

OECD Skills Studies

OECD Skills Strategy Thailand

Assessment and Recommendations



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ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Foreword

Skills are vital for the Kingdom of Thailand's ability to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world. Countries where people develop strong skills, learn throughout their lives, and use their skills fully and effectively at work and in society, are more productive and innovative. They also enjoy higher levels of trust, better health outcomes and a higher quality of life.

For Thailand, there is an urgent need to adapt its skills system to address persistent skills challenges and adapt to evolving economic and societal needs. For instance, the country should address the quality and accessibility of education, reduce the large share of adults with low skill levels, increase participation in adult education and training programmes, and respond to significant skills imbalances. These challenges are exacerbated by the impact of various megatrends, including demographic change, characterised by a rapidly ageing population, technological advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence, and the green transition.

In light of these trends, the Thai skills system will need to support the development and effective use of a diversified supply of skills to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities of a rapidly changing world. People will need to leave formal education not only equipped with the skills to meet current labour market and societal needs but also with the capacity and motivation to anticipate and adapt to future demands. Adults will require opportunities to upskill and reskill to enabling them to perform new tasks within their existing jobs, assume the duties of new roles, and adapt to new modes of work, consumption, and social participation. At the same time, firms will have to adopt more innovative and productive approaches to utilising their employees' skills. Strong governance structures will also be essential to ensure that these efforts are sustainable and impactful.

Thailand has already made significant strides in enhancing its skills system through a series of strategic reforms. Central to these efforts is the National Strategy 2018-2037, which serves as a high-level blueprint for guiding national policies across key policy areas. Aligned with this, the Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) prioritises human capital development, aiming to cultivate a workforce that is adaptable and committed to lifelong learning. Complementing these initiatives are the revised Higher Education Plan for Manpower Production and Development (2023-2027), the Five-Year Investment Promotion Strategy for the New Economy (2023-2027), and the Learning Promotion Act B.E. 2566 (2023), among other initiatives.

Building upon Thailand's recent reforms and strategic initiatives, this report presents 20 tailored recommendations developed through comprehensive analysis and extensive stakeholder engagement. These recommendations offer high-level strategic policy directions across three priority areas, providing a robust foundation for Thailand to craft its own cohesive skills strategy and implementation plan. By aligning these insights with national objectives, Thailand can ensure a co-ordinated and effective approach to skills policy over the medium to long term.

The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

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While the report draws upon data and analysis from the OECD, Thailand's authorities and other published sources, any errors or misinterpretations remain the responsibility of the OECD team.

Bart Staats was the OECD Project Leader responsible for managing this OECD Skills Strategy project in Thailand. The authors of the report were: Abigail Sageev, OECD Centre for Skills (Chapter 1 and Chapter 4), and Maria Regina Tongson, consultant OECD Centre for Skills (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3). Andrew Bell, Head of OECD Skills Strategies, provided analytical guidance and supervised the project. El Iza Mohamedou, Head of the OECD Centre for Skills, oversaw the project, while Stefano Scarpetta, OECD Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, and Mark Pearson, OECD Deputy Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, provided strategic oversight.

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On 17 June 2024, the OECD Council decided to open accession discussions with Thailand. The Roadmap for the OECD Accession Process of Thailand was adopted on 10 July 2024. In accordance with the Roadmap, Thailand will undergo in-depth reviews by the OECD technical committees listed in the Roadmap. This report forms part of the Thailand Country Programme Phase 2 (2023-2025) and was carried out separately from Thailand's accession process.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

The following are the main abbreviations and acronyms cited in the report.

Abbreviation/acronym	Full description
ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
AI	Artificial intelligence
ALMPs	Active labour market policies
AQRF	ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
BEC	Basic Education Committee
BIBB	Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training
BMAS	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
CGP	Career guidance programmes
CLCs	Community learning centres
CSOs	Civil society organisations
CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
CVT	Continuing vocational training
CWIE	Cooperative and work integrated education programme
DASTA	Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DLA	Department of Local Administration
DSD	Department of Skills Development
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
EDG	Education development guidelines
EDUFI	Finnish National Agency for Education
EEF	Equitable Education Fund
EFA	Education For All
EQA	External Quality Assurance
ESA	Educational service areas
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FINEEC	Finnish Education Evaluation Centre
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNI	Gross national income
GVCs	Global value chains
HE	Higher education
HEIs	Higher education institutions
HELP	Higher education loan programme
HLSIG	High-level skills implementation group
HPWPs	High-performance work practices
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILAs	Individual learning accounts
IQA	Internal quality assurance

Abbreviation/acronym	Full description
ISCED	International Standard Classification for Education
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
IT	Information technology
JPPSCC	Joint Public and Private Sector Consultative Committee
JSA	Jobs and skills Australia
K-10	Kindergarten to Grade 10
KERIS	Korea Education and Research Information Service
KIM	Ministry of Culture and Innovation
KOSEN	Japan's National Institute of Technology
KPIs	Key performance indicators
LAOs	Local administration organisations
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMAC	Labour Market Advisory Council
LMI	Labour market information
MAB	Hungarian Accreditation Committee
MHESI	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation
MNEs	Multinational enterprises
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MOOC	Thailand Massive Online Open Courses
MOST	Ministry of Science and Technology
MoUs	Memoranda of understanding
MSMEs	Micro, small and medium sized enterprises
MyCOL	Malaysia's Critical Occupations List
MyGDX	Malaysia's Government Central Data Exchange
MyNSR	Malaysia National Skills Registry
NACE	Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community
NCBS	National Credit Bank System
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NEET	Not in education, employment and training
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NESDC	Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council
NESDP	National Economic and Social Development Plan
NFEs	Non-formal and informal education centres
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRCT	National Research Council of Thailand
NSO	National Statistic Office
NXPO	Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council
O-LMS	Virtual learning environment or Learning Management System
O-NET	Ordinary National Educational Test
OBEC	Office of the Basic Education Commission
OEQA	Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment
OERs	Open education resources
OHEC	Office of the Higher Education Commission
ONESQA	Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment
ONIE	Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education
OQEA	Offering Quality Education to Adults
OVEC	Office of the Vocational Education Commission
PATA	Pacific Asian Travel Association

Abbreviation/acronym	Full description
PDP	Philippine Development Plan
PES	Public employment services
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PSD	Public Service Division
PWM	Progressive wage model
RCF	Regional competence fora
R&D	Research and development
R&I	Research and innovation
RoRRs	Recognition of rural and remote service
RPEL	Recognition of prior experiential learning
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SAA	Skills assessment and anticipation
SGI	Sustainable Governance Indicators
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SSCs	Sectoral skills Councils
SSG	SkillsFuture Singapore
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TAT	Tourism authority of Thailand
TCEB	Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau
TDGA	Thailand Digital Governance Academy
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
ToR	Terms of Reference
TPQI	Thailand Professional Qualification Institute
TRF	Thailand Research Fund
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
VLE/LMS	Virtual learning environment or learning management system
WBL	Work-based learning

Executive summary

OECD-Thailand collaboration on the OECD Skills Strategy project

In this OECD Skills Strategy project, the OECD worked collaboratively with the Royal Thai Government to identify skills policy priorities and develop tailored policy recommendations for strengthening the country's skills system. Through desk research and engagement with government and stakeholder representatives in multiple workshops over 19 months between 2023 and 2025, the project resulted in 20 recommendations across three priority areas that provide strategic policy directions for Thailand.

Key findings and opportunities for improving Thailand's skills system

Thailand has achieved significant economic progress over the past decades. Growth has been driven by strong exports, particularly in manufacturing and agriculture, as well as a thriving tourism sector, which remains a key pillar of the economy. However, there are signs of slowdown in the face of ongoing and emerging structural challenges. Recent years have seen little catch up in Thailand's GDP per capita relative to the OECD, and changes in the global trading environment are a risk to the economic outlook. Progress in poverty reduction has slowed and inequalities remain significant. Building a strong and adaptive skills system is essential to overcoming these challenges. By developing robust, labour market-relevant skills and ensuring their effective use in the labour market, Thailand could further boost innovation, productivity, and growth.

Thailand's skills system will also need to adapt to megatrends that are reshaping how we work and live. Demographic shifts, particularly an aging population, necessitate effective skills policies to maximise workforce participation and productivity. Climate change and the green transition will reshape skills demands, necessitating green skills and sustainable technologies to support Thailand's goal of net-zero emissions by 2065. Additionally, rapid technological advancement, including artificial intelligence, underscore the need for a diverse mix of cognitive, socio-emotional, and metacognitive skills. Strengthening skills is essential to effectively harness technological progress and bridge the digital divide.

Thailand must foster the development and effective use of a diversified skills base to navigate emerging challenges and capitalise on new opportunities of a changing world. Now is an opportune moment to build on existing strengths and place skills at the core of a comprehensive policy response and strategic investment. This OECD Skills Strategy project provides the foundation for achieving this goal.

Priority area 1 – Strengthening the skills of youth in initial education

Ensuring access to high quality, relevant and inclusive opportunities in initial education is central to helping Thai youth acquire strong basic skills and develop positive attitudes towards learning. To strengthen the skills of youth in initial education, Thailand should:

- **Increase the quality and relevance of initial education**, including by strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education, and improving the relevance of TVET offers through high-quality work-based learning opportunities.
- **Promote the development of higher-level skills among youth**, including by promoting informed educational choices through an increased supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools, and increased access to high-quality higher education programmes.
- **Reduce inequalities in educational outcomes**, including through enhanced access to high-quality teaching, and supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives.

Priority area 2 – Fostering greater participation in adult learning

Increasing participation in adult learning is essential to foster a learning culture throughout life and enabling Thailand to respond effectively to the challenges of a rapidly aging population and evolving global megatrends. To promote greater participation in adult learning, Thailand should:

- **Increase the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities**, including by improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for formal and non-formal adult learning, and steering the learning provision and educational choices towards areas of skills shortage.
- **Address barriers to participation in adult learning**, including by diminishing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities, and increasing the motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives.
- **Increase participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups**, including by improving access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers, and expanding access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches.

Priority area 3 – Strengthening the governance of the skills system

Strengthening governance is essential to building a responsive and adaptive skills system. Given the cross-sectoral nature of skills policies, their effectiveness depends on effective co-ordination of government efforts, meaningful engagement with non-governmental stakeholders, and the integration of comprehensive skills information systems. To strengthen the governance of the skills system, Thailand should:

- **Enhance the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy**, including by designing a national strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy – building on findings of this OECD Skills Strategy – and ensuring the effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies.
- **Foster a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making**, including by strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination among government ministries and agencies, and vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels.
- **Strengthen stakeholder engagement in skills policy making**, including by strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement, and more effective engagement with hard-to-reach stakeholders.
- **Improve skills information systems**, including by improving the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy, and enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services to improve accessibility and meet diverse user needs.

1 Key insights and recommendations for Thailand

This chapter describes the key insights and policy recommendations of the OECD Skills Strategy Assessment and Recommendations project for Thailand. It applies the OECD Skills Strategy Framework to assess the performance of Thailand's skills system, describes the policy context, and presents the recommendations for the three priority areas for action:

1. Strengthening the skills of youth in initial education; 2. Fostering greater participation in adult learning; 3. Strengthening the governance of the skills system. Subsequent chapters describe each priority area in greater detail, highlighting the opportunities for improvement, good practices and recommendations for improvement.

Skills matter for Thailand

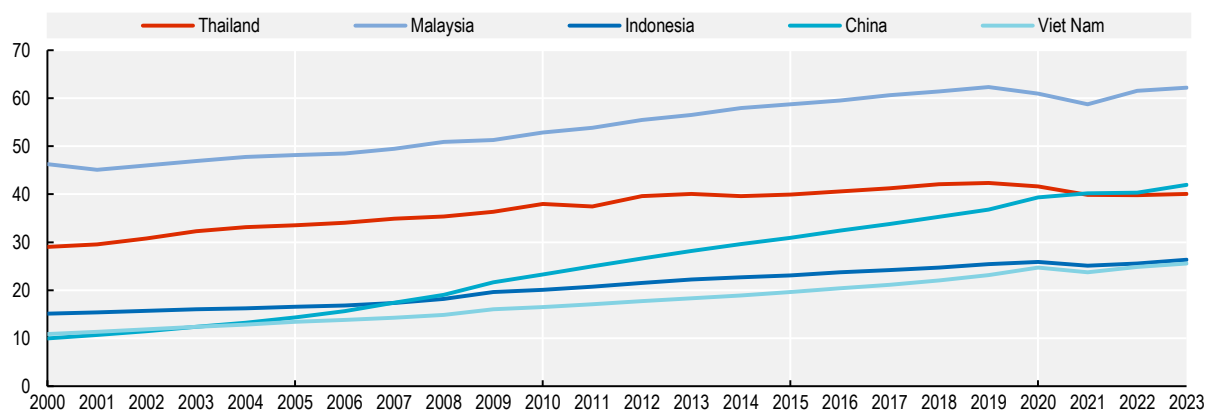
Skills¹ are vital for enabling individuals and countries to thrive in an increasingly complex, interconnected and rapidly changing world. Countries where people develop strong skills, learn throughout their lives, and use their skills fully and effectively at work and in society, are more productive and innovative. They also enjoy higher levels of trust, better health outcomes and a higher quality of life (OECD, 2019^[1]).

Strong skills policies play a critical role in ensuring societal well-being and inclusive and sustainable growth in Thailand

Thailand's living standards have increased substantially in recent decades. However, there are signs of slowdown in the face of ongoing and emerging structural challenges. Recent years have seen little catch up in Thailand's GDP per capita relative to the OECD (see Figure 1.1) (World Bank, 2025^[2]). The key sectors of tourism and automobiles have been facing specific challenges, and changes in the global trading environment are a risk to the economic outlook. The economy grew by 2.5% in 2024, but lower growth is expected in 2025.

Progress in poverty reduction has slowed and inequalities remain. The average per capita consumption in the richest quintile's households is nearly six times higher than in the poorest quintile. Spatial disparities are also pronounced, with average per capita consumption in Bangkok being over twice as high as in the rural areas of the North and Northeast regions. Low-income households remain concentrated in agriculture and self-employment, facing longstanding challenges, exposure to climate risks, and persistent vulnerability to poverty (World Bank Group, 2024^[3]). Informal employment is also a major impediment for the country's development, and it is estimated that it constitutes 65% of all employment in Thailand (ILO, 2022^[4]).

Figure 1.1. GDP per capita relative to the OECD average



Note: GDP per capita computed at 2021 USD PPP, OECD = 100.

Source: World Bank (2025^[2]), World Development Indicators database, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/327po0>

Building a strong and adaptive skills system is essential to overcoming these challenges. By developing robust, labour market-relevant skills and ensuring their effective utilisation to boost innovation, productivity, and growth, Thailand can improve its economic performance and foster a more equitable and resilient society.

Megatrends are reshaping the skills needed to thrive in the workforce and society

Thailand is witnessing a significant demographic shift marked by a rapidly ageing population. The old-age dependency ratio, measuring the ratio of individuals aged 65 and above to those of working age (16-64 years), is projected to more than double, rising from 21% to 48.8% between 2023 and 2053 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2024^[5]). As the population ages, Thailand's future economic growth will depend heavily on maximising workforce participation and, most importantly, achieving productivity gains. Effective skills policies are crucial in this context, as they can mitigate the impact of a shrinking workforce while supporting the need for sustained productivity.

Climate change and the green transition are expected to significantly impact Thailand's skills system. The country's long coastlines, fragile agricultural systems, and susceptibility to extreme weather events make it particularly vulnerable. Over the past two decades, severe floods and tropical cyclones have caused the third-largest economic losses globally, averaging 0.8% of GDP (Eckstein, Künzel and Schäfer, 2021^[6]). Future potential costs could be even higher, estimated to range between 10-20% of GDP (World Bank Group, 2023^[7]). These environmental challenges affect consumer demand and production methods, thereby altering the skills required for work and living.

Thailand has committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2065, necessitating a focus on ensuring the green transition drives economic growth and enhances living standards (OECD, 2023^[8]). This transition will drive a growing demand for green skills and sustainable technologies. As Thailand shifts towards greener industries and the number of green jobs increases, the importance of certain skills will rise. Ensuring access to relevant skills development will be crucial in supporting this transition and fostering economic resilience in the face of climate change.

New technologies and digital infrastructure are rapidly spreading in Thailand. This trend is also expected to have a significantly impact on Thailand's skills needs. Harnessing this wave of technological progress has the potential to offer great benefits for individuals, firms, and the country as a whole. However, to fully capitalise on these opportunities, a broad mix of skills is essential. These include cognitive skills (e.g. information-processing), socio-emotional skills (e.g. communication, teamwork), and metacognitive (e.g. regulation of one's own thinking process) (OECD, 2023^[9]). Critical thinking skills are equally important, allowing individuals to make informed decisions amidst vast amounts of information in a digital world (Cunningham et al., 2022^[10]).

Skills development plays a crucial role in addressing the challenges of technological progress and the digital divide. As technology advances, labour markets are becoming increasingly polarised: highly skilled individuals are in greater demand as their expertise complements technology, while those with lower skill levels are more likely to work in jobs at risk of automation, face difficulties adapting to new technologies, and have fewer opportunities to upskill (OECD, 2019^[11]). Expanding opportunities for skills development is essential to help workers transition from high-risk jobs to new, higher-quality roles.

As labour markets evolve in response to technological progress, particularly with the rapid rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI), Thailand must strike a balance between policies that support labour market flexibility – enabling smooth transitions across jobs – and those that support job stability, protecting vulnerable workers who cannot easily adapt.

Globalisation also has significant implications for skills development. A highly skilled workforce enables countries to engage in high-value activities at the higher end of global value chains (GVSc). For Thailand to strengthen its position as a high-value economy and a key player in GVCs, it will need to ensure its workforce possesses the skills needed to achieve productivity gains (OECD, 2023^[11]).

Skills policies should be at the core of Thailand's response to these trends

In light of the above trends, the Thai skills system will need to support the development and effective use of a diversified supply of skills to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities of a rapidly changing world.

People will need to leave formal education not only equipped with the skills to meet current labour market and societal needs but also with the capacity and motivation to anticipate and adapt to future demands. Adults will require opportunities to upskill and reskill to enabling them to perform new tasks within their existing jobs, assume the duties of new roles, and adapt to new modes of work, consumption, and social participation. At the same time, firms will have to adopt more innovative and productive approaches to utilising their employees' skills. Strong governance structures will also be essential to ensure that these efforts are sustainable and impactful.

This OECD Skills Strategy aims to support Thailand in achieving this goal, equipping the country to navigate and thrive in an ever-evolving world.

The OECD Skills Strategy project in Thailand

In this OECD Skills Strategy project, the OECD worked collaboratively with the Royal Thai Government to identify skills policy priorities and develop tailored policy recommendations for strengthening the countries' skills system.

The project started in September 2023 with a kick-off meeting with involved ministries and government agencies. Subsequently, the OECD conducted desk-based analysis on Thailand's skills system, informed by a policy questionnaire completed by Thai officials. Virtual consultations were organised in September 2024 to test and refine a preliminary list of policy recommendations (see Annex 1.A for an overview of the phases of the project). With these activities, the project engaged representatives from government ministries and organisations, employer organisations, educational establishments, research institutions and other interested parties.

Through desk research and active engagement with stakeholders consulted during this OECD Skills Strategy project, three overarching priority areas were identified for this OECD Skills Strategy project with recommendations for each (see Figure 1.2 for an overview of the recommendations):

1. Strengthening the skills of youth in initial education (Chapter 2).
2. Fostering greater participation in adult learning (Chapter 3).
3. Strengthening the governance of the skills system (Chapter 4).

The 20 recommendations described in this report provide strategic policy directions for Thailand across these priority areas. The recommendations are accompanied by specific actions, translating these strategic policy directions into more concrete policy interventions (see the sections below for an overview of these specific actions and Annex 1.B for detailed descriptions).

The guidance contained in this report provides Thailand with a strong foundation on which to build its own strategy and implementation plan (see also Opportunity 1 in Priority area 3 – Strengthening the governance of the skills system). Additional efforts will be required by Thai stakeholders to sequence and prioritise policy actions and investments. In some instance, further work will also be needed to determine the most effective approaches for implementing the prioritised recommendations. To achieve these objectives, Thai stakeholders will need to sustain their productive collaboration to identify roles and responsibilities for the design and implementation of prioritised actions.

Figure 1.2. OECD Skills Strategy Thailand: Overview of recommendations

Priority area 1. Strengthening the skills of youth in initial education



Priority area 2. Fostering greater participation in adult learning



Priority area 3. Strengthening the governance of the skills system



Note: See a description of the recommendations in the sections below and a detailed overview of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Annex 1.B and Chapters 2-4.

The findings of this report are relevant beyond Thailand, as many OECD member countries face similar skills-related challenges. The analysis and recommendations can inform the development of effective strategies in diverse national contexts. The international good practices featured throughout the report offer further insights to support policy design and implementation across countries.

The report's emphasis on reducing inequalities is particularly pertinent for OECD countries seeking to build more inclusive and adaptable skills systems. It highlights targeted measures to support disadvantaged groups, including financial and non-financial incentives for students from low-income households and improved access to adult learning through online and community-based initiatives.

In addition, the report offers guidance on strengthening governance arrangements for skills systems. Recommendations to enhance strategic capacity – namely, the ability to set clear priorities and translate them into coherent, high-impact actions – may be especially relevant for OECD countries aiming to improve policy coherence and implementation across government.

The performance of Thailand's skills system

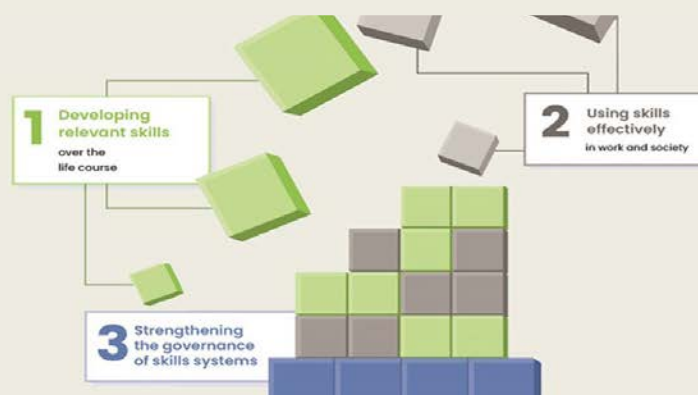
This section summarises the analysis of Thailand's skills system performance, assessed across the three dimensions of the skills strategy framework (see Box 1.1): 1) Developing relevant skills, 2) Using skills effectively, and 3) Strengthening the governance of the skills system.

Box 1.1. The OECD Skills Strategy projects

OECD Skills Strategy projects provide a strategic and comprehensive approach to assess countries' skills challenges and opportunities and build more effective skills systems. The OECD collaborates with countries to develop policy responses tailored to each country's specific skills challenges and needs. The foundation of this approach is the OECD Skills Strategy Framework (see Figure 1.3), the components of which are:

- **Developing relevant skills over the life course:** To ensure that countries are able to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world, all people need access to opportunities to develop and maintain strong proficiency in a broad set of skills. This process is lifelong, starting in childhood and youth and continuing throughout adulthood. It is also “life-wide”, occurring both formally in schools and higher education and non-formally and informally in the home, community and workplaces.
- **Using skills effectively in work and society:** Developing a strong and broad set of skills is just the first step. To ensure that countries and people gain the full economic and social value from investments in developing skills, people also need opportunities, encouragement and incentives to use their skills fully and effectively at work and in society.
- **Strengthening the governance of skills systems:** Success in developing and using relevant skills requires strong governance arrangements to promote co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration across the whole of government; engage stakeholders throughout the policy cycle; build integrated information systems; and align and co-ordinate financing arrangements.

Figure 1.3. The OECD Skills Strategy Framework



Source: OECD (2019^[1]), *OECD Skills Strategy 2019: Skills to Shape a Better Future*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264313835-en>.

Developing relevant skills

To ensure that countries are able to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world, all people need access to learning opportunities to develop and maintain strong proficiency in a broad set of skills. This process is lifelong and “life-wide”, occurring formally, non-formally and informally.

While access to education has improved significantly in recent decades, Thailand can further improve the quality of education

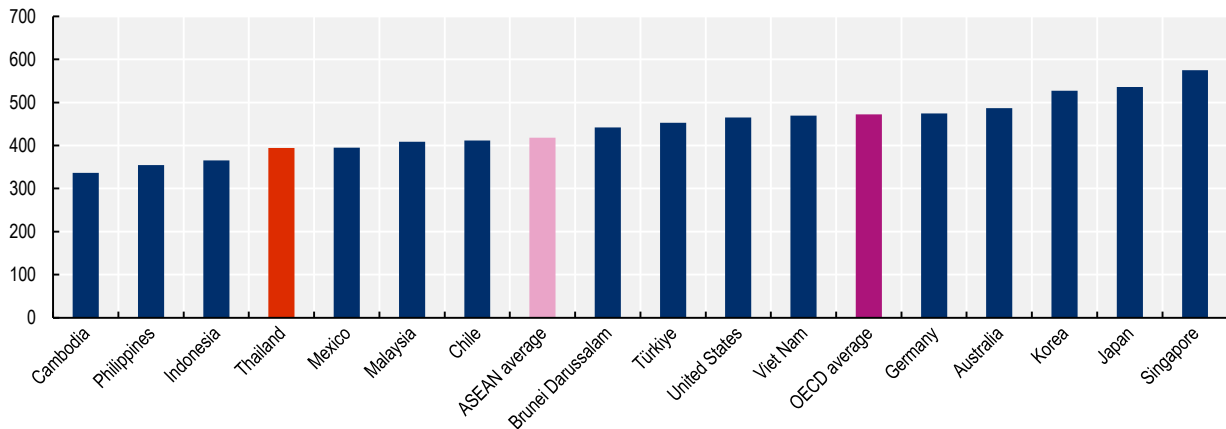
Gross enrolment rates have risen across all levels of education in Thailand over the past two decades. For instance, enrolment rates in secondary education increased from around 75% in 2000 to 100% in 2022, reaching the OECD average and exceeding the ASEAN average (World Bank, 2023^[12]). Similar trends are observed in pre-primary and tertiary education, with primary education achieving universal or near-universal enrolment rates over the past two decades.

Thailand also has one of the highest enrolment rates in technical vocational education and training (TVET) programmes among Southeast Asian countries. In 2022, 14% of Thai secondary education students were enrolled in a TVET track, which is nearly double the ASEAN average of 8% (World Bank, 2024^[13]).

Furthermore, since 1999, Thailand has been increasing its efforts to make the teaching profession more attractive. As a consequence of these efforts, Thailand has seen an increase in the supply of high-quality teachers (UNESCO, 2019^[14]).

Despite these improvements, the quality of education remains a significant challenge. This is reflected in Thai students' performance in the 2022 PISA assessment, where Thailand ranked below several other countries in Southeast Asia (see Figure 1.4) (OECD, 2022^[15]).

Figure 1.4. Average PISA score in mathematics, 2022



Source: OECD (2022^[15]), *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data and methodology*, www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/pisa/pisa-data.html.

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Thailand spends 2.6% of its GDP on education, which is lower than the average across ASEAN countries (2.8%) and the OECD average (5%) (World Bank, 2023^[16]). Despite the pressing need to improve education quality, public spending on education has declined in recent years (World Bank Group, 2023^[7]), with households shouldering an increasing share of education costs. This underscores the need for greater investment to enhance education quality and better align it with labour market requirements.

Despite improvements, equitable access to high-quality education remains a challenge

While educational participation has generally improved over recent decades, significant barriers to equity remain, including gender inequality and regional disparities. Among children aged 3 to 4 years who are not attending early childhood and education (ECE) or are not developmentally on track, 65% are boys, indicating that male children are disproportionately falling behind.

Inter-regional differences in educational access and outcomes are also pronounced, with urban-rural divides playing a major role. The Northeast and Southern regions, which are more rural and have poverty rates nearly double the national average (World Bank Group, 2022^[17]), face particularly stark challenges. Therefore, it is necessary to improve children's foundational skills in these regions in order to reduce educational inequities.

There is scope to strengthen adult skills and increase participation in education and training

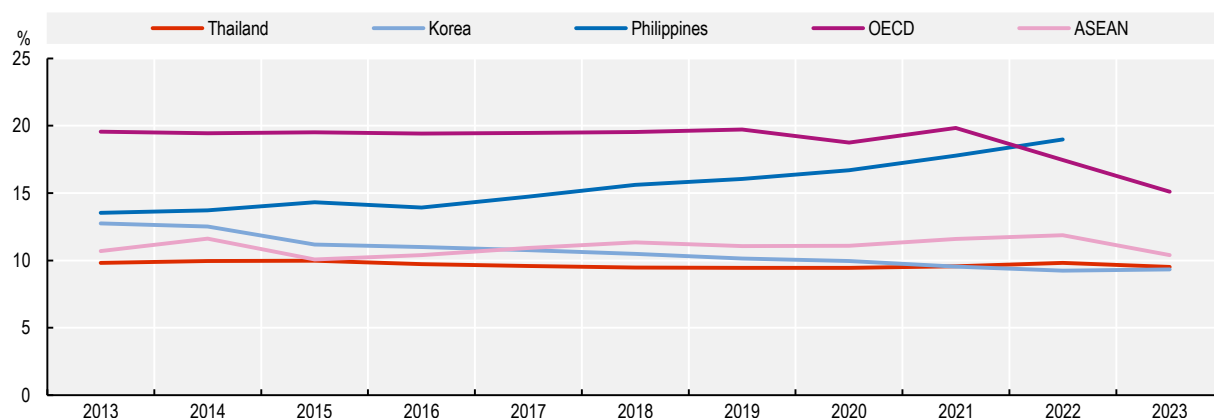
Despite signs of progress, there remains room to increase educational attainment in Thailand. In 2022, 39% of adults aged 25 and over had completed upper secondary education, while 17% had attained a short-cycle tertiary qualification and 17% held a bachelor's degree. Notably, Thailand stands out in the region for its relatively high share of adults with a master's degree (2%) – exceeding the proportions observed in Viet Nam (0.7%), Indonesia (0.7%) and Malaysia (1.6%) (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024^[18]).

In addition, there are significant opportunities to strengthen foundational skills among Thai youth and adults (see Figure 3.2). For example, 65% of individuals report difficulties with basic literacy tasks, such as understanding short texts, drawing simple inferences, or integrating information. Similarly, 74% face challenges with basic digital skills, including navigating digital tools or using online information to solve simple problems. There is also room to further develop socio-emotional skills, with 30% of youth and adults indicating they do not view themselves as open, curious or imaginative (The World Bank Group, 2024^[19]).

Participation in adult learning could enable Thai adults to develop the skills they need to thrive in an increasingly complex and competitive world of work. However, fewer than 10% of individuals aged 25 to 54 participated in formal and non-formal education and training in the first half of 2023, showing little improvement since 2013 (see Figure 1.5) (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024^[18]). The issue is particularly acute in Thailand's extensive informal sector, where opportunities for employer-provided training are limited, and skills recognition remains a significant challenge (OECD, 2024^[20]).

Despite these challenges, it is positive that Thailand is already one of the highest spenders on adult learning among Southeast Asian countries and has announced plans to increase investment in adult learning (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2022^[21]). This suggests that while there is still room to improve adult learning outcomes, Thailand is increasingly recognising the role of adult learning in fostering national growth.

Figure 1.5. Participation rate of adults (25-54 years old) in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, latest available year



Note: OECD Average excludes Japan, ASEAN excludes Malaysia and some years are missing for: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Singapore.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2024^[18]), *SDG 4 Indicator Dashboard: Indicator 4.3.1*, www.unesco.org/en/articles/world-education-statistics-2024.

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Using skills effectively

To ensure that countries and people gain the full economic and social value from investments in developing skills, people also need opportunities, encouragement and incentives to use their skills fully and effectively at work and in society.

High employment rates are accompanied by high rates of skills imbalances

Thailand has maintained a notably low unemployment rates in recent years, demonstrating stability within a range of approximately 1-2% (OECD, 2023^[8]). These low and stable rates indicate that the Thai economy has been successful in providing most adults with opportunities in the labour market.

However, Thailand faces significant skills imbalances, with large labour market surpluses and shortages. Thailand has an abundant surplus of physical skills, such as manual labour and technical trades, but has strong skills shortages in more specialised areas (OECD, 2022^[22]). These skills shortages are strongest in production and technology knowledge, business processes, and communications skills.

Furthermore, Thailand experiences substantial over-qualification in the labour market. 34% of highly educated workers in Thailand are employed in low- or medium-skilled jobs, more than double the OECD average of 16.5% (OECD, 2021^[23]). Despite a large share of over-qualified workers, there are still large shortages of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields (OECD, 2021^[24]) (Prapatsorn Somsathan, 2022^[25]). This would suggest that over-qualification is mainly the result of an oversupply of tertiary-educated workers in non-STEM career fields

More could be done to leverage high-skilled workers to drive innovation and growth

The presence of large numbers of over-qualified workers can serve as a strategic opportunity to enhance economic dynamism and improve job quality. By implementing targeted policies that stimulate innovation and promote high-value industries, economies can effectively harness the surplus of highly educated workers. Such measures not only create more rewarding and fulfilling employment opportunities but also contribute to a more competitive and resilient economic landscape, ensuring workforce capabilities align with evolving labour market demands.

Nevertheless, Thailand's investment in research and development (R&D) and patent production remains below levels typically associated with its per-capita income² (de Nicola, 2021^[26]). This suggests considerable untapped potential to drive innovation, which in turn could increase demand for high-skilled workers and optimise the utilisation of their talents.

Enhancing TVET quality is needed to align graduate supply with demand

Thailand's labour force requires more vocationally trained and specialised workers to meet the demands of the economy (OECD, 2021^[23]). Although Thailand boasts relatively high levels of TVET enrolment compared to other ASEAN countries, the quality of TVET programmes could be further enhanced, since graduates' skills often falling short of labour market needs and employer expectations. This could, in part, contribute to the low wages offered to TVET graduates, which remain insufficiently competitive to attract enough learners to meet demand (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[27]). Furthermore, there is currently no formal mechanism for assessing the quality of many adult education programmes, including TVET.

Strengthening the governance of the skills system

Effective public governance of skills systems relies on a government's ability to co-ordinate, guide, monitor, and communicate both across government departments, with regional and local authorities, and with external public and private stakeholders (OECD, 2019^[1]).

Thailand has made progress towards promoting a whole-of-government approach to skills policy, but there remains room to further improve

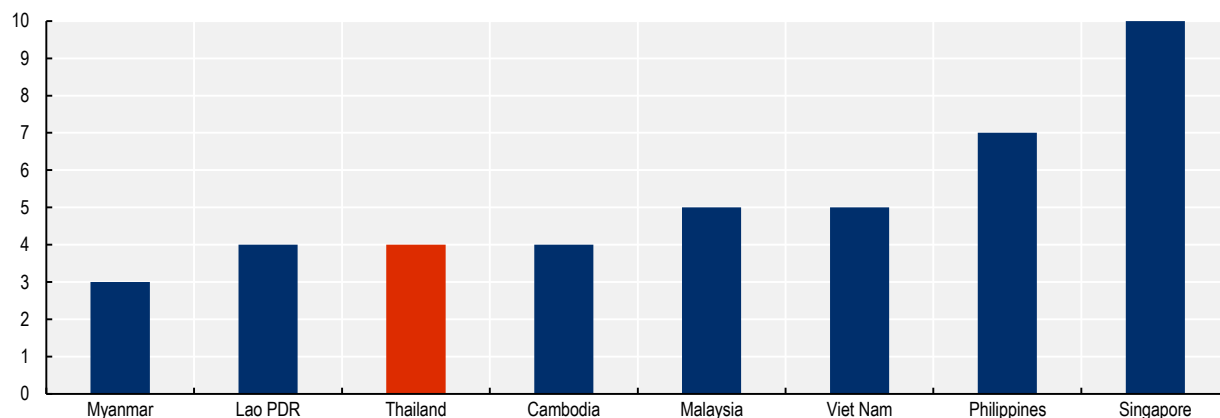
Given the multifaceted nature of skills policies, responsibilities for skills span multiple ministries and agencies in Thailand. At the national level, several ministries have responsibilities for aspects of skills policy. These include the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MHESI), and the Ministry of Labour (MOL). Several agencies also play key roles in the skills system, including the Office of the Permanent Secretary, the Office of the Education Council, and the Office of the Vocational Education Commission.

Thailand has established several mechanisms to promote co-ordination and collaboration on skills-related matters across ministries and agencies. An example is the Education Council, which has 41 members – including representatives from six ministries, several non-governmental organisations and experts – and is tasked with developing and implementing educational policies, as well as fostering collaboration to advance education and human resource development. Another example is the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Committee that brings together policymakers, public and private sector representatives, and experts, and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the new NQF, ensuring that quality standards are maintained across occupations and training programmes.

Despite these efforts, there remains considerable scope to strengthen horizontal co-ordination and collaboration in Thailand. As shown in Figure 1.6, government capacity to align conflicting objectives is below both OECD and ASEAN averages, highlighting the need for stronger inter-ministerial co-ordination and more integrated policymaking.

Figure 1.6. Performance in inter-ministerial co-ordination in Thailand and selected countries, 2022

Index value (1-10)



Note: Inter-ministerial co-ordination refers to scores that countries are assigned by experts in response to the question “To what extent can the government co-ordinate conflicting objectives into a coherent policy?”, including the extent to which a country “introduces horizontal forms of co-ordination to mediate between different departments of the state administration”. Higher scores indicate better performance.

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022^[28]), BTI Transformation Index, <https://bti-project.org/en/index/governance>.

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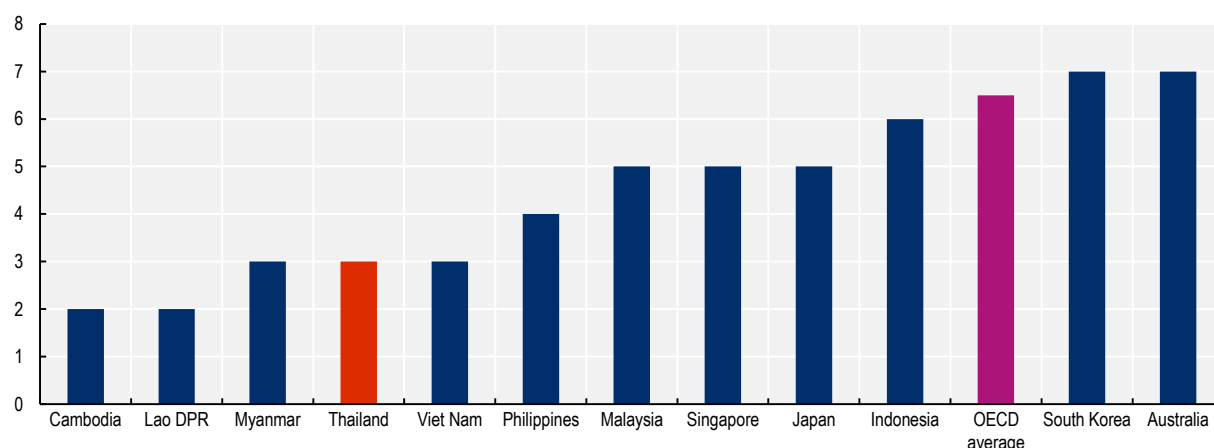
Provincial and local authorities are also active players in Thailand’s skills system. These include Local Administration Organisations (LAOs), as well as Regional Education Offices and Provincial Labour Offices. Vertical co-ordination remains challenging, as LAOs have limited representation in national bodies and minimal involvement in policy design. Bureaucratic complexity further hampers co-ordination, delaying decisions and implementation.

Despite recent efforts towards engaging non-governmental stakeholders in skills policy, there is room to better involve labour market actors and civil society

Effective governance enables non-governmental stakeholders – ranging from educational institutions and employers to trade unions and NGOs – to leverage their strengths, knowledge, and networks to complement each other and achieve shared policy objectives (OECD, 2021^[29]).

Thailand has made notable progress in establishing a legal framework for stakeholder consultation in the formulation of general policies. Additionally, several bodies that convene public and private actors have been established, such as the Skill Development Promotion Committee and the Education Council. In line with *Thailand 4.0* (Thailand Board of Investment, n.d.^[30]), which promotes an industry-led economic model, Thailand also established sector skills councils, such as industry-specific bodies to align training government programmes with industry needs.

In addition to involving labour market actors, Thailand has made efforts to engage with civil society organisations (CSOs), which offer important services such as formal and non-formal education, career guidance, community development, and other initiatives that support skills development, particularly in rural areas. However, civil society’s involvement in policy formulation in Thailand remains relatively limited compared to other ASEAN and OECD countries (see Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7. Civil society participation on policy making in Thailand and selected countries, 2022

Note: Civil society participation refers to scores that countries are assigned by experts in response to the question “To what extent does the political leadership enable the participation of civil society in the political process?”. Higher scores indicate better performance. Scores for OECD countries are taken from the Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI) scores, where the relevant question is “Does the government consult with economic and social actors in the course of policy preparation?”

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022^[31]), Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI), www.sgi-network.org/2022/; Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022^[28]), BTI Transformation Index, <https://bti-project.org/en/index/governance>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/vqjkw>

Thailand has various tools and mechanisms for collecting and using skills information, but the coverage, standardisation, accessibility, and effective use of skills data can be improved

High-quality and comprehensive data play a crucial role in skills policy by enabling effective assessment and anticipation of skills needs, as well as the identification of policy priorities.

Various governmental bodies, such as the MOE, MOL, and the Office of Statistics, have responsibilities in collecting skills data in Thailand. Additionally, Thailand currently participates in several international tests and surveys. However, there remain gaps in data coverage. For instance, there are still notable gaps in the coverage and openness of governmental data, particularly in education indicators, where Thailand's coverage trails both ASEAN and OECD averages (Open Data Watch, 2022^[32]).

Beyond coverage, Thailand has made progress in developing policies and guidelines for data management, such as the Digital Government Development Plan and Data Governance Framework 1.0. However, these efforts mainly focus on data access and sharing, neglecting the importance of standardised data collection. Skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) exercises, which are crucial for identifying future skills needs, are also fragmented and inconsistently applied. Additionally, while platforms like govchannel.go.th and the Open Government Data Centre provide access to government data, Thailand's overall performance in data openness remains low (Open Data Watch, 2022^[32]).

The policy context in Thailand

Thailand employs a strategic and comprehensive approach to policymaking, characterised by overarching strategies and policy plans that engage multiple ministries to ensure alignment of policy priorities. Central to this framework is the National Strategy 2018–2037 (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017^[33]), developed by the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) under the Office of the Prime Minister. This strategy serves as a high-level blueprint for guiding national policies across key areas such as national security, economic development, health, social development, and environmental sustainability. Notably, the strategy places a strong emphasis on human capital development, underscoring the critical importance of skills on Thailand's policy agenda.

To operationalise the National Strategy, Thailand has established second-level plans, including the Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[27]). This plan offers an in-depth analysis of Thailand's economic and social conditions, and outlines specific objectives, measurable targets, and key milestones. A central priority of the plan is the development of human capital to meet the demands of the new global era, with a focus on cultivating a highly capable workforce that values lifelong learning and demonstrates adaptability.

Ministerial level plans, considered as 'third-level plans', are required to align with the overarching goals set forth in the National Strategy and Development Plan. For instance, the Higher Education Plan for Thailand's Manpower Production and Development (2021-2027) (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2022^[34]) outlines a comprehensive strategy for enhancing human capital and promoting lifelong learning, including pathways to higher education, vocational education and training (VET), as well as initiatives to support re-skilling and upskilling.

To strengthen the use of skills in the workforce, Thailand has made investments in integrating new technologies across various industries. A key initiative is the 5-Year Investment Promotion Strategy for the New Economy (2023–2027), adopted in October 2022 as part of Thailand's new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) strategy. This strategy prioritises the promotion of high-technology, innovation, and green industries such as electric vehicles (OECD, 2023^[8]). In parallel, Thailand has introduced measures to attract high-skilled foreign workers, leveraging visa programmes and tax incentives to strengthen its talent pool (OECD, 2023^[8]).

In addition to its strategic frameworks, Thailand has enacted several key legislative documents that guide the structure of the skills system. The National Education Act B.E. 2545 (1999) was introduced to reform the country's education system in order to respond better to domestic and global changes. The act promotes a more decentralised education, delegating increased responsibilities for education financing and administration to educational service areas (ESA), LAOs and schools (OECD/UNESCO, 2016^[35]).

The Skills Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 (A.D. 2002) offers various incentives to businesses to upskill their employees. It also established a Skill Development Fund, which offers loans to employees seeking training opportunities and to businesses organising skills development opportunities (Ministry of Labour, 2002^[36]).

Complementing this, the Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act B.E. 2551 (Ministry of Education, 2008^[37]) and the more recent Learning Promotion Act B.E. 2566 (Sawasdee Thailand, 2023^[38]), promote lifelong learning through formal and non-formal education pathways as well as through informal learning. Additionally, the Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation Policy and Strategy (2024) and Vocational Act (2008) highlight the importance of providing and recognising work-based opportunities to foster a culture of lifelong learning (Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council (NXPO), 2024^[39]).

Other important legislations include the Early Childhood Development Act B.E. 2562 (2019), the National Standard for Early Childhood Development Centre B.E. 2562 (2019), the National Educational Standards Act B.E. 2561 (2018), and the Persons with Disabilities Education Act B.E. 2551 of 3008. These legislative instruments collectively enhance the structure and accessibility of Thailand's education and skills development system, emphasising inclusivity and lifelong learning.

Recommendations for priority area 1 – Strengthening the skills of youth in initial education (Chapter 2)

Ensuring access to high quality, relevant and inclusive opportunities in initial education is central to helping Thai youth acquire strong basic skills and develop positive attitudes towards learning. Three opportunities

to strengthen the skills of youth in initial education were selected based on input from the literature, desk research, a policy questionnaire and discussions in virtual workshops.

Opportunity 1: Increasing the quality and relevance of initial education

To strengthen the skills of youth in initial education, it is vital to improve the quality and relevance of skills development opportunities in Thailand. This will help young people acquire the skills needed to progress through education, engage in society, and improve their job prospects. Better initial education can also reduce poverty, boost social mobility, and drive innovation and productivity. See Table 1.1 for the recommendations and specific actions for increasing the quality and relevance of initial education.

Table 1.1. Recommendations for increasing the quality and relevance of initial education

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 1: Increasing the quality and relevance of initial education	
Recommendation 1: Strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education	1.1. Adapt the curricula in initial education based on the new framework for core competencies and with regular review periods. 1.2. Actively involve key stakeholders such as teachers in the curriculum reform process. 1.3. Provide adequate training and support to teachers and educational staff to implement the new curriculum.
Recommendation 2: Improving relevance of TVET offers through high-quality work-based learning opportunities	2.1. Leverage the large number of MSMEs in Thailand to increase the supply of work-based learning opportunities. 2.2. Build training networks to help MSMEs gain access to high-quality equipment and learning opportunities for TVET offers. 2.3. Use skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) exercises more systematically to determine the content of work-based learning opportunities.

Note: Full descriptions of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Chapter 2 and Annex 1.B.

Recommendation 1: Strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education

Strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education can help Thailand ensure that students acquire the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world of work. The curriculum reform process should actively involve key stakeholders in the education system, such as teachers, to reflect the realities of Thai classrooms and build support for effective implementation. In addition, providing sufficient time for training teachers and school staff can help ensure the successful rollout of the new curriculum.

Recommendation 2: Improving the relevance of TVET offers through high-quality work-based learning opportunities

Improving the relevance of TVET provision through high-quality work-based learning opportunities is essential to ensure that students in Thailand's vocational track develop the skills needed to contribute effectively in the workplace and meet employer expectations. High quality work-based learning opportunities enable students to apply their learning in real-world settings, ease their transition from school to work, and support their job prospects. To achieve this, Thailand could leverage its large number of Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to expand work-based learning placements, establish training networks to improve access to quality equipment, and use SAA exercises more systematically to shape programme content.

Opportunity 2: Promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth

To support Thailand's ambition of transitioning towards an innovation-based economy, promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth should be a key priority. Higher education systems play a vital role in nurturing these skills – whether transversal higher-order cognitive skills such as creativity and critical thinking, or specialised, industry-specific skills related to science and technology (e.g. AI, coding, data management). See Table 1.2 for the recommendations and specific actions for promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth.

Table 1.2. Recommendations for promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 2: Promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth	
Recommendation 3: Promoting informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools	3.1. Provide incentives for guidance counsellors to obtain formal qualifications, as well as competitive benefits and support for practicing professionals. 3.2. Provide career guidance training to teachers.
Recommendation 4: Increasing access to high-quality higher education programmes	4.1. Support HEIs in implementing more efficient and digitalised quality assurance processes. 4.2. Establish robust internal and external quality assurance mechanisms specifically tailored for online and digital higher education programmes. 4.3. Support HEIs in offering a greater number of online courses and distance learning modalities. 4.4. Support educators in HEIs to deliver online learning through tailored pedagogical practices and curricula.

Note: Full descriptions of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Chapter 2 and Annex 1.B.

Recommendation 3: Promoting informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools

Promoting informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools can help ensure that Thai students choose higher education programmes aligned with their interests and abilities, while also reflecting the skills and qualifications in high demand in the labour market. This can help ensure that students' investments in education are well-rewarded with strong employment prospects and fair remuneration, while also contributing to a reduction in skills mismatches in Thailand. To this end, Thailand could provide incentives for guidance counsellors to obtain formal qualifications, offer competitive benefits and support for practising professionals, and deliver career guidance training to teachers.

Recommendation 4: Increasing access to high-quality higher education in Thailand

Increasing access to high-quality higher education in Thailand can be achieved by strengthening quality assurance processes and promoting online and distance learning options. These measures would help to broaden access, boost tertiary attainment rates, and support the country's internationalisation efforts. Online higher education, in particular, offers significant advantages, including more cost-efficient training solutions for higher education institutions (HEIs). To this end, Thailand could support HEIs in adopting more efficient and digitalised quality assurance processes, and establish robust internal and external quality assurance mechanisms specifically tailored to online and digital programmes. The government could also assist HEIs in expanding their offering of online courses and distance learning modalities, and support educators in delivering these through tailored pedagogical approaches and curricula.

Opportunity 3: Reducing inequalities in educational outcomes

In Thailand, inequalities in educational outcomes remain widespread, particularly among disadvantaged groups. Children from low-income households, rural areas, ethnic minorities, migrant backgrounds, as well as girls and students with disabilities, consistently face barriers that hinder access to high-quality and relevant skills development opportunities. Government representatives have identified geographic location and socio-economic status as the most significant contributors to these inequalities. By prioritising equity and inclusion in Thailand's initial education system, all students are empowered to achieve their full potential, irrespective of their personal or social circumstances. See Table 1.3 for the recommendations and specific actions for reducing inequalities in educational outcomes.

Table 1.3. Recommendations for reducing inequalities in educational outcomes

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 3: Reducing inequalities in educational outcomes	
Recommendation 5: Bridging regional gaps in educational outcomes through enhanced access to high-quality teaching	5.1. Provide specialised training teachers on multi-grade teaching methodologies as an interim solution to address teacher shortages in rural areas. 5.2. Introduce incentives to attract and retain teachers and school administrative staff in rural areas. 5.3. Strengthen the use of digital technologies to connect qualified teachers with rural schools.
Recommendation 6: Supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives	6.1. Ensure that financial incentives for low-income students are well-targeted. 6.2. Encourage greater parental involvement in their children's schooling. 6.3. Implement awareness raising initiatives targeted specifically to disadvantaged groups to inform them about skills development opportunities.

Note: Full descriptions of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Chapter 2 and Annex 1.B.

Recommendation 5: Bridging regional gaps in educational outcomes through enhanced access to high-quality teaching

Bridging regional gaps in educational outcomes through enhanced access to high-quality teaching should be a priority for Thailand. Youth in underserved areas should be able to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to bridge the gap with their urban counterparts and thrive in an increasingly dynamic and competitive world of work. To this end, Thailand could provide specialised training teachers on multi-grade teaching methodologies as an interim solution to address teacher shortages in rural areas. Furthermore, Thailand could introduce incentives to attract and retain teachers and school administrative staff in rural areas, as well as strengthen the use of digital technologies to connect qualified teachers with rural schools.

Recommendation 6: Supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives

Supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through both financial and non-financial incentives can help to create a more equitable and inclusive educational system. Reducing cost barriers by providing adequate financial support can help children stay in school and reduce the risk of dropping out. Non-financial incentives, such as encouraging greater parental involvement in their children's education, can help sustain student's motivation and resilience in the face of financial hardship. To this end, Thailand could ensure that financial support for low-income students is well-targeted, promote active parental engagement, and implement awareness-raising initiatives specifically aimed at disadvantaged groups to inform them about available skills development opportunities.

Recommendations for priority area 2 – Fostering greater participation in adult learning (Chapter 3)

Increasing participation in adult learning is essential to foster a lifelong learning culture and enabling Thailand to respond effectively to the challenges of a rapidly aging population and evolving global megatrends. Three opportunities to promote greater participation in adult learning were selected based on input from the literature, desk research, a policy questionnaire and discussions in virtual workshops.

Opportunity 1: Increasing the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities

To foster greater participation in adult learning, Thailand could make learning opportunities more attractive by ensuring they are high quality and aligned with current and future labour market needs. Adults and firms are more likely to invest time and resources in training when confident that it meets national and international standards. Moreover, training becomes especially worthwhile for adults when the skills acquired can be effectively applied in their current roles or future employment opportunities. See Table 1.4 for the recommendations and specific actions for increasing the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities.

Table 1.4. Recommendations for increasing the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 1: Improving the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities	
Recommendation 1: Improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for formal and non-formal adult learning	1.1. Expand internal and external quality assurance mechanisms to include adult learning providers currently excluded from existing regulations. 1.2. Strengthen the capacity of adult learning providers to conduct self-evaluations and make improvements based on results. 1.3. Introduce quality assurance labels for adult learning providers.
Recommendation 2: Steering adult learning provision and educational choices towards areas of skills shortage	2.1. Use skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) tools more systematically to determine labour market needs. 2.2. Disseminate information about skills shortages by introducing a government-approved list of critical skills and occupations. 2.3. Introduce financial incentives to encourage employers and adult learning providers to offer opportunities in high-demand areas, and support learners in making education and training choices aligned with labour market needs.

Note: Full descriptions of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Chapter 3 and Annex 1.B.

Recommendation 1: Improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for formal and non-formal adult learning

Improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for both formal and non-formal adult learning can help ensure that learners receive high-quality training, equipping them with in-demand skills that enhance employability, access to better jobs, and overall productivity. To this end, Thailand could extend quality assurance frameworks to cover adult learning providers, strengthen their capacity to carry out self-evaluations and act on findings, and consider introducing quality assurance labels to promote transparency and trust in adult learning provision.

Recommendation 2: Steering adult learning provision and choices towards areas of skills shortage

Steering adult learning provision and choices towards areas of skills shortage can help ensure that adult learners participate in training that is well aligned with Thailand's labour market needs and national development goals. To this end, Thailand could use SAA tools more systematically to identify labour market needs, as well as disseminate information about skills shortages by introducing a government-approved list of critical skills and occupations. In addition, financial incentives could be introduced to encourage employers and adult learning providers to offer programmes in high-demand areas, while also supporting learners to make education and training choices aligned with labour market needs.

Opportunity 2: Addressing barriers to participation in adult learning

Fostering greater participation in adult learning requires addressing the diverse barriers that Thai adult learners face. These barriers may be situational – such as work and family obligations – or dispositional, including beliefs about being too old to learn or anxiety about returning to a classroom environment. Tackling these challenges through targeted financial and non-financial measures is essential to enabling adults to engage fully in learning opportunities. See Table 1.5 for the recommendations and specific actions for addressing barriers to participation in adult learning.

Table 1.5. Recommendations for addressing barriers to participation in adult learning

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 2: Reducing barriers to participation in adult learning opportunities	
Recommendation 3: Addressing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities	3.1. Raise awareness about existing flexible adult learning opportunities, including digital formats, to increase their take-up. 3.2. Introduce time accounts or consider incorporating them into existing learning platforms such as the National Credit Bank System (NCBS). 3.3. Promote the uptake of existing training leave policies and improve their effectiveness.
Recommendation 4: Increasing motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives	4.1. Conduct a nation-wide campaign to raise awareness about the importance of a lifelong approach to learning. 4.2. Introduce a financial incentive, such as personal income tax deductions, to motivate individuals to pursue training. 4.3. Introduce payback clauses to ensure that investments in training by enterprises and the government can lead to positive returns. 4.4. Explore the introduction of individual learning schemes (e.g. training vouchers, learning accounts) to encourage adults to take greater responsibility for their lifelong learning

Note: Full descriptions of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Chapter 3 and Annex 1.B.

Recommendation 3: Addressing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities

Addressing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities is especially important in Thailand, where adults are among the most overworked in the world and have little time for learning. Offering flexible adult learning opportunities in terms of place, time and modality can help adults to balance training with work and personal commitments. To this end, Thailand could raise awareness about existing flexible adult learning opportunities, including digital formats, to increase their take-up. Furthermore, Thailand could consider introducing time accounts or consider incorporating them into existing learning platforms such as the National Credit Bank System (NCBS) and promote the uptake of existing training leave policies and improve their effectiveness.

Recommendation 4: Increasing motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives

Increasing motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives can help overcome attitudinal barriers and foster a culture of lifelong learning. To this end, Thailand could launch a nation-wide campaign to raise awareness about the value of lifelong learning. Furthermore, introducing financial incentives – such as personal income tax deductions – could encourage individuals to pursue training, while payback clauses could help ensure returns on training investments made by employers and the government. To further empower adults to take ownership of their learning, Thailand could also explore individual learning schemes, such as training vouchers or learning accounts.

Opportunity 3: Increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups

It is important to provide additional, targeted support to disadvantaged groups in Thailand to ensure their full participation in adult learning and enable them to benefit from its outcomes. For groups such as informal economy workers, low-skilled and low-income adults, those from cultural minorities, and adults with disabilities, adult learning can help make up for limited educational opportunities earlier in life, support the development of skills needed in a changing labour market, and improve employment prospects. See Table 1.6 for the recommendations and specific actions for increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups.

Table 1.6. Recommendations for increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 3: Increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups	
Recommendation 5: Improving access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers	5.1. Introduce a targeted subsidy scheme to support training for workers in sectors with high rates of informal employment. 5.2. Implement targeted outreach campaigns to raise awareness among informal workers about available adult learning opportunities and their benefits.
Recommendation 6: Expanding access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches	6.1. Expand access to adult learning among individuals in remote areas through inclusive online programmes. 6.2. Provide adults in rural areas with connectivity support and digital literacy training. 6.3. Strengthen existing local community structures (e.g. local administration organisations [LAOs], community learning centres [CLCs] and Non-formal and Informal Education Centres [NFEs]) to increase access to adult learning.

Note: Full descriptions of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Chapter 3 and Annex 1.B.

Recommendation 5: Improving access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers

Improving access to adult learning opportunities for informal workers is a pressing priority in Thailand, where informality remains widespread across many sectors. Adult learning can equip informal workers with the skills needed to adapt to a rapidly evolving labour market and support their transition into formal employment. To this end, Thailand could introduce targeted subsidies to support training in sectors with high levels of informality and implement outreach campaigns to raise awareness among informal workers about available learning opportunities and their benefits.

Recommendation 6: Expanding access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches

Expanding access to adult learning for disadvantaged groups through online and community-based approaches can boost participation among those who need it most. Greater access can help individuals realise their potential, improve labour market outcomes, and promote equity and social cohesion. A key strategy to expand access for disadvantaged groups is to increase online learning options, complemented by connectivity support and digital literacy training in rural areas. Furthermore, increased funding and recognition for local structures – such as LAOs, community learning centres (CLCs), and Non-formal and Informal Education Centres (NFEs) – can help strengthen community-based approaches to reach disadvantaged adult learners more effectively.

Recommendations for priority area 3 – Strengthening the governance of the skills system (Chapter 4)

Strengthening governance is essential to building a responsive and adaptive skills system. Given the cross-sectoral nature of skills policies, their effectiveness depends on effective co-ordination of government efforts, meaningful engagement with non-governmental stakeholders, and the integration of comprehensive skills information systems. Four opportunities to strengthen the governance of the skills system were selected based on input from the literature, desk research, a policy questionnaire and discussions in virtual workshops.

Opportunity 1: Enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy

Strategic capacity, in the context of this report, refers to a country's ability to set high-level goals and priorities for its skills system, and translate them into effective actions to achieve maximum impact. Drawing on insights from international best practices, Thailand could further strengthen its strategic capacity for effectively developing and implementing skills policy. In particular, Thailand should design a national strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy – building on findings of this OECD Skills Strategy for Thailand – and ensuring the effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies. See Table 1.7 for the recommendations and specific actions for enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy.

Table 1.7. Recommendations for enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 1: Enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy	
Recommendation 1: Designing a national strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy building on the OECD Skills Strategy for Thailand	1.1. Adopt a more integrated approach to skills policy by either developing a single national skills strategy or strengthening the alignment of existing strategies 1.2. Establish a formal mandate for the national skills strategy with clearly defined roles and responsibilities 1.3. Ground the strategy in robust evidence and analysis
Recommendation 2: Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies	2.1. Secure a champion(s) that can promote broad awareness and support for the strategy(s) 2.2. Establish strong implementation practices that ensure effective achievement of strategic goals 2.3. Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the strategy's implementation

Note: Full descriptions of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Chapter 4 and Annex 1.B.

Recommendation 1: Developing a skills strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy

Developing a skills strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy is important for Thailand to address various challenges. The fragmentation of skills policy across multiple strategic documents risks creating gaps, overlaps, and conflicting objectives. Additionally, there is a lack of clearly assigned roles and responsibilities, which hinders the practical implementation of strategic objectives. To this end, Thailand could adopt a more integrated approach to skills policy by either developing a single national skills strategy or strengthening the alignment of existing strategies. Furthermore, Thailand could establish a formal mandate for the national skills strategy with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and ensure the strategy is grounded in robust evidence and analysis.

Recommendation 2: Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies

Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies is important for Thailand to achieve its ambitious goals, aligning the implementation with lessons from international best practices. To this end, Thailand could secure a champion(s) that can promote broad awareness and support for the strategy(s). Moreover, Thailand could establish strong implementation practices that ensure effective achievement of strategic goals and establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the strategy's implementation.

Opportunity 2: Fostering a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making

Establishing mechanisms to facilitate ongoing collaboration and co-ordination among governmental entities is crucial to ensure the long-term responsiveness and effectiveness of the country's skills system. In this context, it is important to ensure both horizontal co-ordination – i.e. between different governmental departments and agencies – and vertical co-ordination – i.e. between different levels of government, such as national and subnational levels. See Table 1.8 for the recommendations and specific actions for fostering a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making.

Table 1.8. Recommendations for fostering a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 2: Fostering a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making	
Recommendation 3: Strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination among government ministries and agencies	3.1. Establish a dedicated inter-ministerial co-ordination body for skills policy 3.2. Strengthen co-ordination bodies for skills policy, including newly established ones, in line with international best practice 3.3. Leverage informal co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms to better support a whole-of-government approach to skills
Recommendation 4: Strengthening vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels	4.1. Strengthen subnational skills policy capacity through pilot programmes, direct engagement, and targeted support 4.2. Establish provincial skills development co-ordinators and a collaborative network to foster collaboration and peer learning across LAOs 4.3. Amplify the voice of subnational authorities in national skills policy discussions through the network of provincial skills development co-ordinators

Note: Full descriptions of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Chapter 4 and Annex 1.B.

Recommendation 3: Strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination among government ministries and agencies

Strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination among government ministries and agencies is important since responsibilities for skills policies are shared across multiple ministries and agencies. Effective co-ordination through strong formal and informal mechanisms is crucial to enhance ongoing alignment of goals and activities, addressing any gaps, overlaps, and fostering synergies. To this end, to

strengthen and complement existing co-ordination bodies – such as the Education Council and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Committee – Thailand could establish a dedicated inter-ministerial co-ordination body for skills policy and ensure that it is established in line with international best practice. Moreover, Thailand could leverage informal co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms to better support a whole-of-government approach to skills.

Recommendation 4: Strengthening vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels

Strengthening vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels is crucial for Thailand because of the important role that subnational authorities and ministerial offices play in the skills system. To this end, Thailand could strengthen subnational skills policy capacity through pilot programmes, direct engagement, and targeted support. Furthermore, Thailand could identify provincial skills development co-ordinators and establish a collaborative network to foster collaboration and peer learning across LAOs. The voice of subnational authorities could also be amplified in national skills policy discussions through the network of provincial skills development co-ordinators.

Opportunity 3: Strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy making

Strengthening engagement with non-governmental stakeholders, such as employers, unions, and training providers, is essential for enhancing the governance of Thailand's skills system. Their expertise and diverse perspectives help to ensure that skills policies are responsive to both societal and economic objectives, fostering more effective and inclusive policy development. See Table 1.9 for the recommendations and specific actions for strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy making.

Table 1.9. Recommendations for strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy making

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 3: Strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy making	
Recommendation 5: Strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement	5.1. Strengthen the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement bodies 5.2. Strengthen and co-ordinate sectoral stakeholder engagement mechanisms through existing and emerging structures 5.3. Enhance stakeholder engagement by adopting additional tools and strengthening capacity-building efforts
Recommendation 6: Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach stakeholders	6.1. Diversify engagement methods to make participation accessible to hard-to-reach groups 6.2. Leverage provincial and local authorities to support localised engagement 6.3. Support and strengthen representative advisory bodies and umbrella organisations

Note: Full descriptions of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Chapter 4 and Annex 1.B.

Recommendation 5: Strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement

Strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement is key for effective governance of the skills system in Thailand. Stakeholders offer valuable expertise and diverse perspectives that are crucial for shaping skills policies that align with both societal and economic objectives. While Thailand has established methods for stakeholder engagement, such as dedicated bodies and legal frameworks, more could be done to refine and expand these efforts. To this end, Thailand could strengthen the effectiveness of existing stakeholder engagement bodies and further improve sectoral stakeholder engagement mechanisms through existing and emerging structures. Additionally, Thailand could enhance stakeholder engagement by adopting additional tools and strengthening capacity-building efforts.

Recommendation 6: Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach non-governmental stakeholders

Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach non-governmental stakeholders – including SMEs, minority communities, civil society organisations (CSOs), and actors in the informal economy – is important for enhancing the governance of the skills system. These actors have an important stake in skills policy discussions but may be under-represented in existing fora. To this end, Thailand could diversify engagement methods to make participation accessible to hard-to-reach groups. Furthermore, Thailand could leverage provincial and local authorities to support localised engagement and support and strengthen representative advisory bodies and umbrella organisations.

Opportunity 4: Improving skills information systems

Enhancing the availability and effective use of skills information is essential for strengthening the governance of Thailand's skills system. High-quality data is crucial for accurately assessing current skills needs, anticipating future needs, formulating evidence-based policies, and assessing the impacts of these policies. See Table 1.10 for the recommendations and specific actions for improving skills information systems.

Table 1.10. Recommendations for improving skills information systems

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 4: Improving skills information systems	
Recommendation 7: Improving the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy	7.1 Develop a comprehensive skills data framework, based on a robust assessment of user needs
	7.2 Align data collection standards and improve technical infrastructure, building on existing governmental data initiatives
	7.3 Strengthen co-ordination in skills data collection by establishing a cross-ministerial forum
Recommendation 8: Enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services to improve accessibility and meet diverse user needs	8.1 Establish a comprehensive and integrated online platform for skills information
	8.2 Strengthen co-ordination and collaboration across the guidance system
	8.3 Enhance the capacity and inclusivity of in-person guidance services

Note: Full descriptions of the recommendations and specific actions can be found in Chapter 4 and Annex 1.B.

Recommendation 7: Improving the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy

Improving the collection and use of skills data to inform policy should be a priority for Thailand. This will be crucial for designing effective, evidence-based skills policies and guiding education, training, and career choices. Achieving this requires collaboration to identify data needs and implement technologies that support data sharing and utilisation. To this end, Thailand could develop a comprehensive skills data framework, based on an assessment of user needs, and align data collection standards while enhancing technical infrastructure, building on existing governmental initiatives. Additionally, Thailand could strengthen co-ordination in skills data collection by establishing a cross-ministerial forum.

Recommendation 8: Enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services

Enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services is important to improve accessibility and meet diverse user needs. Providing accessible and actionable skills information empowers individuals to make informed choices that align with their goals and abilities, while also enabling policy makers and stakeholders to design evidence-based policies that respond to current and future

labour market needs. This information can be delivered through in-person guidance, as well as online portals and digital services that connect users to relevant opportunities. To improve skills information and guidance services, Thailand could establish a comprehensive and integrated online platform for skills information. Moreover, it could strengthen co-ordination and collaboration across the guidance system, as well as enhance the capacity and inclusivity of in-person guidance services.

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Notes

¹ The OECD Skills Strategy 2019 (2019^[1]) identifies a broad range of skills, including: i) foundational skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy and digital literacy); ii) transversal cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (e.g. critical thinking, complex problem solving and self-regulation); iii) social and emotional skills (e.g. responsibility, empathy and self-efficacy); and iv) professional, technical and specialised knowledge and skills needed to meet the demands of specific occupations.

² As estimated using a sample of over 60 countries, including all ASEAN countries, as well as developed countries such as the United States.

Annex 1.A. Phases of the OECD Skills Strategy Thailand project

The phases of the OECD Skills Strategy Thailand project

The OECD Skills Strategy Thailand project consisted of several phases: Scoping and assessment; recommendations; and publication and launch.

Scoping and assessment phase

The objective of the scoping phase was to introduce the project to a broad group of government representatives and stakeholders in Thailand, and to discuss with them the overarching priority areas, key goals, timelines and outputs.

A virtual working group meeting was organised for the OECD Skills Strategy project in September 2023. The meeting convened government officials and senior officials from several relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MHESI), and the Ministry of Labour (MOL), among others, as well as key government agencies, such as the Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) and the Office of the Education Council (OEC). The objective of the seminar was to present a high-level assessment of the performance of the skills system in Thailand using the OECD Skills Strategy dashboard and other research to help focus discussions on policy priorities, and to agree on the priority areas to be covered.

The OECD also developed a questionnaire to identify relevant stakeholders, literature, statistics, policies, and practices, which was completed by the group of experts who were identified for the project. Responses to this questionnaire, along with desk-based research, informed the assessment and recommendations as presented during the recommendation phase.

Recommendations phase

The objective of the recommendations phase was to test recommendations with government officials and stakeholders, identify good practices, and develop final recommendations.

Virtual workshops on the recommendations and their implementation were organised in September 2024. The workshops included multiple discussion sessions that convened government officials and stakeholders to discuss and refine a draft set of recommendations identified for Thailand, identify key considerations for implementation, and discuss good practices in Thailand and elsewhere. The workshops also helped raise awareness and visibility of the project and the overarching priority areas, facilitate cross-sectoral dialogue on potential solutions, and provide insights for the final report.

Publication and launch

In this phase, the final report was published and findings of the project were disseminated.

A public event to launch the report was held to raise public awareness and develop a broad base of support for future action in improving the skills system in Thailand.

Annex 1.B. OECD Skills Strategy Thailand: Overview of recommendations and specific actions

This annex presents the OECD's recommendations for Thailand arising from this project. These recommendations and the analysis, evidence and international examples that support them can be found in Chapters 2-4 of the full report.

As described above, further work is required by Thai stakeholders to sequence and prioritise the implementation of these recommendations. In some cases, additional work will be needed to determine how the recommendations can best be implemented. Thai stakeholders will need to continue their fruitful collaboration to identify who will have leadership and responsibility for design and implementation of prioritised actions. The OECD stands ready to support Thailand with these next steps.

Priority 1: Strengthening the skills of youth in initial education (Chapter 2)

Opportunity 1: Increasing the quality and relevance of initial education

Annex Table 1.B.1. Detailed recommendations for increasing the quality and relevance of initial education

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 1: Increasing the quality and relevance of initial education	
Recommendation 1: Strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education	1.1. Adapt the curricula in initial education based on the new framework for core competencies and with regular review periods. As the current curriculum for initial education has remained unchanged for nearly two decades, Thailand should move forward with introducing it in schools to improve the relevance of the education system, although not without ensuring that adequate support (e.g. guidelines, training for school personnel, development of new teaching materials) is provided for proper implementation. Thailand must ensure that the new curriculum is reviewed regularly and as planned (i.e. every five to seven years as reported by stakeholders), or as deemed necessary in between designated review periods. 1.2. Actively involve key stakeholders such as teachers in the curriculum reform process. As the new curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated, teachers should be involved in the process in order to ensure that their input is reflected in the curriculum's content and that there is adequate buy-in to ensure the effective implementation. This could be done through establishing systematic consultation mechanisms with teachers (e.g. surveys distributed to schools), or ensuring they have representation in governance bodies responsible for curriculum reform (e.g. working groups). 1.3. Provide adequate training and support to teachers and educational staff to implement the new curriculum. To address previous concerns among teachers and educational staff that they are unprepared to implement a new curriculum, training must be allotted in order to fully explain the contents of the new curriculum and the new roles that teachers are expected to play. Adequate time for training must also be accounted for in order to help teachers grow accustomed to the changes, as well as to update their pedagogical skills and provide them with the necessary resources and classroom management techniques to help them adapt to the new curriculum. Thailand may consider implementing a pilot phase in selected schools to test the effectiveness of the new curriculum before introducing it at full scale across the country.
Recommendation 2: Improving relevance of TVET offers through high-quality work-based learning opportunities	2.1. Leverage the large number of MSMEs in Thailand to increase the supply of work-based learning opportunities. Thailand should tap on the potential of millions of MSMEs in the country to provide more high-quality work-based placements for TVET graduates. Relevant ministries and agencies, such as the Office of the Vocational Education Commission and the Office of SMEs Promotion, should collaborate to inform them about the benefits of work-based learning opportunities such as apprenticeships, raise awareness about available

Recommendations	Specific actions
	government support measures for work placements (e.g. Learn to Earn Programme, New Breed Graduate Programme, CWIE, STEMPlus Platform), identify the recruitment needs of enterprises (e.g. qualifications, skills and competencies, number of students sought), and match these with potential trainees and apprentices enrolled in dual TVET programmes. 2.2. Build training networks to help MSMEs gain access to high-quality equipment and learning opportunities for TVET offers. Thailand may work with enterprises to establish company training networks in order to fill the gaps in the capacity of MSMEs to offer high-quality vocational training. Through such networks, apprentices assigned to MSMEs, especially those in Thailand's rural areas, can have access to better facilities and equipment in partner companies, as well as gain additional skills and expertise that small companies cannot always singlehandedly provide. Additionally, this arrangement can help provide apprentices with a wider range of work-based learning opportunities, enabling them to develop a more comprehensive set of skills. 2.3. Use SAA exercises more systematically to determine the content of work-based learning opportunities. As discussed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4, the supply of work-based learning opportunities in Thailand must be underpinned by reliable and timely data about which skills are needed in the labour market. SAA exercises must be conducted by both government and private sector actors alike, and subsequently used by TVET providers and training companies to inform the set of skills to be developed among trainees and apprentices.

Opportunity 2: Promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth

Annex Table 1.B.2. Detailed recommendations for promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 2: Promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth	
Recommendation 3: Promoting informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools	3.1. Provide incentives for guidance counsellors to obtain formal qualifications, as well as competitive benefits and support for practicing professionals. Thailand can increase the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors by introducing financial incentives (e.g. scholarships, study leaves) to encourage prospective students to take up guidance counselling studies and obtain formal qualifications that certify that they have the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies to provide career guidance services. In addition, Thailand can raise the profile of guidance counselling as a profession by providing competitive working conditions to guidance counsellors. This could be done by putting policies in place to ensure that school administrators assign career counselling posts to individuals with formal qualifications, provide continuous professional development opportunities (e.g. networking, training on newest career guidance tools and techniques), and clear pathways for career advancement. 3.2. Provide career guidance training to teachers. As Thailand works over the long-term to fill the shortage of qualified career guidance counsellors, the country can adopt the interim measure of training teachers on the provision of career guidance services. OVEC, which is already active in training teachers in this area through its Counselling Service Unit, must reinforce its efforts to provide teachers, especially those found in disadvantaged schools (e.g. in rural areas), with basic career guidance skills, up-to-date knowledge of labour markets, and the latest effective practices in the career guidance profession. Teachers must also be trained to maintain Thailand's multiple intelligences approach in the provision of career advice.
Recommendation 4: Increasing access to high-quality higher education programmes	4.1. Support HEIs in implementing more efficient and digitalised quality assurance processes. To reduce the bureaucratic burden associated with conducting internal quality assurance for all higher education programmes, including both in-person and online offerings, Thailand should consider introducing a digital platform to streamline and standardise the process. Such a platform could be designed to reduce the need for extensive paperwork, which is currently a significant barrier to HEIs' compliance with internal QA requirements. The platform could incorporate self-assessment indicators, as outlined in the Manual for Internal Quality Assurance for Higher Education Institutions into an easily accessible and user-friendly template for HEIs to complete. Additionally, the platform could include functionality for submitting accreditation documents, further simplifying the reporting process for institutions. 4.2. Establish robust internal and external quality assurance mechanisms specifically tailored for online and digital higher education programmes. These criteria should include elements such as effective course design for digital delivery, provision of training for staff in digital methods, measures to ensure student identity verification and educational integrity, safeguards for data protection and personal privacy, and the availability of adequate infrastructure and technical support. These criteria must be included in internal quality assurance mechanisms, such as HEIs' self-assessments conducted via the digital platform (see Recommendation 4.1). Additionally, they should also be included in external quality assurance mechanisms, namely as criteria for external assessments overseen by ONESQA and for the awarding of quality labels to deserving digital higher education programmes.

Recommendations	Specific actions
	4.3. Support HEIs in offering a greater number of online courses and distance learning modalities. Thailand should encourage HEIs to offer online versions of their existing course offerings or develop new online programmes in priority areas, that could lead to formal qualifications. These efforts could build on existing good practices, such as the Thai MOOC platform. Relevant authorities in Thailand should actively review the content, quality and relevance of new online higher education courses prior to their official launch. This process would ensure that courses are supported by effective educational plans and are designed to achieve positive learning outcomes for graduates. 4.4. Support educators in HEIs to deliver online learning through tailored pedagogical practices and curricula. HEIs that offer online programmes should ensure that educators are well-equipped with the necessary digital pedagogical skills. This can be achieved by developing and disseminating basic guidelines on how to deliver online courses and use digital education technologies, communicate with students through digital platforms, assess students' performance in online learning settings, and troubleshoot common technical issues. In addition, Thailand could provide more comprehensive training on specific software or digital learning tools, as well as specialised topics such as the use of artificial intelligence in education. To complement these training initiatives, educators should also have opportunities to share knowledge and exchange best practices with their peers. Such efforts would help to build a collaborative learning culture and further strengthen educators' capacity to deliver high-quality online education.

Opportunity 3: Reducing inequalities in educational outcomes

Annex Table 1.B.3. Detailed recommendations for reducing inequalities in educational outcomes

Recommendations	Specific actions
	Opportunity 3: Reducing inequalities in educational outcomes
Recommendation 5: Bridging regional gaps in educational outcomes through enhanced access to high-quality teaching	5.1. Provide specialised training teachers on multi-grade teaching methodologies as an interim solution to address teacher shortages in rural areas. The Ministry of Education should collaborate with teacher training institutions to provide training, including pre-service training, on effective practices for multi-grade classrooms. Considering the importance of multi-grade teaching in mitigating teacher shortages, particularly in disadvantaged rural areas, it is essential to equip teachers with the necessary pedagogical skills and knowledge for multi-grade teaching, tailored to different education levels and subject areas. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education should ensure that teachers in rural areas have access to continuous professional development opportunities on multi-grade teaching, enabling them to stay updated with the latest pedagogical practices. 5.2. Introduce incentives to attract and retain teachers and school administrative staff in rural areas. The Ministry of Education should consider introducing a package of incentives to attract and retain teachers in rural schools. These incentives could include higher salaries or bonuses, annual retention benefits, and additional leave days for personal or professional development. Support for relocation and living costs should also be provided, such as relocation assistance, housing subsidies, and well-being programmes. To maximise the impact of these measures, the Ministry of Education should develop targeted awareness-raising materials, such as video explainers and brochures, to raise awareness of the advantages and opportunities of teaching in rural schools. 5.3. Strengthen the use of digital technologies to connect qualified teachers with rural schools. Build on its progress in expanding high-speed internet access to villages, Thailand should expand access to virtual learning opportunities. This could include establishing a digital platform that rural schools can join free of charge to connect with teachers across the country – and potentially from abroad – to offer joint classes. Such a platform would enable rural students to benefit from the expertise of highly qualified teachers, who are often concentrated in urban areas. Additionally, the platform could feature a digital library where teachers can upload lesson plans and learning materials, as well as a real-time communication function to facilitate the exchange of best practices and collaborative problem-solving among educators.
Recommendation 6: Supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives	6.1. Encourage greater parental involvement in their children's schooling. Thailand should explicitly recognise the crucial role parents play in their children's academic success, even when they experience socio-economic disadvantages. This could be achieved by adopting an official law, policy or strategy specifically focused on encouraging parental involvement in education. Such measures would raise the issue's visibility as a political priority and allocate resources for initiatives to support this goal, such as training school personnel to better engage with parents or developing informational materials targeted towards parents themselves. 6.2. Implement awareness raising initiatives targeted specifically to disadvantaged groups to inform them about skills development opportunities. Thailand should reach out to disadvantaged groups, such as low-income students and their parents (especially those at risk of dropping out), in order to inform them about the benefits of education, available learning offers, and the financial support measures that they can avail of. Thailand can employ cost-effective strategies to raise awareness, such as incorporating short promotional

Recommendations	Specific actions
	videos into children's learning activities (see Peru in Box 2.7) or engaging disadvantaged groups through partnerships with community-based organisations that serve and work with them. 6.3. Encourage greater parental involvement in their children's schooling. Thailand should explicitly recognise the crucial role parents play in their children's academic success, even when they experience socio-economic disadvantages. This could be achieved by adopting an official law, policy or strategy specifically focused on encouraging parental involvement in education. Such measures would raise the issue's visibility as a political priority and allocate resources for initiatives to support this goal, such as training school personnel to better engage with parents or developing informational materials targeted towards parents themselves. 6.4. Implement awareness raising initiatives targeted specifically to disadvantaged groups to inform them about skills development opportunities. Thailand should reach out to disadvantaged groups, such as low-income students and their parents (especially those at risk of dropping out), in order to inform them about the benefits of education, available learning offers, and the financial support measures that they can avail of. Thailand can employ cost-effective strategies to raise awareness, such as incorporating short promotional videos into children's learning activities (see Peru in Box 2.7) or engaging disadvantaged groups through partnerships with community-based organisations that serve and work with them.

Priority 2: Fostering greater participation in adult learning (Chapter 3)

Opportunity 1: Improving the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities

Annex Table 1.B.4. Detailed recommendations for improving the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 1: Improving the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities	
1. Improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for formal and non-formal adult learning	1.1. Expand internal and external quality assurance mechanisms to include adult learning providers currently excluded from existing regulations. Thailand should make a deliberate effort to co-ordinate with other types of adult learning providers beyond HEIs and VET institutes to provide them with guidance on how to properly comply with quality assurance requirements. These include LAOs, CLCs, NFEs, schools for the elderly, and private companies. OHEC should work with these adult learning providers to set up internal quality assurance mechanisms, as well as extend to them the requirement to submit self-assessment reports and undergo audit every three years. Similarly, Thailand should also include these providers in their list of institutions that will undergo external quality assurance assessments every five years. 1.2. Strengthen the capacity of adult learning providers to conduct self-evaluations and make improvements based on results. Thailand should collaborate with adult learning providers to enable them to conduct self-assessments, including through the provision of clear, easy to understand guidelines. Such guidelines may explain why such internal quality assurance mechanisms are needed, what aspects of their functioning are being assessed (e.g. relevance, pedagogical practices, administration, graduate outcomes), how to conduct the self-assessment, how often, and by whom (e.g. administrators, teaching personnel, students). The guidelines should be easily accessible, and a dedicated support team from relevant government agencies must be available to help adult learning providers in more detail. 1.3. Introduce quality assurance labels for adult learning providers. ONESQA should build on its actual external quality assurance mechanisms and introduce a label or logo for adult learning providers who demonstrate exceptional performance based on site visits, evaluation reports, and monitoring data. Additional criteria may also be added, such as programmes' alignment with the National Qualifications Framework. Thailand should make sure that the ONESQA-offered label or logo is known among adult learning providers and prospective students as the official government-approved quality assurance label in Thailand in order to uphold its value as a quality assurance instrument.
2. Steering adult learning provision and educational choices towards areas of skills shortage	2.1. Use skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) tools more systematically to determine labour market needs. In addition to the employer and employee surveys conducted by the Department of Skills Development, Thailand should adopt additional SAA tools that are not yet utilised systematically. These tools could include quantitative models, qualitative methods, and sectoral, occupational, and regional studies. Employing a wide range of SAA tools would enable Thailand to generate more comprehensive, timely and representative data about the supply and demand of skills in its labour market. The systematic use of these SAA tools will require Thailand to invest in improvements in its skills information system, as well as hire technical experts capable of managing the design, implementation, and analysis of SAA exercises.

Recommendations	Specific actions
	2.2. Disseminate information about skills shortages by introducing a government-approved list of critical skills and occupations. Thailand could use results from SAA exercises to generate a list of skills and occupations that are critical to the country's labour market. This would help to co-ordinate training offers from various learning providers facilitate the achievement of objectives in national development plans. The list could be made available to the public and to relevant stakeholders, including adult learning providers and employers by publishing it through a credible and easily accessible channel, such as the Ministry of Labour or the Ministry of Education's official website. 2.3. Introduce financial incentives to encourage employers and adult learning providers to offer opportunities in high-demand areas, and support learners in making education and training choices aligned with labour market needs. To ensure that skills and labour market information derived from SAA exercises is effectively utilised, Thailand could introduce financial incentives, such as subsidies, to encourage employers to offer adult learning opportunities in relevant skilling areas. To enhance the strategic impact of these incentives, subsidy levels could be adjusted based on how critical and strategic the government deems the skills or occupations relative to labour market's needs and national development objectives. In addition to enterprises already supported by the Thailand Plus Package, such incentives should also be extended to LAOs, CLCs and NFEs, as these organisations play an important role in delivering adult learning programmes through localised and community-based approaches. Simultaneously, financial incentives for individuals, such as scholarships or grants, may also encourage adult learners to pursue training in strategic fields of study.

Opportunity 2: Reducing barriers to participation in adult learning opportunities

Annex Table 1.B.5. Detailed recommendations for reducing barriers to participation in adult learning opportunities

Recommendations	Specific actions
	Opportunity 2: Reducing barriers to participation in adult learning opportunities
3. Addressing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities	3.1. Raise awareness about existing flexible adult learning opportunities, including digital formats, to increase their take-up. Thailand could more actively promote participation in flexible, short-term adult learning opportunities that are offered through existing initiatives, such as the Thai MOOC platform. This could be done through collaborating with employers and other relevant stakeholders to disseminate information about the platform, or to conduct information campaigns that could raise awareness among the general public. Such awareness raising initiatives must take place along with broader efforts to expand access to the Thai MOOC platform by improving internet connectivity and improving the level of digital literacy among Thai adults, especially those from disadvantaged groups (see Recommendation 6). 3.2. Introduce time accounts or consider incorporating them into existing learning platforms such as the NCBS. Thailand could enable employees to accumulate training hours over time and store them into a time saving account, either as a standalone initiative or integrated into existing systems such as the NCBS. This would be a strategic and relevant option to build time credits for adult learning, given that Thai workers spend a greater number of hours working in comparison to the global average. Particular attention must be paid to disadvantaged workers, such as workers with low levels of skills and workers in the informal economy, such as by entitling them to more training hours that can be credited into the time account. 3.3. Promote the uptake of existing training leave policies and improve their effectiveness. Thailand should work with enterprises to improve the current level of take-up of the training leave policy, by evaluating its effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. Enterprises may be surveyed to determine what share of their employees are aware of the training leave and use it, the average duration of the training leave, and the employment outcomes (e.g. was able to use new knowledge and skills in the workplace, received a promotion) of those who have participated in training. Based on the results, Thailand should then work with enterprises and, their employees to address policy gaps, raise awareness about the policy changes, and encourage uptake of the training leave.
4. Increasing motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives	4.1. Conduct a nation-wide campaign to raise awareness about the importance of a lifelong approach to learning. Thailand should launch a nation-wide campaign to raise awareness about the available learning opportunities in the country, the benefits of participating in them during adulthood and the elderly years, and available government support to overcome time and cost barriers. The campaign should aim to be cost-effective by using communication channels that are widely used in Thailand (e.g. social media, television). It is important to tailor key messages to the Thai context and reflect local labour market conditions in order to more effectively connect with the public, especially disadvantaged groups and elderly learners. To ensure maximum reach, especially at the local level and among disadvantaged groups, the campaign can be implemented in partnership with structures that work directly with them, such as LAOs, CLCs, NFEs, and schools for the elderly.

Recommendations	Specific actions
	4.2. Introduce a financial incentive, such as personal income tax deductions, to motivate individuals to pursue training. Thailand should build on its existing tax infrastructure to introduce personal income tax deductions for training costs, including tuition fees, costs for training materials, and travel and accommodation. Guidance on how to claim such personal income tax deductions should also be provided once the incentive is introduced in order to ensure awareness and effective take-up among taxpayers. This could be done in partnership with enterprises, who may raise awareness directly among their employees. 4.3. Introduce payback clauses to ensure that investments in training by enterprises and the government can lead to positive returns. Thailand could implement a payback clause policy through legislation, either by introducing a new law or amending the Labour Code. This would provide a legal framework for employers and employees to establish contractual agreements regarding training investments, as well as lay out key principles to guide the use of payback clauses and ensure they are applied fairly and effectively. These principles may include the minimum amount of training costs (or the duration of training) eligible for a refund from the employer in case of termination, the maximum length of the retention period, types of employees covered, and the eligible reasons for which employers can request for a refund of their expenditure (e.g. when employees leave voluntarily or are dismissed for misbehaviour). 4.4. Explore the introduction of individual learning schemes (e.g. training vouchers, learning accounts) to encourage adults to take greater responsibility for their lifelong learning. Thailand could explore the introduction of initiatives such as personal learning accounts in order to encourage individuals to participate in training regardless of their employment status. The learning account may help overcome time barriers if eligible courses are asynchronous and offered on line (see Recommendation 3) and may also address cost barriers through the provision of learning credits.

Opportunity 3: Increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups

Annex Table 1.B.6. Detailed recommendations for increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 3: Increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups	
5. Improving access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers	5.1. Introduce a targeted subsidy scheme to support training for workers in sectors with high rates of informal employment. Thailand should introduce financial incentives, such as subsidies, to support informal workers in managing the costs of education and training while compensating for potential income lost during their participation in training. This incentive could be modelled after Malaysia's Bina Kerjaya Programme for the Informal Sector. The subsidy should prioritise occupational sectors where informal employment is most prevalent in Thailand, namely as agriculture and fishing, as well as services and retail, among others. Additionally, the scheme should take educational attainment into consideration, targeting informal workers who have completed lower levels of education and who are thus more likely to benefit from adult learning opportunities. 5.2. Implement targeted outreach campaigns to raise awareness among informal workers about available adult learning opportunities and their benefits. Thailand should partner with industry associations and civil society groups that work directly with informal workers, as well as LAOs, CLCs, and NFES, to raise awareness about adult learning. More specifically, the campaign should explain in layman's terms key information that could help informal workers build their own initiative to participate in training. This includes the global megatrends shaping labour markets, the new and emerging skills relevant to their area of work, the benefits of participating in adult learning, available training opportunities, and where to access them
6. Expanding access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches	6.1. Expand access to adult learning among individuals in remote areas through inclusive online programmes. Thailand should promote participation among individuals in remote areas in courses available in existing platforms, such as Thai MOOC, where most learning offers are also inexpensive, if not free. This entails raising awareness about the existence of the platform among local communities and promoting its increased use, possibly in partnership with actors who are already currently active in the provision of non-formal learning among disadvantaged groups (e.g. Equitable Education Fund, the Department of Skills Development, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board), as well as local actors who are responsible for providing adult learning at the local level (e.g. LAOs, CLCs, NFES). 6.2. Provide adults in rural areas with connectivity support and digital literacy training. Thailand should ensure that disadvantaged groups in rural areas, especially women, are provided with the ICT tools such as mobile phones and computers, which they would need to connect to the Internet and access online learning platforms. Such tools must be tailored to their needs (e.g. with language options) in order to ensure inclusivity. In addition to providing them with the tools needed to access online programmes, disadvantaged adults should be provided with digital skills training that would allow them to navigate through online learning

Recommendations	Specific actions
	platforms, follow their courses with ease, accomplish digital tasks independently, and tailor the course according to their learning preferences and pace.
	6.3. Strengthen existing local community structures (e.g. LAOs, CLCs, NFEs) to increase access to adult learning. Thailand should continue to support the implementation of community-based adult learning opportunities that are offered by local education structures such as LAOs, CLCs and NFEs. By formally recognising community-based approaches at the political and strategic level as essential parts of the education system (e.g. through a unified strategy or separate document, as discussed in Priority 1 in Chapter 4), Thailand can increase the financial and human resources dedicated to these local education structures, set minimum standards for quality and relevance, and link community-based learning offers to broader national development goals.

Recommendations for priority area 3 – Strengthening the governance of the skills system (Chapter 4)

Opportunity 1: Enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy

Annex Table 1.B.7. Detailed recommendations for enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 1: Enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy	
Recommendation 1: Designing a national strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy building on the OECD Skills Strategy for Thailand	1.1. Adopt a more integrated approach to skills policy by either developing a single national skills strategy or strengthening the alignment of existing strategies. Thailand could strengthen its skills strategy by adopting a cohesive approach that fosters collaboration among all relevant actors. One option is to create a single national skills strategy, collaboratively developed by all relevant government ministries and agencies, as well as stakeholders, which would address a broad range of skills policy challenges. Alternatively, Thailand could retain its decentralised approach but strengthen alignment across related strategies. Engaging officials across ministries, sub-national governments, employers, training providers, and civil society organisations early in the development process ensures that strategies are well-targeted, align with implementation mechanisms, and foster long-term stakeholder commitment. Existing structures such as the Skills Development Promotion Committee and the Education Council can support this collaborative process, which is essential for creating strategies that are inclusive, comprehensive, and sustainable. 1.2. Establish a formal mandate for the national skills strategy with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. To ensure alignment and accountability, Thailand's skills strategy should include a formalised mandate that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of ministries and agencies at the strategic level. By assigning responsibilities broadly, the strategy can reduce duplication, address gaps, and provide clarity for implementation planning. Backing the strategy with legislation or government acts strengthens its legitimacy and ensures adequate resources and administrative capacity for its success. A clear mandate also supports long-term sustainability by defining the strategy's objectives, providing provisions for oversight and monitoring, and enabling ministries and agencies to work toward shared goals with well-defined accountability. 1.3. Ground the strategy in robust evidence and analysis. A skills strategy grounded in robust evidence is critical for identifying priorities and designing effective policies. Quantitative data on skills outcomes, shortages, mismatches, and labour market trends, alongside qualitative input from experts and stakeholders, provides a comprehensive understanding of the skills system's strengths and gaps. In Thailand, this approach is particularly important for addressing competing interests among ministries and stakeholders, helping to build consensus and ensuring the strategy focuses on the most pressing challenges. Evidence-based planning also aligns national objectives with local needs, ensures strategies are responsive to changing workforce demands, and generates broad support through impartial and transparent assessments.
Recommendation 2: Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies	2.1. Secure a champion(s) that can promote broad awareness and support for the strategy(s). To ensure the successful implementation of Thailand's strategic goals, it is essential to foster broad awareness and support across all levels of government and among key stakeholders in the skills system. This involves securing champions, such as senior officials within key ministries, such as the Ministers of Education or Labour, or influential figures in key bodies or agencies, like the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC). These champions can advocate for the strategy, raise awareness, and drive its objectives forward. By actively promoting the strategy's importance and aligning it with the interests of various actors, these champions can help build consensus and ensure that all relevant stakeholders are committed to its long-term success. They can also secure the strategy's mandate and support legislative or structural changes needed to implement the strategy.

Recommendations	Specific actions
	2.2. Establish strong implementation practices that ensure effective achievement of strategic goals. Effective implementation practices are crucial for translating Thailand's strategic framework into tangible outcomes, which would entail the development of formal action plans that clearly outline responsibilities, allocate resources, and timelines for implementing actions. This would help to ensure that the efforts of different governmental bodies are aligned, which is especially important for Thailand because of the complexity, overlap and fragmentation of strategic documents. It is also essential to ensure flexible and responsive management of the strategy, ensuring that it remains aligned with both national objectives and on-the-ground realities. 2.3. Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the strategy's implementation. Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is crucial for ensuring the successful implementation of Thailand's skills strategies. These mechanisms should combine quantitative and qualitative tools, such as KPIs, benchmarks, surveys, and case studies, to track progress and allow for timely adjustments. Oversight bodies like the NESDB and the Skills Development Promotion Committee could play a pivotal role in reviewing progress, holding implementing authorities accountable, and ensuring alignment with national objectives. To maintain relevance in the face of evolving skills needs, strategies should incorporate flexibility through periodic reviews and adjustments, as seen in countries like Latvia and Greece. Additionally, sufficient resources – human, financial, and institutional—must be allocated to support these processes, ensuring strategies are not only effectively monitored but also adaptable to changing conditions.

Opportunity 2: Fostering a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making

Annex Table 1.B.8. Detailed recommendations for fostering a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 2: Fostering a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making	
Recommendation 3: Strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination among government ministries and agencies	3.1. Establish a dedicated inter-ministerial co-ordination body for skills policy. Thailand could benefit from a dedicated inter-ministerial co-ordination body focused exclusively on aligning governmental efforts in the skills policy domain. This mechanism would operate independently of non-governmental stakeholders and bring together representatives from key ministries at both senior and operational levels. Its primary role would be to align overarching goals, identify key skills challenges, and uncover opportunities for institutional improvements or synergies. It could also be charged with the development and oversight of a national skills strategy. To strengthen existing co-ordination bodies, Thailand could establish dedicated co-ordination functions within each relevant ministry or agency. These functions would help to map policies, foster bilateral collaboration, align actions across institutions, and enhance participation in inter-agency co-ordination efforts. 3.2. Strengthen co-ordination bodies for skills policy, including newly established ones, in line with international best practice. To ensure the effectiveness of Thailand's existing or newly established inter-ministerial and inter-agency co-ordination bodies, Thailand can align them with lessons drawn from international best practices. This includes clearly defining the mandates, roles, and decision-making powers of these bodies to ensure that their efforts lead to tangible outcomes. Carefully curating the membership of the bodies is key, ensuring a mix of high-ranking officials to secure institutional support and technical experts who can implement decisions and provide ground-level insights. Moreover, adequate and targeted funding, alongside skilled facilitation and secretariat support, is essential for these bodies to function effectively and manage conflicting views while driving concrete results. When multiple, closely related bodies exist, it is important to ensure alignment in their activity through regular meetings and shared membership. 3.3. Leverage informal co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms to better support a whole-of-government approach to skills. In addition to formal co-ordination bodies, Thailand can enhance inter-ministerial collaboration through informal mechanisms such as joint workshops, leadership development programmes, and cross-agency seminars. These channels can help break down bureaucratic silos, facilitate knowledge sharing, and foster stronger relationships between officials across government agencies. Informal mechanisms could complement existing co-ordination structures, particularly for addressing cross-cutting skills challenges such as digital transformation, lifelong learning, and regional labour market disparities. Regular cross-ministerial workshops and targeted networking opportunities could help align policy efforts, encourage innovation, and strengthen co-operation between central and subnational authorities.
Recommendation 4: Strengthening vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels	4.1. Strengthen subnational skills policy capacity through pilot programmes, direct engagement, and targeted support. Thailand could enhance subnational skills policy capacity by implementing nationally funded pilot programmes, fostering direct engagement with Local Administrative Organisations (LAOs), and providing targeted support to underperforming regions. These programmes should be collaboratively developed with selected LAOs and then scaled up based on their demonstrated success. Particular attention should be given to underperforming and under-represented LAOs to address gaps and challenges, ensuring

Recommendations	Specific actions
	they receive the targeted support needed to improve their performance. By directly involving subnational authorities in these pilots, the programmes can facilitate active engagement in policy development, align national strategies with local needs, and build stronger local governance capacity. Furthermore, the national government should provide tailored support to ensure these efforts result in improved outcomes, particularly in regions facing persistent challenges. 4.2. Establish provincial skills development co-ordinators and a collaborative network to foster collaboration and peer learning across Local Administration Organisation (LAOs). Thailand should introduce provincial skills development co-ordinators within each province to enhance co-ordination among local stakeholders, including labour offices, education providers, and non-governmental actors. These co-ordinators would lead local skills fora in their respective regions to address skills-related challenges, align initiatives with local needs, and improve the implementation of national policies. To promote collaboration across LAOs, a network of these provincial skills development co-ordinators should be established. This network would meet regularly to share information, promote peer learning, and identify opportunities to scale up or replicate successful policies across regions. By connecting provincial skills development co-ordinators, the network would strengthen communication and knowledge sharing, thereby helping to address regional disparities, build local capacity, and facilitate the adoption of innovative approaches throughout the Thai skills system. 4.3. Amplify the voice of subnational authorities in national skills policy discussions through the network of provincial skills development co-ordinators. To ensure that the perspectives of subnational authorities are reflected in national policy making, Thailand should designate a main officer or director for the provincial skills development co-ordinators' network. This officer, potentially housed within a national agency, such as the Department of Skills Development (DSD), would serve as a liaison between the network and national authorities. Their role would be to represent subnational perspectives, advocate for local priorities, and provide input to inform national strategies. Furthermore, the network should appoint representatives to participate in national co-ordination bodies and discussions. These representatives would present a consolidated view of subnational challenges, share successful practices, and propose policy changes to address local needs. This approach would not only amplify the voice of LAOs at the national level but also strengthen vertical co-ordination and alignment between local and national skills policies.

Opportunity 3: Strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy making

Annex Table 1.B.9. Detailed recommendations for strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy making

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 3: Strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy making	
Recommendation 5: Strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement	5.1. Strengthen the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement bodies. Thailand should strengthen existing stakeholder engagement bodies, such as the Skills Development Promotion Committee and the Education Council by ensuring that membership is carefully curated to include experts with relevant expertise and a commitment to policy development. The inclusion of professionals who can effectively represent their organisations and contribute to the policy making process is crucial. Moreover, ensuring clear and transparent communication throughout the engagement process is important for fostering trust and active participation among stakeholders, who should be informed about the body's purpose, mandate, their roles within it, and the impact of their contributions. Additionally, employing a project-based approach, where short-term working groups are established to achieve specific goals, can help actively involve stakeholders in policy design and implementation, driving more effective and targeted outcomes. 5.2. Strengthen and co-ordinate sectoral stakeholder engagement mechanisms through existing and emerging structures. Building on Thailand's existing Sectoral Skills Councils (SSCs) supported by the Department of Skill Development (DSD), as well as other sectoral engagement efforts across ministries, Thailand should enhance and formalise sectoral-level stakeholder engagement mechanisms to more effectively respond to the evolving skills needs of key industries. This includes strengthening the mandate and capacity of SSCs, ensuring their sustained collaboration with training providers, and expanding representation to include SMEs and emerging sectors. Efforts should also be made to co-ordinate sectoral engagement across government institutions to minimise redundancy and reduce the burden on stakeholders. These mechanisms should be informed by international good practices and equipped with adequate tools and resources to carry out skills gap analysis, curriculum development, and policy advice in their respective sectors. 5.3. Enhance stakeholder engagement by adopting additional tools and strengthening capacity-building efforts. Thailand can incorporate a range of tools for stakeholder engagement such as public consultations, stakeholder workshops or roundtables, online platforms, and targeted communication. To ensure sustainable

Recommendations	Specific actions
	and impactful stakeholder engagement, ministries and agencies should be supported with tools, resources, and training tailored to their needs. For example, Thailand could develop a stakeholder engagement toolkit or provide training to civil servants in stakeholder engagement strategies. These efforts can help foster a culture of collaboration while ensuring consistent and impactful interactions with stakeholders and enhance Thailand's overall ability to design and implement skills policies that align with labour market needs.
Recommendation 6: Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach stakeholders	6.1. Diversify engagement methods to make participation accessible to hard-to-reach groups. To effectively incorporate the perspectives of SMEs, minority communities, CSOs, and actors in the informal economy into skills policy, Thailand should diversify engagement methods when developing skills policy. This can include organising workshops, virtual consultations, and information-sharing events. Adopting innovative approaches, including virtual and in-person options, should can help accommodate logistical needs and preferences of diverse stakeholders, particularly those without formal organisational representation. For example, Korea's Civic Participatory Service Design Teams, as well as digital tools such as the "mVoting" app in Seoul can ensure that these stakeholders are active participants in policy design rather than passive consultees. By adopting similar practices, Thailand can ensure more inclusive and responsive policy making, capturing the perspectives of SMEs, minority communities, and informal workers. 6.2. Leverage provincial and local authorities to support localised engagement. Provincial and local authorities are uniquely positioned to engage effectively with local communities, SMEs, religious groups, and actors in the informal economy due to their understanding of local dynamics. To capitalise on this potential, Thailand can establish provincial skills councils or forums similar to those in Norway (see Opportunity 2). These councils would provide structured platforms for local engagement, enabling stakeholders to share information, discuss skills needs, and collaborate on tailored policy initiatives. Provincial skills development co-ordinators, as proposed in Opportunity 2, could play a vital role by leveraging their relationships with community leaders and small enterprises to communicate local needs to national policy maker/policy makers. Their trust-building efforts are particularly critical for engaging actors in the informal economy, who may require additional support to access training, transition into the formal economy, and benefit from government services. 6.3. Support and strengthen representative advisory bodies and umbrella organisations. Thailand should establish and strengthen advisory bodies representing hard-to-reach groups, ensuring their voices are integrated into national policies. Additionally, supporting networks and umbrella organisations that bring together representatives from smaller or less visible groups, can amplify their collective voice, ensuring their concerns are adequately represented in policy debates. By providing these organisations with resources and capacity-building support, the government can foster more inclusive and representative policy making. Additionally, including these advisory bodies and umbrella organisations in national engagement bodies and forums would ensure their perspectives are represented in high-level discussions.

Opportunity 4: Improving skills information systems

Annex Table 1.B.10. Detailed recommendations for improving skills information

Recommendations	Specific actions
	Opportunity 4: Improving skills information systems
Recommendation 7: Improving the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy	7.1 Develop a comprehensive skills data framework, based on a robust assessment of user needs. To ensure that skills data effectively supports policy development and decision-making, Thailand should create a comprehensive skills data framework that fully encompasses all relevant indicators. This framework should be informed by a thorough assessment of the needs of various stakeholders, including policy maker/policy makers, researchers, employers, and education providers. It should also build on a robust mapping of existing data sources across the skills system. Through this process, Thailand can identify key data gaps and priorities, ensuring that the framework captures all relevant indicators necessary for informed skills policy. 7.2 Align data collection standards and improve technical infrastructure, building on existing governmental data initiatives. Align data collection standards and strengthen engagement with existing governmental data initiatives. Improving the interoperability of data across different government ministries and agencies is crucial for effective skills policy. Thailand needs to address the current fragmentation in data initiatives by standardising data collection processes and ensuring that different datasets are compatible with each other. Ministries and agencies should actively engage with broader governmental data initiatives – such as training opportunities, and efforts to unify standards – to leverage existing expertise and align skills policy with the government's broader data-driven focus. This includes for example, incorporating guidance from the Data Governance Framework 1.0, expanding training initiatives through Thailand Digital Government Academy (TDGA). Additionally, strengthening technical infrastructure is essential for seamless data sharing and utilisation. Thailand should develop secure integration platforms, enhance interoperability tools for cross-agency data exchange, and ensure stakeholders have the technical capacity to effectively use the data.

Recommendations	Specific actions
	7.3 Strengthen co-ordination in skills data collection by establishing a cross-ministerial forum. Establishing a dedicated cross-ministerial forum on skills data infrastructure is essential for enhancing co-ordination and collaboration among various institutions. This forum would bring together experts from relevant ministries, local authorities, and data agencies to share information, identify gaps, and develop co-ordinated strategies for improving skills data collection, sharing, and utilisation. Such a forum could be established as a working group under a broader inter-ministerial co-ordination body on skills, such as the one recommended in Opportunity 2, and as exemplified by Sweden's Data Working Group under the Inter-agency Cooperation Structure for Skills and Lifelong Learning. By fostering ongoing dialogue and collaboration, this forum can ensure that Thailand's skills data infrastructure is robust, responsive, and aligned with the needs of all stakeholders.
Recommendation 8: Enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services to improve accessibility and meet diverse user needs	8.1 Establish a comprehensive and integrated online platform for skills information. Thailand should develop a dedicated online platform to serve as a centralised resource for skills information, labour market trends, and educational and training pathways. Building on existing initiatives such as the STEMPlus Platform, the new platform should adopt a broader, cross-sectoral approach, incorporating personalised features like career quizzes, AI-driven chatbots, and tailored recommendations. It should also integrate real-time labour market data, results from Skills Assessment and Anticipation (SAA) exercises, and updated occupational forecasts. This platform can empower individuals and stakeholders to make informed decisions that align with personal preferences and labour market needs while addressing the current fragmentation in information systems. 8.2 Strengthen co-ordination and collaboration across the guidance system. To improve the delivery of skills information and career guidance, Thailand must enhance co-ordination among key actors, including government ministries, Provincial Labour Offices, educational institutions, and civil society organisations (CSOs). Establishing formal mechanisms, such as a national task force or inter-agency forums, can align efforts and create a unified framework for guidance services. At the subnational level, local skills managers should oversee co-ordination to ensure alignment between local needs and national priorities. Greater collaboration will ensure that guidance services are consistent, comprehensive, and effectively linked to broader labour market strategies. 8.3 Enhance the capacity and inclusivity of in-person guidance services. Improving in-person guidance requires targeted investments in training and resources for guidance providers. Expanding professional development opportunities for counsellors and equipping them with up-to-date tools and materials will enhance their ability to provide accurate and relevant advice on career and training pathways. Ensuring equitable access to guidance services should be a priority, with tailored strategies to reach rural areas, disadvantaged populations, and minorities. Decentralisation can help adapt services to local needs, but central oversight is essential to maintain quality and standards. Digital platforms should complement in-person guidance by expanding access where physical services are limited.

2 Strengthening the skills of youth in initial education in Thailand

Access to high quality, relevant and inclusive opportunities in initial education is central to helping Thai youth acquire strong basic skills and develop positive learning attitudes. This chapter explains the importance of strengthening the skills of youth in initial education in Thailand, which can ensure that the country is able to promote good educational outcomes for all children and build strong foundations for learning throughout life. It also describes the current policies and practices to increase access to, and ensure the quality of compulsory education, technical and vocational education and training, and higher education. It then explores three opportunities to strengthen the skills of youth: (1) increasing the quality and relevance of initial education; (2) promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth; and (3) reducing inequalities in educational outcomes.

The importance of strengthening the skills of youth in initial education

Equitable access to high-quality initial education is key to Thailand's sustainable economic growth, social equity, technological progress, and overall national development. Acquiring strong foundational skills¹ in initial education can help Thai youth obtain higher-level skills later in life, contributing to the development of a more competitive workforce. Supporting youth to access high-quality and relevant skills development opportunities can help them acquire basic skills and knowledge, foster a motivation for learning at an early age, as well as lay the ground for a culture of lifelong learning that will make Thailand an adaptable and resilient society.

Education has played an important role in Thailand's transformation into an upper middle-income country and contributing to the economic growth of Southeast Asia. Over the past few decades, the country has considered strengthening the skills of youth in initial education as a priority, enacting major education reforms, such as the provision of free basic education for 12 years, as well as the investment of a significant share of resources into the education of Thai youth (OECD/UNESCO, 2016^[1]). In recent years, the government has continued to highlight well-educated youth as drivers of future growth and as contributors to the achievement of objectives in the Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) (UNICEF, 2021^[2]; Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[3]).

Policy reforms and public investments in basic education have resulted in improvements in key educational indicators. Thailand has initiated many efforts to improve the teaching profession, and the country currently enjoys the lowest pupil-qualified teacher ratios at the pre-primary and primary levels in Southeast Asia (UNESCO, 2023^[4]). Participation in pre-primary, primary and secondary education in Thailand is relatively high, and has remained generally stable in recent years. Based on latest available data, participation in technical and vocational programmes among 15-24 year-olds was also higher in Thailand than in many other Southeast Asian countries (World Bank, 2019^[5]). Gross enrolment rates at the tertiary level have also risen steadily over the decades, situating Thailand among the top of Southeast Asian countries – only behind Singapore – in 2022 (World Bank, 2022^[6]).

Despite these achievements, Thailand still faces key challenges in strengthening the skills of youth in initial education. More could be done to improve the quality of learning in schools, as Thailand's average performance in mathematics, reading and science in the latest round of PISA in 2022 was lower than in any previous assessment since the country first participated in 2001. Prolonged school closures from the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated many of these challenges in skills development, as less students in Thailand were supported through virtual classes and felt confident about motivating themselves to do school work, compared to the OECD average (OECD, 2022^[7]; OECD, 2023^[8]). Equity in educational opportunities also remains a challenge. While Thailand has generally succeeded in increasing enrolment rates at all levels, access to educational opportunities remains highly unequal between socio-economic groups and regions (UNICEF, 2019^[9]; Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[3]).

Renewed commitment to skills development of youth through a comprehensive and multi-faceted skills strategy can help Thailand address the learning losses resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as prepare Thai youth to remain resilient in the face of future disruptions. Such policy efforts can also help the country adapt more easily to global trends, especially the digital transformation, artificial intelligence (AI) and the green transition. Thailand has pledged to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2065, requiring massive economic and labour market reforms and highlighting the importance of skills that are needed for a technologically advanced and greener future (OECD, 2023^[10]; OECD, 2024^[11]).

This chapter provides a detailed assessment of the skills of youth in initial education and presents policy recommendations for three opportunities for Thailand to strengthen these skills, namely:

- increasing the quality and relevance of initial education
- promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth
- reducing inequalities in educational outcomes.

Overview and performance

This section provides an overview of the initial education system in Thailand, as well as an assessment of the country's performance on key educational indicators. Initial education in the country is composed of early childhood education and care (ECEC), basic compulsory education (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary), technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and higher education. These components of initial education are supported by a framework of laws, strategies and policies, and are overseen by relevant government agencies. An assessment of Thailand's performance on key indicators indicates that there is significant room for Thailand to improve access to, and the quality and relevance of, initial education opportunities.

Overview of Thailand's policies and practices for strengthening the skills of youth in initial education

Strengthening the skills of youth in initial education requires political commitment, as well as strong policy co-ordination among the various ministries and institutions involved in managing the different levels of education in Thailand. Over the years, the Government of Thailand has put forward various policies that aimed to improve the quality of education and provide equal opportunities to all groups of the Thai population. This section summarises the relevant legislation, strategies and policies that currently guide skills development in Thailand, as well as presents an overview of the country's educational system for youth and the different types of skills development offers that are available in the country.

Relevant legislation, strategies and policies for developing the skills of youth in initial education

Various legislation, strategies and policies guide the development of young people's skills in Thailand (see Table 2.1). The main legislation underpinning the structure of Thailand's educational system is the National Education Act B.E. 2545 (1999), which was developed in recognition of the country's need to reform its education system in order to respond better to domestic and global changes. The Act promoted a more decentralised education system in Thailand, allotting increased responsibilities for education financing and administration to educational service areas (ESA), local administration organisations (LAO) and schools.

Table 2.1. Thailand's main legislation, strategies and policies for strengthening the skills of youth in initial education

Major strategy or policy	Description
National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999)	The National Education Act of 1999 is the main legislative document in Thailand's education sector. It was developed in response to the economic, political, cultural and social crisis the country was experiencing at the time and was an effort to reform the country's education system and boost its socio-economic growth. The Act mandated nine years of compulsory education, consisting of six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education, and also paved the way for the decentralisation of the Thai education system by assigning the financing and management of basic education to Educational Service Areas (ESAs). In 2002, the Act was amended to reflect changes to the several government agencies' names (e.g. change from Ministry of Education, Religion and Culture to Ministry of Education) and functions, as well to establish additional provisions regarding the decentralised management of education in ESAs.

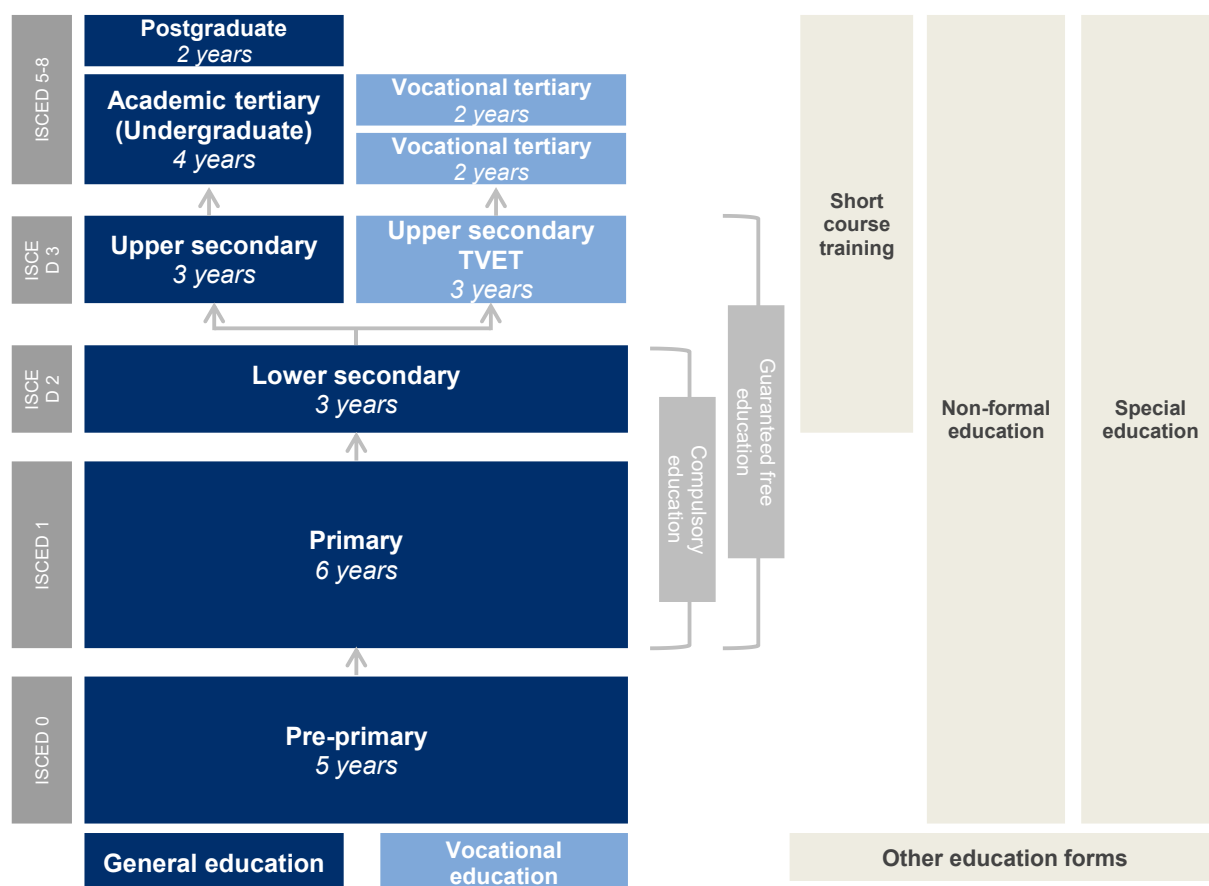
Major strategy or policy	Description
Early Childhood Development Act B.E. 2562 (2019) / National Standard for Early Childhood Development Centre B.E. 2562 (2019) (Abridged Version)	The government recognises the importance of early childhood, highlighting it as one of the key stages of human resource development. It promotes educational, health and social support for children to help them obtain good physical and mental development, intellectual ability, foundational skill acquisition. The Act states that before children enter free basic and compulsory education, the State has the responsibility to ensure that early age children receive appropriate care and development services in accordance with their age.
Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act B.E. 2551 (2008)	The Act defines “non-formal education” as educational activities without clear target groups and educational objectives, curricula, and methods of provision, and “informal education” as educational activities in individuals’ daily lifestyles. The Act aims to promote and support non-formal education by increasing access to opportunities and decentralising the provision of education to educational establishment and networks, as well as to encourage individuals to participate in informal education by developing educational resources and learning materials and increasing the population’s access to them.
Higher Education Act B.E. 2562	The Act stipulates that the objective of higher education is to develop human resources with the skills, knowledge and competencies required in their respective academic or professional fields, thereby supporting the country’s competitiveness. In addition, higher education should also aim for a holistic approach that covers physical and mental health. The Act requires higher education institutions to review the latest expertise in their fields and include this in their course offerings.
Equitable Education Act of 2018	The Equitable Education Act of 2018 established Thailand’s Equitable Education Fund (EEF), which aims to provide financial support (e.g. conditional cash transfers) to children and youth in need, reduce educational inequalities through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, and support the improvement of teaching quality. The Act focuses on supporting disadvantaged youth across all levels of education, as well as children aged 3 to 17 who are out of school.
National Educational Standards Act B.E. 2561 (2018)	Currently under Cabinet approval, the Act allows educational institutions to administer education freely and independently, in accordance with their own contexts and learners’ aptitudes. However, it recognises the need to standardise quality, thereby providing regulations regarding the expected educational outcomes. It builds on the requirements of the Quality Assurance for Education B.E. 2561 (2018), which requires educational institutions to establish their own internal quality assurance system, as well as undergo external quality assurance through the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA).
National Scheme of Education B.E. 2560-2579 (2017-2036)	The National Scheme of Education B.E. 2560-2579 (2017-2036) is a 20-year plan to guide the development of the country’s educational system in preparation for Thailand 4.0. It highlights the need for co-ordination among all sectors in response to rapid technological changes, socio-economic advancements, and demographic changes, and other national and global trends affecting the demand for skills. The policy is based on the evaluation results of the National Scheme of Education B.E. 2542-2559 (2003-2016), covering the areas of access to education, educational quality, educational management and administration, instructional effectiveness, and educational budgeting.
20-Year Higher Education Plan	The policy provides an overview of Thailand’s plans to improve the provision of higher education in line with the country’s vision, development objectives and other key government strategies. It covers eight key changing areas that include reforming higher education, strengthening the role of government as a regulating authority, and promoting the independent operation of higher education institutions on the basis of academic freedom, educational quality, and educational standards.
Higher Education Plan for Thailand’s Manpower Production and Development (2021-2027) and its revised version for 2023–2027	The plan aims to position higher education as a catalyst for Thailand’s economic development and the key to overcoming the middle-income trap. It envisions the development of a workforce with strong moral character, intellectual capacity, and adaptability to sustainable development through three key strategies: (1) developing human capacity (e.g. promoting lifelong learning, enhancing educational quality); (2) building a robust research ecosystem (including enhancing entrepreneurial skills); and (3) transforming higher education (e.g. improving the management of higher education institutions in line with good governance practices, upgrading digital infrastructure).

Source: Office of the Prime Minister (1999^[12]), *National Education Act of B.E.2542 (1999)*, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Thailand184.pdf>; Office of the Prime Minister (2002^[13]), *National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and Amendments (Second National Education Act B.E. 2545 [2002])*, www.onesqa.or.th/upload/download/file_697c80087cce7f0f83ce0e2a98205aa3.pdf; The Equitable Education Fund (EEF) (2022^[14]), *What we do*, <https://en.eef.or.th/our-projects/>; OECD Skills Strategy Thailand policy questionnaire; Ministry of Education (2008^[15]), *Promotion of non-formal and informal education act, B.E. 2551-2008 – (Vol. 125, Part 41a, Government Gazette, dated 3rd March B.E. 2551 (2008))*, <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2008/promotion-non-formal-and-informal-education-act-be-2551-2008-vol-125-part-41a-government>; Office of the Education Council (2017^[16]), *The National Scheme of Education B.E. 2560-2579 (2017-2036)*, <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2017/national-scheme-education-be-2560-2579-2017-2036-thai-6635>; Office of the Education Council (2018^[17]), *National Education Standards B.E. 2561 (2018)*, <https://backoffice.onec.go.th/uploads/Book/1659-file.pdf>.

Overview of Thailand's education system

Thailand's education system consists of 12 years of free basic education guaranteed by the Constitution, nine of which are compulsory. An overview of the various components of the educational system is presented in Figure 2.1. The system is composed of six years of primary education (*prathom*) from levels P1 to P6, and six years of secondary education (*mattayom*), which is further split into lower (M1 to M3) and upper secondary (M4 to M6) levels. Access to primary and lower secondary education was made compulsory in Thailand's 1997 constitution. The National Education Act B.E. 2545 of 1999 expanded compulsory education from six to nine years, while its amendment in 2002 made 12 years of primary and secondary education free of charge, including for non-Thai children residing in the country (OECD/UNESCO, 2016^[11]).

Figure 2.1. Thailand's education system



Source: Adapted from MOE (2008^[18]), *Towards a Learning Society in Thailand: An Introduction to Education in Thailand*, www.bic.moe.go.th/images/stories/book/ed-eng-series/intro-ed08.pdf; UNESCO (2015^[19]), *World TVET Database, Thailand* (2015^[20]) https://unevco.unesco.org/wtdb/worldtvtdatabase_tha_en.pdf; OECD/UNESCO (2016^[11]), *Education in Thailand: An OECD-UNESCO Perspective*, www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2016/08/education-in-thailand_g1g6a08c/9789264259119-en.pdf; (2016^[11]), *Education in Thailand: An OECD-UNESCO Perspective*, www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2016/08/education-in-thailand_g1g6a08c/9789264259119-en.pdf.

Enrolment in the basic education system begins at the age of seven, although early childhood education services are also available in the country from birth to age six (MOE, 2017^[21]). The TVET track begins at the upper secondary level and has a duration of three years and may continue on to the tertiary level for an additional two years (Ministry of Education, 2008^[15]).

Non-formal education, one of the three types of education officially recognised in Thailand (see Box 2.1), is also available as an alternative pathway to education in the country, especially among out-of-school and vulnerable youth, as well as adults. Non-formal basic education includes several types, such as literacy and numeracy training, equivalency programmes, life-skills training programmes, income generation or non-formal vocational training, information services offered by Regional Non-formal Education Centres, and science education (UNESCO, 2007^[22]). In addition to non-formal education, Thailand also promotes informal learning as part of its lifelong learning strategy, as well as a means of providing skills development opportunities to those who do not have access to formal education (UNESCO, 2016^[23]).

Box 2.1. Types of education in Thailand

The National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and its amendment Second National Education Act B.E. 2545 (2002) recognise three types of education and learning in Thailand, namely:

- **Formal education**, which is education that is structured, with objectives, teaching methods, curricula, set duration, and assessment and evaluation that would mark its completion. Formal education is provided in various formats in Thailand, including: (1) mainstream education, in both general and vocational tracks; (2) basic education for children with special educational needs; (3) education for ecclesiastics and education provided by religious institutions; (4) specialised education provided by agencies other than the Ministry of Education; and (5) international education in which a language other than Thai (e.g. English) is used as the medium of instruction.
- **Non-formal education**, which is education that is more flexible in terms of its objectives and delivery modalities. The National Education Act stipulates that the content and curricula for non-formal education must be responsive and appropriate to the needs of learners.
- **Informal learning**, which is learning that enables students to learn by themselves in accordance with their interests, potential and readiness. Learning opportunities come from the individuals themselves, as well as various sources of learning in their environment, such as libraries, museums, mass media (e.g. radio, television, newspapers, magazines), and local wisdom and cultures in their communities.

Source: MOE (2017^[24]), *Education in Thailand*, www.bic.moe.go.th/images/stories/pdf/EDUCATION_IN_THAILAND_2017.pdf; Office of the Prime Minister (2002^[13]), *National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and Amendments (Second National Education Act B.E. 2545 [2002])*, www.onesqa.or.th/upload/download/file_697c80087cce7f0f83ce0e2a98205aa3.pdf.

The responsibility for strengthening the skills of youth in Thailand is shared across multiple ministries and agencies, although the Ministry of Education (MOE) remains the principal governance body. The MOE promotes and oversees all levels and types of education offered by both the state and the private sector, as well as formulates policies, plans and standards. The ministry is also responsible for the mobilisation of resources for education, as well as for the monitoring and evaluation of educational initiatives in the country. The MOE is further divided into administrative bodies that manage each level of education (see sections below), and also supervises several agencies that form an ecosystem of educational actors in Thailand, such as teachers' organisations, institutes for science and trade, high schools for gifted students, and scout organisations (MOE, 2017^[21]).

The current structure of Thailand's education system stems from the reforms of the 1999 National Education Act, which promoted the decentralisation of educational administration, although educational planning responsibilities remain at the central level (Ministry of Education, 2008^[15]). Regional actors thus play a significant role in the provision of education in Thailand. These regional actors include local administration organisations (LAOs), which are supervised by the Ministry of Interior and oversee educational institutions at the local level, as well as about 185 Educational Service Areas (ESA) throughout

the country – three in Bangkok and 182 in the provinces – that aim to facilitate the decentralisation of educational administration (MOE, 2017^[21]; Ministry of Education, 2008^[15]). The different levels of education in Thailand, as well as their objectives, relevant policies, and the bodies responsible for their governance, are described in detailed below.

Early childhood education and care

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Thailand covers all children from birth until the age of six, before children's entry into first grade of primary schooling (MOE, 2017^[21]). Thailand's definition of ECEC also includes disadvantaged children and those with disabilities, as well as foreign children living in the country (UNESCO, 2014^[25]). Thailand adopts a child-centred approach to ECEC, paying attention to individual differences and the context of their communities, and also recognises the role that various actors play in fostering children's holistic development, including parents, families, communities, and educational institutions, among others (MOE, 2017^[21]).

Several policies govern the ECEC system in Thailand. These include, among others, the 2003 Early Childhood Curriculum, which lay the foundations for assessing the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children as they age, as well as a National Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Development in accordance with the Government Policy 2012-2016, which aimed to ensure that all relevant agencies co-operated to deliver ECEC objectives (Iemamnuay, 2019^[26]; UNESCO, 2014^[25]). At present, the Early Childhood Curriculum B.E. 2560, which was adopted in 2017, is the primary policy that guides the delivery of ECEC services. According to the curriculum, ECEC in Thailand aims to support the development of children along four dimensions – physical, emotional, social, and cognitive – as well as to fully prepare them for schooling (MOE, 2017^[21]).

Several bodies are responsible for the delivery of ECEC institutions in Thailand. These include childcare centres, child development centres, pre-school child development centres of religious institutions, and initial care centres for children with disabilities or special needs (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002^[27]). The management of these ECEC institutions is spread across multiple ministries but is managed by the Committee on National Early Childhood Development. The non-government sector, such as children's foundations, and private schools, also play a significant role in the delivery of ECEC services in Thailand (UNESCO, 2014^[25]; Iemamnuay, 2019^[26]; Buain and Pholphirul, 2022^[28]); (MOE, 2017^[21]).

Compulsory education

Compulsory education in Thailand includes six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education, spanning the ages of six to 14 years old. Compulsory education in Thailand was mandated by the Compulsory Education Act B.E. 2545 (2002), which increased compulsory education from six to nine years of schooling (Chaijaroen and Panda, 2023^[29]); (MOE, 2017^[24]). The national curriculum at these levels encompasses a wide range of competencies, such as the Thai language, mathematics, social studies, religion and culture, health and physical education, arts, careers and technology, and foreign language (Ministry of Education, 2008^[15]). Upon completion of lower secondary education (*Mattayom* 1 to 3), students may pursue upper secondary education (*Mattayom* 4 to 6), either through the general (academic) track or through the TVET pathway (see section below) (Department of Education, 2019^[30]). Thailand adopts a multiple intelligences approach to education, highlighting the different strengths and competencies that learners may naturally possess and which the educational system must strengthen.

Primary and lower secondary education in Thailand is offered by government schools, where it is free of charge, as well as by private schools, and schools under the jurisdiction of Buddhist or other religious institutions. The Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) is a body under the Ministry of Education that is responsible for central planning activities, such as the development of policies, plans, standards and core curricula for these levels of education. As part of the country's decentralisation efforts, the day-to-day supervision of schools in the country is conducted by local administrative organisations

(LAO), such as provincial administration organisations, municipalities, sub-district administration organisations, and special local administration organisations (i.e. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and Pattaya City) (MOE, 2017^[24]).

Through the Persons with Disabilities Education Act B.E. 2551 of 3008, Thailand's education system aims to promote access to quality education among students with special needs and disadvantaged children. Children with special needs may refer to children with visual, hearing, verbal and/or physical/health impairments, as well as children with learning disabilities, autism, and behavioural or emotional disorders. Moreover, disadvantaged children in Thailand refers to various types, such as children forced to enter the labour market, children who are sex workers, deserted children or orphans, children in observation and protection centres, street children, children with HIV/AIDS, children of minority communities, physically abused children, impoverished children, and children affected by narcotic drugs, among others. Most of these students attend regular public schools, known as "inclusive schools", while others attend specially arranged schools called "welfare schools" and "border patrol police schools". These specialised schools are under the supervision of the OBEC of the MOE (MOE, 2017^[24]).

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Thailand

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Thailand starts at the upper secondary level upon completion of lower secondary, where students may choose between the vocational or general education track. Students in both tracks undergo a three-year programme at the upper secondary level and are considered equally qualified to sit for national university entrance examinations upon completion. Students in the TVET track also receive a vocational certificate. After the upper secondary level, students may further pursue the postsecondary level, leading to a diploma or associate's degree in vocational education, or higher education, leading to a bachelor's degree in technology (MOE, 2017^[24]; OECD, 2021^[31]).

The Vocational Act of 2008 regulates the TVET system in Thailand by establishing the various forms of TVET offered in the country and indicating the various institutions that may provide TVET (see Table 2.2). These institutions are governed by the Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) under the Ministry of Education. OVEC is responsible for providing recommendations for TVET-related policies, defining the budget of the TVET system, co-ordinating the improvement of VET programmes and professional standards, training VET teachers and personnel, and liaising between the government and the private sector in TVET offers (OECD, 2021^[31]; UNESCO, 2015^[19]).

Table 2.2. Institutions and programmes offering TVET types in Thailand

Formal TVET	Non-formal TVET	Informal TVET
• Technical colleges • Vocational colleges • Agricultural and technology colleges • Commercial colleges • Ship building industrial and technology colleges • Fishery colleges • Administration and tourism colleges • Polytechnic colleges • Golden Jubilee Royal goldsmith colleges • Arts and crafts colleges • Industrial and community colleges • Science-based technology vocational college • Agricultural technology and fisheries college • Novice monk's skills college • Vocational education college	• Occupational development programmes • Short training programmes • Group vocational courses • Vocational certificate programmes equivalent to lower secondary school • Non-formal occupational certificate programmes	• Community centres • Science centres for education

Source: UNESCO (2015^[20]), *World TVET Database: Thailand*, worldvetdatabase.tha_en.pdf; SEA-VET.net, TVET platform for SEA (n.d.^[32]), *Thailand: Profile* www.sea-vet.net/thailand.

Higher education in Thailand

Higher education in Thailand begins after the upper secondary level and has four main objectives, namely to produce graduates, conduct research studies, provide academic services, and preserve arts and culture (Ministry of Education, 2014^[33]). Higher education in Thailand covers multiple types of qualifications, such as associate degrees (at least 90 credits), bachelor's degrees (120 to 180 credits), graduate diplomas (at least 24 credits after a bachelor's degree), master's degrees (at least 36 credits after a bachelor's degree), higher graduate diplomas (at least 24 credits after a master's degree), and doctoral degrees (at least 36 credits after a master's degree) (UNESCO, 2022^[34]).

The National Education Act B.E. 2542 and its 2002 amendment indicate that higher education is provided through higher education institutions (HEIs) such as universities, institutes and colleges (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002^[27]). Private HEIs also began to develop in Thailand in 1979 in order to accommodate the increasing demand for higher education and strengthen the educational development of the country (MOE, 2017^[24]). Currently, private HEIs are governed by the Private Higher Education Institution Act B.E. 2546 of 2003 and its second revision of 2007, which indicates that private HEIs may award higher education degrees if their academic quality is accredited by the Ministry of Education (Office of the Council of State, 2006^[35]).

Until 2020, the main governance body overseeing the delivery of higher education in Thailand was the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) under the Ministry of Education. OHEC had the authority to establish policies, development plans and standards for higher education, as well as co-ordinate the mobilisation of resources (e.g. human, financial), and oversee HEIs. In 2020, the OHEC merged with the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT), and the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) to form the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) (UNESCO, 2022^[34]). The merge was implemented to strengthen co-operation between higher education, science, research and development, innovation and competition, in the hopes of transforming Thailand into an innovation-based economy (MHESI, 2022^[36]).

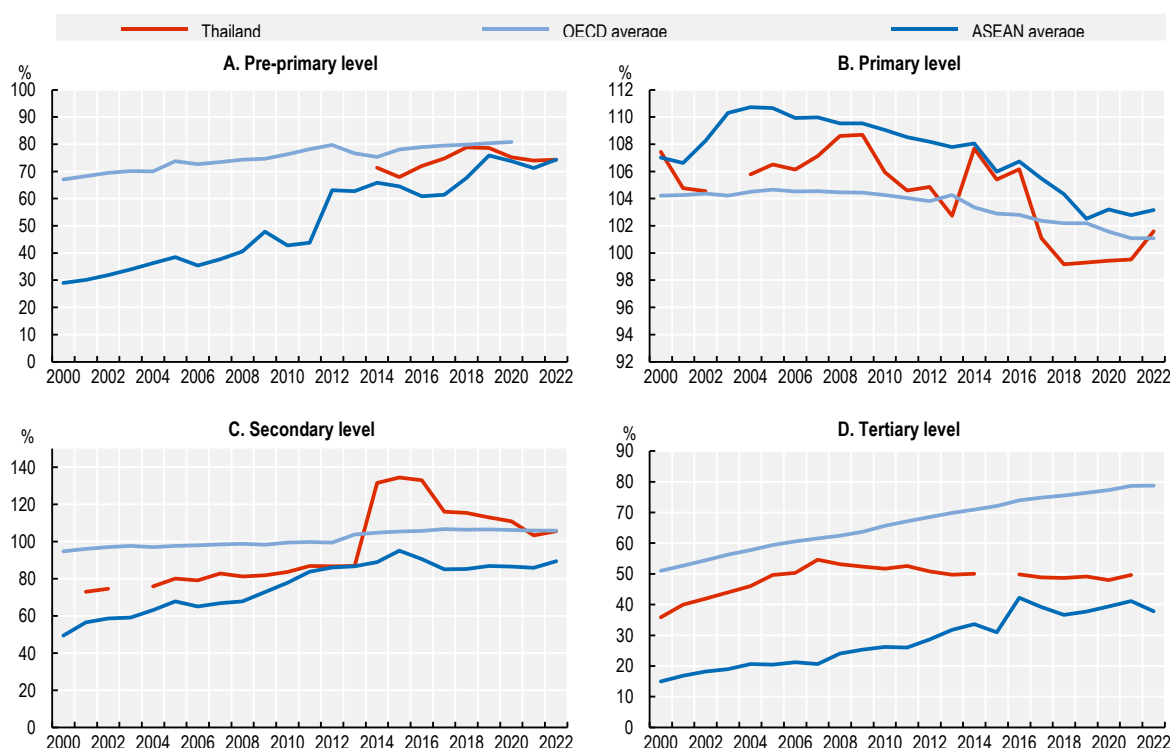
Thailand's performance in strengthening the skills of youth in initial education

While Thailand has made significant efforts to introduce policies and initiatives to strengthen the skills of youth in initial education, available data indicates that there is significant room to improve the quality and relevance of educational opportunities, as well as reduce inequities in educational outcomes among disadvantaged groups. This section presents Thailand's performance in key education indicators in comparison to neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia and select countries from across the OECD.

While access to education has improved significantly over the last three decades, more could be done to improve the quality of education in Thailand

Gross enrolment rates² have risen at all levels of education in Thailand over the past two decades. The enrolment rate at the pre-primary level has increased from 66% in 1997³ to 74% in 2022. Gross enrolment at the pre-primary level in Thailand is higher than the ASEAN average (41%), but still lower than the OECD average (81%) (see Figure 2.2, Panel A). The country has been successful in achieving universal or near-universal enrolment rates at the primary level over the past two decades, performing close to the OECD and ASEAN averages (see Figure 2.2, Panel B). Enrolment rates at the secondary level in Thailand have also increased by around 33 percentage points over the past two decades, reaching parity with the OECD average and surpassing the ASEAN average as of 2022 (see Figure 2.2, Panel C). While enrolment at the tertiary level in Thailand remained relatively low in comparison to OECD countries at 49% in 2022, this already represents a significant increase from two decades ago, where the enrolment rate was at only 36% in 2000 (see Figure 2.2, Panel D). While this is higher than the average gross tertiary enrolment rate across the ASEAN (41%) in 2021, this is still significantly lower than the OECD (79%).

Figure 2.2. Gross enrolment rates by level of education in Thailand, 2000 to 2022



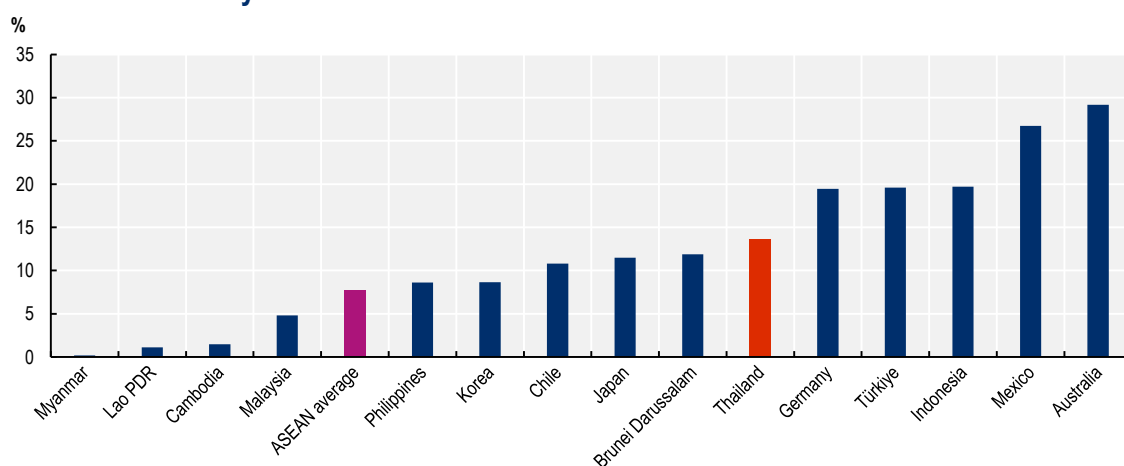
Note: Gross enrolment rates account for students of all ages, including those whose age exceeds the official age group for the specified level of education. Therefore, if there is early enrolment, late enrolment or grade repetition, gross enrolment rates can exceed 100%.

Source: World Bank (2022^[37]), *School enrolment, pre-primary (% gross)*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRE.ENRR>; World Bank (2023^[38]), *School enrolment, primary (% gross)*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRIMARY.ENRR>; World Bank (2023^[39]), *School enrolment, secondary (% gross)*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRR>; World Bank (2023^[40]), *School enrolment, tertiary (% gross)*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR>.

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Thailand also has one of the highest enrolment rates in TVET programmes among Southeast Asian countries, second only to Indonesia (see Figure 2.3). 14% of Thai secondary education students were in the TVET track in 2022, which is nearly double the ASEAN average of 8% (World Bank, 2024^[41]). At the upper-secondary level, about one-third of students follow the vocational track, while roughly one in five post-secondary students enroll in vocational diploma programmes (OECD, 2021^[31]). However, while TVET enrolment is high, the number of students enrolling in TVET tracks at the secondary level is on a downward trend (see Figure 2.10 in Recommendation 2) (World Bank, 2019^[5]). Wages offered to TVET graduates are often not competitive enough to draw more learners, and many students face various constraints to obtaining higher vocational qualifications (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[3]).

Figure 2.3. Share of all students in secondary education enrolled in vocational programmes (%), 2021 or latest available year



Source: World Bank (2024^[41]), *Vocational and technical enrolment (% of total secondary enrolment)*, <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/indicators/se-sec-enrl-vo-zs/?gender=total>.

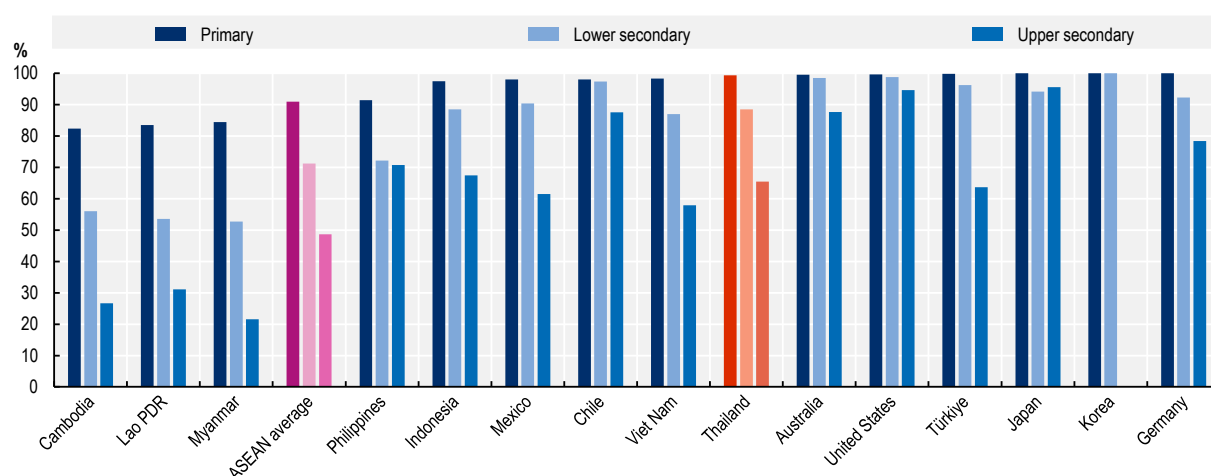
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In addition to successfully expanding access education and increasing general enrolment rates over the last three decades, Thailand also currently has among the highest completion rates⁴ at all levels of education among Southeast Asian countries (see Figure 2.4). The completion rate remains universal at the primary level (99%), and is significantly higher than the ASEAN average at the lower secondary (89%) and upper secondary (65%) levels. However, while Thailand's performance in Southeast Asia is positive, its completion rates are still relatively low in comparison to select OECD countries.

However, labour market outcomes differ considerably between graduates of general education and those from TVET pathways. Concerns persist regarding the quality of TVET provision, particularly in relation to graduate competencies, which often do not align with labour market demands or employer expectations (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[3]). This gap has contributed to weaker labour market outcomes for higher-level TVET graduates. Despite a decline in TVET enrolment (see Figure 2.10 in Recommendation 2), the demand for graduates with higher vocational certificates or diplomas remains limited at just 9% in 2013, compared to a supply of 18% in 2018 (see Figure 1.5 in Chapter 1) (OECD, 2021^[31]).

While policies have been introduced to enhance the quality of education in Thailand (see Table 2.1), there remains room for improvement in the general streams of education, as illustrated by the country's performance in the latest round of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). While performing better than neighbouring countries such as Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia, Thailand scored below other Southeast Asian countries, as well as below the ASEAN and OECD averages in mathematics, reading and science (see Figure 2.5). While PISA measures only certain types of foundational skills, the survey also highlights broader challenges within Thailand's education system. For instance, many children and youth have negative attitudes towards their education and do not connect learning with life outside of school (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[3]). For instance, a relatively small share of youth at the age of 15 has a clear idea about their future job (74% compared to 80% across the OECD). This presents a major challenge in Thailand, as students' attitudes towards school and their sense of belonging at school are important predictors of learning outcomes (OECD, 2004^[42]).

Figure 2.4. Completion rates, both sexes (%), by level of education, latest available year

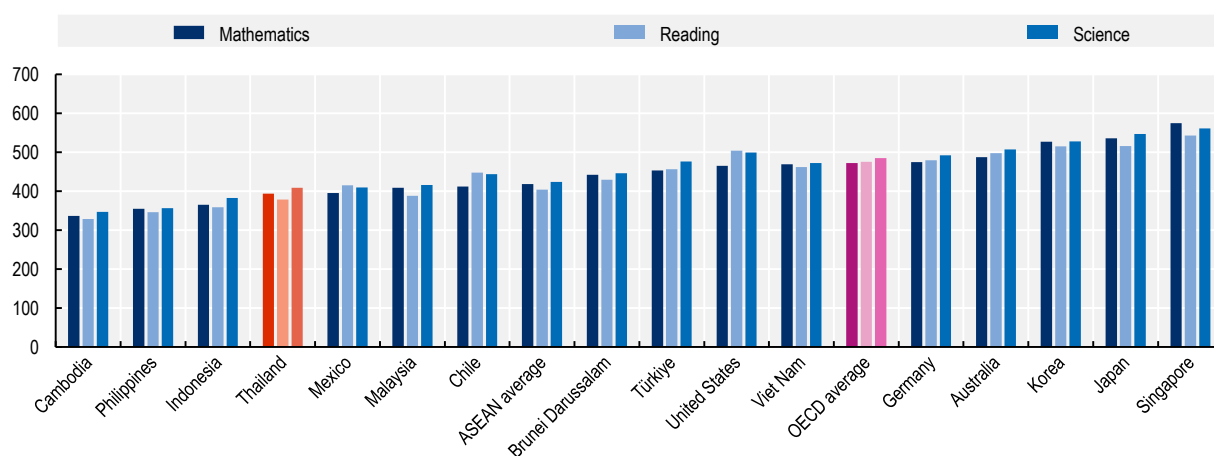


Note: Due to lack of data, the latest available year was used: 2017 (Lao PDR); 2018 (Japan, Türkiye); 2020 (Australia, Chile, Germany [primary level], Indonesia, Korea, Mexico, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand); and 2021 (Cambodia, Germany [lower secondary and upper secondary levels], United States, Viet Nam).

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2021^[43]), Indicator 4.1.2: Completion rate, <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>.

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Figure 2.5. Average PISA score in mathematics, reading and science, 2022



Source: OECD (2022^[44]) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), www.oecd.org/pisa/data/.

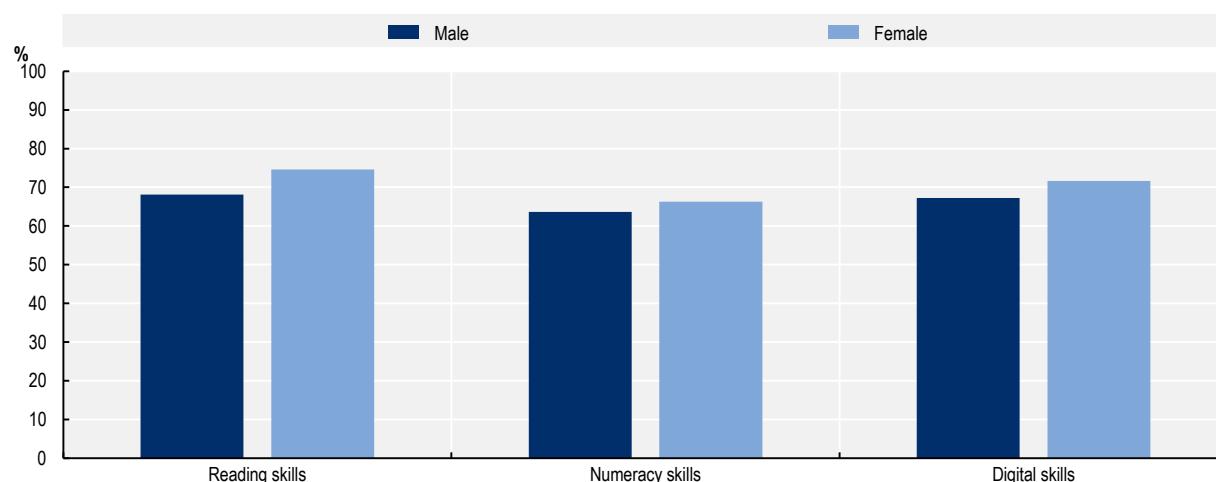
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Equitable access to high-quality education could be further enhanced

While participation in education has improved over the past few decades, there are still various barriers to achieving equity in Thailand's educational sector. Socio-economic status is one of the strongest determiners of access to initial education. As described more extensively in Recommendation 6, children from lower wealth quintiles are more likely to be out of education across all levels of education, with the risk of dropping out increasing at higher levels of education (see Figure 2.14) (UNICEF, 2019^[9]). While Thailand's free basic education policy has helped widen access, severe poverty continues to exist in many parts of the country, with many children from low-income households unable to afford other school costs (Equitable Education Fund, 2024^[45]).

In addition to socio-economic status, gender also contributes to differences in educational outcomes in Thailand. Male children aged 7-14 years-old are lagging behind their female counterparts across all measures of foundational skills development (see Figure 2.6). Only 68% of male children demonstrate foundational reading skills in comparison to 75% of female children, while only 64% of males demonstrate numeracy in comparison to 66% of female children. During the COVID-19 pandemic, only 67% of male children demonstrated digital skills by reporting online channels as their main method of attending remote classes, in comparison to 72% of female children (UNICEF, 2023^[46]). Furthermore, in the latest round of PISA, boys and girls performed at similar levels in mathematics, but boys were outperformed by girls by 27 score points in reading (OECD, 2023^[8]).

Figure 2.6 Share of Thai children aged 7 to 14 years old who demonstrate foundational skills, by gender, 2022



Note: Digital skills capture children's ability to engage in online learning as the main type of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Table LN.5.1 of (UNESCO, 2023^[41]))

Source: UNICEF (2023^[46]), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2022: Survey Findings Report, [www.unicef.org/thailand/media/11356/file/Thailand%20MICS%202022%20full%20report%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/thailand/media/11356/file/Thailand%20MICS%202022%20full%20report%20(English).pdf).

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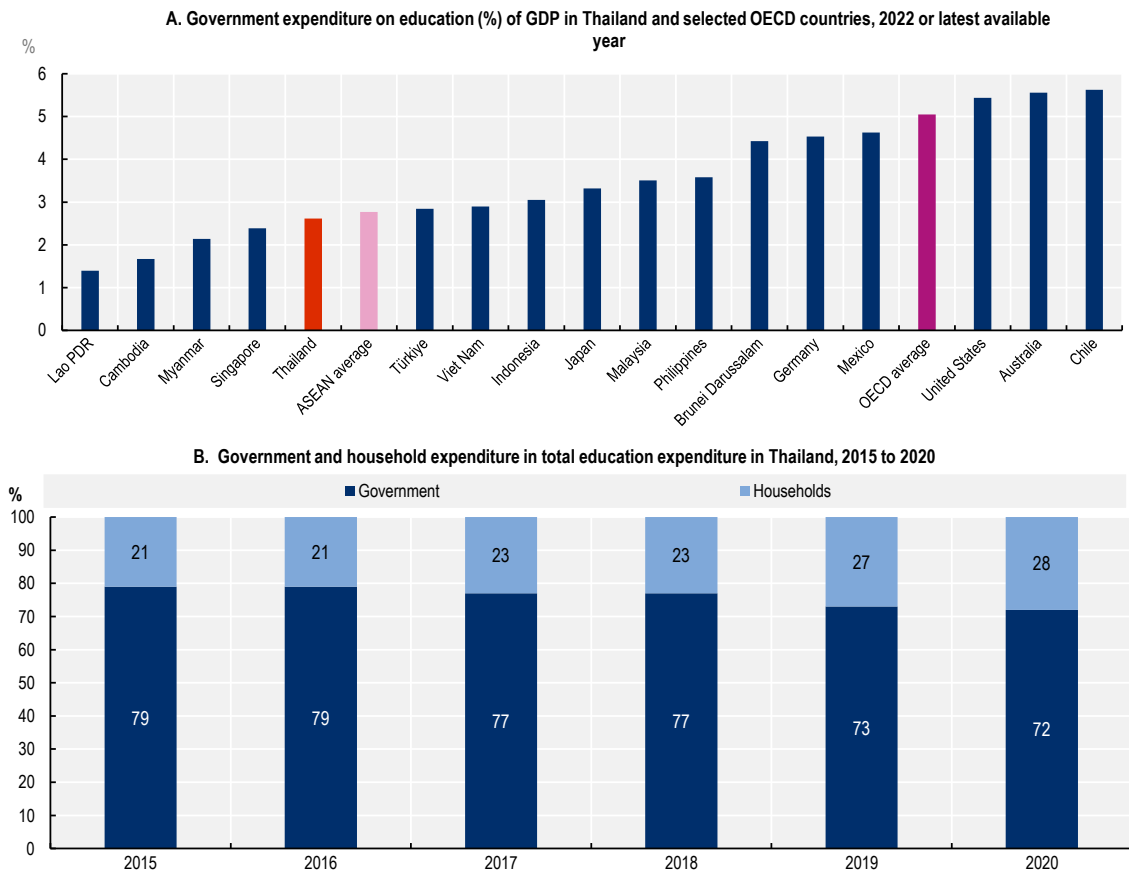
In addition to gender, inter-regional differences in educational access and outcomes are stark in Thailand, as further discussed in detail in Opportunity 5. Urban-rural divides are significant in the country, with the Northeast and Southern regions remaining relatively more rural in comparison to the rest of the country and having poverty rates nearly twice as high as the national level (World Bank, 2022^[47]). Consequently, the likelihood of having children who do not have strong foundational skills is also much higher in these regions. Across all levels of education, children from rural areas also have lower completion rates than the national average and children from urban areas (UNICEF, 2019^[9]). Half of the lowest-scoring provinces in Thailand's Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET), a high-stakes and mandatory examination administered at grades 6, 9 and 12 to determine promotion to the next grade, are found in the disadvantaged Northeast and Southern regions alone, with many of them being the provinces with the highest levels of chronic poverty (Fry, Bi and Apahung, 2018^[48]).

Thailand could do more to raise the level of resources dedicated to initial education

Thailand spends 2.6% of its GDP on education, one of the lowest among Southeast Asian countries and lower than the averages across the ASEAN (2.8%) and the OECD (5%) (see Figure 2.7, Panel A) (World Bank, 2023^[49]). Public spending on education has also been declining in Thailand in recent years (World

Bank, 2023^[50]). Increasing investment in education is advisable, but there is a concerning trend where Thai households are assuming a larger financial burden for schooling costs. In 2020, 28% of the costs of education expenditure came from households, in comparison to only 21% in 2015 (see Figure 2.7, Panel B). Educational expenses shouldered by households increase as students progress to higher levels. In 2020, educational expenses at the pre-primary level constituted 11% of total expenditure among Thai households, increasing to 19% at the primary level, 31% at the secondary level, and 38% at the tertiary level. Attending higher education entails significant financial burdens among poor households (UNESCO, 2022^[51]).

Figure 2.7. Government expenditure on education (% of GDP) in Thailand and selected OECD countries, 2022 or latest available year



Note: Due to lack of available data, the latest available year was used for the following countries: Brunei Darussalam (2016); Myanmar (2019), Chile, Mexico and the United States (2020); Australia, Cambodia, Germany Indonesia, Japan and Türkiye (2021); Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam (2022).

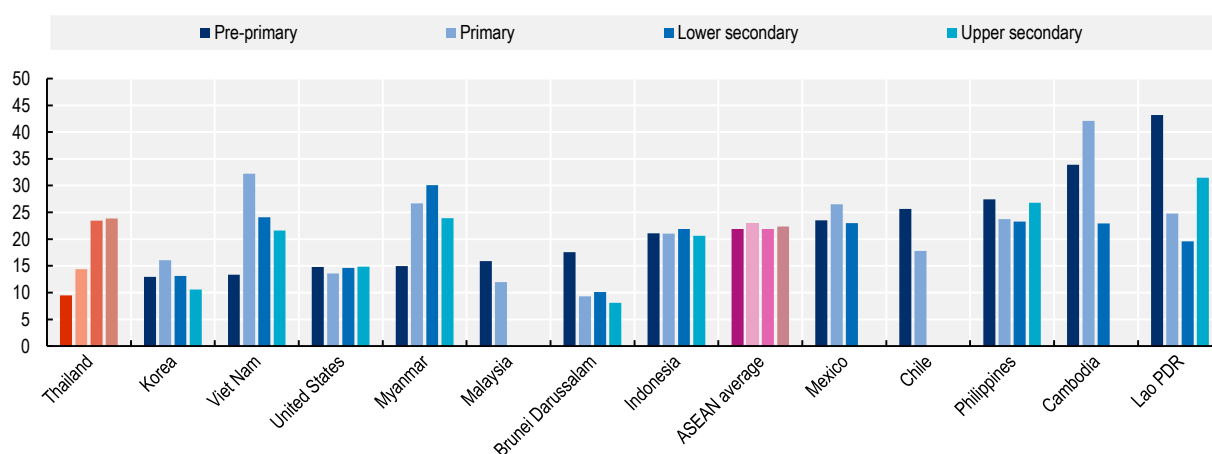
Source: World Bank (2023^[49]), *Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP)*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS>; UNESCO (2022^[51]), *The financing of education in Thailand*, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384381>.

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This trend may be linked to an increasing share of enrolment in private schools in Thailand. Private enrolment at the primary level has been on a steady rise over the past few decades, increasing from 9% in 1990 to 22% in 2020 (World Bank, 2023^[52]). The rate of private enrolment at the secondary level has been fluctuating, although still presents a slight increase from 9% in 2001 (earliest year with available data) to 12% in 2020 (World Bank, 2023^[53]).

Since the launch of the first National Education Act in 1999, Thailand has intensified efforts to make the teaching profession more attractive, and, in turn, increase the supply of high-quality teachers. Retention rates are generally high, supported by relatively attractive salaries and welfare benefits. These conditions are likely sustained by the substantial share of public education funding allocated to teaching staff compensation. In 2016, for example, teacher salaries accounted for 74% of OBEC's budget, suggesting that teacher remuneration are prioritised even amid constrained educational resources (Unesco, 2025^[54]). Teachers in Thailand also benefit from access to professional development opportunities and a degree of professional autonomy. In addition, the teaching profession continues to be held in high regard within society (UNESCO, 2019^[55]). The country has the best pupil-qualified teacher ratio⁵ among Southeast Asian countries, especially at the pre-primary level, where there are only nine students for every qualified teacher in comparison to the ASEAN average of 22 (see Figure 2.8). The ratio remains low at the primary level (14) and is better or at par with many OECD countries, such as the United States (14), Korea (16), Chile (18), and Mexico (27). However, the pupil-qualified teacher ratio increases significantly at the lower secondary (24) and upper secondary (24) levels, where Thailand starts to perform worse than the ASEAN average.

Figure 2.8. Pupil-qualified teacher ratio (headcount basis) in Thailand and selected OECD countries, latest available year



Note: Due to lack of available data, the latest available year was used.

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2023^[56]), Indicator 4.C.4: Pupil-qualified teacher ratio (headcount basis), <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>.

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Opportunities to strengthen the skills of youth in initial education

Thailand's performance in strengthening the skills of youth in initial education is influenced by a range of factors at the individual, institutional and societal levels. Drawing on findings from a literature review, desk research, a policy questionnaire distributed to Thai policymakers, and in-depth virtual consultations with stakeholders the following opportunities for improvement have been identified for strengthening the skills of youth in initial education in Thailand:

1. increasing the quality and relevance of initial education
2. promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth
3. reducing inequalities in educational outcomes.

Opportunity 1: Increasing the quality and relevance of initial education

In order to strengthen the skills of youth in initial education, improving the quality and relevance of skills development opportunities in Thailand is of utmost importance. This can ensure that Thai youth are able to acquire the skills they need to successfully move through the educational system, participate effectively in society, and improve their labour market prospects once they have finished school. Higher quality initial education can not only provide youth with better educational outcomes, but also contribute to lower levels of poverty, improved social mobility, and increased innovation and productivity in the country (OECD, 2023^[57]; UNICEF, 2019^[58]).

Two key recommendations have been identified to help Thailand to increase the quality and relevance of initial education opportunities: (1) strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education, and (2) improving the relevance of TVET offers through high-quality work-based learning opportunities.

Recommendation 1: Strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education

As described in the performance section, gross enrolment rates at the primary and secondary levels have been universal or near universal over the past two decades in Thailand. Furthermore, completion rates (see Figure 2.2) are better than most Southeast Asian countries and above the ASEAN average (see Figure 2.4). Thailand also has among the best pupil-qualified teacher ratios in the region at the pre-primary and primary levels, although the ratio increases significantly at the lower and upper secondary levels (see Figure 2.8). Thailand also has good infrastructure in comparison to many ASEAN countries, with nearly all schools in the country having access to electricity, computers, and internet for pedagogical purposes (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2023^[56]).

However, despite this performance, the quality of education remains a challenge, as evidenced by Thai students' performance in the latest PISA round in 2022 (see Figure 2.5) (OECD, 2004^[42]). Average PISA scores for mathematics, reading and science are below the ASEAN and OECD averages, which suggests that there is room for the current education system to better ensure that students acquire the foundational skills needed for success in work and life.

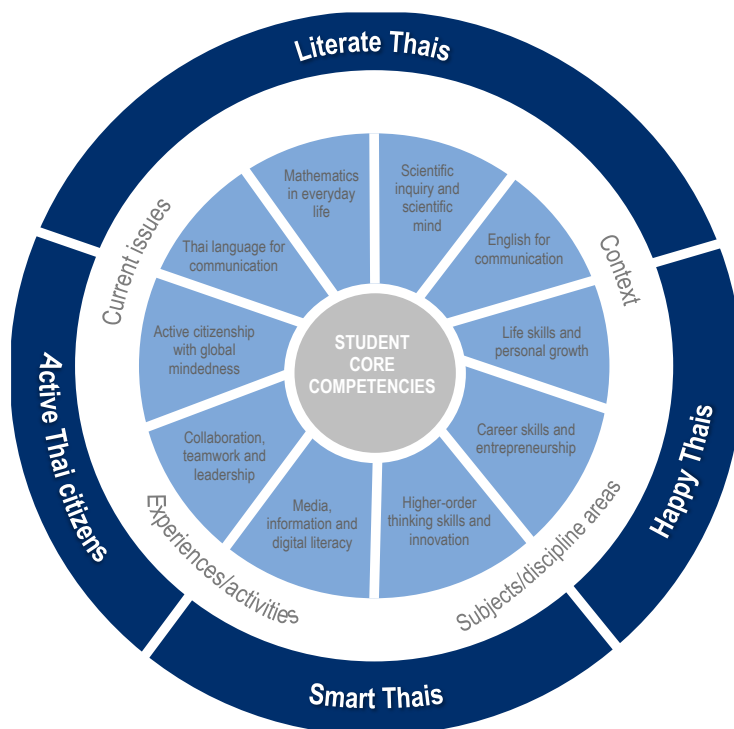
While the quality of education is determined by many factors, many of the challenges faced in the quality of initial education in Thailand stems from an outdated curriculum. The curriculum is one of the most important components of the educational system, as it operationalises how schools and educational providers will concretely equip children with the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to thrive in today's world (OECD, 2020^[59]).

Thailand's Core Curriculum for Basic Education is intended to be standards-based, with students being expected to master pre-determined standards at every grade level (OECD/UNESCO, 2016^[1]). These standards should, in theory, enable cross-comparability across classrooms, schools and districts. However, the curriculum places a significant amount of responsibility on teachers to interpret and implement the content. Furthermore, government representatives have reported that no adequate guidance is provided to successfully do this (OECD/UNESCO, 2016^[1]).

Responding to challenges in educational quality, the Office of Education Council worked with the Independent Commission for Education Reform and academic experts to shift towards a competency-based curriculum, putting a greater emphasis on critical thinking, creativity and collaboration skills. This has resulted in a core competency framework consisting of four elements and ten core competencies to be developed among students in Prathom 1 to 3 to help them adapt to today's rapidly changing world (see Figure 2.9) (Ministry of Education, 2019^[60]; Sangwanglao (จตุพล สัจวงเลา), 2024^[61]). Similar core competency frameworks are also being developed for other levels of education. Government representatives in

Thailand explained that the competency framework merely serves as guidelines from the central government. To promote a bottom-up approach, schools will be tasked to implement an area-based curriculum that takes local needs and contexts into account in order to accommodate children's backgrounds more effectively.

Figure 2.9. Framework of core competencies for the updated Thai initial education curriculum (Prathom 1-3)



Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education (2019^[62]), *Framework for core competencies for students at the basic education level and lower primary school level (Grade 1-3)*, <http://backoffice.onec.go.th/uploads/Book/1674-file.pdf>.

Good quality curriculum development must be a routine, ongoing and continuous process in order to ensure that educational systems are able to adequately respond to changes (OECD/UNESCO, 2016^[1]). Throughout the OECD, many countries use fixed major reform cycles as an opportunity to review their curricula, ensuring that their content can remain relevant. Such fixed major reforms may be planned every 2 to 5 years in countries such as the Czech Republic; every 5 to 10 years in countries such as Australia, Chile, Finland, Japan, Korea and Singapore; or every 15 to 20 years in countries such as Denmark, Mexico, New Zealand, Türkiye and the United States. While there is no clear research evidence on the optimal frequency of curriculum reform, having set guidelines can affect how quickly education systems can reflect current and future needs. In most countries, ad-hoc reforms are also used in between major reform cycles to respond to emerging skill needs (OECD, 2020^[63]).

Government representatives have reported that Thailand aims to update the curriculum every five to seven years, but in practice, this is pushed back to more than ten years per update. Before the new core competency framework, the initial education curriculum remained essentially unchanged for nearly two decades. There have been attempts to revise the initial education curriculum for the last eight years, with OBEC and OVEC co-ordinating to change the curricula for both general education and TVET and strengthen linkages between the two tracks. While a new competency framework has been developed in

recent years (see Figure 2.9), a lack of political support has prevented the official introduction of the new curriculum into schools.

Furthermore, efforts to introduce the new core competency framework have also faced pushback from key stakeholders such as teachers, who argued that the updated curriculum does not reflect their input and that they were not informed about the planned changes and how they would be affected (OECD/UNESCO, 2016^[1]; Thailand Development Research Institute, 2023^[64]). Stakeholders have reported that many teachers, as well as parents, do not understand the need for a new curriculum and lack awareness about the need to replace the current one, despite the context of global megatrends that are rapidly changing education systems and labour markets.

Based on these findings, it appears there is a need to pursue a more inclusive approach to curriculum development, emphasising the active role and input of key stakeholders such as teachers, as well as raising awareness among them about the need to keep educational curricula relevant. In many OECD countries where a bottom-up approach to curriculum development is taken, teachers are not considered as passive implementers at the final stage of the reform once the new curriculum is about to be introduced, but rather as active contributors throughout the entire reform process (OECD, 2020^[59]). Effective planning, close consultations and consensus building with key stakeholders such as teachers and students are central to a successful curriculum reform (OECD, 2020^[63]). Teachers' input into the curriculum redesign process is critical, as they have knowledge of daily classroom realities and subject content (Finnanger and Prøitz, 2024^[65]). Countries across the OECD have found different ways to involve teachers, such as conducting systematic consultations throughout the entire curriculum redesign process, reserving a seat for teacher representatives in the design team (e.g. Canada, Netherlands), and encouraging the active involvement of local levels in school curriculum development, as in Finland (see Box 2.2) (Van den Akker, 2018^[66]); (OECD, 2020^[63]).

Stakeholders in Thailand reported that there are some implementation challenges with introducing the new curriculum, including inconsistencies in the way the curriculum is applied across different schools and regions, leading to disparities in educational quality. In 2021, the government postponed its introduction in schools, due to inadequate resources among schools and families to purchase new textbooks, as well as insufficient training for teachers to implement it (Boonyatus, 2023^[67]). Teachers reportedly do not understand their responsibilities regarding the new curriculum, and many still use outdated teaching practices that focus on transmitting content rather than fully developing students' real-life skills, appropriate values and useful competencies (OECD/UNESCO, 2016^[1]).

This highlights the importance of providing adequate training to teachers to implement the new curriculum before it is formally introduced at a full scale in schools all over Thailand. Curriculum reforms may require teachers to change existing pedagogical beliefs and practices, which may take time (Fullan, 2015^[68]; OECD, 2017^[69]). In educational systems where school leaders have the responsibility for curriculum, as in Thailand and its area-based curriculum approach, school leaders will play a key role in communicating to teachers the importance of the new curriculum and convincing them to implement it in the classroom. In these settings, school leaders may involve teachers more actively in the development of the curriculum in order to foster buy-in from the start (as discussed in the case of Finland in Box 2.2), as well as encourage peer learning and teacher training at the school level (OECD, 2016^[70]; OECD, 2020^[59]); (OECD, 2019^[71]). For example, in the Philippines, the introduction of the new Kindergarten to Grade 10 (K-10) curriculum of basic education is taking place gradually and in phases (including a pilot period) to ensure that teachers have proper time to adjust and learn the new content and master the pedagogical requirements of the curriculum. The Department of Education has also implemented training sessions at the local level, where teachers engage in collaborative learning sessions to solve shared challenges in their schools (see Box 2.2) (Ombay, 2023^[72]).

Box 2.2. Relevant international example: Strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education

Finland: Co-creation of the Finnish National Curriculum

The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) leads the curriculum development process every 10 years. The latest Finnish National Curriculum was launched in 2016 and was the first successfully co-created educational policy, marking a shift from a bureaucratic curriculum development requirement to a stakeholder-led process. In the country, curriculum work is seen as an ongoing dialogue and learning cycle that helps educational stakeholders identify issues to be improved and promote their commitment to curriculum renewal. The new curriculum took 2.5 years to develop, with each municipality in Finland having their own curriculum working group to discuss how the national curriculum could be adapted to local contexts. Teachers also worked in sub-working groups that covered either a school subject or a transversal competency of the curriculum. Stakeholders were regularly involved in the renewal process, with EDUFI asking educational authorities and schools to comment on the curriculum document through surveys. Schools were encouraged to include parents and students' feedback. Three rounds of comments were also provided to the public through EDUFI's website, and over 4 000 comments were received from individuals and 180 organisations or communities.

Philippines: Teacher training to implement the new K-10 curriculum

The Department of Education announced the official launch of the new Kindergarten to Grade 10 (K-10) curriculum of basic education to further develop foundational skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional skills) among students. The department plans to introduce the curriculum gradually and in phases from the School Year 2024-2025 to School Year 2027-2028. Before the full implementation of the curriculum in schools, a pilot stage was conducted in select areas across the country, the findings of which are informing the phased implementation of the new curriculum over the next few years. The participating schools and government division offices played an active role in monitoring the implementation of the new curriculum. In addition, the Department of Education also conducted training sessions to strengthen the expertise of teachers and in preparation for the new curriculum. Through Learning Action Cells, groups of teachers engaged in collaborative learning sessions to share challenges in their school, exchange knowledge, improve attitudes, and gain new competencies needed for the new curriculum and its instruction and assessment requirements. The training sessions promoted not only collaborative learning among teachers, but also self-directed learning and reflective pedagogical practices, facilitating self-evaluation and actionable improvements.

Source: Lähdemäki, J. (2019^[73]), *Case Study: The Finnish National Curriculum 2016 – A Co-Created National Education Policy*, <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/22996/1007165.pdf> - page=407; Ombay (2023^[74]), *DepEd launches revised k-10 curriculum*, www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/878503/dep-ed-launches-revised-k-10-curriculum/story/; Ombay (2023^[75]), *Teachers training for pilot run of revised k-10 curriculum completed – DepEd*, www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/883115/teachers-training-for-pilot-run-of-revised-k-10-curriculum-completed-deped/story/; Ombay (2023^[76]), *DepEd: Pilot run of revised K-10 curriculum to begin Sept. 25*, www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/882407/dep-ed-pilot-run-of-revised-k-10-curriculum-to-begin-sept-25/story/.

Recommendation 1: Strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education

Strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education can help Thailand ensure that students develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world of work. The process of curriculum reform must actively involve key stakeholders in the educational system, such as teachers, not only to reflect the daily realities in Thai classrooms but also build buy-in for the successful implementation of the new curriculum. Furthermore, allotting adequate time to training teachers and school personnel to implement the new curriculum can help ensure its success.

Thailand could undertake the following specific actions to strengthen the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education:

- 1.1. **Adapt the curricula in initial education based on the new framework for core competencies and with regular review periods.** As the current curriculum for initial education has remained unchanged for nearly two decades, Thailand should move forward with introducing it in schools to improve the relevance of the education system, although not without ensuring that adequate support (e.g. guidelines, training for school personnel, development of new teaching materials) is provided for proper implementation. Thailand must ensure that the new curriculum is reviewed regularly and as planned (i.e. every five to seven years as reported by stakeholders), or as deemed necessary in between designated review periods.
- 1.2. **Actively involve key stakeholders such as teachers in the curriculum reform process.** As the new curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated, teachers should be involved in the process in order to ensure that their input is reflected in the curriculum's content and that there is adequate buy-in to ensure the effective implementation. This could be done through establishing systematic consultation mechanisms with teachers (e.g. surveys distributed to schools), or ensuring they have representation in governance bodies responsible for curriculum reform (e.g. working groups).
- 1.3. **Provide adequate training and support to teachers and educational staff to implement the new curriculum.** To address previous concerns among teachers and educational staff that they are unprepared to implement a new curriculum, training must be allotted in order to fully explain the contents of the new curriculum and the new roles that teachers are expected to play. Adequate time for training must also be accounted for in order to help teachers grow accustomed to the changes, as well as to update their pedagogical skills and provide them with the necessary resources and classroom management techniques to help them adapt to the new curriculum. Thailand may consider implementing a pilot phase in selected schools to test the effectiveness of the new curriculum before introducing it at full scale across the country (see Philippines in Box 2.2).

Recommendation 2: Improving relevance of TVET offers through high-quality work-based learning opportunities

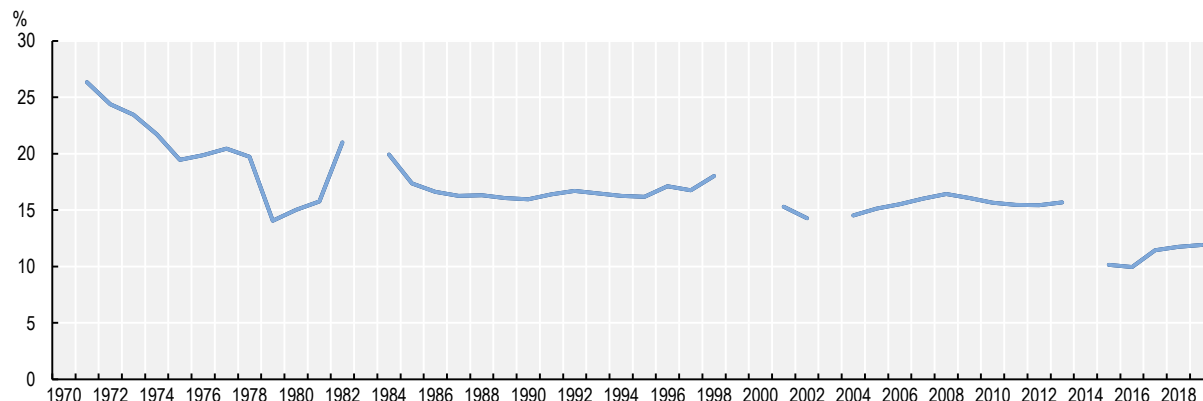
As new global production supply chains take shape, production facilities (e.g. in the semiconductor and parts manufacturing sector), are expected to relocate to Thailand, impacting the demand for new skills. This highlights the increased need to promote the development of industry-relevant skills among youth in Thailand, particularly by ensuring that TVET opportunities are accessible and of high quality (SCB Economic Intelligence Center, 2023^[77]; OECD, 2021^[31]).

Thailand already has a good base to begin with, as the country enjoys one of the highest enrolment rates in TVET programmes among ASEAN countries, second only to Indonesia. In 2022, 14% of Thai secondary education students were in the TVET track, surpassing the ASEAN average of 8% (World Bank, 2019^[5]). TVET graduates also have relatively strong labour market outcomes in Thailand, as post-secondary vocational diploma holders have employment rates that are nearly as high as those with a tertiary education degree, while vocational certificate holders have stronger employment outcomes than graduates with a general upper secondary education degree (OECD, 2021^[31]).

Many of these improvements stem from Thailand's long-standing efforts to improve the relevance of the dual TVET system by increasing the supply of work-based learning opportunities (as guaranteed by the Skills Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 and its Amendment (No.2) B.E. 2557) and promoting linkages with industry partners (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[3]). Government representatives have reported putting in place various projects and programmes to ensure relevance, such as the Learn to Earn programme, which aims to foster students' careers through vocational and work-based learning, provide them with life skills, and prepare them for the world of work; The New Breed Graduate programme, which emphasises practical work experience in S-Curve industries⁶ in support of the Thailand 4.0 strategy; the Cooperative and Work Integrated Education (CWIE) programme, which strengthens university-employer engagement to provide students with access to opportunities to develop their practical working skills; and the STEMPlus Platform, which analyses data from educational providers and industry players to match manpower supply and demand, helping inform workforce planning activities (Minister of Education, 2023^[78]). To encourage employers to promote the dual TVET system, the Thai government implemented a 100% tax exemption for expenditures incurred for apprenticeships, as well as introduced subsidies to help students shoulder the expenses of training, transportation, accommodation, uniform and safety equipment, and insurance (OECD, 2021^[31]).

In addition to improving relevance, Thailand has also established governance bodies that are dedicated to improving the quality of TVET, such as the Professional Qualification Institute, which aims to improve co-ordination across ministries concerning TVET, as well as the Public-Private Committee for Vocational Education Development, which promotes partnerships with industry stakeholders (Chalapati and Chalapati, 2020^[79]; ASEAN, 2022^[80]). The dual TVET system is also covered by quality assurance mechanisms in the country, which are overseen by the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002^[27]; ONESQA, 2021^[81]), as well as the Thai National Qualifications Framework, which sets out unified standards for qualifications and clear learning outcomes (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2022^[82]).

However, despite these many efforts to improve both the quality and relevance of the TVET system, TVET enrolment as a share of all secondary-level enrolment has been declining over the years (see Figure 2.10). In 1971, TVET students comprised 26% of all enrolment at the secondary level, but this has declined to 12% in 2019 (World Bank, 2019^[5]). Despite this steady decline in the supply of TVET graduates, the demand for higher vocational certificate or diploma graduates is even lower (see Figure 1.5 in Chapter 1) (OECD, 2021^[31]), demonstrating challenges in the ability of Thailand's TVET system to not only attract students, but to also to assure employers of the quality and relevance of their graduates' skills.

Figure 2.10. Share of TVET in secondary level enrolment, 1970 to 2019

Note: Due to lack of available data, figures for the following years are not available: 1970, 1983, 1999, 2000, 2003 and 2014.

Source: World Bank (2019^[83]) *Vocational and technical enrolment (% of secondary enrolment)*, <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/indicator/se-sec-enrl-vo-zs?view=trend&geos=THA>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/kd9gej>

The skills of TVET graduates do not always meet the requirements of employers, who have difficulty finding graduates with vocational qualifications and the right set of skills, including computer skills and other technical skills (World Bank, 2022^[84]). In 2014, 53% of employers in Thailand reported struggling to fill job vacancies within three months (OECD, 2021^[31]; Chalapati and Chalapati, 2020^[79]). Among employers who are able to hire graduates, they are often unsatisfied with the performance of new hires, including those coming from vocational tracks (OECD, 2021^[31]; World Bank, 2022^[84]). Employers have reported that new graduates are weak in both cognitive skills (e.g. problem solving) and non-cognitive skills (e.g. leadership, social skills) (Chenphuengpaw and Rukkiatwong, 2018^[85]).

Work-based learning opportunities are key to improving the relevance of the TVET system and ensuring that graduates have high-quality skills that meet the needs of the labour market. Empirical evidence from various countries confirms that such opportunities are more effective than school-based TVET in facilitating transitions into the labour market upon graduation, helping youth find jobs more easily and supporting companies to build the workforce they need (GIZ, 2022^[86]; OECD, 2023^[87]). Thailand recognises the importance of work-based learning and provides TVET students in school-based TVET programmes with the opportunity to participate in internships and apprenticeships in companies for at least one semester (OECD, 2021^[31]).

However, in practice, the length and the quality of work-based learning opportunities depends on the willingness of employers to provide high-quality placements to TVET students (OECD, 2021^[31]). Many of these work-based learning opportunities in Thailand still suffer from quality and relevance issues, which stem from multiple factors. Some vocational providers face severe resource constraints, including outdated equipment and lack of access to the latest industry technologies, which diminish the quality of TVET opportunities. Many enterprises in Thailand, lack equipment or machines for efficient production, and do not have enough staff with high levels of skills (Numprasertchai, Srinammuang and Skuna, 2018^[88]), which can affect their ability to supervise apprentices and provide them with valuable work-based learning opportunities.

Since TVET provided through government-run institutions does not always provide students with the right skills, it is often not the education system, but instead industry actors (through individual employers) who are taking on the main responsibility for training TVET graduates and making them job-ready in Thailand (Australian Department of Education, 2021^[89]). However, co-operation between industry and TVET schools

varies considerably across sectors and firm sizes, and the provision of work-based learning opportunities is highly dominated by large employers (OECD, 2021^[31]). Several large, multi-national companies in Thailand have established their own training colleges and sector-specific vocational programmes, revealing the insufficient inability of the national TVET system to match the needs of the labour market (Chalapati and Chalapati, 2020^[79]).

The fact that most work-based learning opportunities are offered by large companies presents a major policy gap in Thailand's TVET system, as this limits the number of students who can be enrolled in dual TVET programmes (OECD, 2021^[31]). Given that micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) constitute 99.5% of all enterprises in the country, a significant share of employers are currently unable to reap the benefits of hiring apprentices. Moreover, students are unable to apply their skills in workplaces that are most commonplace in the Thai economy. Many of these MSMEs in Thailand are also in found in key sectors, such as accommodation, food and tourism (Asian Development Bank, 2023^[90]).

MSMEs often face multiple barriers to not only recruiting apprentices, but also providing them with high-quality work-based learning opportunities. MSMEs may not always be able to afford the costs involved in fulfilling the formal requirements of the apprenticeship system, and they generally do not allot large proportions of their gross annual income on training (ILO, n.d.^[91]; Thassanabanjong, Miller and Marchant, 2009^[92]). There is also a lack knowledge or information on how to promote new training modalities for apprenticeships among MSMEs (ILO, 2018^[93]). MSMEs found in rural areas, such as those in northern Thailand, struggle the most, as industry is limited in these regions and there are less high-quality TVET colleges in rural areas in comparison to those found in cities.

These are challenges that are also present in many OECD countries, though governments have introduced several solutions in response. For example, in Germany, demographic changes have posed challenges in the ability of MSMEs to recruit skilled trainees. With more limited financial and human resources, less experience in effective recruitment practices, and less visibility, SMEs struggle to attract talented youth in comparison to larger companies. In response to this challenge, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action initiated the programme *Passgenaue Besetzung* ("perfect match"), which aims to support SMEs to find suitable trainees and job candidates (see Box 2.3) (OECD, 2024^[94]). Similarly, in Switzerland, an innovative approach using training networks has helped MSMEs overcome limitations in equipment and staff when training apprentices and TVET students. Training networks allow MSMEs to pool their resources and maximise their training potential (see Box 2.3).

In addition to enterprise-level barriers to ensuring the relevance of work-based learning opportunities, other TVET system-level challenges also exist in Thailand. Skills mismatches are prevalent in the country, as the TVET system does not sufficiently use skills data and intelligence, nor inputs from stakeholders, in order to design TVET opportunities (OECD, 2021^[31]). Skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) exercises are central to determining the supply and demand of skills in the labour market and adjusting skills development opportunities accordingly. However, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, the use of SAA exercises in Thailand is fragmented and sporadic (World Bank, 2021^[95]). At the country level, there is also a clear need to promote the systematic collection, management and use of skills data to inform the content of skills development opportunities and reduce skills mismatches (see Chapter 4).

Box 2.3. Relevant international examples: Improving the relevance of TVET offers through high-quality work-based learning opportunities

Germany: Matching of youth apprentices to MSMEs in need

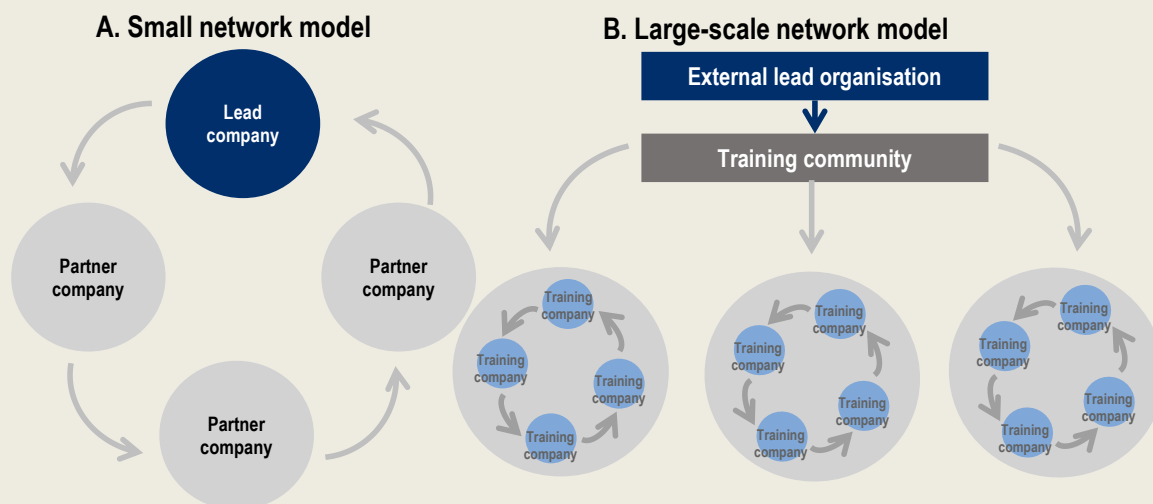
The German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action initiated the programme *Passgenaue Besetzung* (“perfect match”), which aims to support SMEs to find suitable trainees and job candidates. In the programme, a network of advisors reaches out to MSMEs and support them to fill their vacant apprenticeship positions. The advisors are employed through the programme and are based in local business organisations, such as Chambers of Industry and Commerce, Chambers of Skilled Crafts, and Chambers of Liberal Professions, among others. The advisors help determine the MSMEs’ hiring needs, identify requirement profiles, and search for potential candidates. To match apprentices with MSMEs, they organise “apprentice-speed-dating” initiatives, conduct vocational training fairs, accompany young people at job interviews, and use various channels for outreach and consultation (e.g. social media, virtual meetings, face-to-face). A counterfactual impact evaluation of the programme determined that it was successful, exceeding the number of MSMEs that it aimed to support, with many of the supported MSMEs consulted to better integrate foreign youth and skilled workers. Support for micro-enterprises was a strong achievement – amounting to 50% of all consultations – as this group faces the most difficulties in finding suitable apprentices and workers.

Switzerland: Host company networks to support MSMEs in providing training

In Switzerland, host company networks (*Lehrbetriebsverbünde*) group together enterprises that cannot or do not want to train apprentices on their own. Through this arrangement, enterprises can share the responsibilities of apprenticeship training, offer a bigger range of learning opportunities, and maximise the training potential of those that are too small and/or specialised to singlehandedly cover all the competencies specified in the VET curriculum. This arrangement helps guarantee that learners can obtain a comprehensive training programme, even when they are placed with small companies. Host company networks are covered by quality assurance mechanisms as specified in the Vocational Training Act and are required to have the necessary instruments and processes in place to routinely ensure the quality of training in the enterprises.

Several structures are possible. In the small network model (see Panel A in Figure 2.11), two or more companies join forces and provide complementary training, although one of them is considered the lead company, who is responsible for the apprentice. The partner companies cover training areas that the lead company cannot teach or could be taught better by partner companies. The costs for the apprenticeship are contractually regulated between the lead company and the partners companies. In the large-scale network model (see Panel B in Figure 2.11), an external and separate organisation is tasked to lead and carry out administrative functions, such as managing the training contract, ensuring compliance with quality assurance requirements, as well as organising the coaching, training and rotation of apprentices between the different enterprises. In this model, financing for the external lead organisation must be secured when the network is established.

Figure 2.11. Structures of host company networks to support MSMEs in Switzerland



Source: Berufsbildung (n.d.^[96]), *Training company association: Possible solutions for smaller companies*, www.berufsbildung.ch/de/grundlagen/lehriebetriebsverbund; ILO (n.d.^[97]), *Adapting apprenticeships to the needs of SMEs*, www.ilo.org/topics/apprenticeships/publications-and-tools/digital-toolkit-quality-apprenticeships/innovations-and-strategies/innovations-and-emerging-trends-apprenticeships/adapting-apprenticeships-needs-smes/; OECD (2024^[98]), *A perfect match – supporting SMEs in filling their vacant apprenticeship positions*, www.oecd.org/en/publications/2023/04/providing-local-actors-with-case-studies-evidence-and-solutions-places_20b385f4/a-perfect-match-supporting-smes-in-filling-their-vacant-apprenticeship-positions_126f584a.html.

Recommendation 2: Improving relevance of TVET offers through high-quality work-based learning opportunities

Improving the relevance of TVET offers is central to ensuring that students in Thailand's vocational track develop the skills they need to fully contribute to their workplaces, as well as meet the standards of employers, helping promote the TVET track as a competitive option for students. High quality work-based learning opportunities can help improve the relevance of TVET by allowing students to apply their skills in real-world settings, facilitating their school-to-work transitions, and supporting them to find jobs more easily.

Thailand could undertake the following specific actions to improve the relevance of TVET offers through high-quality work-based learning opportunities:

- 2.1. Leverage the large number of MSMEs in Thailand to increase the supply of work-based learning opportunities.** Thailand should tap on the potential of millions of MSMEs in the country to provide more high-quality work-based placements for TVET graduates. Relevant ministries and agencies, such as the Office of the Vocational Education Commission and the Office of SMEs Promotion, should collaborate to inform them about the benefits of work-based learning opportunities such as apprenticeships, raise awareness about available government support measures for work placements (e.g. Learn to Earn Programme, New Breed Graduate

Programme, CWIE, STEMPlus Platform), identify the recruitment needs of enterprises (e.g. qualifications, skills and competencies, number of students sought), and match these with potential trainees and apprentices enrolled in dual TVET programmes.

- 2.2. Build training networks to help MSMEs gain access to high-quality equipment and learning opportunities for TVET offers.** Thailand may work with enterprises to establish company training networks in order to fill the gaps in the capacity of MSMEs to offer high-quality vocational training. Through such networks, apprentices assigned to MSMEs, especially those in Thailand's rural areas, can have access to better facilities and equipment in partner companies, as well as gain additional skills and expertise that small companies cannot always singlehandedly provide. Additionally, this arrangement can help provide apprentices with a wider range of work-based learning opportunities, enabling them to develop a more comprehensive set of skills.
- 2.3. Use SAA exercises more systematically to determine the content of work-based learning opportunities.** As discussed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4, the supply of work-based learning opportunities in Thailand must be underpinned by reliable and timely data about which skills are needed in the labour market. SAA exercises must be conducted by both government and private sector actors alike, and subsequently used by TVET providers and training companies to inform the set of skills to be developed among trainees and apprentices.

Opportunity 2: Promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth

While Thailand has succeeded in raising gross enrolment rates in primary and secondary education over the past few decades, enrolment at tertiary education still remains low in comparison to OECD countries (World Bank Group, 2023^[99]). In order to support Thailand's ambitions of transitioning towards an innovation-based economy, promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth should be a critical priority. It is important to ensure that these initiatives are accompanied with efforts to raise the supply of jobs requiring higher levels of skills, in line with priority sectors in Thailand's socio-economic development strategies (e.g. Thailand 4.0, 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan), to avoid creating skills imbalances. Higher education systems play a key role in fostering the development of these skills, whether they be transversal higher-order and cognitive skills such as creativity and critical thinking, or specialised and industry-specific skills, such as those related to science and technology (e.g. artificial intelligence, coding, data management) (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002^[27]; OECD, 2024^[100]).

Two key recommendations have been identified to help Thailand to promote the development of higher-level skills among youth: (1) promoting informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified career guidance counsellors in schools; and (2) increasing access to high-quality higher education programmes.

Recommendation 3: Promoting informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools

Efforts to raise enrolment in higher-level educational programmes must take into account students' interests, as well as the needs of the labour market. Career guidance services play an important role guiding students' decisions, providing them with relevant, personalised and timely information on what skills are in demand in the labour market (see Box 2.4). Such services help students assess their current skills set, identify opportunities for further educational development, and provide advice on where to obtain skills development opportunities (CEDEFOP et al., 2019^[101]; (OECD, 2023^[102]).

Box 2.4. Definition of career guidance

Career guidance includes services and activities that aim to assist individuals to make educational, training and occupational choices, as well as to help them prepare their transitions into the labour market and manage their careers. Career guidance has two main elements:

- Career education, where students learn about the world of work and develop career management skills through a combination of classroom-taught lessons and work experience.
- Individual career advice provided on a one-to-one basis by a career guidance professional, who shares specific advice on further education and training choices and career decisions.

These two elements of career guidance are underpinned by (increasingly web-based) career information on training courses, occupations and career pathways. These services may be delivered face-to-face, at a distance or in blended mode, and either pro-actively (e.g. school-mandated interviews for all students) or reactively (e.g. on demand). They may be provided to students through primary and secondary schools, vocational training centres, and tertiary and higher education institutions, as well as through public and private employment services and public and private career guidance centres.

Career guidance could take the form of mentoring and coaching. In a mentorship, an older and more experienced individual typically gives advice to students (or younger employees) based on their own personal and professional experiences. Coaching, on the other hand, uses students' pre-determined goals as a starting point and helps them work towards these goals through improved behaviours and thinking patterns, thereby increasing their performance and productivity levels.

Source: OECD (2024^[103]), *Challenging Social Inequality Through Career Guidance: Insights from International Data and Practice*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/619667e2-en>; OECD (2010^[104]), *Learning for Jobs*, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264087460-en>; UNESCO (2019^[101]), *Investing in Career Guidance*, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378215>; Indeed (2024^[105]), *Mentoring, Coaching and Counseling: What's the Difference?*, www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/mentoring-coaching-and-counseling.

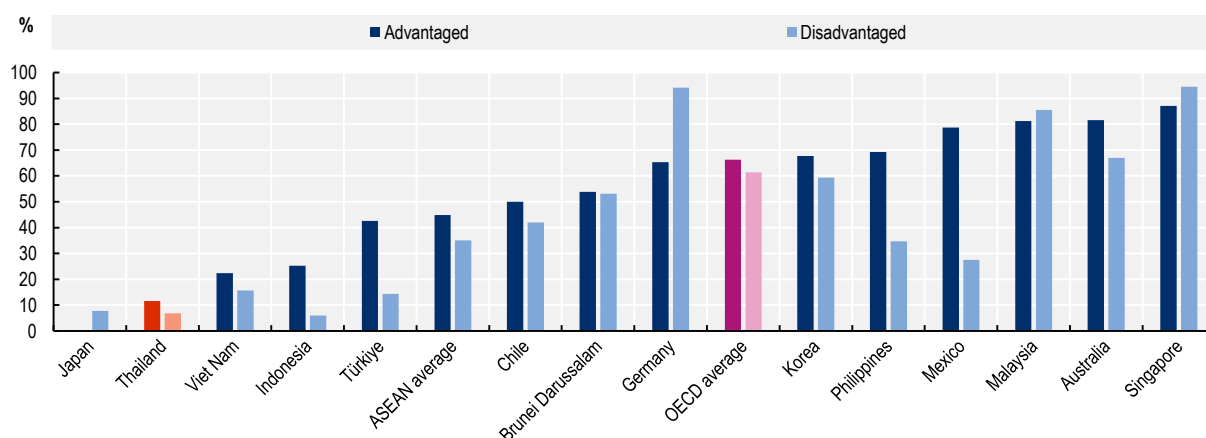
In Thailand, career guidance services are provided by the government, as well as non-government actors such as the private sector and civil society. Within government, the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) under the Ministry of Education plays a key role in developing career guidance curricula from primary to high school levels, including in the vocational track. Other key government actors include the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute, as well as the Department of Employment and the Department for Skill Development of the Ministry Labour, which provides career guidance services to adolescents and youth who have dropped out of school through Provincial Labour Offices. In addition, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation also manages the Further Education Planning website (<https://gotouni.mhesi.go.th/>), which provides information on the curricula provided by Thai HEIs, the number of expected students, tuition fees, scholarships, career options after graduation, and living conditions (e.g. dormitories). Beyond government, social enterprises and NGOs also offer a variety of career guidance services, such as skills assessment, the provision of career information (UNICEF, 2022^[106]; Equitable Education Fund, 2023^[107]).

However, many challenges still exist in Thailand when it comes to the provision of career guidance, resulting in the lack of information about in-demand skills and qualifications in the labour market, and therefore significant skills mismatches. Field-of-study choices in Thailand are often mismatched with labour market needs, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, where there are low levels of enrolment despite the fact there is high demand for STEM graduates by industry. Conversely, there is a disproportionate oversupply of tertiary-educated workers in non-STEM career fields (OECD, 2021^[108]) (Somsathan et al., 2022^[109]).

As described in Recommendation 2, and in Chapters 3 and 4, one of the main policy gaps contributing to the low relevance of educational opportunities in Thailand is the absence of SAA exercises to support the alignment of supply and demand for skills development programmes. As Thailand currently lacks a national database that consolidates information about what skills are required by industry, schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) lack important information needed to support the design of curricula that can equip graduates with the competencies required by employers (NESDC, 2023^[110]; Office of National Higher Education, 2022^[111]).

Furthermore, many schools have inadequate human resources dedicated to providing career guidance services to students and helping them make informed choices about higher education programmes. In Southeast Asia, Thailand has one of the lowest shares of students with access to one or more counsellor(s) who provide career guidance, regardless of whether they are found in an advantaged or disadvantaged school (see Figure 2.12). Only 12% of students in advantaged schools in Thailand have access to career guidance services, which is significantly lower than the ASEAN average of 45% and the OECD average of 66%. The situation is even worse in disadvantaged schools, where only 7% of students in Thailand have access to career guidance services. This rate is also significantly lower than the ASEAN (35%) and OECD (61%) averages for disadvantaged schools (OECD, 2019^[112]). These disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged schools were confirmed by government representatives in Thailand, who reported that students in remote or underserved areas in the country have limited access to up-to-date information about educational pathways, labour market trends, and career options.

Figure 2.12. Share of students in advantaged and disadvantaged schools with one or more counsellor(s) who provide career guidance, 2018



Source: OECD (2019^[112]), "How school systems prepare students for their future", in *PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/31156087-en>.

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In addition to a low supply of career guidance counsellors in the country, the quality of career guidance services is also a concern. In many cases, teachers in Thailand double as guidance counsellors, but they often do not have the necessary knowledge and resources to perform this function (OECD, 2020^[113]; UNICEF, 2022^[106]; OECD, 2019^[114]). Many counsellors in Thai schools thus provide career guidance as an additional task on top of their primary responsibilities, which affects their ability to provide personalised and comprehensive information on labour market needs, and detracts from their primary role of teaching. Most schools in the country allocate only less than one hour per week for students to attend guidance counselling sessions. Furthermore, even when prospective guidance counsellors want to have formal qualifications to formally practice the profession, programmes in psychology and counselling do not open for admission every year (UNICEF, 2022^[115]).

There is a clear need for Thailand to increase the supply of career guidance counsellors in schools to help students make informed choices about which higher education programmes to take. This would entail recruiting more individuals into the guidance counselling profession, for instance by supporting more individuals to take up formal qualifications in counselling studies and providing the profession with a range of attractive benefits. For instance, in New Zealand, the government introduced the Guidance Counsellor Training Study Award to reduce cost barriers and incentivise prospective guidance counsellors to take up formal qualifications (see Box 2.5). Increasing the supply of qualified guidance counsellors can thus lower Thailand's counsellor-student ratio, reduce the current workload of counsellors, and avoid the need to have teachers perform career guidance tasks on top of their teaching responsibilities (UNICEF, 2022^[106]).

Increasing the supply of career guidance counsellors in Thailand also involves making the profession more attractive. Career pathways for career guidance counsellors are not as well-defined and competitive as those for teachers. Furthermore, the practice of career guidance lacks recognition and is considered as unimportant by many in the country, with many practitioners believing that any teacher can perform the tasks of a guidance counsellor (UNICEF, 2022^[106]). While attitudinal barriers are more complex to address, providing guidance counsellors with professional support and a wide range of benefits can help improve perceptions of the profession in Thailand. For example, in Singapore, the Ministry of Education provides comprehensive support to school counsellors, such as opportunities for skills development and collaboration with other educational professionals, as well as clear pathways for career advancement (see Box 2.5).

Realistically, it might take time for Thailand to adequately increase its supply of career guidance counsellors with professional qualifications. For instance, in nearby Philippines, where there is also a severe shortage of career guidance counsellors, policymakers estimate that it will take up to 14 years to produce the supply of qualified career guidance counsellors needed to fill all vacancies across the country (see Box 2.5) (Esguerra, 2024^[116]). Thailand's provision of incentives for individuals to take up formal qualifications in career guidance must thus be accompanied by efforts to train teachers to provide these services in the meantime. This would entail allotting additional resources to OVEC's Counselling Service Unit, which provides training to teachers to conduct guidance counselling. Thailand must reinforce these training initiatives in order to ensure that teachers are equipped with adequate knowledge of training opportunities, labour markets, and career pathways, and are trained to identify and use reliable sources of labour market information to provide evidence-based advice to their students (OECD, 2010^[104]). Additionally, career advice given to students must be in line with Thailand's multiple intelligences approach, and must build on students' interest, aptitudes, and needs.

Box 2.5. Relevant international examples: Promoting informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools

New Zealand: Study grants to incentivise prospective guidance counselling students

New Zealand's Ministry of Education launched the Guidance Counsellor Training Study Award to incentivise prospective students to complete a master's qualification in counselling studies. Every year, the programme offers four full-time teacher equivalent study awards to untrained guidance counsellors, as well as teachers who want to become qualified guidance counsellors. The award is open to individuals working in secondary schools and who have applied to study a Master of Counselling or Counselling Studies at an approved tertiary education institution. The award provides up to four years of part-time study or two years for full-time study, coverage of tuition fees, and contributions towards travel or relocation costs. In addition, award recipients will continue to receive their normal salary while on study leave.

Philippines: Training for teachers on guidance counselling

The Philippine Department of Education's Bureau of Learner Support conducts month-long training sessions for teachers throughout the country to prepare them for the implementation of the Career Guidance Programme (CGP). The CGP aims to provide secondary-level students with support in choosing their career tracks. With the help of resource speakers such as licensed guidance counsellors and experts, the training sessions aim to equip teachers with a concrete understanding of what career guidance services are and how they can perform career guidance tasks effectively for learners. The content of the training modules includes the legal framework for career guidance in the Philippines, the basics of career guidance provision, and trends and updates in the field of career guidance.

Singapore: Benefits and professional development support for school counsellors

Singapore's Ministry of Education recognises the value that school counsellors play in nurturing students' socio-emotional and mental health development by providing a wide range of support services. Before being recruited as a school counsellor, prospective applicants are enrolled in a foundational training programme that equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct counselling activities, and then graduate with a professional accreditation. The Ministry of Education provides their full salary during the foundational training programme.

Among many benefits, school counsellors receive tailored professional development opportunities throughout their career to strengthen their counselling skills and build their expertise (e.g. workshops, seminars), as well as participate in networking and collaboration opportunities with school, ministry officers and other professionals from diverse domains to exchange best practices and collaborate. The Ministry of Education also provides clear pathways for career advancement for school counsellors, allowing them to progress in their role by leading counselling initiatives or mentoring junior counsellors. They may also take on leaderships positions within the school or at the ministry level, enabling them to contribute to the development of policies regarding school counselling and student well-being.

Source: Ministry of Education (2024^[117]), *Guidance Counsellor Training Study Award*, <https://workforce.education.govt.nz/current-teachers/sabbaticals-study-awards-and-study-grants/guidance-counsellor-training-study-award>; Ministry of Education (2024^[118]), *School Counsellor (Trained/Untrained)*, www.moe.gov.sg/careers/non-teaching-careers/allied-educators/school-counsellor; Department of Education (2017^[119]), *DepEd trains teachers on career guidance*, www.deped.gov.ph/2017/02/17/deped-trains-teachers-on-career-guidance/; Department of Education (2021^[120]), *Career Guidance Program (GCP) for S.Y. 2021-2022*, <https://caraga.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/CAREER-GUIDANCE.pdf>.

Recommendation 3: Promoting informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools

Promoting informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools can help ensure that Thai students choose higher education programmes that are in line with their own interests and abilities and, at the same time, are reflective of the skills and qualifications that are high in demand in the labour market. This can help ensure that students' investments in their education are well-rewarded with good employment opportunities and commensuration, as well as contribute to reducing skills mismatches in Thailand.

Thailand could undertake the following specific actions to promote informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools:

- 3.1. Provide incentives for guidance counsellors to obtain formal qualifications, as well as competitive benefits and support for practicing professionals.** Thailand can increase the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors by introducing financial incentives (e.g. scholarships, study leaves) to encourage prospective students to take up guidance counselling studies and obtain formal qualifications that certify that they have the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies to provide career guidance services. In addition, Thailand can raise the profile of guidance counselling as a profession by providing competitive working conditions to guidance counsellors. This could be done by putting policies in place to ensure that school administrators assign career counselling posts to individuals with formal qualifications, provide continuous professional development opportunities (e.g. networking, training on newest career guidance tools and techniques), and clear pathways for career advancement.
- 3.2. Provide career guidance training to teachers.** As Thailand works over the long term to fill the shortage of qualified career guidance counsellors, the country can adopt the interim measure of training teachers on the provision career guidance services. OVEC, which is already active in training teachers in this area through its Counselling Service Unit, must reinforce its efforts to provide teachers, especially those found in disadvantaged schools (e.g. in rural areas), with basic career guidance skills, up-to-date knowledge of labour markets, and the latest effective practices in the career guidance profession. Teachers must also be trained to maintain Thailand's multiple intelligences approach in the provision of career advice.

Recommendation 4: Increasing access to high-quality higher education programmes

Access to higher levels of education promotes the development of higher-level skills among youth, which can improve their ability to thrive in an increasingly complex world of work, as well as support the productivity and innovative capacity of the country's workforce. Higher education is playing an increasingly important role in boosting countries' economic development and improving overall social well-being. Given these benefits, higher education institutions (HEIs) are accounting for an increasingly large share of national income in OECD countries and are facing greater public scrutiny to ensure value for money and high-quality performance (OECD, 2020^[121]).

Similarly, in Thailand, the government is making substantial investments in higher education to produce a highly skilled workforce capable of driving its ambitions for innovation-based growth. Initiatives such as the Thai KOSEN project, which partners with Japan's National Institute of Technology (KOSEN), have been

put in place to promote engineering education in specialised knowledge and skills; the New Breed Graduate Programme, which provides work-based learning experiences in strategic sectors outlined in Thailand 4.0; and the Cooperative and Work Integrated Education (CWIE) programme, which strengthens university-industry engagement and allows students to gain practical working skills through work-based learning opportunities.

Although gross enrolment rates have risen across all levels of education in Thailand over the past two decades, enrolment in tertiary education has remained relatively low. This is despite the “massification” of higher education – defined as the expansion of access beyond the nation’s elite (Crocco, 2018^[122]) – in the country (OECD, 2020^[113]; World Bank, 2023^[123]). Many HEIs in Thailand are struggling to fill their available spaces. Government representatives attribute this to the country’s rapid demographic shift toward an ageing society and a shrinking youth population, which has led to a steady decline in student enrolment. This trend presents significant financial challenges for HEIs and increases the risk of downsizing or closure for many institutions (OECD, 2020^[113]; Scott and Guan, 2023^[124]; ICEF Monitor, 2017^[125]). This issue underscores Thailand’s urgent need to address its demographic challenges while simultaneously expanding access to tertiary educational in priority fields such as information and communication technology (ICT), artificial intelligence, robotics and engineering, and digital medicine, among others (Australian Department of Education, 2020^[126]; Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[3]).

Improving the efficiency of current quality assurance mechanisms for higher education

Addressing the challenge of low demand for tertiary-level programmes and making them more attractive to prospective students will require enhancing the quality of higher education. Existing regulations govern both internal and external quality assurance systems for training institutions, including HEIs. Section 48 of the National Education Act of 1999 stipulates that internal quality assurance (IQA) is considered the responsibility of training providers, including HEIs. These institutions are required to integrate quality assurance mechanisms into their management practices, submit annual reports to relevant government agencies, and make these reports publicly accessible. IQA is overseen by the Office for Higher Education (OHEC) under the Ministry of Education (Office of the Prime Minister, 2002^[27]; OHEC, 2014^[127]).

In addition, external quality assurance (EQA) is conducted by the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA), who sends a panel of assessors to gather qualitative data through observations and compare these against a set of criteria and standards, which differ for each level of education (ONESQA, 2021^[128]). External quality assurance mechanisms evaluate HEIs based on 32 indicators, including employment outcomes of graduates within one year of graduation, employers’ satisfaction of graduates, and share of research and creative work out of HEI activities, among others (ONESQA, 2021^[128]). In addition to these quality assurance mechanisms established by law, the Thai government has set additional regulations to guarantee the quality of the higher education system (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3. Regulations for quality assurance in Thailand's higher education system

Initiative	Description
Announcement of the Commission on Higher Education Standards on guidelines for enhancing the quality of faculty staff to achieve the desired learning outcomes, according to the Higher Education Standards B.E. 2566 (2023)	The announcement focuses on improving the effectiveness of higher education faculty by setting standards in three components: knowledge, competencies, and values. It categorises the quality of faculty into four levels: (1) beginner or fellow teacher; (2) competent or professional teacher; (3) proficient or scholarly teacher; and (4) mastery teacher.
Ministerial Regulation on the Standard of Higher Education Provision B.E.2565 (2022)	The regulation establishes minimum standards for higher education institutions, covering their characteristics, quality, operations, outcomes, and overall educational provision. The standards serve as a framework for promoting, supervising, inspecting, monitoring, and evaluating higher education. The regulation is divided into three components: (1) institutional readiness standards; (2) operational standards; and (3) quality development standards. It covers standards for diploma, bachelor and graduate programmes. The regulation requires Thai higher education institutions to align their programmes with national development goals, and to ensure that their curricula adhere to higher education qualification standards and quality assurance principles (with an emphasis on learning assessment).
Ministerial Regulation on the Qualification Framework on Higher Education B.E 2565 (2022)	The regulation identifies the expected learning outcomes and curriculum standards for diploma, bachelor, and graduate programmes. The outcomes cover four areas: (1) knowledge, (2) skills, (3) ethics, and (4) character.
Announcement of the Commission of Higher Education Standard on the Quality Assurance for Higher Education (2021)	The announcement identifies the criteria for the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutes. It covers internal and external quality assurance, as well as educational quality monitoring and development. The announcement emphasises the importance of the quality assurance process in enabling higher education institutions to meet the needs of stakeholders and gain more national and international recognition.
Announcement of the Commission of Higher Education Standard on the Quality Assurance for Higher Education (2021)	This announcement identifies the criteria of quality assurance for higher education institutions. It relates to the internal quality assurance, educational quality monitoring, educational quality development and external quality assurance. This process of quality assurance aims to elevate the status of higher education institutions to meet the needs of stakeholders and gain more national and international recognition.
Enhancing Thai higher education institutions to secure accreditation from the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET)	This project aims to develop the quality of engineering education in line with international standards.

Source: OECD Skills Strategy Thailand policy questionnaire.

While Thailand has a quality assurance system in place with numerous regulations and controls, existing mechanisms are perceived as bureaucratic, and resources to implement them are inadequate (Hemthong, Thanasatchawat and Savatsomboon, 2023^[129]; Scott and Guan, 2023^[124]). There is a lack of capacity among higher education providers to conduct comprehensive internal quality assurance, such as self-assessments, and many of them are reluctant to comply due to the large amount of paperwork involved.

Nonetheless, government representatives in Thailand still recognise the need to have mechanisms in place to monitor and ensure the quality of HEIs. In response to this need, Thailand could consider adopting digital tools to facilitate the conduct of quality assurance mechanisms for HEIs, helping to streamline procedures and make them more systematised and accessible for higher education programmes. For example, in some OECD countries such as Finland (see Box 2.6), quality assurance for higher education is done through a digital platform, which offers a joint online space for conducting both internal (i.e. through a self-evaluation template filled out by HEIs) and external quality assurance (i.e. assessment conducted by an external audit team). The introduction of the platform has helped streamline the quality assurance process for all relevant parties, as it allows HEIs to upload documents needed for the audit, as well as allows the audit team to write the audit report directly into the platform itself. After the audit, the report is also published on the platform, rendering evaluations by FINEEC more transparent and participatory (FINEEC, 2018^[130]; FINEEC, 2019^[131]). Adopting a similar digital platform can help Thailand reduce the amount of paperwork involved in quality assurance processes, such as by allowing HEIs to answer evaluation questions and/or

assess their performance on indicators on the platform itself and upload supporting documents onto it, as well as by allowing external auditors to compose and publish their write-ups digitally on the same platform.

Strengthening digital higher education programmes through comprehensive quality assurance mechanisms and improved digital competencies among educators

In addition to improving quality to enhance the attractiveness of existing higher education programmes, more online modalities and distance learning options can contribute to widening access to higher levels of education among the Thai population, helping address inter-regional differences and increase educational attainment levels in disadvantaged rural areas. This can also support the country's efforts to attract more international students, promote digital learning in higher education, and become a digital university of the future that offers standardised online and hybrid education options (Office of National Higher Education, 2022^[111]). If designed and used effectively, standardised online higher education options could help educators reach a larger number of students, as well as maintain education provision at scale despite a shortage of qualified educators. Online higher education could help transform teaching and learning practices, use more differentiated learning approaches, better detect students at risk of failure, and lead to faster completion times for students in higher education (OECD, 2023^[132]; OECD, 2024^[133]). There is also some evidence to suggest that higher education programmes offered in blended formats or fully online have been able to provide similar learning outcomes as in-person courses at significantly lower cost (Chirikov et al., 2020^[134]).

In Thailand, online forms of learning are gaining ground, as evidenced by the introduction of the Thailand Massive Online Open Courses (Thai MOOC) platform, which was launched in 2016 to expand access to education (see Box 3.3 in Chapter 3). The platform currently offers over 700 non-formal courses in 12 areas: education and training; food and nutrition; mathematics and science; computers and technology; life skills and development; business and management; language and communication; engineering and architecture; arts, culture and religion; society, politics and governance; health and medicine; and agriculture and environment (Thai MOOC, 2024^[135]). In addition, OVEC is prioritising digital literacy and ICT training in schools to make students more proficient in using digital tools for learning, while the Ministry for Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) is HEIs to develop digital platforms for learning and online short courses, which are also available to adult learners.

The increasing popularity of online education options in Thailand is in line with trends observed in many OECD countries, where digital education technologies have now become a key resource and where fully online HEIs are emerging and growing (OECD, 2023^[132]). As of 2023, at least 17 OECD countries have recognised fully online higher education providers within their educational system, which may either be public or government-dependent, or independent non-profit or for-profit. In some cases, traditional HEIs have partnered with private educational technology companies to either integrate online learning material into their formal online programmes, help them manage their delivery of online education options, or completely outsource the development of online programmes (Broberg and Golden, 2023^[136]).

However, despite its many benefits, there is also evidence to suggest that fully online programmes can lead to poor learning outcomes (Escueta et al., 2020^[137]; OECD, 2023^[132]), which underlines the need to ensure that careful attention is paid to ensuring the quality of online higher education options (OECD, 2023^[138]; OECD, 2024^[139]). Online higher education programmes must thus be carefully approached in Thailand, and a comprehensive set of quality assurance processes – covering both the design or development and implementation phases – must be put in place to guarantee their quality and relevance (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4. Quality assurance mechanisms for online higher education programmes

	Programme design and development	Programme implementation	
		Internal quality assurance	External quality assurance
Current quality assurance mechanism in Thailand	N/A	Self-assessments (Section 48 of National Education Act of 1999)	External audits (Section 49 of National Education Act of 1999)
Responsible agency in Thailand	N/A	Office for Higher Education (OHEC)	Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA)
Action points for Thailand (with OECD examples)	Introduce review and approval process to ensure quality and relevance (see Hungary in Box 2.6)	- Improve efficiency through digital platforms (see Finland in Box 2.5) - Add additional indicators specific to digitalisation (see Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal, Romania and Spain in (Broberg and Golden, 2023^[136]) <u>and guidance on digital quality assurance from (OECD, 2024^[139])</u>	- Add additional indicators specific to digitalisation (see Estonia in Box 2.6) - Publish audit results of online programmes (see Finland in Box 2.6) - Introduce quality labels for online programmes (see Estonia in Box 2.6)

Source: Broberg, N. and G. Golden (2023^[136]), “How are OECD governments navigating the digital higher education landscape?: Evidence from a comparative policy survey”, *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 303, <https://doi.org/10.1787/93468ccb-en>; European Commission (2024^[140]), *Quality assurance in higher education: Finland*, <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/quality-assurance-higher-education>; FINEEC (2024^[141]), *Audit register for higher education institutions*, www.karvi.fi/en/evaluations/higher-education/audit-register-higher-education-institutions; FINEEC (2018), *3rd cycle: Audits of higher education institutions 2018-2024*, www.karvi.fi/en/evaluations/higher-education/3rd-cycle-audits-higher-education-institutions-2018-2024; OECD (2023^[138]), *Ensuring quality digital higher education in Hungary*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f44fd6f-en>; OECD (2024) (2024^[142]), *OECD Workshop: Enhancing Quality Assurance in Digital Adult Education Summary of Discussions*, www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/skills-strategies/centre-for-skills-peer-learning-events/OECD-Workshop-Enhancing-Quality-Assurance-in-Digital-Adult-Education-Summary-of-Discussions_240718_1707.PDF; OECD (2024^[139]), *Quality Matters: Strengthening the Quality Assurance of Adult Education and Training*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f44a185b-en>.

Thailand can adopt proactive measures from the outset of programme design and development to strengthen the quality of its digital higher education offerings. These efforts should prioritise alignment with Thailand 4.0 priority sectors, ensuring that new higher education programmes are thoroughly reviewed by Thai national educational authorities for their quality and relevance before officially being offered to learners. For instance, in Hungary (see Box 2.6), the government permits HEIs to introduce new programmes only when they have been evaluated by the Hungarian Committee and approved by the Educational Authority and the Ministry of Culture and Innovation (OECD, 2023^[138]).

Moreover, once online programmes are operational and are being implemented, Thailand’s existing quality assurance mechanisms could be refined by tailoring them to online and digital formats. This could include introducing digitalisation-specific indicators in self-assessments and external audits, such as those that pertain to ensuring the quality and effectiveness of course design (e.g. integrating active learning and interactive content), ensuring staff are competent and have adequate training for digital contexts, ensuring student verifiability and educational integrity (e.g. preventing cheating and plagiarism), safeguarding data and personal privacy, and providing adequate infrastructure and technical support (OECD, 2024^[139]; Broberg and Golden, 2023^[136]).

In addition to internal quality assurance, external mechanisms, such as the use of quality labels, are also used as a tool to guarantee digital education programmes’ quality. Quality labels and certificates are provided by external bodies (i.e. separate from the training provider seeking certification; e.g. governmental or non-governmental organisations) who conduct audits using pre-determined requirements for quality. When training providers meet these requirements, they are given quality labels, such as a logo, emblem or symbol that they may use and advertise to the public (OECD, 2021^[143]; OECD, 2023^[144]). In Estonia, the Quality Label of Digital Education has been used since 2008 to assure learners

of the quality of individual online courses. More specifically, the label assures that the courses apply digital technologies effectively to improve their learning processes, and that education materials follow best practices for the creation of digital learning materials (see Box 2.6).

One policy measure, distinct from but closely related to the quality assurance of digital higher education, is the provision of digital skills training to teaching personnel in Thailand. Educators must be trained with digital pedagogical skills, or the ability to use digital platforms, resources and practices to teach, communicate with, and assess students (World Bank, 2023^[145]). Countries in the OECD use various practices to this end, such as developing toolkits or guidelines to help HEI teaching staff develop their digital pedagogical skills, providing training on the use of specific digital software or tools, and establishing platforms for teachers to share educational materials and exchange the best digital pedagogical practices (Broberg and Golden, 2023^[136]). For example, Korea operates an education training centre to strengthen teachers' digital competencies. The Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS) Comprehensive Education Training Institute is a training centre specialised in digital education, offering a wide variety of educational technology courses on artificial intelligence and other emerging tools in education. The centre also allows teachers to share their digital skills with one another through real-time video lectures (KERIS, 2023^[146]).

Box 2.6. Relevant international examples: Increasing access to high-quality higher education programmes

Finland: Digital platforms for quality assurance

In Finland, the Universities Act and the Universities of Applied Sciences Act state that HEIs have the primary responsibility for evaluating the quality of their educational programmes, research, and artistic activities (i.e. internal quality assurance). In addition, the acts also state that HEIs must regularly participate in external evaluations, which are conducted by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). In 2018, FINEEC renewed its audit model and introduced a digital platform, which functions as a template for both the self-evaluation conducted by HEIs themselves, and the external audit process. Once the audit has been conducted, the audit team proposes to the Higher Education Evaluation Committee that the HEI has either passed, or must undergo a re-audit. After passing the audit, the HEI will receive an audit certificate and an electronic quality label, and will also be displayed in the Audit register for higher education institutions, which presents a list of HEIs who have been quality assured. All in all, digital quality assurance tools have made the process more transparent and interactive, has made results easier to use, and has promoted participatory and an open quality culture in Finnish higher education.

Hungary: Accredited fully online distance learning programmes

In Hungary, digital higher education, including distance learning, is an important way to increase participation in tertiary education and improve attainment rates, especially among disadvantaged socio-economic students and international students. Distance learning in Hungary is defined as a form of training in which the theoretical aspects of learning are taught within a digital curriculum, and in which co-operation between the teacher and the student occur in a closed distance virtual learning environment or learning management system (VLE/LMS) via the internal IT network of the HEI (Internet/Intranet). To assure quality and relevance, Hungary has adopted a regulation stipulating that HEIs can only launch programmes in registered fields of study, once they have submitted an application to – and have been evaluated by – the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB), as well as approved by the Educational Authority (OH) and the Ministry of Culture and Innovation (KIM). In their application, HEIs must justify the establishment of the new programme in the context of existing higher education offers in Hungary and internationally, as well as present the programme's proposed education plan and

learning outcomes. Approved applications are then included in the official Higher Education Qualifications Register. More recently, Hungary has been taking steps to allow HEIs to move towards self-accreditation in order to further enhance their responsibility for quality. Moreover, Hungary also aims to simplify the existing programme accreditation process and make better use of digital technologies to improve the efficiency of quality assurance procedures. For instance, MAB has developed a new information system that allows HEIs to submit all accreditation documents into an integrated online platform.

Estonia: Quality labels for digital education

In Estonia, the Quality Label of Digital Education was introduced in 2008 to respond to education providers' request to be recognised for their high-quality online courses. The label assures that online courses effectively apply digital technologies to enhance the learning process based on the ADDIE model, which stands for Analysis, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluation. While the ADDIE model is applicable to in-person courses as well, additional criteria have been introduced specifically for digital learning, such as the use of technological tools to support the learning process, and the conformation of digital learning materials with best practices. The quality criteria are regularly updated by a working group of experts (e.g. instructional designers, technologists, academic staff), and also incorporate feedback from HEIs to ensure relevance. In addition, the working group also develops guidelines for online courses and provides training to educational providers.

The label is completely voluntary and free of charge. The application process involves the following elements: (1) a self-evaluation by the applicant using a standard template; (2) a review of the online course at the institutional level (e.g. by the programme manager, head of department); and (3) an evaluation of the online course by an expert panel, based on pre-determined criteria and clear grading guidelines. The expert panel then makes the decision to award the quality label to the education provider, and may also award outstanding e-courses with the label "Excellent e-course". After the application process, applicants continue to receive constructive feedback from the working group on how to improve their provision. Once the label has been provided, education providers gain access to a wide variety of benefits, including access to a community of practice where best practices are shared, as well as permission to use the label for marketing purposes. Courses with the label can be credit towards a bachelor's or master's degree, or can be made available to learners that are not enrolled in higher education. Renewing the label every three years is recommended but not required, although the date the label was received is indicated.

Source: European Commission (2024^[140]), *Quality assurance in higher education: Finland*, <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/finland/quality-assurance-higher-education>; FINEEC (2024^[141]), *Audit register for higher education institutions*, www.karvi.fi/en/evaluations/higher-education/audit-register-higher-education-institutions; FINEEC (2018^[147]), *3rd cycle: Audits of higher education institutions 2018-2024*, www.karvi.fi/en/evaluations/higher-education/3rd-cycle-audits-higher-education-institutions-2018-2024; OECD (2023^[138]), *Ensuring Quality Digital Higher Education in Hungary*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f44fd6f-en>; OECD (2024^[142]), *OECD Workshop: Enhancing Quality Assurance in Digital Adult Education Summary of Discussions*, www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/skills-strategies/centre-for-skills-peer-learning-events/OECD-Workshop-Enhancing-Quality-Assurance-in-Digital-Adult-Education-Summary-of-Discussions_240718_1707.PDF.

Recommendation 4: Increasing access to high-quality higher education programmes

Increasing access to high-quality higher education in Thailand can be achieved by strengthening quality assurance processes and promoting online and distance learning options. These measures would help to broaden access, boost tertiary attainment rates, and support the country's internationalisation efforts. Online higher education, in particular, offers significant advantages, including more cost-efficient training solutions for HEIs in Thailand, many of which are facing financial challenges arising from declining student enrolment.

Thailand could undertake the following specific actions to increase access to high-quality higher education programmes:

- 4.1. Support HEIs in implementing more efficient and digitalised quality assurance processes.** To reduce the bureaucratic burden associated with conducting internal quality assurance for all higher education programmes, including both in-person and online offerings, Thailand should consider introducing a digital platform (see Finland in Box 2.6) to streamline and standardise the process. Such a platform could be designed to reduce the need for extensive paperwork, which is currently a significant barrier to HEIs' compliance with internal QA requirements. The platform could incorporate self-assessment indicators, as outlined in the Manual for Internal Quality Assurance for Higher Education Institutions (OHEC, 2014^[127]), into an easily accessible and user-friendly template for HEIs to complete. Additionally, the platform could include functionality for submitting accreditation documents, further simplifying the reporting process for institutions.
- 4.2. Establish robust internal and external quality assurance mechanisms specifically tailored for online and digital higher education programmes.** These criteria should include elements such as effective course design for digital delivery, provision of training for staff in digital methods, measures to ensure student identity verification and educational integrity, safeguards for data protection and personal privacy, and the availability of adequate infrastructure and technical support. These criteria must be included in internal quality assurance mechanisms, such as HEI's self-assessments conducted via the digital platform (see Recommendation 4.1). Additionally, they should also be included in external quality assurance mechanisms, namely as criteria for external assessments overseen by ONESQA and for the awarding of quality labels to deserving digital higher education programmes (see Estonia in Box 2.6).
- 4.3. Support HEIs in offering a greater number of online courses and distance learning modalities.** Thailand should encourage HEIs to offer online versions of their existing course offerings or develop new online programmes in priority areas, that could lead to formal qualifications. These efforts could build on existing good practices, such as the Thai MOOC platform (see Box 3.3 in Chapter 3). Relevant authorities in Thailand should actively review the content, quality and relevance of new online higher education courses prior to their official launch. This process would ensure that courses are supported by effective educational plans and are designed to achieve positive learning outcomes for graduates (see Hungary in Box 2.6).
- 4.4. Support educators in HEIs to deliver online learning through tailored pedagogical practices and curricula.** HEIs that offer online programmes should ensure that educators are well-equipped with the necessary digital pedagogical skills. This can be achieved by developing and disseminating basic guidelines on how to deliver online courses and use digital education technologies, communicate with students through digital platforms, assess students'

performance in online learning settings, and troubleshoot common technical issues. In addition, Thailand could provide more comprehensive training on specific software or digital learning tools, as well as specialised topics such as the use of artificial intelligence in education. To complement these training initiatives, educators should also have opportunities to share knowledge and exchange best practices with their peers. Such efforts would help to build a collaborative learning culture and further strengthen educators' capacity to deliver high-quality online education.

Opportunity 3: Reducing inequalities in educational outcomes

In Thailand, inequalities in educational outcomes remain widespread in Thailand, particularly among disadvantaged groups. Children from low-income households, rural areas, ethnic minorities, and migrant backgrounds, as well as girls and students with disabilities, consistently face barriers that hinder access to high-quality and relevant skills development opportunities. These disparities are influenced by various factors; however, government representatives have identified geographic location and socio-economic status as the most significant contributors to these inequalities. By prioritising equity and inclusion in Thailand's initial education system, all students are empowered to achieve their full potential, irrespective of their personal or social circumstances (OECD, 2024^[148]).

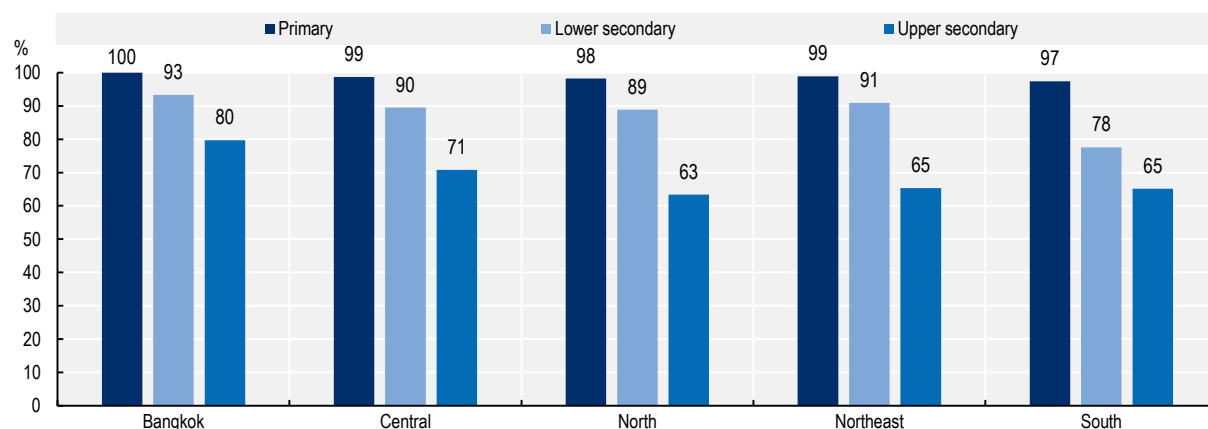
Two key recommendations have been identified to help Thailand to reduce inequalities in educational outcomes: (1) bridging regional gaps in educational outcomes through enhanced access to high-quality teaching; and (2) supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives.

Recommendation 5: Bridging regional gaps in educational outcomes through enhanced access to high-quality teaching

In Thailand, stark inter-regional disparities persist in both access to and the quality of initial education. Those least likely to gain access to education, especially at higher levels, and to complete it include children living in remote rural areas, particularly in the northern, north eastern and southern parts of the country (OECD/UNESCO, 2016^[11]). In these rural areas, students' completion rates at the upper secondary level are 18 percentage points lower than those of their counterparts in urban areas (UNICEF, 2019^[9]). Inter-regional disparities in the quality of education are also a challenge, as evidenced by the performance of students in the O-NET, a high-stakes and mandatory examination administered at grades 6, 9 and 12 to determine promotion to the next grade. Half of all lowest-scoring provinces are found in the economically disadvantaged northeast and southern regions. In contrast, nearly all the top-scoring provinces are found in cities in the central region (e.g. Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pattaya) (Fry, Bi and Apahung, 2018^[48]; UNESCO, 2014^[149]).

In the north, north-eastern and southern regions, where the poverty rates are almost double the national level (World Bank, 2022^[47]), the likelihood of having children who complete their schooling is much lower than in other regions (see Figure 2.13). Students from these regions are much less likely to finish any level of schooling in comparison to students from Bangkok and the central region. Inter-regional differences are most stark at the upper secondary level, where only 63% of students in the northern region and 65% of students in the north-eastern and southern regions finish their schooling, in comparison to 80% of students in Bangkok (UNICEF, 2023^[46]).

Figure 2.13. Completion rates at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels, by region, 2022



Source: UNICEF (2023^[150]), *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2022: Survey Findings Report*, [https://www.unicef.org/thailand/media/11356/file/Thailand%20MICS%202022%20full%20report%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/thailand/media/11356/file/Thailand%20MICS%202022%20full%20report%20(English).pdf).

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Regional differences in educational outcomes in Thailand may be due to a wide variety of factors, including uneven access to high-quality infrastructure and learning materials, as well as inconsistencies in the implementation of the curriculum. Government representatives have confirmed that there is an uneven distribution of resources between urban and rural schools, with urban schools often having better facilities and greater access to learning materials (including digital tools).

The Thai government has implemented a series of measures to improve the quality of education in rural areas. These include merging small schools to concentrate resources and focus on fewer high quality but in-need schools, matching rural teachers with local universities to improve their skills in math, physics, and use of digital tool, and offering scholarships to teachers to complete their education. A condition of these scholarships is that recipients return to their local communities to provide service, thereby addressing local education needs. However, despite these efforts, schools in rural areas still face many challenges.

One of the most important challenges is the shortage of highly qualified teachers in rural areas. Although the Thai government has made targeted investments in underserved areas to improve infrastructure and provide better learning materials, there remains a significant imbalance in teacher deployment between rural and urban areas. Rural schools struggle to attract and retain teachers, while urban schools generally do not face such shortages and may even have a surplus (UNESCO, 2019^[55]). This has a strong impact on the quality of education in rural schools. There is evidence that even when controlling for school size, location and type (public or private), Thai schools with teacher shortages tend to have poorer educational outcomes than those without shortages (Pholphirul, Rukumnuaykit and Teimtad, 2023^[151]).

Shortages are particularly concerning among mathematics teachers and science teachers, who play a key role in developing the skills and knowledge necessary to develop a highly innovative economy in Thailand (Buain and Pholphirul, 2022^[28]). Teachers in rural schools suffer from heavy workloads and are often forced to teach beyond their own fields of specialty (OECD/UNESCO, 2016^[11]). However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, various organisations in Thailand have supported teachers with pedagogy and new teaching techniques – such as OBEC's Online Platform, IPST's Online Educational Resources, Distance Learning Television (DLTV) by the Distance Learning Foundation under The Royal Patronage, and the Professional Learning Community (PLC).

Government representatives also confirmed that due to the shortage of teaching personnel, there is also a higher student-teacher ratio in rural areas and teachers often have to resort to multi-grade teaching, which affects pedagogical quality (World Bank, 2016^[152]; Pholphirul, Rukumnuaykit and Teimtad, 2023^[151]); (OECD, 2024^[153]). While perceptions of the merits of multi-grade teaching varies across countries, Thailand considers it as an important strategy for improving the quality of education in small rural schools, as it is considered too costly to provide a teacher for every grade level (SEAMEO-INNOTECH, 2012^[154]). However, despite multigrade teaching being a common practice in many schools, there is currently no mandatory pedagogical training for managing multi-grade classrooms. There is thus a need for Thailand to incorporate this into pre-service teacher training and offer ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers. This would enable the more effective application of multi-grade teaching as a strategy to mitigate teacher shortages and large class sizes in the short to medium-term (Buaraphan, Inrit and Kochasila, 2018^[155]).

In the longer-term, increasing the supply of highly qualified teachers in rural areas must be a priority. This has already been identified as a priority by government representatives in Thailand. Providing incentives specifically for teachers in rural schools may be helpful in increasing prospective teachers' motivation to relocate and stay in rural areas. For example, in Australia, multiple states, such as New South Wales and Queensland have introduced attraction and retention incentives specifically for teachers in rural regions (see Box 2.7). In a similar vein, government representatives in Thailand have reported adopting a multifaceted approach that includes financial incentives, comprehensive benefits, and continuous professional development opportunities.

While incentives for teachers in rural areas have been introduced in the past, uptake has been low and implementation has proven difficult due to limited administrative capacity at the school level. Teachers are frequently required to balance their teaching responsibilities with additional work as financial managers and administrators, making the management of incentive schemes more challenging. This underscores the need for Thailand to complement teacher incentives with measures to strengthen school-level administrative capacity – for example, by offering similar incentives to encourage school administrators and support personnel to relocate to rural areas. For example, the state of Western Australia's attraction and retention benefits for teachers are also available for school administrators at the secondary level (see Box 2.7) (Western Australia Department of Education, 2022^[156]).

Careful policy design and continuous policy monitoring and evaluation is essential to ensure that such incentives are well-targeted and effective in addressing the challenges faced by teachers and administrators in rural areas. While evidence from high-income countries such as Australia provides useful insights, experiences from developing countries also demonstrate that, even under financial constraints, well-designed financial incentives can be effective. Their success, however, depends on several factors. These include effective targeting, strategic differentiation of incentive levels according to community characteristics (e.g. urban, semi-urban, rural, remote), as well as the complementary provision of non-financial benefits, such as teaching material and others resources, and direct access to supervisors) (UNESCO, 2011^[157]; Lentini, Gimenez and Valbuena, 2024^[158]).

The introduction of such incentives should be accompanied by initiatives to raise awareness of the benefits of living and teaching in rural areas. This approach has been employed in New South Wales and Queensland, Australia, where awareness raising materials – such as promotional videos – were developed to communicate the benefits and incentives available to teachers in rural schools (see Box 2.7). When well-designed, such campaigns can serve as a cost-effective means of disseminating information on the broader benefits of rural living, including closer engagement with communities and more opportunities for students to participate in local projects and businesses. These efforts can contribute to improving perceptions of rural schools among both teachers and the wider public (OECD, 2024^[133]).

In addition to providing incentives to attract qualified teachers to rural areas, Thailand could leverage digital technologies – including artificial intelligence (AI) – to expand access to high-quality education for students in rural areas. Globally, digital and AI-driven solutions are playing an increasingly important role in education systems, offering a range of potential benefits. These include promoting inclusion and equity, enabling more personalised learning, broadening access to high-quality learning resources, and improving the efficiency of key processes such as grading, assessments and homework monitoring. Moreover, integrating such technologies can help ensure that education remains relevant by strengthening digital competencies among both teachers and students (OECD, 2023^[159]; UNESCO, 2021^[160]).

In line with Thailand's efforts to provide high-speed internet to every village in the country through the Net Pracharat project (Net Pracharat, 2018^[161]), digital technologies could be strengthened in order to virtually bring qualified teachers into rural schools and deliver classes. This is already being practiced in some countries across the OECD, where rural schools also face a shortage of qualified teachers and are turning to digital solutions for providing high-quality education. In Lycksele in Sweden, a rural municipality with a Sami community, a severe shortage of Sami language teachers was addressed by virtually co-operating with other schools to organise joint Sami language courses. This strategy helped pool resources and teaching expertise to ensure that students can have access to high-quality education in their native language (European Commission, 2023^[162]). In addition, the EU-funded EU Rural Virtual Classroom is a collaborative virtual platform where rural schools can support each other, fill teacher shortages, and exchange content and activities in real time. The platform offers a virtual classroom, an online space where teachers can deliver classes, facilitate breakout rooms, upload and share materials, and use an interactive blackboard. It also features a digital repository of lesson plans and learning materials that other rural teachers can use, as well as a virtual exchange channel where teachers can get in contact with each other to share experiences (EU Rural Virtual Classroom, 2024^[163]).

Beyond pedagogical applications, digital and AI technologies are increasingly used to streamline educational administration, including processes such as admissions, timetabling, and school inspections. These efficiencies can help free up teachers' for core instructional responsibilities (UNESCO, 2021^[160]). However, the deployment of AI in education must be approached with caution to avoid exacerbating existing disparities, particularly between urban and rural areas. Using AI to enhance Thailand's education system should be accompanied by sustained efforts to strengthen the foundational conditions in rural schools. This includes addressing persistent gaps in teacher supply and improving critical infrastructure, such as internet connectivity and access to digital devices (UNESCO, 2021^[160]).

Box 2.7. Relevant international example: Bridging regional gaps in educational outcomes through enhanced access to high-quality teaching

Australia: Attraction and retention scheme for rural teachers and school administrators

Several states in Australia have introduced a package of incentives to encourage teachers to relocate to rural schools. New South Wales provides the Rural Teacher Incentive amounting between AUD 20 000 and AUD 30 000 per year, an Experienced Teacher Benefit of AUD 10 000 gross for a maximum of five years, and an annual retention benefit of AUD 5 000 gross for a maximum of ten years. In addition, New South Wales also offers rental subsidies, additional personal leave and training leave, and transfer points. In Queensland, teachers in rural and remote communities have access to a range of additional benefits on top of their salary. These include generous payments for teachers and their families through the Recognition of Rural and Remote Service (RoRRS) scheme, additional leave days and extra school holidays, relocation assistance, subsidised housing, opportunities for professional development, and wellbeing support. If teachers decide to extend their stay in a remote community, they may also become eligible for a reduction in their Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP) debt. In Western Australia, the Regional Attraction and Retention Incentive is available to both teachers and

school administrators. It provides a financial benefit varying from AUD 5 000 to AUD 17 000 depending on the location. 25% of the total amount is paid at the start of the assignment, while the remaining 75% is paid to teachers and school administrators who stay until the end of the school year.

To accompany the introduction of the incentives, both New South Wales and Queensland have developed awareness-raising materials, such as promotional videos, to motivate prospective applicants to discover life as a rural teacher. In these materials, they explain not only how living in rural areas could help teachers access a range of additional opportunities for their professional development, but also form part of local communities and gain access to bigger living spaces for their families.

Source: New South Wales Government (2023^[164]), *Choose rural*, <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teach-nsw/find-teaching-jobs/choose-rural>; Queensland Government (2024^[165]), *Rural and remote benefits*, <https://teach.qld.gov.au/teach-in-queensland-state-schools/pay-benefits-and-incentives/rural-and-remote-benefits>; Western Australia Department of Education (2022^[166]), *Attraction and retention incentive for remote and regional schools*, www.education.wa.edu.au/attraction-and-retention-initiative.

Recommendation 5: Bridging regional gaps in educational outcomes through enhanced access to high-quality teaching

Bridging regional gaps in educational outcomes requires enhancing access to high-quality teaching. By incentivising highly skilled and qualified teachers to relocate to and remain in rural schools, or by facilitating direct connections between these educators and students, youth in underserved areas can develop the skills and knowledge necessary to bridge the gap with their urban counterparts and thrive in an increasingly dynamic and competitive world of work.

Thailand could implement the following targeted actions to bridge regional gaps in educational outcomes by enhancing access to high-quality teaching:

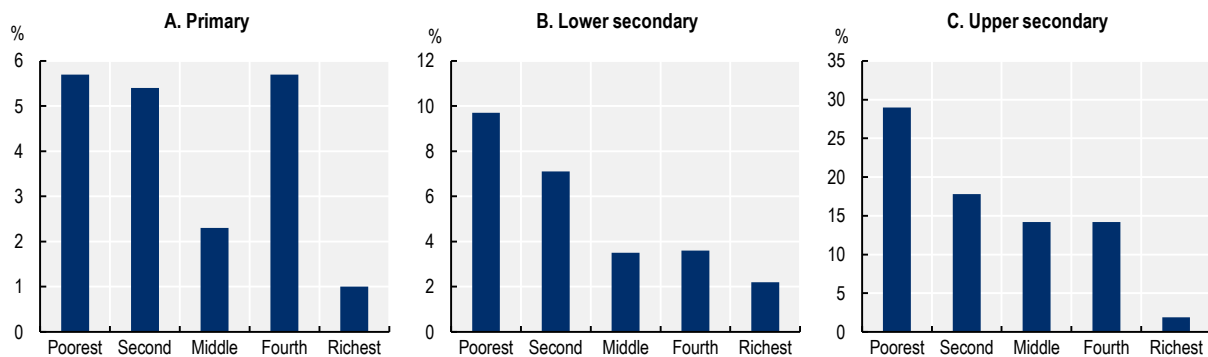
- 5.1. Provide specialised training teachers on multi-grade teaching methodologies as an interim solution to address teacher shortages in rural areas.** The Ministry of Education should collaborate with teacher training institutions to provide training, including pre-service training, on effective practices for multi-grade classrooms. Considering the importance of multi-grade teaching in mitigating teacher shortages, particularly in disadvantaged rural areas, it is essential to equip teachers with the necessary pedagogical skills and knowledge for multi-grade teaching, tailored to different education levels and subject areas. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education should ensure that teachers in rural areas have access to continuous professional development opportunities on multi-grade teaching, enabling them to stay updated with the latest pedagogical practices.
- 5.2. Introduce incentives to attract and retain teachers and school administrative staff in rural areas.** The Ministry of Education should consider introducing a package of incentives to attract and retain teachers in rural schools. These incentives could include higher salaries or bonuses, annual retention benefits, and additional leave days for personal or professional development. Support for relocation and living costs should also be provided, such as relocation assistance, housing subsidies, and well-being programmes. To maximise the impact of these measures, the Ministry of Education should develop targeted awareness-raising materials, such as video explainers and brochures, to raise awareness of the advantages and opportunities of teaching in rural schools.

5.3. Strengthen the use of digital technologies to connect qualified teachers with rural schools. Build on its progress in expanding high-speed internet access to villages, Thailand should expand access to virtual learning opportunities. This could include establishing a digital platform that rural schools can join free of charge to connect with teachers across the country – and potentially from abroad – to offer joint classes. Such a platform would enable rural students to benefit from the expertise of highly qualified teachers, who are often concentrated in urban areas. Additionally, the platform could feature a digital library where teachers can upload lesson plans and learning materials, as well as a real-time communication function to facilitate the exchange of best practices and collaborative problem-solving among educators.

Recommendation 6: Supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives

In Thailand, socio-economic status is a significant determinant of access to initial education alongside geographic location. Children from the lower wealth quintiles are disproportionately more likely to be out of school across all levels of education (see Figure 2.14). This disparity is particularly pronounced at the upper secondary level, where there is a 27 percentage-point gap in the out-of-school rates between the poorest (29%) and richest (2%) quintiles (UNICEF, 2023^[46]). Despite the introduction of a policy guaranteeing free basic education until the upper secondary level, severe poverty persists in many parts of the country. As a result, children from low-income households often struggle to afford other costs associated with schooling, leading to higher dropout rates (Equitable Education Fund, 2024^[45]).

Figure 2.14. Share of out-of-school children in Thailand, by wealth quintile, 2019



Source: UNICEF (2023^[150]), *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2022: Survey Findings Report*, [www.unicef.org/thailand/media/11356/file/Thailand%20MICS%202022%20full%20report%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/thailand/media/11356/file/Thailand%20MICS%202022%20full%20report%20(English).pdf).

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Uneven access to education disproportionately impacts the educational outcomes of disadvantaged children, as evidenced by the 2022 PISA results, which show that socio-economic status accounted for 10% of the variation in Thai students' mathematics performance. While this figure is slightly lower than the ASEAN (11%) and OECD (15%) averages (OECD, 2023^[8]), this difference likely reflects weaker performers in the ASEAN region and lower variability among OECD countries, rather than an indication of low inequality within Thailand. Students from high-income families often have greater access to high-quality public education institutions and consistently outperform their peers. Conversely, children from intergenerationally poor households often enter the labour market as low-skilled or semi-skilled workers, perpetuating low income levels and reinforcing the cycle of poverty (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[3]).

In response to these challenges, Thailand has put in place several initiatives aimed at providing additional support to economically vulnerable children at risk of dropping out, as well as providing alternative skills development opportunities for those who are already out of school. For instance, the government is implementing the Zero Dropout pilot project, which seeks to identify and support at-risk children from low-income households, migrant backgrounds, and those with disabilities (Equitable Education Fund, 2024^[167]). Additionally, Regional Non-formal Education Centres offer a range of programmes to vulnerable populations, including out-of-school youth. These include literacy programmes (e.g. for Thai, sign language), equivalency programmes that cover a wide range of educational topics from curricula at the primary and secondary levels, life skills training for youth and early adults (e.g. environmental preservation, sex education, health), and non-formal vocational training for income-generating activities (UNESCO, 2007^[22]; Yenjai, 2014^[168]). Additionally, the Ombudsman, together with several ministries, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, are co-operating to provide upskilling opportunities for students who did not pursue further education after completing compulsory levels.

In addition to these initiatives, the Equitable Education Fund (EEF) was established under the Equitable Education Act of 2018, in order to provide financial support to children and youth in greatest need, conduct research on financing for equity, and establish support centres for children in crises (Equitable Education Fund, 2022^[169]; Equitable Education Fund, 2019^[170]). The EEF aims to supplement the cost-per-head formula used to allot school budgets, thereby helping channel more resources to students who need additional support due to their socio-economic vulnerability. One of the biggest initiatives implemented by the EEF is a cash transfer programme, where they provide 569 000 of the poorest primary and secondary-level students with educational resources needed (Equitable Education Fund, 2019^[170]).

However, it is unclear how EEF's cash transfer programme works in practice, including what the specific target groups are and how much the transfers cost. Furthermore, evidence of the effectiveness of cash transfer programmes in Thailand has been mixed. Evaluations of a similar programme in Thailand, specifically a large-scale unconditional cash transfer programme (the State Welfare Card scheme), introduced in 2017 and targeting over 20% of the population, showed that it was unsuccessful in reducing monetary poverty, as it was not targeted carefully (Durongkaveroj, 2022^[171]). On the other hand, the introduction of a universally covered social pension scheme (equivalent to 2-3 days of minimum wage) was found to increase the likelihood of teenage boys living with male pensioners to enrol in secondary school, although results for teenage girls were inconclusive (Herrmann, Leckcivilize and Zenker, 2017^[172]). Evidence of cash transfer programmes in other countries have yielded more positive outcomes, although studies of their effectiveness highlight the need for the careful targeting of beneficiaries (Özler, Loeser and Premand, 2021^[173]). There is thus a need for Thailand to gather rigorous evidence on the EEF's cash transfer programme to ensure that it is appropriately targeted and represents the most cost-effective option for the government.

In addition to financial barriers, attitudinal and knowledge barriers also hinder children from low-income households from remaining in school. Household poverty, exacerbated by livelihood losses during the COVID-19 pandemic, has compelled many Thai youth to enter the workforce to support their families. This economic strain has negatively affected their mental health, further disrupting their ability to continue their education. One of the commonly cited reasons for dropping out of school is low motivation to continue studying once they have completed compulsory education, as well as a lack of awareness of available skills development opportunities (UNICEF, 2024^[174]).

There is strong evidence suggesting that Thailand would benefit from raising awareness among low-income students about further education options, the benefits of participating, and support measures available. For example, an impact evaluation study in Peru (see Box 2.8) has found that providing information about the social and financial benefits of education can help students consider finishing higher levels of education and motivate parents to support their children more in their schooling. Moreover, an

impact evaluation in Canada also showed that explaining the benefits of post-secondary education (e.g. increased earnings in comparison to individuals with lower levels of educational attainment) and providing information about available financial aid options increased the likelihood that low-income students would attain post-secondary education (Dunn and Oreopoulos, 2009^[175]). Similarly, in Chile, low-income students were provided with information on their higher education options and available financial aid measures, which increased school attendance (particularly among medium- and high-performing students) and increased enrolment in college preparatory schools (Dinkleman and Martinez, 2009^[176]).

In addition to increased awareness, parental support is a strong determiner of the level of motivation to learn. Thai children from low-income households who have supportive parents tend to develop positive attitudes towards education and perform well in school (Equitable Education Fund, 2022^[169]). There is a large body of evidence demonstrating the positive impacts of parental involvement on students' attendance and their educational outcomes (OECD, 2019^[177]). In Thailand, some local studies have supported these findings; students with highly involved parents (e.g. communication, support for learning at home, collaboration with the community, expectation setting) had better academic performance and higher test scores than their counterparts who had less involved parents (Naite, 2021^[178]); (Yawman et al., 2019^[179]) Supportive parents are also more likely to have tertiary and post-graduate degrees (Naite, 2021^[178]), suggesting a bi-directional relationship between parental involvement and educational attainment.

However, on a broader level, Thai society tends to have higher trust in the ability of school and teachers to develop their children's skills. In many cases, the roles of the school and the family are still separate when it comes to education. Many parents also believe that, in comparison to teachers, they do not have the skills and knowledge necessary to adequately develop their children's skills. At present, Thailand still lacks a clear strategy for increasing parents' involvement in their children's education (Nomnian and Thawornpat, 2015^[180]), unlike the case of several OECD countries, such as Scotland (United Kingdom) (see Box 2.8), which officially recognises the role of parents in their children's education through the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act of 2006.

Box 2.8. Relevant international example: Supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives

Peru: Information campaign on the returns of education

In Peru, children from disadvantaged backgrounds spend less time in school and enter the labour market much later. This stems from a lack of information among students and their parents about the available educational tracks or fields of study, as well as what financial aid programmes they can avail of. To address this challenge, the Ministry of Education worked with impact evaluators to run a campaign that provided information about the social and financial benefits of education to improve families' knowledge about the returns to education. The campaign used telenovela-style videos whose plot communicated the social value of education, which students watched in school as part of their curriculum. In addition, an app-based intervention also delivered similar messages and was accessed by students and their parents either at home or in school. In the app, a survey was accompanied by infographics, interactive activities and in-depth presentations about the value of education. The impact evaluation revealed that the intervention helped reduce school drop-out rates by 1.8 percentage points over the span of two years, with parents and students improving their educational plans after receiving new information about available learning offers and their benefits. Children considered finishing higher levels of education, and parents tended to be more willing to support their children in their schooling.

Scotland (UK): Laws, policies and initiatives to promote parental involvement in education

Across multiple levels of policy, Scotland acknowledges the role that parents play in their children's learning. The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act of 2006 recognises the duty of the government in promoting the involvement of parents in students' attendance in public schools, requiring each educational authority to prepare their own strategy for parental involvement. The strategy must highlight how equal opportunities could be attained by collaborating with parents. In addition, on a policy level, Scotland has also developed the Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home based on research gathered through several years, including through national mapping exercises conducted by Education Scotland. The framework aims to streamline initiatives to train schools and other childhood education providers on how to engage with parents for students' learning at home. In addition to these laws and policies, Scotland developed a comprehensive online toolkit for practitioners to guide them on how to engage parents and families. The resource provides tools to measure and evaluate schools' practices in involving parents in learning at home and in early childhood settings.

Source: Education Scotland (2017^[181]), *Engaging parents and families – A toolkit for practitioners*, <https://education.gov.scot/resources/engaging-parents-and-families-a-toolkit-for-practitioners/>; Education Scotland (2022^[182]), *Strategic Framework for: Parents' Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home*, <https://education.gov.scot/media/4w3lkhd/strategic-framework-for-pi-pe-fl-lah-august-2024.pdf>; Gallego, Molina & Neilson (2018^[183]), *Role of information on the returns of post-primary education on school dropout*, www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/role-information-returns-postprimary-education-school-dropout.

Recommendation 6: Supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives

Supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives can help to create a more equitable and inclusive educational system in Thailand. Reducing cost barriers by providing adequate financial support can help children stay in school and avoid the risk of dropping out. Furthermore, non-financial incentives, for instance support for parents to become more involved in their children's schooling, can help maintain high levels of motivation for learning and make students more resilient despite financial constraints.

Thailand could undertake the following specific actions to support students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives:

- 6.1. Ensure that financial incentives for low-income students are well-targeted.** Thailand has promising initiatives in place to provide additional financial support to students in need, such as a cash transfer programme implemented through the Equitable Education Fund. An evaluation should be conducted of the fund's effectiveness, including the extent to which the programme has been able to improve student attendance, as well as reduce inequalities in educational outcomes.
- 6.2. Encourage greater parental involvement in their children's schooling.** Thailand should explicitly recognise the crucial role parents play in their children's academic success, even when they experience socio-economic disadvantages. This could be achieved by adopting an

official law, policy or strategy specifically focused on encouraging parental involvement in education. Such measures would raise the issue's visibility as a political priority and allocate resources for initiatives to support this goal, such as training school personnel to better engage with parents or developing informational materials targeted towards parents themselves.

- 6.3. Implement awareness raising initiatives targeted specifically to disadvantaged groups to inform them about skills development opportunities.** Thailand should reach out to disadvantaged groups, such as low-income students and their parents (especially those at risk of dropping out), in order to inform them about the benefits of education, available learning offers, and the financial support measures that they can avail of. Thailand can employ cost-effective strategies to raise awareness, such as incorporating short promotional videos into children's learning activities (see Peru in Box 2.8) or engaging disadvantaged groups through partnerships with community-based organisations that serve and work with them.

Summary of policy recommendations

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 1: Increasing the quality and relevance of initial education	
Recommendation 1: Strengthening the process for reviewing and implementing a new curriculum in initial education	1.1. Adapt the curricula in initial education based on the new framework for core competencies and with regular review periods. 1.2. Actively involve key stakeholders such as teachers in the curriculum reform process. 1.3. Provide adequate training and support to teachers and educational staff to implement the new curriculum.
Recommendation 2: Improving relevance of TVET offers through high-quality work-based learning opportunities	2.1. Leverage the large number of MSMEs in Thailand to increase the supply of work-based learning opportunities. 2.2. Build training networks to help MSMEs gain access to high-quality equipment and learning opportunities for TVET offers. 2.3. Use SAA exercises more systematically to determine the content of work-based learning opportunities.
Opportunity 2: Promoting the development of higher-level skills among youth	
Recommendation 3: Promoting informed educational choices by increasing the supply of well-qualified guidance counsellors in schools	3.1. Provide incentives for guidance counsellors to obtain formal qualifications, as well as competitive benefits and support for practicing professionals. 3.2. Provide career guidance training to teachers.
Recommendation 4: Increasing access to high-quality higher education programmes	4.1. Support HEIs in implementing more efficient and digitalised quality assurance processes. 4.2. Establish robust internal and external quality assurance mechanisms specifically tailored for online and digital higher education programmes. 4.3. Support HEIs in offering a greater number of online courses and distance learning modalities. 4.4. Support educators in HEIs to deliver online learning through tailored pedagogical practices and curricula.
Opportunity 3: Reducing inequalities in educational outcomes	
Recommendation 5: Bridging regional gaps in educational outcomes through enhanced access to high-quality teaching	5.1. Provide specialised training teachers on multi-grade teaching methodologies as an interim solution to address teacher shortages in rural areas. 5.2. Introduce incentives to attract and retain teachers and school administrative staff in rural areas. 5.3. Strengthen the use of digital technologies to connect qualified teachers with rural schools.
Recommendation 6: Supporting students from low-income households to access initial education through financial and non-financial incentives	6.1. Ensure that financial incentives for low-income students are well-targeted. 6.2. Encourage greater parental involvement in their children's schooling. 6.3. Implement awareness raising initiatives targeted specifically to disadvantaged groups to inform them about skills development opportunities.

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Notes

¹ Foundational skills refer to skills that are necessary for the acquisition of higher-level skills and include basic literacy and numeracy (OECD, 2021^[184]).

² Defined as the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to a given level of education.

³ Data from 1997 was considered, as it is the closest year to 2000 with available data.

⁴ Defined as the percentage of a cohort of children or young people (aged 3 to 5 years above the intended age for the last grade of a given level of education) who completed the grade (UN Statistical Commission, 2022^[186]).

⁵ Defined as the average number of pupils per qualified teacher (i.e. having at least the minimum academic qualifications required for teaching their subjects at the relevant level) at each level of education in a given academic year (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2023^[56]).

⁶ Under the Thailand 4.0 strategy, S-curve industries are promoted by the government to accelerate investments and drive innovation-driven growth. These industries include the following: biofuels and biochemicals; digital economy; medical hub; automation and robotics; aviation and logistics; agriculture and biotechnology; smart electronics; affluent medical and wellness tourism; next-generation automation; and food for the future (Thailand Board of Investment, n.d.^[185]).

3

Fostering greater participation in adult learning in Thailand

This chapter explains the importance of fostering greater participation in adult learning in Thailand, which can strengthen a culture of learning throughout the life course and help the country adapt to challenges brought about by a rapidly ageing population, as well as successfully adapt to global megatrends. It also describes the current policies and practices to upskill and reskill adults in various settings, including in formal and informal work. It then explores three opportunities to promote greater participation in adult learning: (1) increasing the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities; (2) addressing barriers to participation in adult learning; and (3) increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups.

The importance of fostering greater participation in adult learning

Participation in adult learning can bring numerous socio-economic benefits to countries. Adult learning is central to helping people and countries adapt to global megatrends and stay competitive through upskilling and reskilling opportunities. The traditional approach of front-loading skills development in initial education is becoming increasingly untenable in a world of rapid technological progress, advances in artificial intelligence, the green transition, and geopolitical tensions in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world that are reshaping production patterns and affecting the demand for skills. Adult learning can help individuals continuously gain new knowledge and develop new skills, thereby enabling countries to respond to changing labour market needs and reduce skills imbalances (OECD, 2019^[1]).

Thailand has been increasingly recognising the importance of adult learning in driving national growth. As Thailand is one of the fastest ageing countries in the world, with more than a quarter of the population projected to be 65 years or older by 2040 (WHO, 2023^[2]; World Bank, 2016^[3]), adult learning will play an increasingly important role in ensuring that the country stays productive, innovative and competitive, especially in key sectors highlighted in the Thailand 4.0 strategy (Ministry of Industry, 2017^[4]). In recognition of this, Thailand has a long history of promoting adult learning through policy. Under the National Strategy 2018-2037, the National Strategy on Developing and Strengthening of Human Capital aims to promote the multidimensional (i.e. physical, mental, intellectual) development of Thai citizens of all ages, equip them with 21st century skills, and help them acquire positive attitudes towards lifelong learning (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017^[5]). More recently, Thailand also announced the Learning Encouragement Act, B.E. 2566 in 2023, which aims to promote lifelong learning¹ and provide educational opportunities, especially to those who have not received formal education or who are from disadvantaged regions (Sawasdee Thailand, 2023^[6]). Thailand is also one of the highest-spending countries on adult learning in Southeast Asia, allotting between 2 and 4% of its public education spending (UNESCO, 2022^[7]).

However, despite these welcome policy reforms, Thailand still faces challenges in fostering greater participation in adult learning. In 2022, only 0.3% of Thai adults aged 25 to 54 years old participated in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous twelve months (UNESCO, 2022^[8]). The share of firms offering formal training in Thailand is also lower (18%) than the ASEAN average (23%), and participation rates decrease significantly along with enterprise size, with only 14% of small firms having access to training in comparison to 19% of medium firms and 51% of large firms (World Bank, 2023^[9]). Furthermore, access to adult learning is especially limited in Thailand's widespread informal sector. It is estimated that informal employment constitutes 65% of all employment in Thailand, suggesting that a significant proportion of the country's workforce has limited opportunities to upgrade their skills through employer-provided training and would have to train autonomously (OECD, 2025^[10]; ILO, 2022^[11]).

Boosting participation in adult learning in Thailand can help maximise the potential of its rapidly ageing population, as well as successfully adapt to global megatrends. Focusing on reaching disadvantaged groups, such as older adults, workers in the informal sector, and adults in rural areas, can help ensure that Thailand's adult learning initiatives result in inclusive and equitable outcomes for all. This chapter provides a detailed assessment of adult learning in Thailand and presents policy recommendations for three opportunities to foster greater participation in adult learning, namely:

- Improving the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities.
- Reducing barriers to participation in adult learning opportunities.
- Increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups.

Overview and performance

This section provides an overview of the adult learning system in Thailand, as well as assessment of the country's performance on key adult learning indicators. Adult learning opportunities in the country are supported by a framework of laws, strategies and policies, and are offered by relevant government

agencies and various education and training providers. Despite these efforts, an assessment of Thailand's performance on key indicators indicates that there is significant room for Thailand to improve participation in, and the quality and relevance of, adult learning opportunities.

Overview of Thailand's policies and practices for fostering greater participation in adult learning

Given the increasingly important role that adult learning plays in Thailand, effective, evidence-based policies are needed to adequately provide high-quality adult learning opportunities to all segments of the country's population. Thailand has various policies and strategies in place to promote learning and education throughout the life course, as well as strengthen the capacities of local governance bodies to provide community-based adult learning practices. This section summarises the relevant legislation, strategies and policies that currently guide the provision of adult learning opportunities in Thailand, as well as presents an overview of the country's adult learning system.

Relevant legislation, strategies and policies for fostering greater participation in adult learning

There are numerous laws and strategies dedicated to adult learning in Thailand (see Table 3.1). Lifelong learning is acknowledged broadly in the National Education Act B.E. 2545 (1999), the main legislative document in the country's education sector. The Act defines lifelong education as "education resulting from [the] integration of formal, non-formal and informal education so as to create [the] ability for continuous lifelong development of [the] quality of life" (Office of the Prime Minister, 1999^[12]). In addition, the Skills Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 (A.D. 2002) is one of the oldest and most important adult learning laws in Thailand, as it offers various incentives to businesses to upskill their employees. Furthermore, the Act established the Skill Development Fund, which provides loans to employees who wish to participate in training and to businesses who wish to organise skills development opportunities (Department of Skills Development, 2002^[13]).

Table 3.1. Thailand's main legislation, strategies and policies for fostering greater participation in adult learning

Major strategy or policy	Description
National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999)	The National Education Act of 1999 is the main legislative document in Thailand's education sector and establishes the framework for education in the country, including for adult education and lifelong learning. It aims to promote the provision of lifelong learning resources, namely public libraries, museums, art galleries, public parks, botanical gardens, science and technology parks, zoos, and sports and recreation centres, among others. The Act states that individuals have the right to develop their skills in using educational technologies that would facilitate the acquisition of knowledge on a continual lifelong basis.
Skills Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 (A.D. 2002) and its Amendment (No.2) B.E. 2557	The Skills Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 (A.D. 2002) was passed by the Ministry of Labour's Department of Skill Development to encourage businesses to develop the skills of their employees and enhance labour productivity and national competitiveness. The Act requires employers with at least 100 employees to provide skills development opportunities and support employees to help them pass national skill standard tests. Employers that fail to meet this requirement must contribute to the Skill Development Fund, which is used to promote the provision of and participation in skills development activities. Furthermore, the Act provides tax exemptions (for training expenses and equipment used for training purposes) to businesses that provide training, as well as offers them support services (e.g. training of training personnel, testing of skills standards, curriculum development) to help them organise training opportunities.
Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act B.E. 2551 (2008)	The Act supports the aims of the National Education Act to provide lifelong education for individuals and recognises the role that non-formal and informal education play in the provision of continuous learning. In particular, Section 7 of the Act aims to promote non-formal education so as to allow individuals to receive continuing education, thereby allowing Thailand to develop a workforce that can support the development of its economy and security, the environment, and individuals' quality of life.
Vocational Education Act of 2008	The Act indicates that vocational education in Thailand may be arranged in three forms, namely formal TVET, non-formal TVET, and dual vocational training programmes. It provides for a system of recognising work experience and prior education records to earn extra credits in VET programmes.

Major strategy or policy	Description
National Qualifications Framework B.E. 2017	Thailand's National Qualifications Framework (NQF) aims to establish links between the learning outcomes of students in educational institutions and the workplace competencies required by industry. The framework identifies core competencies and occupational competencies, which inform curriculum development, teaching and learning design and Occupational Standards Development. Thailand's NQF is in line with the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) learning outcomes.
National Strategy 2018 – 2037: National Strategy on Developing and Strengthening Human Capital	Under the National Strategy 2018-2037, Thailand's core development plan, the National Strategy on Development and Strengthening Human Capital aims to ensure that Thai citizens of all ages achieve their full potential, develop skilled needed to adapt to changes in the 21 st century, and promote lifelong learning. One of its key target groups is people of working age, aiming to provide them with continuous professional development in line with their expertise and labour market needs, as well as Thai elderly, recognising them as a key driving force for national growth.
Learning Encouragement Act B.E. 2566 (2023)	As part of the government's efforts to develop Thailand's educational system and develop people's skills and knowledge in the context of a rapidly changing world, the Act was announced in 2023 to support learning in three forms, namely lifelong learning, learning for self-development, and learning for academic qualifications. Under the Act, the government is required to provide education to the public and promote lifelong learning, especially among those who have not received formal education or who come from disadvantaged groups. It also elevates the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education to become the Department of Learning Encouragement.
Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation Policy and Strategy (2027)	The strategy aims to prepare Thailand for the 21st century by providing a framework for the development of the country's higher education, science, research and innovation system. Its main objectives include the development of human resources and knowledge institutions, the improvement of research and innovation activities that would respond to the challenges faced by Thailand, as well as the enhancement of research and innovation activities for competitiveness, regional development and reduction of social inequality. The strategy includes the Lifelong Learning and Future Skills Set programme, which aims to promote upskilling and reskilling and offer grants for lifelong learning opportunities.
Action Plan for the Production and Development of Human Resources in Occupations that are Urgently Needed for Development (2019-2022)	The action plan creates a model for producing manpower according to the National Qualifications Framework and in line with the current supply of and demand for skills in seven key fields: (1) infrastructure logistics; (2) logistics and supply chain; (3) robotics and automation; (4) information and communication technology and digital content; (5) food and agriculture; (6) petrochemicals, chemicals, energy and renewable energy; and (7) printing.
Guidelines for Operating the Credit Bank for Basic Education and Vocational Education (2024)	The guidelines cover the operations of Thailand's education credit banking system, which aims to promote self-development among Thai individuals, increase their qualifications for work, and provide them with an opportunity to learn and retrain themselves regardless of their age.

Source: ASEAN (1999^[12]), *National Education Act of B.E.2542 (1999)*, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Thailand184.pdf>; OECD (2021^[14]), *Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation Policy and Strategy*, <https://stip.oecd.org/stip/interactive-dashboards/policy-initiatives/2023%2Fdata%2FpolicyInitiatives%2F26107>; IOM UN Migration (2022^[15]), *IOM and the Department of Skills Development Collaborate to Facilitate Skills Development for Migrant Workers in Thailand*, <https://thailand.iom.int/news/iom-and-department-skills-development-collaborate-facilitate-skills-development-migrant-workers-thailand>; Ministry of Labour (2002^[13]), *Skill Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 (A.D. 2002)*, www.mol.go.th/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/02/311en.pdf; NXPO (2023^[16]), *Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation Policy*, www.nxpo.or.th/en/higher-education-science-research-and-innovation-policy/; office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (2017^[5]), *National Strategy 2018-2037 (Summary)*, www.bic.moe.go.th/images/stories/pdf/National_Strategy_Summary.pdf; OECD Skills Strategy Thailand policy questionnaire; Office of the Education Council, (2017^[17]), *National Qualifications Framework (Revised Edition)*, <https://backoffice.onec.go.th/uploads/Book/1552-file.pdf>; Office of the Prime Minister (2017^[5]), *National Strategy 2018-2037*, <http://nscr.nesdc.go.th/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/National-Strategy-Eng-Final-25-OCT-2019.pdf>; Office of the Education Council (2019^[18]), *(Draft) Action Plan for the Production and Development of Human Resources in Occupations that are Urgently Needed for Development*, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B9z3jQulPok0k1t3W-tqs7AijUVvhEJ4o/view>; Prajuablap, M. (2022^[19]), *Lifelong learning policy in Thailand*, https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jclmd_psru/article/view/254645; Sawasdee Thailand (2023^[6]), *The Learning Promotion Act Elevates NFE to the "Department of Learning Promotion"*, www.thailand.go.th/issue-focus-detail/001_06_051; UNESCO (2008^[20]), *Promotion of non-formal and informal education act, B.E. 2551-2008 (Vol. 125, Part 41a, Government Gazette, dated 3rd March B.E. 2551 (2008))*, <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2008/promotion-non-formal-and-informal-education-act-be-2551-2008-vol-125-part-41a-government>.

In more recent years, numerous other laws, strategies and policies have been adopted to promote lifelong learning, highlighting its growing importance in Thailand. For instance, the National Strategy on Developing and Strengthening Human Capital is one of the key components of the National Strategy 2018-2037. It aims to enhance human capital by providing improved education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for Thai citizens of all ages (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017^[5]). Furthermore, the recent Learning Promotion Act B.E. 2566 (2023) aims to promote lifelong learning, learning for self-development,

and learning for academic qualifications in response to a rapidly changing world, while the Action Plan for the Production and Development of Human Resources in Occupations that are Urgently Needed for Development builds on Thailand's National Qualifications Framework, identifies key sectors for manpower production, and assesses the supply of demand for skills in partnership with businesses (Office of the Education Council, 2019^[18]; Prajuablap, 2022^[19]; Sawasdee Thailand, 2023^[6]).

Overview of Thailand's adult learning system

In Thailand, adult learning was initially introduced to improve literacy levels and primary educational attainment among adults who dropped out of school (Ministry of Education, 2008^[21]; DVV International and Chulalongkorn University, 2019^[22]). Since then, the range of adult learning opportunities has expanded significantly to include secondary and vocational education and training. At present, the provision of adult learning programmes, which are often non-formal, is organised into several forms, including short occupation training programmes for the development of life skills, skills training for job employment, group learning for students of the same occupation or trade, and occupational development through the application of technology (e.g. ICT). Non-formal vocational programmes are also available in Thailand, which come in the form of short training programmes, group vocational courses, vocational certificate programmes equivalent to lower secondary school, and non-formal occupational certificate programmes (UNESCO, 2015^[23]; Thongdee et al., 2022^[24]; Leowarin, 2010^[25]; Yenjai, 2014^[26]).

From 2008 to 2023, the main government agency responsible for the management, administration and co-ordination of adult learning in Thailand was the Office of Non-formal and Informal Education (ONIE), which fell under the responsibility of Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education (Charungkaittikul, 2020^[27]; Sawasdee Thailand, 2023^[28]; DVV International and Chulalongkorn University, 2019^[22]). Upon the adoption of the Learning Encouragement Act B.E. 2566 in 2023, ONIE became the Department of Learning Encouragement. The Department is responsible for the promotion of lifelong learning and related policies, as well as the implementation of non-formal and informal education programmes, including flexible learning opportunities outside traditional formal education. The Department also supports community learning centres (CLCs), which are hubs for lifelong learning that offer programmes tailored to local community needs. For all these initiatives, the Department is targeting specific groups of adults, including individuals who have not completed formal education, various other disadvantaged and marginalised groups, as well as community members seeking skill development or continuing education opportunities.

Several actors – both within and beyond government – play an active role in the provision of adult learning opportunities throughout Thailand (see Table 3.2). In central government, the Department of Skills Development under the Ministry of Labour is the main governmental institution responsible for providing workforce upskilling opportunities, including through the administration of the Skills Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545, which provides incentives for adult learning and established the Skills Development Fund (Department of Skills Development, 2002^[13]). Several other ministries, such as the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Transport, and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports also manage educational offers in specialised fields or in local communities (MOE, 2017^[29]).

Moreover, multiple institutions at the local level are active in the provision of adult learning opportunities in Thailand, such as local administration organisations (LAO) that provide formal, non-formal and informal learning to adults; CLCs that provide non-formal education through community-based approaches; Non-formal and Informal Education Centres (NFEs) that provide non-formal and informal learning activities at the sub-district level; and schools for the elderly that provide opportunities for Thai senior citizens to develop their skills and participate in social activities (Belete et al., 2022^[30]; Yenjai, 2014^[26]; Department of Older Persons, 2017^[31]; MOE, 2017^[29]).

Thailand's adult learning system involves a wide range of government actors, each with distinct responsibilities and the types of learning opportunities offered. This highlights the importance of key policy documents (see Table 3.1) that articulate a shared vision and strategic direction for these efforts. While the distribution of the skills mandate across multiple ministries and bodies across levels of government reflects a broad commitment to adult learning, effective co-ordination mechanisms are essential to increase transparency, minimise policy overlaps, and improve implementation efficiency (see Opportunity 2 in Chapter 4).

Table 3.2. Actors involved in the provision of adult learning in Thailand

Name of actor	Description of adult learning initiatives
Department of Skills Development, Ministry of Labour	Under the Ministry of Labour, the Department of Skills Development is the main governmental institution responsible for developing skills to raise the productivity of the Thai workforce and support the needs of the labour market. Its main tasks include improving the quality of Thai citizens' skills to meet international standards, developing systems and initiatives to support skills development and innovation, and promoting the participation of public and private networks in skills development. Through DSD Online Training, the department makes online courses accessible to all. It also collects data on adult learning, such as how much businesses invest in skills development opportunities for their own employees (e.g. expenses, types of training programmes, number of certified learners). Furthermore, the department is also responsible for administering the Skills Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 and its Amendment (No. 2) B.E. 2557, which encourages businesses to develop the skills of their employers through various incentives.
Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), Ministry of Education (Department of Learning Encouragement as of 2023)	The Ministry of Education implements a policy that certifies professional standards and provides skills certificates that would provide students the opportunity to pursue further studies and progress in their work. The Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) under the ministry also has the responsibility of managing, administering and co-ordinating adult learning programmes in the country.
Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC)	Through short training courses, OVEC provides vocational training and upskilling programmes that are tailored to industry needs.
Local administration organisations (LAO)	The Ministry of Education has transferred the authority of education provision to local administration organisations, or LAOs, which make up four types: provincial administration organisations (excluding Bangkok), municipalities, sub-district administration organisations, and special local administration organisations (Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and Pattaya City). LAOs provide formal education, but also non-formal and informal education for adults in the form of various activities, such as lifelong learning sources, work training, and training for life quality development. The decentralised nature of LAOs allows them to organise learning and create teaching curricula in a flexible manner and in line with the various needs of each local community.
Community learning centres (CLCs)	Community learning centres or CLCs in Thailand provide non-formal education through community-based approaches. CLCs are supported by the National Education Act and the Promotion of Non-formal and Informal Education Act. As of 2018, there were 9 524 CLCs across Thailand, including in rural areas. CLCs may be found in various institutions, such as district administration offices, schools, community halls, local elderly people's private houses, factories and temples.
Non-formal and Informal Education Centres (NFE)	Non-formal and Informal Education Centres (NFE) are found at the sub-district level and aim to promote lifelong learning and provide Thai citizens with non-formal education, continuing education and informal education activities. Non-formal education activities include a literacy programme, a basic, self-taught non-formal education programme that is equivalent to Grades 1 to 12, weekend classes, and a distance education programme. Continuing education opportunities constitute vocational training programmes and the education for life skills development programme, which is based on local community needs. Informal education covers the use of radio and television-based educational media, as well as local heritage or local wisdom demonstrations.
Schools for the elderly	Established by the Department of Older Persons under the Ministry of Social Development and Security, schools for the elderly promote lifelong learning among Thai senior citizens. Participation in the schools serve as a way for senior citizens to expand their knowledge and build their skills, as well as participate in social activities for recreational purposes. In 2017, there were around 64 000 elderly students in enrolled in 1 163 schools for the elderly across Thailand.
Universities	Faculties in Thai universities provide various learning opportunities to adults, including short courses, elderly school programmes, public seminars, and in-house training. In many cases, universities collaborate with public and private actors to provide services for the elderly.

Name of actor	Description of adult learning initiatives
Private companies	Private companies in Thailand also offer training to their employees, often focused on industry-specific skills, professional development and continuous learning. However, data on firms in the formal economy indicate that only a small share of them do so. In 2002, Thailand introduced a levy scheme that promotes training initiatives by granting a 200% tax deduction to enterprises that invest in skills development. The levy is compulsory for companies with more than 100 employees, and training should be provided on a yearly basis to at least 50% of employees. There is evidence that the levy scheme has resulted in sharp increases in training provided by companies, reaching around four million employees who receive training every year.

Source: Belete, et al. (2022^[30]), *Community Learning Centres (CLCs) for Adult Learning and Education (ALE): development in and by communities*, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11159-022-09954-w>; Department of Older Persons (2017^[31]), *Situation of the Thai Elderly 2017*, www.dop.go.th/download/knowledge/th1552463947-147_1.pdf; Department of Skill Development (2021^[32]), *Vision/Mission*, www.dsd.go.th/DSD/Home/Vision; Gonçalves (2019^[33]), *Financing TVET: A comparative analysis in six Asian countries*, www.afd.fr/en/ressources/financing-tvet-comparative-analysis-six-asian-countries; IOM (2022^[15]), *IOM and the Department of Skills Development Collaborate to Facilitate Skills Development for Migrant Workers in Thailand*, <https://thailand.iom.int/news/iom-and-department-skills-development-collaborate-facilitate-skills-development-migrant-workers-thailand>; Kearns & Reghenzani-Keams (2018^[34]), *Towards good active ageing for all: In a context of deep demographic change and dislocation*, https://pascalobservatory.org/sites/default/files/towards_good_active_ageing-peter_kearns-dec7.pdf; Ministry of Education (2017^[29]), *Education in Thailand*, www.bic.moe.go.th/images/stories/pdf/EDUCATION_IN_THAILAND_2017.pdf; OECD (2020^[35]), *OECD Economic Surveys: Thailand 2020*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ad2e50fa-en>; Prachyapruit, A. (2023^[36]), *Development of a Thai university model oriented to working adults and the retired elderly*, <https://so02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/hasss/article/view/260752/176957>; Yenjai, P. (2014^[26]), *Community learning in Thailand*, www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-812014-communities/community-learning-in-community-learning-in-thailand.

In addition to these publicly managed institutions at the central and local levels, the private sector also plays a significant role in the provision of adult learning opportunities in Thailand. For instance, as described in the performance section below, more than half (51%) of large firms in Thailand offer training to their employees (see Figure 3.4) (World Bank, 2023^[9]). Recent studies show that Thai employees primarily consider their employers as key to their upskilling needs, even more so than the government. For instance, 52% of Thai employees² believe that employers are primarily responsible for providing financial incentives for upskilling and for recognising their skills (e.g. through certifications and additional benefits). Moreover, 47% of Thai employees also believe that their employers are responsible for providing information on skills needed for different job roles in comparison to 27% of employees who believe that this responsibility lies with the government. 42% of Thai employees also believe that employers are responsible for providing access to diversified skilling programmes, in comparison to only 29% of employees who believe that the government should do so (Bhandari, 2023^[37]).

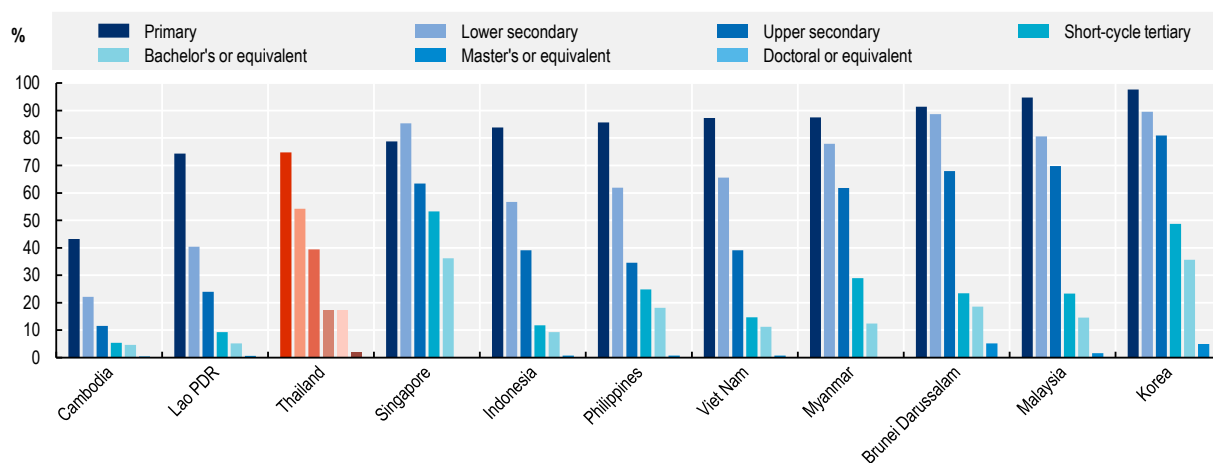
Thailand's performance in fostering greater participation in adult learning

While Thailand has made significant efforts to introduce policies and initiatives to foster greater participation in adult learning, several barriers need to be addressed to increase the supply of and demand for adult learning opportunities in the country. This section presents Thailand's performance in key adult learning indicators in comparison to neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia and select countries from across the OECD.

There is scope to strengthen adult skills and increase participation in education and training

Thailand has made good progress in expanding access to education, with three in four adults aged 25 and over having completed primary education (see Figure 3.1). Continued efforts to strengthen participation beyond the primary level could help raise overall attainment further. Currently, 54% of adults have completed lower secondary and 39% upper secondary education – figures that highlight both progress and the opportunity to further align with attainment levels seen in other countries in Southeast Asia and the OECD (World Bank, 2024^[38]).

Figure 3.1. Share of population aged 25 years old and above by level of educational attainment, latest available year



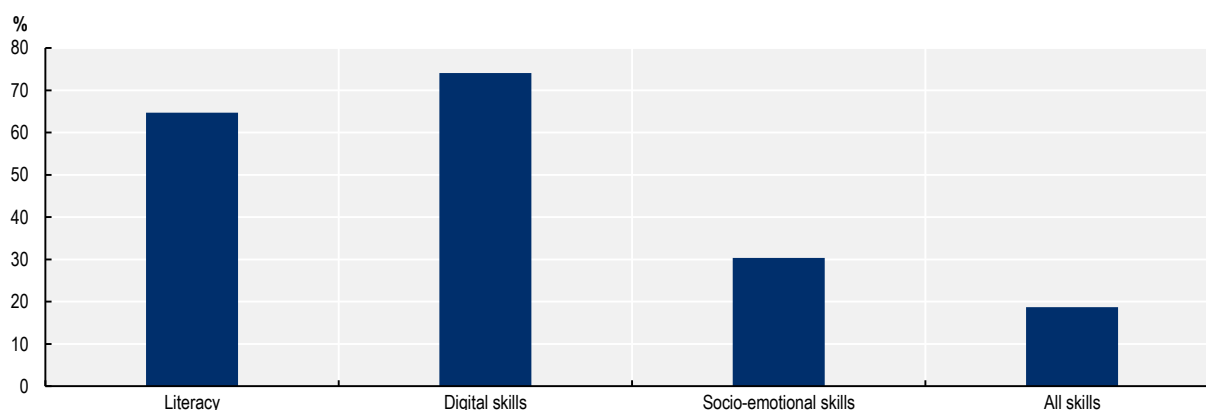
Source: World Bank (2024^[38]), *Educational attainment, at least completed primary, population 25+ years, total (%) (cumulative)*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.CUAT.ZS>.

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Thailand performs relatively well in tertiary education compared to other countries in Southeast Asia. The share of adults with short-cycle tertiary qualification (17%) and bachelor's degrees or equivalent (17%) exceeds the ASEAN average. Moreover, Thailand also has one of the highest shares of adults with a master's degree or equivalent (2%) in Southeast Asia (World Bank, 2024^[38]). This comparatively strong performance in higher education may be attributed to higher education expansion policies and the growth of both public and private universities (Chaemchoy, Puthongsiriporn and Fry, 2021^[39]; Crocco, 2018^[40]). Nonetheless, despite these gains in higher education, the majority of Thai adults have attained only lower levels of education. This limits the development of foundational skills within the workforce, posing challenges for productivity and labour market adaptability.

There is room to strengthen foundational skills among Thai youth and adults (see Figure 3.2). For example, 65% of individuals report difficulties with basic literacy tasks, such as understanding short texts, drawing simple inferences, or integrating information. Similarly, 74% face challenges with basic digital skills, including navigating digital tools or using online information to solve simple problems. There is also room to further develop socio-emotional skills, with 30% of youth and adults indicating they do not view themselves as open, curious or imaginative (World Bank, 2024^[38]). These findings point to key areas where targeted interventions could support stronger learning outcomes and more inclusive skill development.

Developing higher-level skills can play a key role in improving labour market outcomes in Thailand, as individuals with stronger literacy, digital, and socio-emotional skills tend to earn higher incomes than those with lower skill levels. This underscores the importance of fostering advanced skills to promote more inclusive and equitable economic opportunities. For instance, in 2024, adults demonstrating lower levels of foundational literacy report a monthly income of THB 15 692 (Thai Baht) (EUR 398) in comparison to THB 22 016 (EUR 559) among adults with higher levels of foundational literacy (World Bank, 2024^[41]).

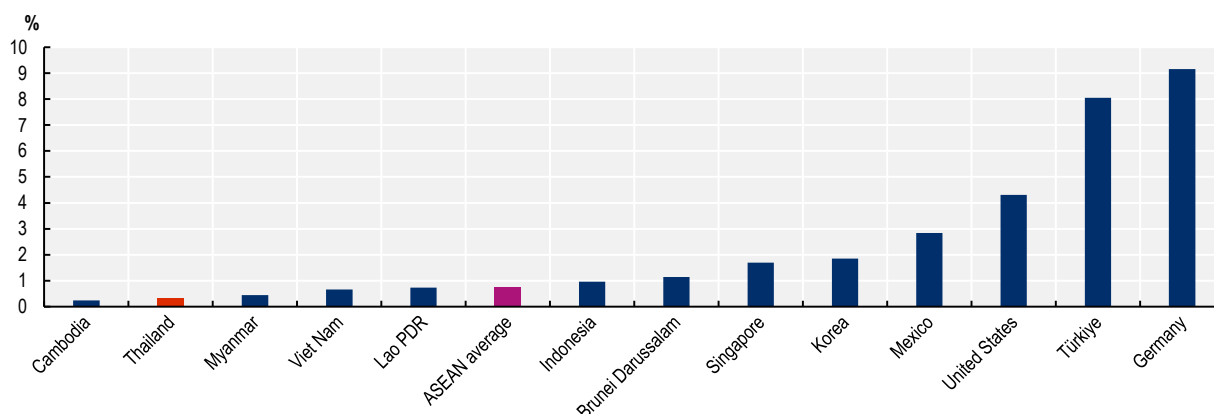
Figure 3.2. Share of Thai youth and adults with low levels of foundational skills, 2024

Source: World Bank (2024^[41]), *Fostering Foundational Skills in Thailand*, www.worldbank.org/en/country/thailand/publication/fostering-foundational-skills-in-thailand.

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Many adults are not learning due to low motivation and time constraints

Participation in adult learning could help Thai adults develop the skills they need to thrive in an increasingly complex and competitive world of work. However, only a small proportion of all Thai individuals aged 25 to 54 years old have participated in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months (see Figure 3.3). Despite various government efforts to expand the supply of adult learning opportunities (see Table 3.1), participation remains limited due to persistent demand-side barriers, including low motivation and time constraints (see Opportunity 2). In 2022, only 0.3% of adults in Thailand participated in adult learning opportunities, placing the country second to last in Southeast Asia, ahead of only Cambodia (0.2%) and ranking well below the participation rates of selected OECD countries used as comparators. While the average rate of participation across the ASEAN is also low (0.8%), Thailand's participation rate remains significantly below this benchmark (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2024^[42]).

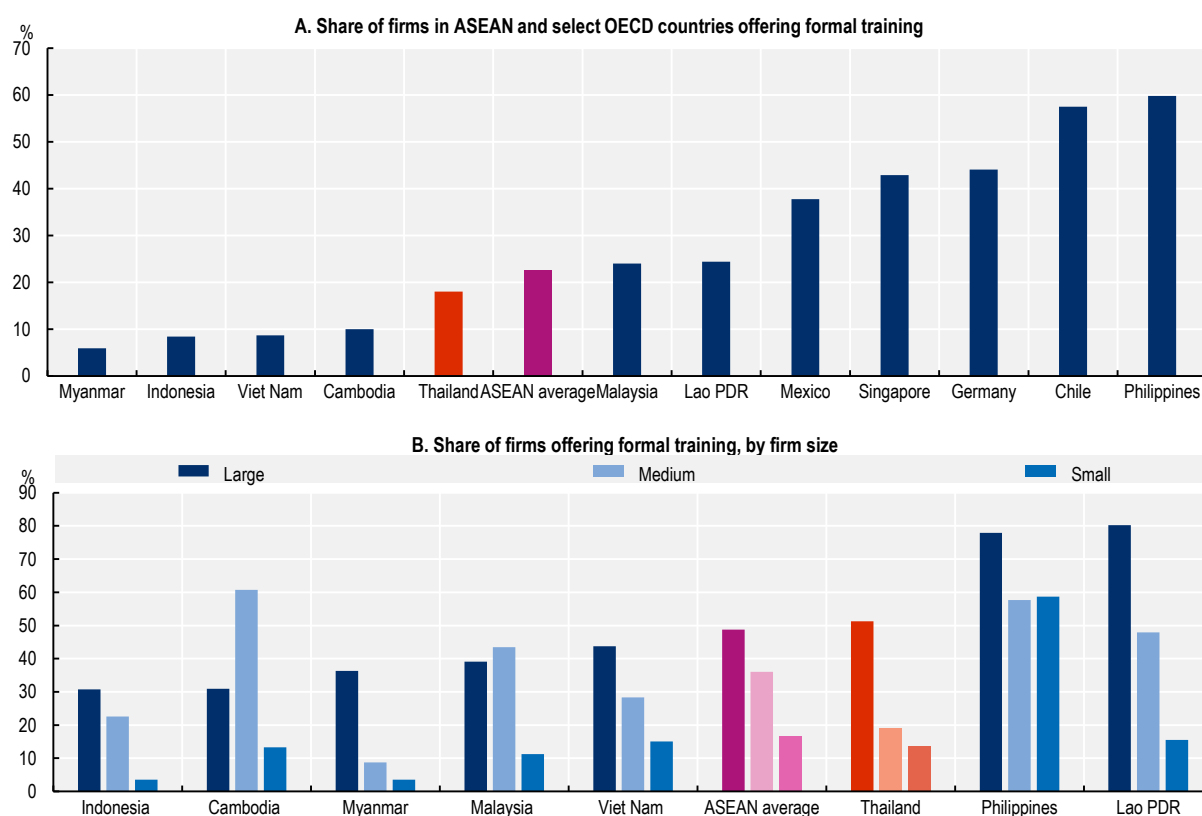
Figure 3.3. Participation rate of adults (25-54 years old) from ASEAN and select OECD countries in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, latest available year

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2021^[43]), *SDG 4 Indicator Dashboard: Indicator 4.3.1*, <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>.

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While many Thai employees believe that employers are primarily responsible for providing access to skills development opportunities, only 18% of Thai firms in the formal economy offered training to permanent, full-time employees in 2016 (Bhandari, 2023^[37]; World Bank, 2016^[44]; World Bank, 2023^[9]).³ This is lower than the ASEAN average of 23% and is significantly lower than select OECD countries, as well as some countries in the region such as the Philippines (60%) and Singapore (43%) (see Panel A in Figure 3.4). Access to training also largely depends on firm size,⁴ with small-sized firms offering significantly less training than larger firms (see Panel B in Figure 3.4). In Thailand, only 14% of small firms offer formal training to their employees, in comparison to 19% of medium firms and 51% of large firms (World Bank, 2023^[9]). Low investments in training among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Thailand stems from multiple reasons, such as the lack of human resource management skills among business leaders, the lack of a strategy for training employees, and reluctance among employees to participate in training (Grimsholm and Poblete, 2010^[45]). This is an important policy issue, as SMEs make up a significant share of the Thai economy – 99.5% of all enterprises in Thailand in 2023 (Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2023^[46]).

Figure 3.4. Provision of training in ASEAN and select OECD countries, latest available year



Note: Due to lack of data, the latest available year was used for the following countries: Chile (2010); Philippines (2015), Myanmar and Thailand (2016); Lao PDR (2018); Malaysia (2019); Germany (2021); and Cambodia, Indonesia, Mexico, Singapore, Viet Nam (2023).

Source: World Bank (2023^[9]), *Enterprise Surveys: Workforce*, [www.enterprisesurveys.org/en/data/exploretopics/workforce](https://enterprisesurveys.org/en/data/exploretopics/workforce).

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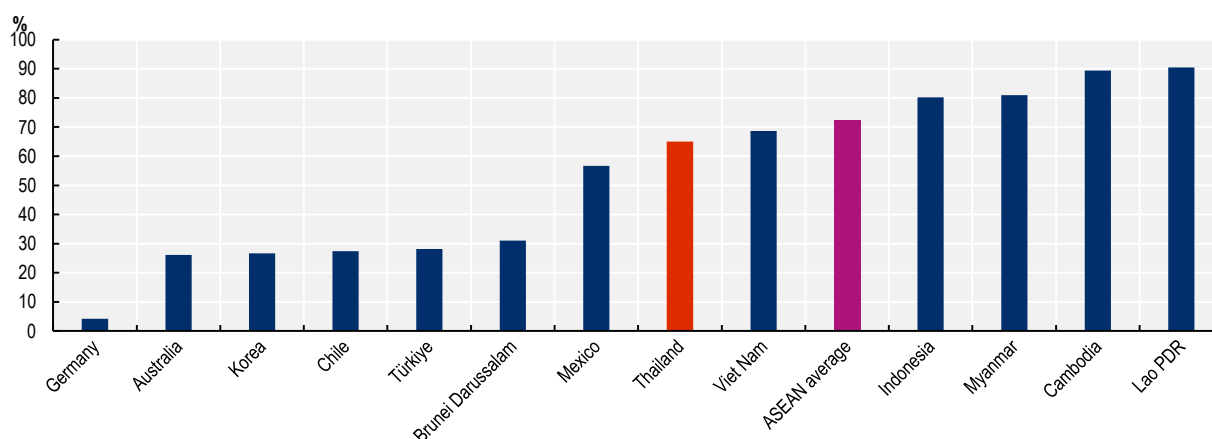
In addition to a limited supply of adult learning opportunities, the demand for them is also low in Thailand, with as many as 92% of adults reporting that they do not wish to participate in adult learning for multiple reasons (see Opportunity 2). Many adults also face a range of obstacles to participation. The most commonly cited reason for not participating in adult learning is the lack of time, as long working hours

prevent many adults from attending classes (OECD, 2020^[35]; Bhandari, 2023^[37]; Kisi, 2021^[47]). In addition to time, motivational and attitudinal barriers also prevent Thai adults from participating in educational offers. These include age-related misconceptions, such as the perception that they are too old to learn, or that there is no further need given that they have already studied. Many adults also lack awareness about the need to develop their skills further (OECD, 2020^[35]; Vandeweyer et al., 2020^[48]).

Especially disadvantaged populations, including those in the informal sector, are not learning

The lack of training is particularly an issue for adults in Thailand's widespread informal sector, where there are more limited opportunities to upgrade their skills through employer-provided training and where skills recognition remains challenging (OECD, 2025^[10]). It is estimated that informal employment constitutes 65% of all employment in Thailand (see Figure 3.5). While this is lower than the ASEAN average of 72%, it is still significantly higher than many OECD countries (ILO, 2022^[11]). The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) estimates that the share of informal workers in Thailand will rise due to changes in work patterns and increases in the number of gig-workers in the country who take independent jobs sporadically and for a short period of time (NESDC, 2023^[49]).

Figure 3.5. Proportion of informal employment in total employment in ASEAN and select OECD countries, latest available year



Source: ILO (2022^[11]), *Statistics on the informal economy*, <https://ilostat ilo.org/topics/informality/>.

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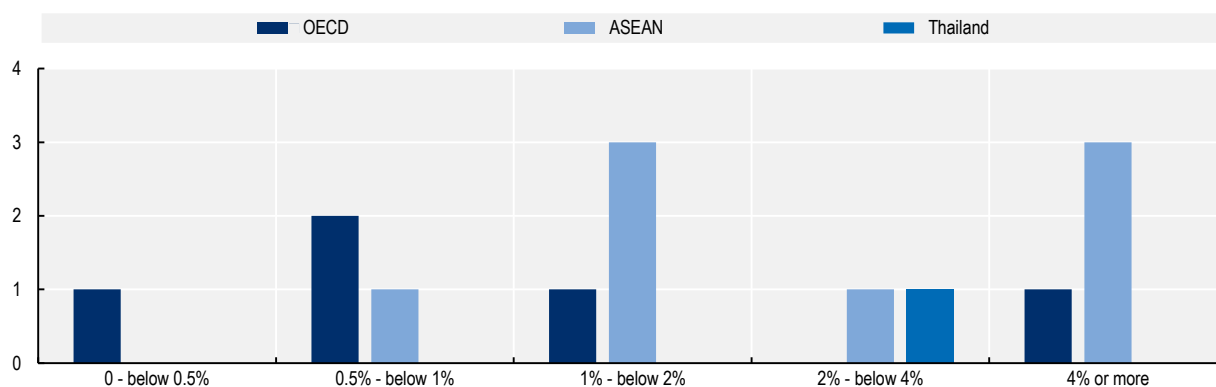
Thai youth and adults with low levels of literacy, digital and socio-emotional skills are more likely to be found in the informal employment sector (World Bank, 2024^[41]). Given that the provision of adult learning opportunities in Thailand is closely tied to employment in companies (Bhandari, 2023^[37]; Department of Skills Development, 2002^[13]), workers in the informal economy are at great risk of lagging behind in terms of acquiring the foundational skills they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world of work.

Extending adult learning opportunities to disadvantaged populations, especially those found in Thailand's widespread informal sector, will require increased investments in adult learning among all stakeholders. Adult learning opportunities in Thailand are co-funded with the private sector and international sources such as bilateral and multilateral aid (UNESCO, 2022^[7]). However, the share of financing from each of these sources is unclear, and systematic and internationally comparable data on public spending on adult learning is limited.

Nonetheless, available data indicates that Thailand is already one of the highest-spending countries in Southeast Asia on adult learning, also surpassing select OECD countries (see Figure 3.6). While a majority

of countries in the region allocate only between 1% to 2% of their public expenditure on education to adult learning, Thailand spends allocates 2% and 4%. However, the country still lags behind Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. Thailand has reported planning to increase spending on adult learning, with a particular focus on unemployed adults, disadvantaged adults due to lack of education and skills, residents of remote or rural areas, adults with disabilities, minority groups (ethnic, linguistic and religious), and indigenous peoples (UNESCO, 2022^[7]).

Figure 3.6. Number of ASEAN and select OECD countries by percentage of public education spending designated to adult learning



Source: UNESCO (2022^[50]), 5th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE), <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/grale-5-dataset>.

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Opportunities to foster greater participation in adult learning

Thailand's performance in fostering greater participation in adult learning is influenced by a range of factors at the individual, institutional and societal levels. Drawing on findings from a literature review, desk research, a policy questionnaire distributed to Thai policymakers, and in-depth virtual consultations with stakeholders, the following opportunities for improvement have been identified for fostering greater participation in adult learning in Thailand:

1. Increasing the quality and relevance of adult learning opportunities.
2. Addressing barriers to participation in adult learning.
3. Increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups.

Opportunity 1: Improving the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities

In order to foster greater participation in adult learning, Thailand could make learning opportunities for adults more attractive by ensuring that they are of high quality and are relevant to the country's current and future labour market needs. Adults and firms would be more likely to invest their time and resources into training opportunities if they are assured that these opportunities adhere to national and international standards. Furthermore, investments in training would especially be worthwhile for adults when they are able to use these new skills in their current and future employment opportunities.

Two key recommendations have been identified to support Thailand in improving the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities: (1) improving internal and external quality assurance

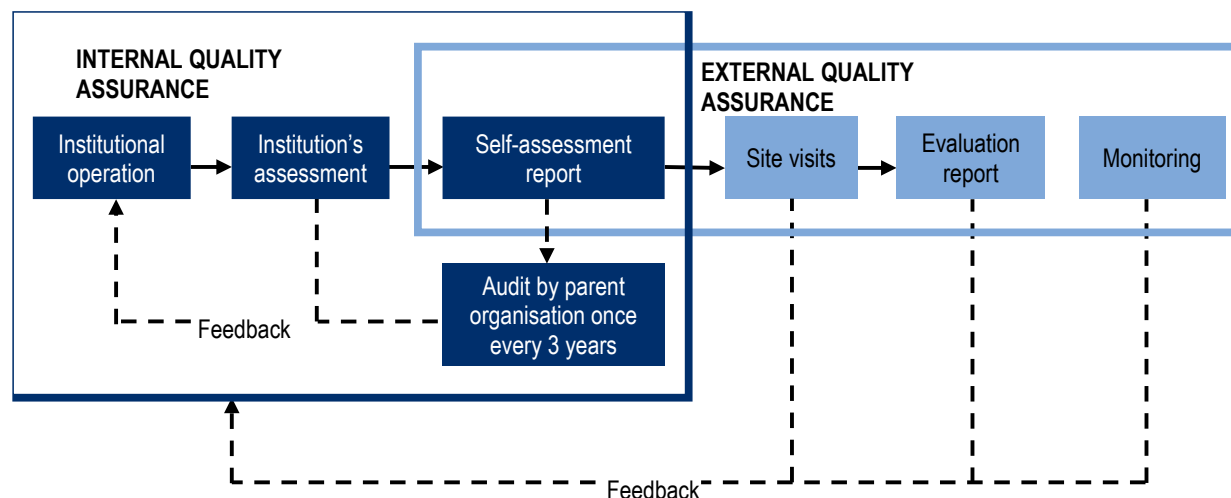
mechanisms for formal and non-formal adult learning, and (2) steering adult learning provision and educational choices towards areas of skills shortage.

Recommendation 1: Improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for formal and non-formal adult learning

Participation in adult learning offer numerous benefits, including access to better quality jobs, greater employability, increased productivity, and improved well-being (OECD, 2019^[51]). However, in order to achieve these benefits, adult learning opportunities need to be of high quality and capable of delivering successful outcomes for learners. Given the constraints on private and public resources, guaranteeing the quality of adult learning is even more crucial to ensure that individuals' investments provide value for money (OECD, 2021^[52]; OECD, 2023^[53]; OECD, 2024^[54]). Robust quality assurance mechanisms not only provide prospective learners with confidence in the value of these opportunities but also enhance trust in the broader adult learning system (OECD, 2021^[52]).

Quality assurance processes were formally integrated in Thailand's educational system through the enactment of the National Education Act of 1999. This legislation established an educational quality assurance system composed of two parallel mechanisms: internal and external quality assurance (Hemthong, Thanasatchawat and Savatsomboon, 2023^[55]; Office of the Prime Minister, 1999^[12]). Internal quality assurance (IQA) is the responsibility of training providers, who are required to continually assess their own performance and publish annual reports to ensure transparency and accountability (Office of the Prime Minister, 1999^[12]). In contrast, external quality assurance (EQA) is overseen by the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). This process involved ONESQA dispatching a panel of assessors to gather data about the institution's performance and evaluate it against established criteria and standards (ONESQA, 2021^[56]). The interplay between the two mechanisms is depicted in Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7. Relationship between internal and external quality assurance in Thailand



Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education (2014^[57]), *Manual for the Internal Quality Assurance for Higher Education Institutions*: Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC), www.dqe.mhesi.go.th/bhes2/56-12-27%20Manual%20for%20the%20Internal%20Final.pdf.

Formal and non-formal adult learning in Thailand is only partially addressed by these systems, which primarily focus on learning opportunities within the formal education system. For instance, formal and non-formal adult learning opportunities are subject to internal quality assurance processes only when they are provided by HEIs overseen by the Office for Higher Education Commission (OHEC) under the Ministry of Education (Office of the Prime Minister, 1999^[12]). However, OHEC's mandate in relation to internal quality assurance primarily targets higher education, leaving adult learning programmes beyond higher education largely outside its purview.

At present, there is no specific guidance for conducting self-assessments of adult learning programmes offered outside the higher education sector (OHEC, 2014^[58]). This highlights a significant gap in the coverage of quality assurance mechanisms. To address this, Thailand must expand the scope of internal quality assurance processes to encompass formal and non-formal adult learning opportunities beyond higher education, including those provided by non-HEI adult learning providers.

Government representatives in Thailand have highlighted the significant role of internal quality assurance, conducted through self-assessments, in shaping the quality of in formal and non-formal adult learning in Thailand. Feedback mechanisms, such as surveys administered to learners and employers, are commonly used by training institutions to gather insights on the quality and relevance of their programmes. This feedback is then leveraged to implement improvements, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the training provided (OECD, 2024^[59]).

These self-assessments are important for assuring the quality of the adult learning system in Thailand, enabling providers to evaluate their performance against established standards and criteria. By promoting accountability – often through the preparation of written reports – self-assessments not only help providers identify their strengths and weaknesses but also support the development and implementation of continuous improvement plans (OECD, 2021^[52]; OECD, 2023^[53]; OECD, 2021^[60]). In a diverse adult learning system with many providers, self-assessments can empower institutions to take ownership of their own quality improvement, while also easing the government's burden in conducting external quality assurance processes (OECD, 2024^[54]).

However, there is scope for enhancing these internal quality assurance mechanisms for adult learning in Thailand. The government currently lacks the capacity to fully integrate adult learning in existing quality assurance frameworks. For instance, the absence of a national database to consolidate information from self-assessments presents a critical gap. Such a database could enable policymakers to generate an overview of the quality of formal and non-formal adult learning in the country, facilitating data-driven decision-making and targeted improvements. Furthermore, the scope of quality indicators available to assess adult learning programmes is notably limited. Existing indicators primarily focus on adults enrolled in graduate programmes within HEIs, leaving many aspects of formal and non-formal adult learning unmeasured. Expanding the range of quality indicators to encompass a broader spectrum of adult learning activities would provide a more robust basis for evaluating programme performance and driving systemic improvements.

To enhance the effectiveness of self-assessments in ensuring the quality of education and training, Thailand should consider several factors. Firstly, establishing a national entity dedicated to supporting adult learning providers is important. Such an entity could offer clear and consistent guidance on how to conduct self-assessment effectively in a standardised manner, fostering uniformity and rigour across providers. Secondly, developing a comprehensive and accessible set of quality indicators would be highly beneficial. These indicators should be sufficiently flexible to allow providers to adapt them to their specific contexts while maintaining alignment with national quality standards (OECD, 2021^[52]; OECD, 2023^[53]). For instance, Slovenia has cultivated a strong culture of self-assessments for quality assurance. The Slovenian Institute of Adult education plays a pivotal role by advising providers on how to evaluate their own quality and identify areas for improvement (see Box 3.1). To further incentivise quality improvement, the institute

awards a logo to providers who demonstrate that they have conducted systematic self-assessments over the past three years and used the findings to enhance their performance.

In addition to internal quality assurance, Thailand faces challenges in implementing effective external quality assurance practices for adult learning. Current efforts, which primarily focus on conducting external audits (see Figure 3.7), remain limited in scope (OHEC, 2014^[58]). While ONESQA oversees external quality assurance for vocational education and training (VET) institutions, its own mechanisms do not extend to continuing vocational education and training (CVET)⁵ for adults or other adult learning opportunities. Furthermore, external quality assurance processes do not currently include a broad range of adult learning providers beyond HEIs and VET institutes. These excluded providers include private companies, LAOs, CLCs, NFEs, and schools for the elderly, all of which play an important role in delivering diverse learning opportunities for adults in Thailand. Expanding the reach of external quality assurance to encompass these providers is essential to ensure comprehensive oversight and the consistent quality of adult learning across the country.

A common approach to external quality assurance in many OECD countries is the use of quality labels and certificates. Under this approach, external bodies – independent of the training provider, including both governmental or non-governmental organisations – conduct audits based on predefined quality standards. Providers that meet these standards are awarded a logo, emblem, or symbol as certification of their compliance (OECD, 2021^[52]; OECD, 2023^[53]; OECD, 2024^[54]; Espinoza and Martinez-Yarza, 2023^[61]). In Thailand, various industry bodies and professional associations in the country provide certification for VET programmes to ensure that they meet industry standards. However, the coverage of such certifications for CVET and adult learning is limited. Introducing quality labels or certificates specifically designed for adult learning providers could help address this gap. Such a measure would not only enhance the visibility and credibility of adult learning opportunities but also encourage providers to uphold and improve their quality standards.

It is important to ensure that the quality certification system for adult learning remains simple and user-friendly. While allowing multiple industry bodies and professional associations to issue quality certificates in Thailand can address the diverse needs of various sectors, this approach also presents challenges. Specifically, if different certification bodies implement their processes without adhering to a common set of minimum quality standards, the credibility and value of the quality labels or certificates awarded to adult learning providers could be compromised (OECD, 2021^[60]). To address this concern, Thailand should consider introducing a unified, government-regulated quality label or certificate for adult learning providers. Such a system would be grounded in a standardised set of certification criteria and operationalised through clear and consistent quality guidelines. A national certification system would not only enhance the legitimacy of quality labels but also streamline the certification process for providers. A useful example can be found in Austria, where the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research oversees the Ö-cert national certification system and quality seal for adult learning providers (see Box 3.1). The Ö-cert application process is straightforward, requiring compliance with five clearly defined basic certification criteria. The entire process, including submission of required documentation, takes less than two hours and is completed on line (OECD, 2021^[52]; OECD, 2023^[53]; OECD, 2024^[54]). Adopting a similarly efficient and transparent model could provide Thailand with a practical framework for enhancing its quality assurance mechanisms.

Box 3.1. Relevant international example: Improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for adult learning, especially non-formal and informal learning

Slovenia: Self-assessments guided by the Slovenian Institute of Adult Education

In Slovenia, where there is a strong culture of quality assurance, self-assessments are commonly used by adult learning providers. The Slovenian Institute of Adult Education launched the Offering Quality Education to Adults (OQEA) initiative in 1999 to advise providers how to self-assess their own quality and plan their own improvements. During the self-assessment process, the adult learning institution's management and employees reflect on their mission, vision and values relating to the education of adults, and may choose from almost 100 quality indicators and criteria gathered by the Slovenian Institute of Adult Education. These indicators cover (1) input factors (educational programmes, promotion of adult education, staff, premises and equipment); (2) process factors (planning of education, implementation of education, development work in support of education, support for individuals in education); (3) output factors (results, effects); and (4) transversal factors (management and administration). Moreover, OQEA also provides a logo to adult education providers if they can prove that for the past three years, they have carried out self-assessment processes systematically and produced a written action plan to improve on the results. It is important to note that this logo is not an instrument for external quality assurance – as is the case with quality labels and certificates – but is rather aimed at rewarding adult learning providers who display strong initiative to systematically assess their own work and continuously improve their performance.

Austria: Ö-cert certification system

Austria provides quality certificates to adult learning providers through the Ö-Cert certification system, which reports to the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research, the same ministry that ensures that all adult learning providers offer programmes that are aligned with the National Qualifications Framework. The certification system is recognised throughout Austria, unlike previous certification systems which were only regional. The Ö-Cert quality seal is an umbrella label for adult learning providers, is a nationwide quality trademark, and is regulated by law. To obtain the seal, adult learning providers must apply for it and fulfil minimum requirements. Eligible providers must have at least one adult learning programme offering in Austria that is regular, planned and communicated publicly (for transparency), and must have formally operated for at least three years. Learning providers are then asked to submit the appropriate paperwork on line, with the process estimated to take less than two hours. They must meet five basic certification requirements:

1. The provider must agree on the definitions of lifelong learning and adult education.
2. The provider's main task should be adult education, with educational managers having corresponding qualifications and professional experience.
3. The adult education offers must be open to the public and not solely oriented towards leisure activities.
4. The provider has to agree on basic ethical principles (e.g. human rights) and democracy.
5. The provider must submit a Q-certificate according to the Ö-Cert list.

Once the application is received, it will be examined, and a final decision will be made during an accreditation group meeting held five to six times every year. The accreditation process is free, but if the provider's application is successful, they must pay EUR 100 for the use of the Ö-Cert quality seal.

Source: OECD (2021^[52]), *Improving the Quality of Non-Formal Adult Learning: Learning from European Best Practices on Quality Assurance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f1b450e1-en>; Ö-Cert (2011^[62]), *An overall framework of quality for adult education in Austria*, <https://oe-cert.at/meta/english-overview.php#>.

Recommendation 1: Improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for formal and non-formal adult learning

Improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for formal and non-formal adult learning can help ensure that learners receive high-quality training, equipping them with in-demand skills that boost employability, access to better jobs, and overall productivity.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to improve quality assurance mechanisms for adult learning, especially non-formal and informal learning:

- 1.1. Expand internal and external quality assurance mechanisms to include adult learning providers currently excluded from existing regulations.** Thailand should make a deliberate effort to co-ordinate with other types of adult learning providers beyond HEIs and VET institutes to comply with quality assurance requirements. These include LAOs, CLCs, NFEs, schools for the elderly, and private companies. OHEC should work with these adult learning providers to set up internal quality assurance mechanisms, as well as extend to them the requirement to submit self-assessment reports and undergo audit every three years. Similarly, Thailand should also include these providers in their list of institutions that will undergo external quality assurance assessments every five years.
- 1.2. Strengthen the capacity of adult learning providers to conduct self-evaluations and make improvements based on results.** Thailand should collaborate with adult learning providers to enable them to conduct self-assessments, including through the provision of clear, easy to understand guidelines. Such guidelines may explain why such internal quality assurance mechanisms are needed, what aspects of their functioning are being assessed (e.g. relevance, pedagogical practices, administration, graduate outcomes), how to conduct the self-assessment, how often, and by whom (e.g. administrators, teaching personnel, students). The guidelines should be easily accessible, and a dedicated support team from relevant government agencies must be available to help adult learning providers in more detail.
- 1.3. Introduce quality assurance labels for adult learning providers.** ONESQA should build on its actual external quality assurance mechanisms and introduce a label or logo for adult learning providers who demonstrate exceptional performance based on site visits, evaluation reports, and monitoring data. Additional criteria may also be added, such as programmes' alignment with the National Qualifications Framework (see Austria's Ö-Cert seal in Box 3.1) Thailand should make sure that the ONESQA-offered label or logo is known among adult learning providers and prospective students as the official government-approved quality assurance label in Thailand in order to uphold its value as a quality assurance instrument.

Recommendation 2: Steering adult learning provision and choices towards areas of skills shortage

In addition to ensuring the quality of adult learning opportunities, it is equally important to ensure that they are relevant to current and future labour market needs. In a rapidly changing world, providing information on current and future skills trends can help training providers develop the right adult learning opportunities that could support national development, as well as help individuals make more informed training choices and enable the development of skills that are valued in the labour market. To this end, Thailand is taking steps to identify critical skills areas and expanding adult learning opportunities to foster innovation and

national competitiveness. At the policy level, the Action Plan for the Production and the Development of Human Resources in Occupations that are Urgently Needed for Development was adopted to create a roadmap for producing manpower in strategic sectors, in line with the National Qualifications Framework (see Table 3.1) (Office of the Education Council, 2019^[18]). Thailand also has a long history of promoting partnerships with industry to design and implement VET programmes for adults and ensure that they align with labour market needs.

Enhancing skills data collection to better align adult learning opportunities with labour market needs

To complement current efforts and further ensure the relevance of adult learning offers, there is room for Thailand to use skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) more systematically. SAA tools are used to generate robust, accurate and timely information about current and future skills needs of the labour market (i.e. skill demand) and the supply of skills available (Bakule et al., 2016^[63]; OECD, 2016^[64]; Wilson and Zukersteinova, 2011^[65]). They involve the use of several methods, such as forecast-based projections and quantitative models; employer, employee, enterprise or vacancy surveys; qualitative methods (e.g. focus group discussions, scenario development), and sectoral/occupational/regional studies (see Table 3.3) (OECD, 2016^[64]; ILO, 2017^[66]).

Information on the use of SAA tools in Thailand is extremely limited, although employer-employee surveys are used by the Department of Skills Development under the Ministry of Labour to determine labour market needs. The Department works with sectoral bodies to conduct two types of surveys: (1) for trainees and workers, which determine what kinds of skills they are motivated to learn or what their needs are in terms of training; and (2) for enterprises, which determine what kinds of skills or qualifications are needed in the workplace. Following the implementation of these surveys, the Department of Skills Development uses the results to inform the content of its adult learning opportunities. As of 2024, the Department is transitioning towards digitalising this process by adopting online surveys for distribution to employers and employees.

Table 3.3. Characteristics of skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) tools

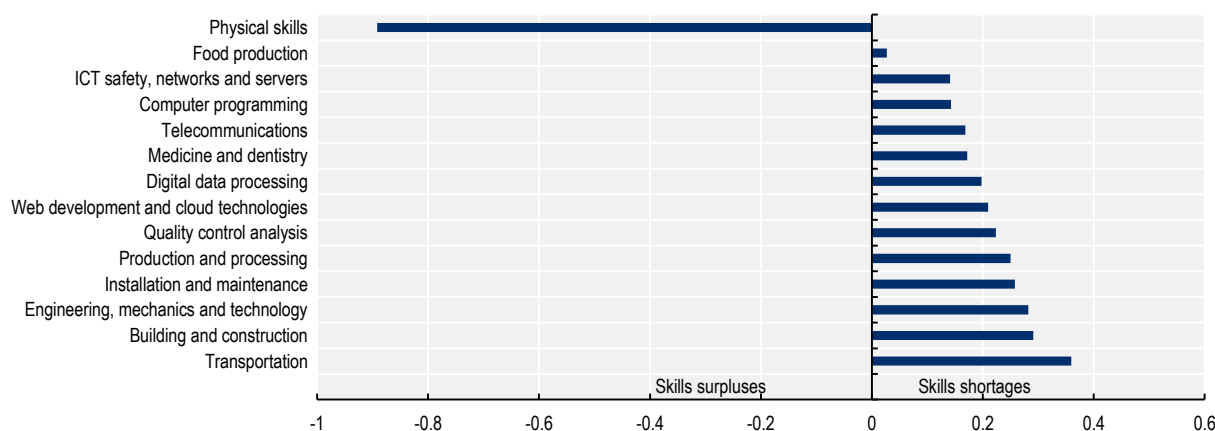
SAA Tool	Considerations for implementation	Advantages	Disadvantages
Forecast-based projections and quantitative models at the national level	- Requires reliable and consistent time series data on labour markets (sector, occupation, qualification) and population (age, gender, labour market participation) - Needs expertise in building and running quantitative forecasting models, requiring statistical and programming experience	- Is comprehensive, typically covering all sectors - Is consistent, transparent and explicit	Can be costly and demanding in terms of data
Employer-employee surveys, enterprise surveys, vacancy surveys	- Requires knowledge on survey design and implementation (representativeness, weighting, questionnaire design, interview training) and analysis of survey outcomes - May build on existing administrative data or processes of public employment services (PES)	- Involves users and customers directly in data gathering - Is easy to set up and carry out	- May be subjective and inconsistent, focusing too much on the marginal and ephemeral - Needs large samples to obtain robust data, and may therefore be expensive
Focus group discussions, round tables, scenario development	No specific data requirements	- Provides a more holistic picture as it considers a broader range of factors than just economic - Involves users and customers directly in data gathering	- May be subjective and inconsistent, focusing too much on the marginal and ephemeral - May be unrepresentative, anecdotal and not grounded in reality

SAA Tool	Considerations for implementation	Advantages	Disadvantages
Sectoral/occupational/regional studies and/or observatories (using both quantitative and qualitative evidence)	- Synthesises sector-based data from statistical surveys, employer-employee surveys, etc. - Requires understanding of sector-based labour markets, occupations and skills requirements - May use either primary or secondary data	Is holistic and comprehensive for the sector/occupation/region being studied	- Ignores other sectors/occupations/regions - May introduce inconsistencies across sectors/occupations/regions

Source: ILO (2017^[66]), *Skills Needs Anticipation: Systems and Approaches*, www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2223_en.pdf; OECD (2016^[64]), *Getting Skills Right: Assessing and Anticipating Changing Skill Needs*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264252073-en>.

In addition to employer-employee surveys conducted by the Department of Skill Development, Thailand can access labour market information through the OECD Skills for Jobs Database, which analyses what skills are in demand in the Thai labour market. The database shows that the country has severe shortages of production and technology knowledge skills, more specifically transportation skills (0.36), building and construction skills (0.291), and engineering, mechanics and technology (0.282) (OECD, 2024^[67]) (see Figure 3.8). Addressing these shortages will be critical if Thailand wants to achieve national development objectives as outlined in the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan 2023-2027 (NESDC, 2023^[49]). For instance, Thailand aims to transform the automobile industry into an electrical vehicle industry and to accelerate its electronics industry to become ASEAN's centre for smart electronics and digital industries. To achieve this objective, Thailand would need to address the current shortages in production and technology knowledge skills.

Figure 3.8. Skills surpluses and shortages in key sectors in Thailand



Note: Positive values indicate skill shortages, while negative values indicate skills surpluses. The larger the absolute value, the larger the imbalance. The value of 1 represents the largest shortage, and -1 the largest surplus across OECD countries, skill categories and years.

Source: OECD (2024^[68]), *Skills for Jobs Database: Skills needs by country*, www.oecdskillsforjobsdatabase.org/index.php#.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/r3alqc>

Generating timely labour market information through SAA exercises can help Thailand identify which skills it needs to further develop in its workforce. However, SAA exercises in the country are still fragmented and carried out sporadically (World Bank, 2021^[69]). Thailand could further improve its SAA exercises. In particular, it would be important to more systematically carry out SAA exercises to obtain a more coherent and comprehensive overview of the skills needed across different sectors and occupations. In many OECD countries, SAA exercises focusing on short-term (i.e. 6 months to 2 years) and medium-term (i.e. 2 to

5 years) needs are generally carried out (or updated) on an annual basis. Longer-term SAA exercises, by contrast, are undertaken less frequently – for example, every four years in Finland with a 15-year outlook – although provisions are generally made for periodic updates to take into account new trends and developments (OECD, 2016^[64]). Drawing on the results of such exercises, Thailand could tailor adult learning opportunities to better align with evolving labour market needs and ensure that individuals acquire the skills most in demand across the economy.

Disseminating skills data to learners and training providers

In addition to improving skills and labour market information, it is also equally important to disseminate this information and ensure its systematic and regular use by key actors, such as training providers and adult learners themselves. For SAA exercises to add value to the skills system, their findings must inform education and training offers and choices (OECD, 2016^[64]). For example, in Japan, offers of vocational training programmes for workers who plan to change jobs or improve their skills are based on local labour market and industrial needs, which are determined by SAA exercises carried out by the public employment service and the regional branches of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Welfare (OECD, 2016^[64]). In Thailand, some of the training opportunities offered by the Department of Skills Development already correspond with targeted higher-level skills outlined in the National Economic and Social Development Plan. For instance, in 2024, the department offered courses on the installation of intelligent electric vehicle power supply systems for buildings (Department of Skills Development, 2024^[70]).

The results of SAA exercises are also typically disseminated to students, families and workers to inform them about the labour market prospects of different occupations. For example, in Finland, the web-based system ForeOccupation (available in Finnish at www.foreammatti.fi) provides workers and students with information on vacancies, the supply and demand for labour at the regional level, skills needed in the workplace, and the level of competition for jobs. The information on the website is based on data from public employment services, analysis of job announcements and forecasts (OECD, 2016^[64]).

In Thailand, data from SAA exercises is often underutilised, failing to adequately inform education providers on which programmes to offer or guide adult learners on which courses to pursue (Vandeweyer et al., 2020^[48]). Labour market information can be obtained from a wide variety of sources, including the Department of Employment's open data portal, which offers detailed information from survey and administrative sources about the labour market; from the Department of Employment's Smart Job Centre, which offers employment forecasts and wage information at the occupation level, as well as provide assistance for training for job-seekers; and from the Department of Skills Development's online training portal (Pattaya Mail, 2015^[71]; World Bank, 2021^[69]). In addition, the private sector also uses job portals (e.g. JobsDB, JobThai) and e-learning sites (e.g. Coursera, edX) to offer career advice and job listings.

Although Thailand's numerous portals have the potential to offer a wide range of services to the public, experiences from other OECD countries show that having multiple sources of LMI can make it harder for prospective students to find reliable, timely data on labour market needs. Furthermore, the information is not always user friendly, and may lack standardised and consistent terminology. The generation of labour market insights may also lack methodological rigor and transparency (Labour Market Information Council, 2022^[72]). These findings suggest the importance of establishing an online platform that centralises labour market data, strengthening the dissemination of skills information to Thai citizens, employers, education and training providers, and researchers (see Recommendation 8 in Chapter 4).

In addition to a centralised and accessible portal, one way in which Thailand could easily make labour market information available for prospective adult learners is to compile a list of critical skills and occupations that reflect changing skills needs and support the objectives of national development strategies. While there are several readily available lists that identify skills and occupations that are growing in demand in the country, many of these are produced by the private sector and are not officially endorsed by the government (British Council, 2023^[73]; Manpower Group, 2019^[74]). In many OECD countries and in

some ASEAN Member States, governments identify and publish a list of critical skills and occupations to inform the public and relevant stakeholders about skills and occupations that are growing in demand. Malaysia's Critical Occupations List (MyCOL) is published annually and draws on quantitative data, such as the labour force survey, administrative records, and qualitative data, including employer surveys and findings from stakeholder consultations, to identify strategically important and hard-to-fill occupations (see Box 3.2). These occupations are categorised based on three main criteria: skilled (i.e. requiring more than primary educational attainment based on the Malaysian Standard Classification of Occupations [MASCO] list), are in high demand (i.e. demand exceeds supply), and are strategically important (i.e. central to economic development objectives) (TalentCorp, 2023^[75]). Similarly, in Singapore, SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) produces a comprehensive report every year to explain changes in the Singaporean economy, highlight priority skills in three strategic areas that are central to the country's national development plan, and provide guidance on how adults could plan their career mobility and access necessary training (see Box 3.2) (SkillsFuture Singapore, 2023^[76]).

Providing incentives to steer the supply of and demand for adult learning opportunities

In addition to the generation and dissemination of skills and labour market information, it is equally important to encourage employers to offer adult learning opportunities that target critical skills and occupations, as well as incentivise adults to pursue training in these critical areas. Governments can utilise a wide variety of supply-side incentives to help employers offset the costs of training. For instance, subsidies, such as grants, can reduce upfront financial barriers and encourage greater employers investment in workforce training (OECD, 2017^[77]; CEDEFOP, 2024^[78]). For instance, in Australia, the government of Queensland has implemented variable subsidy rates for employer-provided training based on labour market information identifying critical skills areas (see Box 3.2) (OECD, 2017^[77]). In Thailand, a diverse range of incentives is already available to employers (see Table 3.5 in Recommendation 4), although these are not structured as direct subsidies. For example, the Skills Development Promotion Act offers tax incentives to employers providing training to their employees. However, these tax incentives, as they are currently designed, do not target training in areas of skills shortages. Addressing this gap, the Thailand Plus Package represents a noteworthy initiative. Introduced as a fiscal measure, it promotes employment and workforce development in in-demand STEM sectors by offering tax incentives to businesses that hire employees in STEM-related areas and provide them with upskilling activities (OECD, 2024^[59]).

On the demand side, various incentives can help encourage individuals to pursue training in areas of skills shortages. These measures may include student loans, scholarships, and grants provided to households, helping learners manage upfront costs, especially in priority fields of study (OECD, 2017^[77]; CEDEFOP, 2024^[78]). For instance, the Philippines offers scholarships to Filipino professionals employed in academic, research, or government institutions to encourage them to pursue master's and doctorate degrees abroad in priority fields of study. Most of these fields are in strategic STEM areas, such as bioengineering, material sciences, and nuclear medicine. The scholarship covers enrolment fees, a monthly stipend for living expenses, healthcare benefits, visa support, and a roundtrip plane ticket (Department of Science and Technology, 2024^[79]). Thai government representatives report that both the government and private sector offer scholarships and grants to encourage adult learners to pursue formal and non-formal training. However, there remains significant scope to better align these incentives with strategic fields of study, particularly those highlighted in the Thailand 4.0 strategy (Ministry of Industry, 2017^[4]).

Box 3.2. Relevant international examples: Steering adult learning provision and educational choices towards areas of skills shortage

Australia: Incentives for employer-provided training

In the state of Queensland, subsidies are provided to encourage the provision of training opportunities in areas of skills shortage. To better promote critical skilling areas, the government varies subsidy rates for employer-provided training according to the strategic importance of the qualification. The funding priorities are determined based on national and state data and industry input, and are reviewed annually. “Priority One” qualifications concern occupations that were identified as critical priorities in Queensland, and the cost of training for apprentices and trainees in these areas is 100% subsidised. On the other hand, “Priority Two” and “Priority Three” qualifications are only partly subsidised and still require contributions from industry, employers, apprentices and trainees. “Priority Two” qualifications are not deemed critical in Queensland but are considered as high priorities, and are subsidised at 87.5%, while “Priority Three” qualifications are not deemed critical in Queensland but are considered as medium priorities, and are subsidised at 75%.

Malaysia: Critical Occupations List (MyCOL)

Since 2015, Malaysia published its Critical Occupations List (MyCOL) annually to identify critical and hard-to-fill occupations based on three main criteria: skilled (i.e. requiring more than primary educational attainment based on the Malaysian Standard Classification of Occupations [MASCO] list, see note below), sought-after (i.e. demand exceeds supply) and strategic (i.e. central to economic development objectives). Through the publication of the MyCOL, Malaysia aims to highlight key skills gaps and align workforce development policies to support the country’s economic growth. The list is derived from the Malaysia National Skills Registry (MyNSR), which is a platform established by TalentCorp to provide information on skills requirements for various occupations and sectors in the country. The list was generated through a rigorous process combines quantitative analysis and qualitative insights. Quantitative data, including Malaysia’s labour force survey and administrative data, is analysed to determine whether an occupation is in shortage, highly sought-after by employers, or strategically aligned with the country’s economic development plans. This quantitative analysis is complemented with qualitative evidence (e.g. through surveys, consultations) gathered from stakeholders such as employers and industry associations. The MyCOL for 2022/2023 lists a total of 37 occupations across three priority sectors: construction, manufacturing (food processing) and aerospace. Most of the occupations identified are at the managerial, professional and associate professional levels, while approximately 30% of the occupations are semi-skilled, such as craft and trades workers, plant and machine operators, and assemblers.

Singapore: “Skills Demand for the Future Economy” Annual Report

SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) is the government agency that is responsible for promoting a culture of lifelong learning and strengthening the adult learning system in the country. Every year, SSG produces a report to explain how various global trends, such as digital technological progress, artificial intelligence, geopolitics, and climate change, are shaping the demand for jobs and skills. The aim of the report is to help Singaporeans inform their learning choices and make use of purposeful training decisions to improve their labour market outcomes. The report is divided into five chapters. The first chapter describes the results of analysing 11 years’ worth of job posting data and investigating the skills needed by the Singaporean economy over time in three job families: hotel and food & beverage managers, information technology infrastructure, and cybersecurity professionals and engineers. The second chapter presents trends in selected priority skills, forecasting the skills that may continue to grow in the near term. The third chapter examines six in-demand jobs within the three aforementioned

job families, providing readers with a multi-step approach to move from their current positions towards these desired in-demand jobs. The fourth chapter provides readers with information on how to access available adult learning opportunities that are aligned to their personal interests and professional ambitions, while the fifth and last chapter provides detailed information on the methodology used to generate the report's insights.

Note: MASCO occupational groups that are semi-skilled or skilled (i.e. requiring more than primary educational attainment) include MASCO 1: Managers; MASCO 2: Professionals; MASCO 3: Technical and Associate Professionals; MASCO 4: Clerical Support Workers; MASCO 5: Service and Sales Workers; MASCO 6: Skilled Agricultural, Forestry, Livestock and Fisheries Workers; MASCO 7: Craft and Related Trades Workers; and MASCO 8: Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers.

Source: OECD (2017^[77]), *Financial incentives for steering education and training*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264272415-en>; SkillsFuture Singapore (2023^[76]), *Skills Demand for the Future Economy*, www.skillsfuture.gov.sg/docs/default-source/skills-report-2023/sdfe-2023.pdf; TalentCorp (2023), *Critical Occupations List (MyCOL) 2022/2023: Sectors Deep Dive for the Malaysia National Skills Registry (MyNSR)*, www.talentcorp.com.my/images/uploads/publication/3/Critical-Occupations-List-MyCOL-20222023-1695267153.pdf; TalentCorp (2024), *What is MyNSR?*, <https://mynsr.talentcorp.com.my/about-mynsr/>.

Recommendation 2: Steering adult learning provision and choices towards areas of skills shortage

Steering adult learning provision and choices towards areas of skills shortage could help ensure that adult learners participate in training opportunities that are well aligned with the needs of Thailand's labour market. Furthermore, it could also help ensure that adult learning opportunities can effectively contribute to the achievement of the country's national development goals.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to steer adult learning provision and choices towards areas of skills shortage:

- 2.1. Use skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) tools more systematically to determine labour market needs.** In addition to the employer and employee surveys conducted by the Department of Skills Development, Thailand should adopt additional SAA tools that are not yet utilised systematically. These tools could include quantitative models, qualitative methods, and sectoral, occupational, and regional studies. Employing a wide range of SAA tools would enable Thailand to generate more comprehensive, timely and representative data about the supply and demand of skills in its labour market. The systematic use of these SAA tools will require Thailand to invest in improvements in its skills information system (see Opportunity 4 in Chapter 5), as well as hire technical experts capable of managing the design, implementation, and analysis of SAA exercises.
- 2.2. Disseminate information about skills shortages by introducing a government-approved list of critical skills and occupations.** Thailand could use results from SAA exercises to generate a list of skills and occupations that are critical to the country's labour market. This would help to co-ordinate training offers from various learning providers and facilitate the achievement of objectives in national development plans. The list could be made available to the public and to relevant stakeholders, including adult learning providers and employers by publishing it through a credible and easily accessible channel, such as the Ministry of Labour or the Ministry of Education's official website.

2.3. Introduce financial incentives to encourage employers and adult learning providers to offer opportunities in high-demand areas, and support learners in making education and training choices aligned with labour market needs. To ensure that skills and labour market information derived from SAA exercises is effectively utilised, Thailand could introduce financial incentives, such as subsidies, to encourage employers to offer adult learning opportunities in relevant skilling areas. To enhance the strategic impact of these incentives, subsidy levels could be adjusted based on how critical and strategic the government deems the skills or occupations relative to labour market's needs and national development objectives. In addition to enterprises already supported by the Thailand Plus Package, such incentives should also be extended to LAOs, CLCs and NFEs, as these organisations play an important role in delivering adult learning programmes through localised and community-based approaches. Simultaneously, financial incentives for individuals, such as scholarships or grants, may also encourage adult learners to pursue training in strategic fields of study.

Opportunity 2: Reducing barriers to participation in adult learning opportunities

Fostering greater participation in adult learning involves addressing the many barriers that Thai adult learners face. Barriers to participation may either be situational, such as needing to fulfil job and family responsibilities, or dispositional, such as thinking that one is too old to learn or being anxious to return to a traditional classroom setting (Falasca, 2011^[80]). Overcoming these barriers through financial and non-financial measures is crucial to ensuring that adults can fully participate in learning activities.

Two key recommendations have been identified to help Thailand in reducing barriers to participation in adult learning: (1) addressing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities; and (2) increasing motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives.

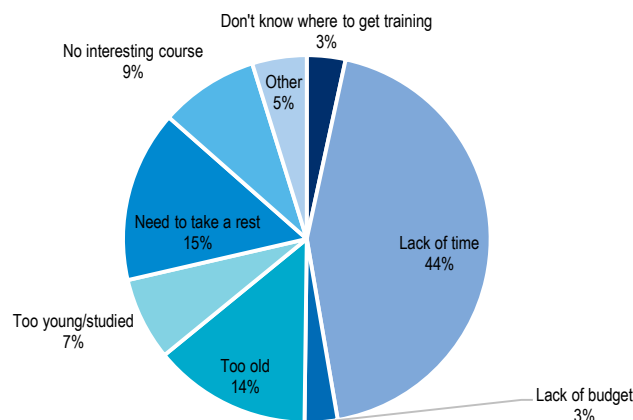
Recommendation 3: Addressing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities

In Thailand, 92% of adults responded that they do not wish to participate in adult learning, citing multiple barriers to participation in training (see Figure 3.9). The most commonly cited reason for not participating in adult learning opportunities is the lack of time, as reported by 44% of adults surveyed (OECD, 2020^[35]). In 2022, Thai employees worked an average of 42 hours per week, and 17% of the employed population worked 49 or more hours per week in the same year (ILOSTAT, 2022^[81]). Studies have suggested that Bangkok was the third-most overworked city in the world based various factors, including the share of the population working more than 48 hours a week and engaging in multiple jobs and the degree to which individuals are able to enjoy their environment after office hours (Bhandari, 2023^[37]; Kisi, 2021^[47]).

Recent studies also indicate that when Thai employees can easily access adult learning opportunities (e.g. free online courses) and are motivated to participate in order to perform better in their current jobs, the lack of time still constitutes a major barrier to participation (Bhandari, 2023^[37]). Due to the labour-intensive nature of the Thai workforce, time and opportunity costs make it difficult for adults to take time off their jobs to participate in training, as it may be difficult for them to make up for foregone earnings.

In many countries, the adult learning systems continue to mimic the rigid structures, schedules and processes of initial education despite the fact that the priorities and responsibilities of adult learners are considerably different. For instance, many adult learning systems continue to require adults to participate in training at a particular time (e.g. during the working week) in a particular place (e.g. in a physical classroom). Many also require adult learners to follow course offerings at a predetermined pace, expecting them to complete the learning programme within a specific timeframe (OECD, 2023^[82]; European Union, 2018^[83]).

Figure 3.9. Share of Thai adults reporting reasons for not desiring to participate in job-related learning, 2019



Source: National Statistics Office, Skills Development Survey; OECD (2020^[35]), *OECD Economic Surveys: Thailand 2020*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ad2e50fa-en>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/0kdv5f>

To overcome time-related barriers to participation in adult learning, Thailand needs to provide a range of course offerings that are more flexible across multiple dimensions, such as time, place, and mode (see Figure 3.10). It is important to offer more flexibility in terms of when and where adult learning opportunities take place, how long they last, and how much time learners need to dedicate to them. This recognises the constraints of adult learners who are working, who are carrying out family responsibilities outside of work, or who have other commitments and are trying to develop their skills at the same time (OECD, 2023^[84]).

Figure 3.10. Dimensions to consider for the flexibility of adult learning opportunities

Time	Place	Mode	Content
When learning opportunities take place, how long they last, and how much time learners need to dedicate to them	Where learning opportunities take place	How learners participate in learning opportunities depending on their learning styles and preferences	What topics, skills and knowledge are being taught in learning opportunities
- Full time - Part time - Weekdays - Weekends - Evenings - Anytime	- Work - Home - Learning institutions - On the move	- Offline - Online - Hybrid - Blended	- Transversal skills - Job-specific skills - Modular sequential - Modular concurrent
Can be synchronous (i.e. instruction and learning take place at the same time, allowing for real-time interactions between instructors and learners) or asynchronous (i.e. instructor and learner are not interacting at the same time, or there may not even be an instructor)			

Source: Adapted from OECD (2023^[82]), *Flexible adult learning provision: What it is, why it matters, and how to make it work*, www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/adult-learning/booklet-flexibility-2023.pdf/ jcr_content/renditions/original/booklet-flexibility-2023.pdf.

There are many ways by which flexible training opportunities can help adult learners fit their education and training around work and personal commitments. For instance, online learning, which is unconstrained by the need for physical proximity and can be accessed anywhere, reduces commuting times to a classroom and can help overcome time barriers. Online learning can offer a range of multimedia resources and tools (e.g. videos, interactive quizzes, discussion forums) that learners can choose from according to their preferred learning styles. Furthermore, through asynchronous forms of online learning, parents can participate in training during times that fit around family responsibilities, and workers can take courses that fit their work schedules (e.g. during the night or on weekends) (OECD, 2023^[82]). Adult learning courses could also have flexible start and finish dates and allow learners to stop and restart learning as they see fit. Adult learning providers should recognise that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and that a variety of options should be offered in order to encourage greater participation (OECD, 2023^[82]).

In addition to online and asynchronous learning, offering adult learning opportunities during paid working hours (either fully or partially) can help improve the accessibility of training among employees. For instance, in countries with high levels of adult learning such as Norway and Switzerland, adult learning opportunities are work-related, take place during working hours, and are offered in classrooms provided for by the company (European Union, 2018^[83]). Such examples of flexible adult learning options can help Thailand overcome several other barriers to training, such as the lack of comprehensive childcare services outside of working hours, as well as the lack of transportation.

The provision of flexible adult learning opportunities has already been identified as a priority in Thailand. The availability of different learning modalities, including in-person, online (e.g. through the Thai MOOC platform) and hybrid options, have helped accommodate adults' various preferences and schedules and facilitate participation in training. Thailand has also introduced the Additional Programme initiative, which targets local government employees, including those working in LAOs, to provide them with learning opportunities on weekends, with the approval of OVEC. In addition, Milestone 12 of the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan 2023-2027 aims to further improve rules and regulations to allow flexibility in the implementation of upskilling and reskilling opportunities, covering rising technologies and forms of work in the future (NESDC, 2023^[49]).

Furthermore, Ministerial Regulation No. 5 B.E. 2541 (1998) issued under the Labour Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998) aims to overcome time barriers to participation in training, indicating that employees are entitled to take time off from work (i.e. training leaves) for skills development. The regulation states that the employee may take up to 30 days of leave per year (Ministry of Labour, 1998^[85]). Many companies offer training leaves as part of the benefits offered to their employees, and typical conditions include eligibility after six months of employment, an allocation of five days of paid training leave, and the requirement of approval by management prior to taking leave. However, data on the utilisation of training leaves remains limited in Thailand.

Nonetheless, it is clear that Thailand has already made significant progress in offering more flexible forms of adult learning with the launch of the Thailand Massive Open Online Courses (Thai MOOC) platform in 2016 (see Box 3.3) (Meinel et al., 2023^[86]). However, while the platform has a promising enrolment of 1.4 million learners, it is unclear how many of these learners are adults. These numbers also represent only a small share of Thailand's total adult population (49.4 million people aged 15 to 64 years old) (World Bank, 2023^[87]), suggesting that efforts are needed to raise more awareness about the flexibility of course offerings on the platform among the general population. Learning through the platform might also be challenging for Thais who have limited access to the Internet, such as those who live in remote rural areas (see Recommendation 6), and who have low levels of digital skills. Studies have shown that many adults in the country still struggle to perform simple tasks, such as using a pointing device or keyboard, or using online information to solve a problem (see Figure 3.2) (World Bank, 2024^[41]). This highlights the need to improve the level of digital literacy among Thai adults, especially those from disadvantaged groups

(including older learners, as identified as a priority by stakeholders), in order to ensure that they are able to learn effectively through the Thai MOOC platform.

In addition to Thai MOOC, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MHESI) has developed the National Credit Bank System (NCBS) to encourage wider participation in adult learning opportunities among Thai adults. Through the initiative, learners can transform previous courses and subjects, as well as work experience, into credits that are stored in the NCBS. With a sufficient number of credits, learners can apply for a degree certificate from one of Thailand's higher educational institutions (Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi, 2022^[88]; Bangkok Post, 2022^[89]).

Thailand could build on its existing system, such as the NCBS, by introducing a time savings account to reduce time-related barriers to training and promote participation according to individuals' preferences and convenience. This scheme would allow individuals to accumulate resources over time – such as time, often linked to overtime hours – for the purpose of training. Unused resources would remain the property of the individual and could be used for a wide variety of purposes, including education and training, but also remuneration or retirement (OECD, 2019^[90]; OECD, 2020^[91]). Although such schemes are rare, relevant examples can be found, notably in France. The *Compte épargne-temps* (Time-Saving Account) allows employees to accumulate time credits over a number of years and benefit from remuneration or additional time off, in return for leave days that are not taken (see Box 3.3) (OECD, 2017^[77]; Ministry of Economy, 2024^[92]).

Box 3.3. Relevant local and international examples: Addressing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities

Thailand: Thai MOOC platform

In 2016, the Thailand Massive Open Online Courses (Thai MOOC) platform was developed with the support of the Thai government to provide an open access learning system and promote lifelong learning. The platform is run by educational institutions and private educational providers both in Thailand and abroad, offering more than 500 courses on various skills and topics. Courses offered on the platform are often cheap or offered for free, and learners participate in them whenever and wherever they wish to. Many Thai MOOC course offerings are short – sometimes as short as five hours – and offer certificates upon completion. Currently, there are more than 1.4 million users of the Thai MOOC platform, with more than 1.3 million of them completing courses and receiving certificates.

France: *Compte épargne-temps* (Time-Saving Account)

France uses time accounts to incentivise training, particularly through the *Compte épargne-temps* (Time-Saving Account), which was introduced in 1994 to allow employees to accumulate time credits over a number of years and subsequently use these credits for a number of purposes, including to acquire training leaves, retire earlier, or take up part-time work. When employees do not use up their vacation or rest days, they can be accumulated and transformed into additional paid leave days or remuneration.

At present, time is also a resource that could be accumulated in France's *Compte personnel de formation* (Individual Training Account). Under this scheme, the account of each full-time worker is credited with 24 hours each year during the first five years, and with 12 hours per year for the subsequent three years. The account could accumulate a maximum of 150 training hours in total. Part-time workers accumulate credits in proportion to the number of hours they worked. Additionally, recent amendments to France's Labour Law have extended the use of the time accounts to the self-employed and all youth aged sixteen and over, as well as credited workers without qualifications up to 48 training hours per year (in comparison to 24 hours for other workers).

The training hours stored in the account are preserved in the case of job loss and are transferrable between employers. The training hours can be used to take up a list of training courses that are selected by the Regional Councils, social partners, and professional associations, which often reflect the forecasted needs of the labour market. Individuals may take the training outside of or during working hours, with the latter requiring permission from the employer. The training costs are covered either by France's collective training fund, or by the employer if it spends less than 0.2% of its wage bill on the Individual Training Accounts of its employees.

Source: DVV International & Chulalongkorn University (2019^[22]), *The Role of Adult Learning and Education in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Thailand – Country Studies*, www.dvv-international.la/fileadmin/files/south-and-southeast-asia/documents/Final_Version_ALE_within_LLL_Southeast_Asia.pdf; Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty (2024^[93]), *Le compte épargne-temps : comment le mettre en place dans votre entreprise ?* www.economie.gouv.fr/entreprises/compte-epargne-temps-cet-employeur; OECD (2017^[77]), *Financial Incentives for Steering Education and Training*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264272415-en>; Thai MOOC (2024), *Homepage*, <https://thaimooc.ac.th/>; Meinel et al. (2023^[86]), *Thai MOOC Academy: Extending the Platform Towards a Sandbox for the National Credit Bank System in Thailand*, https://publishup.uni-potsdam.de/opus4-ubp/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/62421/file/emooocs2023_online_s163-169.pdf.

Recommendation 3: Addressing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities

Addressing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities is especially important in Thailand, where adults are some of the most overworked in the world and have little time for learning activities. Offering flexible adult learning opportunities in terms of place, time and modality can help adults to balance training with work and personal commitments.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to address time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities:

- 3.1. Raise awareness about existing flexible adult learning opportunities, including digital formats, to increase their take-up.** Thailand could more actively promote participation in flexible, short-term adult learning opportunities that are offered through existing initiatives, such as the Thai MOOC platform. This could be done through collaborating with employers and other relevant stakeholders to disseminate information about the platform, or to conduct information campaigns that could raise awareness among the general public. Such awareness raising initiatives must take place along with broader efforts to expand access to the Thai MOOC platform by improving Internet connectivity and improving the level of digital literacy among Thai adults, especially those from disadvantaged groups (see Recommendation 6).
- 3.2. Introduce time accounts or consider incorporating them into existing learning platforms such as the NCBS.** Thailand could enable employees to accumulate training hours over time and store them into a time saving account, either as a standalone initiative or integrated into existing systems such as the NCBS. This would be a strategic and relevant option to build time credits for adult learning, given that Thai workers spend a greater number of hours working in comparison to the global average. Particular attention must be paid to disadvantaged workers, such as workers with low levels of skills and workers in the informal economy, such as by entitling them to more training hours that can be credited into the time account.

3.3. Promote the uptake of existing training leave policies and improve their effectiveness.

Thailand should work with enterprises to improve the current level of take-up of the training leave policy by evaluating its effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. Enterprises may be surveyed to determine what share of their employees are aware of the training leave and use it, the average duration of the training leave, and the employment outcomes (e.g. was able to use new knowledge and skills in the workplace, received a promotion) of those who have participated in training. Based on the results, Thailand should then work with enterprises and their employees to address policy gaps, raise awareness about the policy changes, and encourage uptake of the training leave.

Recommendation 4: Increasing motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives

In addition to lack of time, Thais face a wide variety of other barriers to participation in adult learning. These include age-related misconceptions, such as the perception that they are either too old to learn (14% of surveyed adults) or that they are too young, or that further learning is unnecessary because they have already completed their studies (7%) (see Figure 3.9 above) (OECD, 2020^[35]). Furthermore, many adults are unaware of the need to develop their skills further (Vandeweyer et al., 2020^[48]). Addressing these attitudinal barriers will be important to encourage greater participation in adult learning and foster a culture of lifelong learning. By increasing motivation and fostering a learning-oriented mindset at all stages of life, Thailand can better respond to its socio-demographic challenges and leverage the potential of its aging population.

Adults are more likely to feel motivated to participate in learning activities if they are aware of the benefits of lifelong learning and believe that participation in them will lead to desired outcomes (OECD, 2023^[84]). Adults are motivated to participate in learning opportunities by a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. (see Table 3.4). Intrinsic motivation drives individuals to learn because they find it psychologically rewarding, while extrinsic motivation drives individuals to learn as they expect an external benefit or reward (e.g. money) to come out of it (Hughes et al., 2019^[94]).

Table 3.4. Types of motivation for learning

Motivation	Description	Types
Intrinsic	Learner undertakes the activity because it is internally rewarding and satisfies their basic psychological needs	• Intrinsic motivation towards knowledge: Activity is undertaken for the pleasure of learning something new • Intrinsic motivation towards accomplishment: Activity is undertaken for the pleasure of achieving something • Intrinsic motivation towards stimulation: Activity is undertaken in order to obtain stimulating experiences
Extrinsic	Learner undertakes the activity in order to get an external “reward” in return (e.g. money)	• External regulation: To avoid punishment or gain reward • Introjection: To seek approval or avoid guilt or anxiety • Identification: To achieve a relevant personal goal • Integration: To reflect an aspect of the self

Source: Hughes et al., (2019^[94]) *What Motivates Adults to Learn? A rapid evidence review of what drives learning new skills in the workplace*, https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Digital_Frontrunners_Motivation_to_Learn_report_final_published.pdf.

Awareness-raising initiatives are one of the most important methods for enhancing intrinsic motivation to learn. Evidence shows that providing guidance and informing adults about the benefits of education and training can be more effective at shaping individuals’ attitudes to learning than direct financial incentives (European Commission, 2015^[95]). In Thailand, awareness raising initiatives have been conducted in the past to raise awareness about various topics, such as available adult learning programmes, as well the

benefits of participating in adult learning for individuals and employers (including incentives offered through the Skill Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545). These awareness raising initiatives were conducted through various channels, such as on websites, in partnership with local organisations, through social media, during community events, or through the distribution of brochures. However, there have been limitations in funding and resources, which have impacted the scale and effectiveness of awareness raising campaigns.

In addition to these individual awareness raising initiatives, Thailand could benefit from launching a large-scale flagship communications campaign that provides adult learning with a distinct, recognisable, and positive profile in society. For instance, in Singapore, SkillsFuture is a national movement that promotes lifelong learning for all, and is the go-to portal to all information related to adult learning, including available learning opportunities (SkillsFuture Singapore, 2024^[96]). In the United Kingdom, an awareness raising campaign was also designed and implemented by the Department of Education to tap into the intrinsic motivation of adults and communicate that every individual has untapped potential, and that skills development is key to unlocking it (see Box 3.4). The Department of Education partnered with a private communications and advertising company, which provided expertise on how to make the campaign coherent and more innovative (OECD, 2024^[97]).

Similarly, Thailand could benefit from conducting a nation-wide public awareness campaign that promotes participation in adult learning by combatting attitudinal barriers, such as the belief that adults are too old to participate in educational offers (OECD, 2020^[35]). Promoting a lifelong approach to learning and targeting elderly learners for active ageing is especially crucial in Thailand, where the population is ageing rapidly (UNFPA, 2021^[98]). To this, end stakeholders suggested leveraging various communication channels, such as TV programmes and social media, given that local learning centres and schools for the elderly are not available everywhere. Using such channels to convey the importance of developing key skills, such as digital skills, was also cited as an important priority by stakeholders. Such a campaign should be customised to reflect regional or local labour market conditions and designed with local stakeholders, as this has been shown to more effectively connect with audiences, especially disadvantaged groups (OECD, 2019^[1]; OECD, 2021^[99]).

In addition to intrinsic motivation, it would be important for Thailand to also tap into the extrinsic motivation of individuals by using incentives to encourage participation in adult learning opportunities. A primary reason why adults invest time and resources in education and training is that they expect higher returns in the future. Providing financial and non-financial incentives that reduce costs or increase the rewards to training could thus help motivate more adults to participate in learning (OECD, 2017^[77]; OECD, 2023^[84]). In many OECD countries, such incentives come in various forms for employers, individuals, or both (see Table 3.5). For instance, in Austria, adults are able to deduct costs related to training from the base of their individual income tax (see Box 3.4) (CEDEFOP, 2024^[100]).

Table 3.5. Available incentives for adult learning in Thailand

Incentive	Description	Availability in Thailand	International country example
Employers			
Training levies/funds	Collective fund that pools resources from employers and earmarks them for expenditure on training	Yes (Skills Development Fund)	Ireland (National Training Fund)
Payback clauses	Contractual arrangements that allow employers to recover their investment (or at least part of it) if the trained employee leaves soon afterwards	No	Spain (Article 21 of the Worker's Statute)
Public procurement	Awarding of public contracts to firms conditional on the provision of certain types of training	No	Norway (Section 7 of Public Procurement Act)

Incentive	Description	Availability in Thailand	International country example
Individuals			
Individual learning accounts (ILAs)	Savings accounts that can be opened by individuals to save money or learning credits for future learning activities	Yes (National Credit Bank System)*	Italy (Carta ILA)
Time accounts	Savings accounts that allow individuals to save up time (often unused leave days, and occasionally linked to overtime hours) which they can use for paid time off to participate in training	No	France (Compte épargne-temps)
Study/training leave	Schemes that give employees a right to study leave (and guarantee the right to return to their job after course completion) and reimburse employees/employer for lost working time	Yes (Ministerial Regulation No. 5 B.E. 2541 issued under the Labour Protection Act B.E. 2541 [1998])	Argentina (Licencias Extraordinarias con goce de haberes / Extraordinary leave with pay)
Both individuals and employers			
Subsidies	Schemes that decrease the costs of participation through a direct transfer of money to the individual (e.g. through a voucher, scholarship or grant), the training provider or the employer	Yes, for individuals (OVEC grants and scholarships for adult learners)	Singapore (SkillsFuture Credit)
Tax incentives	Tax allowances (i.e. deductions from taxable income); tax credits (sums deducted from the tax due); tax relief (lower rates for some taxpayers or activities)	Yes, but for employers only (Tax exemptions through the Skills Development Promotion Act)	Austria (Individual tax deductions)
Loans	Guarantees, interest rate subsidies, loan guarantees, income-contingent repayments, student loan remission and/or forgiveness	Yes, for employers and employees (Skills Development Fund)	United Kingdom (Advanced Learner Loan)

Note: Thailand's National Credit Bank System allows individuals to save up course credits (not money) as they participate in learning programmes. The credits could be transformed into qualifications (e.g. degree certificate) from one of Thailand's higher education institutions. Source: OECD Skills Strategy Thailand policy questionnaire; OECD (2020^[91]), *OECD Skills Strategy Northern Ireland (United Kingdom): Assessment and Recommendations*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1857c8af-en>; OECD (2019^[90]), *Individual Learning Schemes*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/203b21a8-en>; OECD (2017^[77]), *Financial Incentives for Steering Education and Training*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264272415-en>; OECD (2023^[101]), *OECD Skills Strategy Southeast Asia*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/923bfd03-en>; Government of Argentina (2017^[102]), *Licencias APN*, www.argentina.gob.ar/empleadopublico/licencias; Lovdata (2016^[103]), *Forskrift om plikt til å stille krav om bruk av lærlinger i offentlige kontrakter*, <https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/forskrift/2016-12-17-1708>; Government of the UK (2016^[104]), *Advanced Learner Loan*, www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan.

In Thailand, some of these incentives are already available. Through the Skills Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 (A.D. 2002) and its Amendment (No. 2), numerous incentives were introduced in the country, such as exemptions for employers from corporate income tax amounting up to 100% of training expenses (pursuant to the Royal Decree issued under the Revenue Code (No. 437). In addition, the establishment of the Skills Development Fund has allowed for the provision of loans to employers, employees or training providers, who must repay the loan within 12 months after completion of training (so long as the training lasts at least 30 days), at an interest rate of 1% (Department of Skills Development, 2002^[13]). In three provinces in the eastern region, the Thai government is working with colleges to provide grants for employees to participate in training, while the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute reportedly offers e-Coupons to help Thai agencies cover the costs of training, although the ceiling is limited at THB 2 000 (55 EUR).

Despite these initiatives, current financial incentives in Thailand only target the supply side (e.g. tax exemptions for employers through Skills Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545). Incentives aimed at stimulating demand for adult learning among individuals do not exist yet and have yet to be introduced. To address this gap, Thailand could consider introducing tax incentives for individuals to encourage them to participate in adult learning and help ensure that their learning is rewarded in practice (OECD, 2023^[84]). Introducing such a tax incentive targeted at individuals could be fairly straightforward to implement, given that Thailand's existing tax system already allows for personal income tax deductions for individuals who make education-related expenses, such as donations in support of education (e.g. buildings, computers,

books, teachers) under projects approved by the Ministry of Education, as well as donations to the Science and Technology Development Fund, the Science and Research Innovation Fund, and the Equitable Education Fund (PwC, 2024^[105]). Thailand could thus consider adding training costs shouldered by individuals to the list of expenses that are eligible for personal income tax deductions.

Tax incentives can be more advantageous relative to other incentives such as subsidies for a number of reasons. First, unlike grants and scholarships, tax incentives do not require the individual to file an application in order to benefit. Second, tax-based incentives are administered through the annual tax return process and are therefore more accessible to the general public, as well as entail lower administrative costs as they build on existing tax infrastructure (OECD, 2017^[77]). By integrating financial incentives into the annual tax return process, Thailand could make them more accessible to the working population.

Another incentive that may be useful to introduce in Thailand is payback clauses. Government representatives have expressed concerns that public investments in subsidies for training in enterprises may not always pay off for firms, as employees may leave their jobs upon finishing training, leaving limited time for Thai enterprises to reap the benefits of adult learning. Through payback clauses, Thai employees would be bounded to employers who have invested in their training (and thus benefited from tax exemptions) for a certain amount of time after concluding training. In this way, these schemes incentives employer to invest in training their workers. As a legal instrument, payback clauses may be added to any employment contract that respects labour laws and will require employees to pay for training costs (or at least a part of it) if the agreed-upon retention period is not respected (CEDEFOP, 2022^[106]).

However, one limitation of such incentives is that they may not apply to all sectors in Thailand, given that these would mostly likely cover only adults working in the formal economy and leave out a substantial share of adults found in Thailand's informal workforce. More specifically, tax incentives would cover formal workers who declare their income for tax purposes, while payback clauses would only apply to workers in firms that invest in their employees' training.

Stakeholders in Thailand have expressed interest in complementing the existing incentives with both targeted initiatives for disadvantaged groups (see Recommendation 5) and more general incentives such as bottom-up learning models. The latter includes individual learning schemes, which not only could be accessed by the wider public – including workers in Thailand's widespread informal economy – but could also foster a greater sense of responsibility among all adults to participate in training on their own. These individual learning schemes can take various forms, including training vouchers, which provide individuals with direct subsidies to pay for training; individual savings accounts, which are actual financial accounts where individuals accumulate funds over time for education and training; and individual learning accounts, which are virtual accounts that track training entitlements or rights accrued over time (OECD, 2019^[90]). In Singapore, the SkillsFuture Credit is an individual learning scheme that facilitates participation in adult learning by offering SGD 500 worth of credits to all Singaporeans aged 25 years old and above. The credit is to be used for a wide range of eligible courses supported by the Ministry of Education and other public agencies. The scheme also provides top-ups of SGD 4 000 at age 40 to encourage mid-career adults to participate in upskilling and reskilling (see Box 3.4).

Box 3.4. Relevant international examples: Increasing motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives

United Kingdom: “It All Starts with Skills” Campaign

To raise awareness about the Department of Education's new skills initiatives, the “It All Starts with Skills” campaign was launched. The primary target groups included adults aged 24 to 59 who want to change their careers, upskill in their current role, or develop new skills that are becoming more important in the labour market; as well as employers who want to upskill their workers and young people aged

14 to 19 years who want to make informed choices about their careers. The campaign builds on the belief that every individual possesses untapped potential, and that skills are key to unlocking it, hence the key message “It All Starts with Skills”. The campaign was launched with a 1-minute video that was aired on national TV, video on demand, and in cinemas across England. In addition, other communication channels were also used, such as radio, outdoor billboards, and social media. The official accounts of the Department of Education (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) and the National Careers Service (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn) were used, encouraging the public to use hashtags such as #SkillsForLife and #ItAllStartsWithSkills. The Department of Education partnered with a private company specialising in communications and advertising to develop a coherent identity for the campaign, as well as create its campaign materials.

Austria: Tax deductions for adult learning

Once each year, adults in Austria can deduct from the base of their individual tax income costs spent on continuing vocational education and training acquired during their current occupation or a future occupation. Eligible costs include tuition fees, costs for teaching materials, travel and accommodation costs, as well as the costs of a computer. Eligible costs are multiplied by the marginal tax rate (between 20% and 55%) and there is no ceiling introduced. Individuals with no taxable income (i.e. an annual gross salary below EUR 11 000 as of 2024) cannot profit from the scheme. While state co-funding through tax deductions implies foregone revenues, the scheme is expected to help incentivise learning among individuals and sustain or increase their future income, implying higher tax revenues later on. While no comprehensive statistical data is available, the number of beneficiaries and the volumes of tax refunds are substantial, amounting to more than EUR 50 000 000 in 2024.

Singapore: SkillsFuture Credit

The SkillsFuture Credit scheme was introduced in 2015 to incentivise participation in lifelong learning among the general public, including employees, self-employed workers, jobseekers and inactive individuals. The scheme provides all Singaporeans aged 25 years and above with an opening credit of SGD 500, which may be used to improve existing skills or reskill into new areas outside of individuals’ current field through a wide range of eligible courses that are available on MySkillsFuture, Singapore’s one-stop online portal on lifelong learning, as well as courses offered by institutions funded by the Ministry of Education and supported by public agencies. At age 40, Singaporeans enter the Mid-Career Tier of the scheme and receive a new top-up of SGD 4 000 that does not expire, and which can be used to access about 7 000 selected courses for upskilling and reskilling. The Mid-Career Tier may lead to full qualifications or be used for shorter modules that may be stacked into a full qualification. It may also be used for workplace learning opportunities for adults (e.g. SkillsFuture Career Transition Programme), as well as courses that allow individuals to fulfil training requirements in Progressive Wage Model (PWM) sectors.

Source: CEDEFOP (2024^[100]), *Tax incentive for individuals: Austria*, www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/financing-adult-learning-db/instrument-types/tax-incentive-individuals; SkillsFuture Singapore (2024^[107]), *SkillsFuture Credit*, www.skillsfuture.gov.sg/initiatives/mid-career/credit; UK Government Department for Education (2023) (2023^[108]), *Skills for Life campaign*, www.gov.uk/government/publications/it-all-starts-with-skills-campaign-introduction-and-background/it-all-starts-with-skills-campaign-introduction-and-background; OECD (2019^[90]), *Individual Learning Schemes* <https://doi.org/10.1787/203b21a8-en>.

Recommendation 4: Increasing motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives

Increasing motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives can help overcome the attitudinal barriers, such as the belief that one is too old to learn or the lack of awareness about the need for further skill development. Boosting motivation to learn and cultivating a learning-oriented mindset can help foster a culture of lifelong learning, enabling Thailand to make better use of its people, including the talents of its rapidly aging population.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to increase motivation to participate in adult learning opportunities through financial and non-financial incentives:

- 4.1. Conduct a nation-wide campaign to raise awareness about the importance of a lifelong approach to learning.** Thailand should launch a nation-wide campaign to raise awareness about the available learning opportunities in the country, the benefits of participating in them during adulthood and the elderly years, and available government support to overcome time and cost barriers. The campaign should aim to be cost-effective by using communication channels that are widely used in Thailand (e.g. social media, television). It is important to tailor key messages to the Thai context and reflect local labour market conditions in order to more effectively connect with the public, especially disadvantaged groups and elderly learners. To ensure maximum reach, especially at the local level and among disadvantaged groups, the campaign can be implemented in partnership with structures that work directly with them, such as LAOs, CLCs, NFEs, and schools for the elderly.
- 4.2. Introduce a financial incentive, such as personal income tax deductions, to motivate individuals to pursue training.** Thailand should build on its existing tax infrastructure to introduce personal income tax deductions for training costs, including tuition fees, costs for training materials, and travel and accommodation. Guidance on how to claim such personal income tax deductions should also be provided once the incentive is introduced in order to ensure awareness and effective take-up among taxpayers. This could be done in partnership with enterprises, who may raise awareness directly among their employees.
- 4.3. Introduce payback clauses to ensure that investments in training by enterprises and the government can lead to positive returns.** Thailand could implement a payback clause policy through legislation, either by introducing a new law or amending the Labour Code. This would provide a legal framework for employers and employees to establish contractual agreements regarding training investments, as well as lay out key principles to guide the use of payback clauses and ensure they are applied fairly and effectively. These principles may include the minimum amount of training costs (or the duration of training) eligible for a refund from the employer in case of termination, the maximum length of the retention period, types of employees covered, and the eligible reasons for which employers can request for a refund of their expenditure (e.g. when employees leave voluntarily or are dismissed for misbehaviour).
- 4.4. Explore the introduction of individual learning schemes (e.g. training vouchers, learning accounts) to encourage adults to take greater responsibility for their lifelong learning.** Thailand could explore the introduction of initiatives such as personal learning accounts in order to encourage individuals to participate in training regardless of their employment status. The learning account may help overcome time barriers if eligible courses are asynchronous and offered on line (see Recommendation 3), and may also address cost barriers through the provision of learning credits (see Singapore example in Box 3.4).

Opportunity 3: Increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups

It is important to provide additional and targeted support to disadvantaged groups in Thailand in order to ensure that they are able to fully participate in adult learning opportunities and reap the benefits of learning. For disadvantaged groups, such as workers in the informal economy, low-skilled and low-income workers, adults from cultural minorities, and adults with disabilities, among others, adult learning can help compensate for a lack of education in earlier life, enable the acquisition of skills needed in a rapidly changing world of work, and promote better labour market outcomes (The European Association for the Education of Adults, 2019^[109]; OECD, 2022^[110]).

Two key recommendations have been identified to support Thailand in increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups: (1) improving access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers; and (2) expanding access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches.

Recommendation 5: Improving access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers

Lack of access to adult learning is particularly a challenge for adults in Thailand's widespread informal sector, where there are limited opportunities to upgrade their skills through employer-provided training and where formal skills recognition remains challenging. It is estimated that informal employment constitutes 65% of all employment in Thailand (ILO, 2022^[111]), which indicates that a significant proportion of the country's workforce lacks access to high quality adult learning opportunities, especially since private companies play a significant role in the provision of training in Thailand (World Bank, 2023^[9]). This limits their ability to participate in training opportunities that can boost their employability and career development as well as reap economic returns (e.g. higher wages) (ILO, 2023^[111]); (OECD, 2024^[112]).

Participation in adult learning among informal workers can provide them with the skills needed to transition towards formal employment and obtain more stable and better-remunerated jobs. Informal on-the-job learning is the most common route for skills acquisition among informal workers, where they learn by doing or through observations, or from family, friends or community members (ILO, 2023^[111]). However, many informal workers perform low-skilled jobs that do not require them to develop more advanced skills, and they are much less likely to participate in informal on-the-job opportunities that are of high quality, in comparison to formal workers (OECD, 2024^[112]). In Thailand, additional barriers such as low income, lack of transportation, lack of childcare services, and limited access to technology impact the participation of adult learning especially among disadvantaged groups.

Workers in the informal economy, especially those with lower levels of skills, can benefit the most from the targeted provision of incentives to facilitate their participation in adult learning opportunities. In Thailand, the Skills Development Fund is one mechanism by which training for workers in the informal economy, including small and micro-enterprises, could be financed. Employers that do not provide yearly training opportunities to at least 50% of their employees, as required by the Skill Standard Promotion Act of 2002, are subject to a national levy amounting to about USD 40 per year per employee in 2020. However, there is no systematic information on how many workers in the informal economy are supported by the Skills Development Fund. Furthermore, while the fund's governance body is represented by various types of stakeholders, such as government, formal sector employers, and workers' organisations, it does not include representation from workers in the informal economy (UNESCO, 2022^[113]).

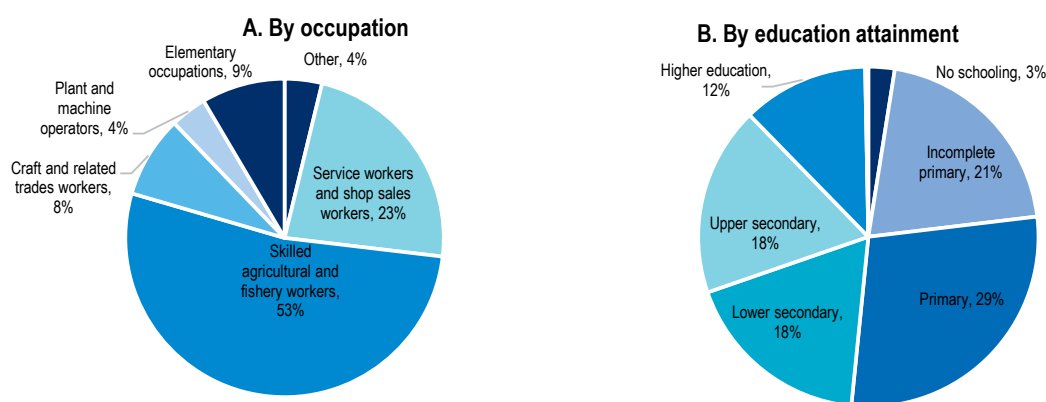
Financial incentives, such as subsidies, allowances or training vouchers, could be effective in helping promote participation in adult learning opportunities (ILO, 2023^[111]). These financial incentives, or a combination of them, could most likely be the most effective policy measures, given that many workers in the informal economy are reluctant to participate in adult learning because they are unable to contribute to training costs, cannot afford to forego even one day's earnings, or are uncertain of the returns they may get from participation (ILO, 2023^[111]; OECD, 2019^[114]; OECD, 2024^[112]).

Thailand should consider introducing a subsidy scheme specifically targeted at workers in the country's extensive informal economy. Designing such a scheme requires careful attention to balancing simplicity and targeting, as these factors significantly impact the policy's feasibility and effectiveness. Simple, universal and less targeted schemes minimise administration costs and are easier to implement. However, they risk higher deadweight loss, as they often disproportionately benefit high-skilled individuals, resulting in a significant portion of subsidies being allocated to individuals who are likely to engage in learning even without financial support (Oosterbeek, 2013^[115]).

Conversely, more targeted schemes can reduce deadweight loss by directing support to those most in need, such as low-skilled or vulnerable workers (OECD, 2017^[77]). However, greater targeting typically involves increased administrative complexity and may lower take-up rates due to challenges in identifying and reaching eligible beneficiaries. To address these issues, many subsidy programmes focus on specific groups to maximise impact while managing costs. For example, Malaysia's Bina Krejaya Programme targets informal workers, including gig workers and the self-employed, providing both training subsidies and a training allowances to encourage participation (see Box 3.5) (Perkeso, 2023^[116]). Striking a balance between simplicity and targeting is inherently challenging, as strengthening one aspect often comes at the expense of the other. Thoughtful policy design, tailored to the administrative capacity of the government and the needs of Thailand's informal workers, will be key to developing a successful subsidy scheme.

In Thailand, workers in several sectors could benefit from targeted subsidies (Panel A of Figure 3.11). While informality can be found in many sectors in Thailand, the sectors wherein informal workers are found most commonly are in agriculture and fisheries (52.7%), as well as services and shop sales (23.1%) (NSO, 2023^[117]). Providing training subsidies for informal workers in these sectors could be strategic, as it could promote upskilling in priority areas identified in Thailand's 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDC, 2023^[49]).

Figure 3.11. Share of informal workers by occupation and educational attainment (%), 2023



Source: NSO (2023^[117]), *The Informal Employment Survey* 2023, www.nso.go.th/nsoweb/storage/survey_detail/2023/20231218155504_43190.pdf.

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Additionally, informal workers in Thailand are more likely to have lower levels of education (Panel B of Figure 3.11). In 2023, 29% of informal workers had only finished primary school, while 21% did not complete primary school. There are also fewer informal workers who had finished lower secondary (18%) and upper secondary (18%) schooling, and even fewer who finished higher education (12%) (NSO, 2023^[117]). In Malaysia's Bina Krejaya Programme for the Informal Sector, educational attainment is part of the eligibility criteria, targeting workers in the informal economy who have attained only a secondary education certificate at most (see Box 3.5) (Perkeso, 2023^[116]).

Such targeted subsidy schemes are best combined with other interventions, such as information, advice and guidance, in order to maximise effectiveness (OECD, 2017^[77]). Despite the availability of training opportunities, many informal workers do not participate because they are simply not aware of them. Many informal workers are also not fully aware of the need to participate in training in the context of rapidly changing labour markets and the challenges that come with not having relevant skills (OECD, 2024^[112]). It is thus crucial for Thailand to raise awareness among informal workers about how jobs are changing a result of various megatrends, why they should participate in training, and what tailored opportunities are available to them.

One strategy to raise awareness among informal workers is to work with industry associations or civil society organisations, as they often have access to the areas (e.g. neighborhoods, villages) where informal workers live and work. Such partners can help promote a greater awareness of the benefits of training, help define their training needs, and deliver training programmes, among many other activities (ILO, 2001^[118]; World Bank, 2013^[119]). For example, in Thailand, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), a not-for-profit tourism industry association, implemented the Informal Workers Programme, which reached out to informal workers to provide training about new tourism practices in a post-COVID world and raise awareness about the benefits of upskilling and reskilling (see Box 3.5) (Pacific Asia Travel Association, 2023^[120]).

Box 3.5. Relevant international examples: Improving access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers

Malaysia: Bina Kerjaya Programme for the Informal Sector

The Bina Kerjaya Programme for the Informal Sector is an initiative of the federal government that aims to equip informal workers with the skills they need to secure formal employment. The programme targets informal workers, specifically gig workers and self-employed individuals, rural farmers and fishermen, and small roadside vendors, aged between 16 and 40 years old and whose highest qualification is an Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) certificate, which is obtained after the 11th grade (i.e. secondary education). Priority is provided to applicants who are interested in transitioning to the formal sector, and profiling exercises are conducted to help them identify suitable training programmes. The programme offers informal workers recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL), micro-credentials, and subsidised professional and competency training programmes that are accredited by public and private institutions of higher learning and professional bodies. Under the programme, informal workers receive subsidised training, amounting to a maximum of RM 2 500 for RPEL and competency opportunities (EUR 493), and RM 4 000 for professional and micro-credential programmes (EUR 804). Additionally, learners will receive a monthly training allowance of RM 300 (EUR 61) per month for up to three months.

Thailand: Training support and awareness raising for informal workers through industry associations

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) is a not-for-profit association based in Thailand that works on responsible travel and tourism within the Asia Pacific Region. In 2021, the association implemented the Informal Workers Programme in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting informal workers, some of the most important stakeholders in the tourism industry. Many of them work as activity providers, artists, artisans, drivers, freelance tour guides, souvenir sellers, and street food sellers, supporting the backbone of the Thai tourism industry. Many of these informal workers are also women, youth and the elderly. As 94% of informal workers in Thailand's tourism industry were severely impacted by the pandemic, PATA and the Roundtable Human Rights in Tourism launched the Informal Workers Programme to train informal workers in post-COVID-19 tourism practices. Aiming to reach as many communities as possible, PATA hired unemployed freelance tour guides and under-employed tourism

professionals to work with PATA staff and partner organisations to reach out to fellow informal workers in the streets and markets of Bangkok, deliver community-based training, and raise awareness about new tourism needs after the pandemic, the importance of social security benefits, and the registration process for Thailand's Safety and Health Administration. As many as 500 informal workers in 15 communities were supported through the programme.

Source: Pacific Asia Travel Association (2023^[120]), *Informal Workers Programme*, <https://src.pata.org/informal-workers/>; Perkeso (2023^[116]), *Bina Kerjaya Programme for the Informal Sector Under Budget 2023 (Trainees)*, [www.perkeso.gov.my/images/belanjawan2023/binakerjaya/210623_FAQ_Bina_Kerjaya - Trainees Employment Transition Program for Self Employed GIG.pdf](http://www.perkeso.gov.my/images/belanjawan2023/binakerjaya/210623_FAQ_Bina_Kerjaya_-_Trainees_Employment_Transition_Program_for_Self_Employed_GIG.pdf).

Recommendation 5: Improving access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers

Improving access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers is an urgent priority in Thailand, where informality remains high across various economic sectors. Providing targeted support to informal workers can help ensure that they can participate in upskilling and reskilling opportunities that are normally accessible only to workers in the formal economy. Through participation in adult learning, informal workers could gain the skills they need to keep up with a rapidly changing labour market and facilitate their transition into formal employment.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to improve access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers:

- 5.1. Introduce a targeted subsidy scheme to support training for workers in sectors with high rates of informal employment.** Thailand should introduce financial incentives, such as subsidies, to support informal workers in managing the costs of education and training while compensating for potential income lost during their participation in training. This incentive could be modelled after Malaysia's Bina Kerjaya Programme for the Informal Sector (see Box 3.5). The subsidy should prioritise occupational sectors where informal employment is most prevalent in Thailand, namely as agriculture and fishing, as well as services and retail, among others. Additionally, the scheme should take educational attainment into consideration, targeting informal workers who have completed lower levels of education and who are thus more likely to benefit from adult learning opportunities.
- 5.2. Implement targeted outreach campaigns to raise awareness among informal workers about available adult learning opportunities and their benefits.** Thailand should partner with industry associations and civil society groups that work directly with informal workers, as well as LAOs, CLCs, and NFEs, to raise awareness about adult learning. More specifically, the campaign should explain in layman's terms key information that could help informal workers build their own initiative to participate in training. This includes the global megatrends shaping labour markets, the new and emerging skills relevant to their area of work, the benefits of participating in adult learning, available training opportunities, and where to access them.

Recommendation 6: Expanding access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches

Providing adult learning opportunities that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of disadvantaged groups is key to ensuring equitable learning outcomes in Thailand. Investing in the learning of disadvantaged groups can enable them to realise their full potential, enabling better labour market outcomes, promoting inclusion, and combatting rising inequality more generally at the country level (UNESCO, 2020^[121]). In recognition of this, Thailand is reportedly planning to increase spending on adult learning, with a particular focus on unemployed adults, disadvantaged adults due to lack of education and skills, residents of remote or rural areas, adults with disabilities, minority groups (ethnic, linguistic and religious), and indigenous peoples (UNESCO, 2022^[7]). Providing learning materials and infrastructure (e.g. classrooms) that are inclusive and tailored to the needs of these different learners is an important factor in the success of disadvantaged learners (McGinty, 2018^[122]). Thailand's government recognises this need for inclusivity in lifelong learning spaces and is committed to developing physical and virtual learning facilities that are diverse, accessible and in line with the needs of all types of learners (NESDC, 2023^[49]). However, there is very limited information on the participation of disadvantaged groups in adult learning opportunities, which has made it difficult for Thai policymakers to design effective and relevant initiatives (UNESCO, 2020^[121]).

Despite these challenges, Thailand has a long history of implementing training targeted at improving the skills of high priority disadvantaged groups. Beyond informal workers, which make up a significant share of the Thai labour force (see Recommendation 5), government representatives have identified several other disadvantaged groups as priorities for skills development initiatives. These include dropouts or adults with low levels of skills, freelance or self-employed individuals, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. For these groups, various government agencies and ministries have reported putting in place numerous initiatives over the years to map their skills challenges, overcome barriers to participation in training, and provide them with upskilling and reskilling opportunities (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6. Thai government initiatives to provide adult learning to disadvantaged groups

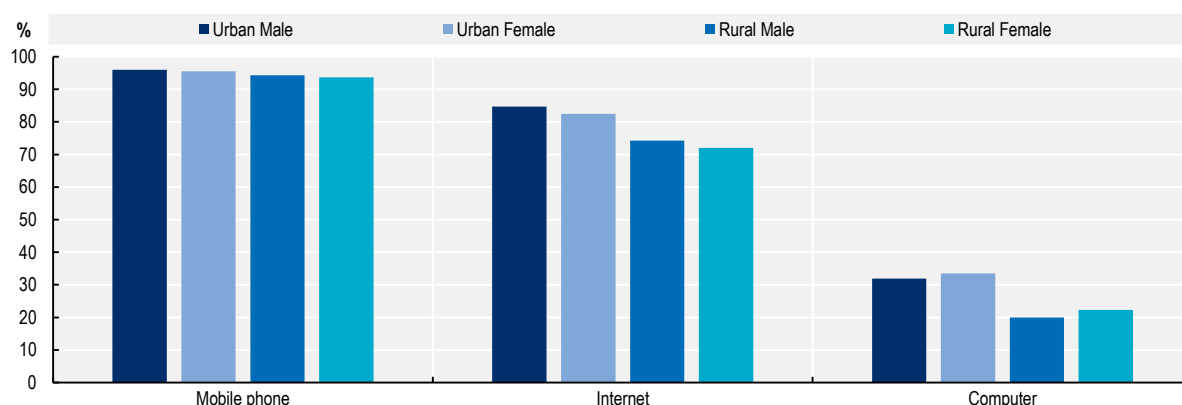
Disadvantaged group	Responsible government body	Description of initiative
Dropouts and adults with low levels of skills	Equitable Education Fund	Survey on the skills of adults aged over 40 years old, reporting that many of them lack foundational skills and highlighting the need for literacy programmes
	Department of Skills Development, Ministry of Labour	Pilot project that tracks high school graduates (or equivalent), determines what sectors they could be employed in based on their level of professional skills, and provides additional training opportunities if needed
	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security	Collaboration with the Ombudsman and other line ministries to track dropouts in the school system and place them in training institutions all over Thailand
Freelance or self-employed workers	Department of Skills Development, Ministry of Labour	Provision of training opportunities to approximately 100 000 self-employed workers per year (though opportunity costs make it difficult to promote participation)
Unemployed individuals	Multisectoral	Digital skills training for individuals who lost their livelihood due to the COVID-19 pandemic, helping them adapt to the increasing digitalisation of various sectors
Persons with disabilities	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security	Activities in collaboration with international development partners, civil society actors, and the private sector to offer training to individuals with handicaps located in Thai provinces, covering seven fields: carpentry industrial-technical, mechanic-technical, electronics and computers, industrial art, industrial agriculture, and service business
Elderly	Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board	Training sessions for elderly people at the Lopburi Province to enhance their levels of digital literacy, looking to expand to other disadvantaged groups such as women, children, youth, parents, guardians of persons with disabilities, and the general public
Indigenous groups	Art for All Foundation	Programmes that promote art exhibitions, workshops and international art education model groups that aim to develop creative skills. Also offered to individuals with disabilities and prison inmates

Disadvantaged group	Responsible government body	Description of initiative
Migrants	CLCs (e.g. Ban Nai Soi, Mae Sai)	Provision of computer training, human rights education, and literacy training for undocumented migrants, refugees and other community members along the Thai-Burmese border

Source: OECD Skills Strategy Thailand stakeholder consultations; ILO (2011^[123]), *Promoting inclusive vocational education and training in the Asian region: Opening opportunities for persons with disabilities*, www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_170528.pdf; Saffa (2024), *Digital Literacy for All: Navigating Thailand's Digital Future*, <https://opengovasia.com/2024/05/17/digital-literacy-for-all-navigating-thailands-digital-future/>.

It is important to recognise that many individuals in Thailand belong to multiple disadvantaged groups simultaneously. For instance, in Thailand, as in many Southeast Asian countries, levels of informality are higher among older people, and particularly older women. These people face difficulties finding formal jobs due to their age, and the lack of old-age income security pushes them into informal employment (ASEAN, 2022^[124]). 79% of Thai's low-income individuals also live in rural areas and work in agriculture, where rates of informal employment are highest (see Figure 3.12) (ILOSTAT, 2018^[125]; World Bank, 2022^[126]).

Figure 3.12. ICT usage among Thai men and women in urban and rural areas, 2020



Source: National Statistics Office (2020); World Bank Group (2023^[127]), *Gender and digital development in Thailand*, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099518309112322076/pdf/IDU005e8c7fb01e69045b40b256059e0bdbc644.pdf>.

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A key strategy for expanding adult learning participation among disadvantaged groups is through online learning, including MOOCs and open educational resources (OERs) (UNESCO, 2020^[121]). As discussed more extensively in Recommendation 3, online forms of learning increase the flexibility of training programmes and make it more likely for adults to participate, as they can be accessed from anywhere and can be accomplished in line with individuals' preferred schedules and learning pace (OECD, 2023^[82]). In Thailand, the Thai MOOC platform, which was launched in 2016 (see Box 3.3), has helped make adult learning more accessible (in terms of both time and costs) among the public. There is a lack of reliable and systematic data on participation rates in adult learning in general in Thailand, but government representatives acknowledge that it is likely to be much lower among disadvantaged groups due to the multiple barriers they face, as well as their low levels of digital literacy.

The potential of online learning in Thailand is hampered by challenges related to digital inequalities, such as the urban-rural divide in digital infrastructure, where most investments, such as smart cities and digital parks, remain concentrated in urban areas (World Bank, 2023^[128]). In 2020, the use of Internet and computers, was lower for both men and women in Thailand's rural areas in comparison to their urban

counterparts (see Figure 3.12). This highlights the need to pursue further efforts to equip disadvantaged groups – especially those living in rural areas – with the ICT tools they need to access online learning offers, including those on the Thai MOOC platform (see Box 3.3). Such efforts would also support Thailand 4.0 objectives and the country's digitalisation objectives, including the 20-Year Digital Economy and Society Development Plan (2017-2036), which aims to construct high-capacity digital infrastructure through the country and develop a workforce for the digital era, among many other ambitions for digitalisation (World Bank, 2023^[128]).

The provision of digital infrastructure must go hand in hand with efforts to improve the level of digital literacy among disadvantaged populations, especially in partnership with local actors that are active in the provision of adult learning, such as LAOs, CLCs and NFEs. Government representatives in Thailand have emphasised the need to equip these groups with adequate digital skills, which would allow them to follow online adult learning programmes with ease. These priorities are supported by evidence showing that 74% of Thai youth and adults have very low levels of digital skills and struggle to perform simple digital tasks, such as using a pointing device or keyboard or using online information to solve a problem (see Figure 3.2) (World Bank, 2024^[41]). A comprehensive initiative that combines the provision of digital infrastructure and with training on digital skills can thus help ensure that Thailand is able to reap the benefits of online forms of adult learning. For example, in the European Union, the Erasmus-funded Our Digital Village project intervenes in rural areas by providing communities with digital and transversal skills through co-designed educational content that is tailored to local needs. The project targets educational institutions that offer formal and non-formal educational programmes, teachers in educational institutions, community organisations' educational staff, adult learners, and policymakers (see Box 3.6).

In addition, Thailand could expand access to adult learning by reinforcing community-based approaches that are currently implemented by LAOs, CLCs, and NFEs, who are often the first points of contact with learning among many disadvantaged groups. Through these local community structures, adults are able to participate in various non-formal learning initiatives such as literacy classes and vocational skills training, but also informal learning opportunities through free access to learning materials such as textbooks, audio cassettes, and videos (Leowarin, 2010^[25]). These local education structures have diverse functions, with their learning offers differing according to the needs of local communities (e.g. to increase literacy, to improve the elderly's quality of life, to disseminate ICT skills) (Thongdee et al., 2022^[24]; Leowarin, 2010^[25]; Yenjai, 2014^[26]). They receive financial support from local governments, which may be supplemented by contributions from members of local communities and indispensable implementation support from civil society (Leowarin, 2010^[25]; UNESCO, 2003^[129]).

Through the decades, community-based structures have been helpful in increasing access to adult learning opportunities among disadvantaged groups, especially in training areas that are highly relevant in their local communities (e.g. forest preservation, farming practices). However, challenges remain, such as the lack of training plans in some CLCs and the lack of adequate equipment and training staff, especially in small communities (Sompong and Rampai, 2015^[130]). Furthermore, links between local training initiatives and national policy and development programmes are weak (Leowarin, 2010^[25]), which can undermine relevance as labour markets continue to change rapidly. There are also limited recognition of prior learning (RPL) and course accreditation mechanisms, limiting the ability of community-based adult learning in Thailand to lead to qualifications that can help disadvantaged adults progress to higher levels of education and access employment opportunities in the formal sector (UN Thailand, 2021^[131]).

Community-based approaches to adult learning need greater recognition at the political and strategic levels in order to strengthen their role as an essential element of the educational system and highlight their contributions to labour force development. Recognising the importance of community-based approaches – either through a unified adult learning strategy or a separate document (see Recommendation 2 in Chapter 4) – can help identify shared priorities and standards (while maintaining the current localised and decentralised approach to training) in line with national development objectives, as well as help mobilise

additional human and financial resources to support the implementation of adult learning opportunities in these local structures. For example, in Scotland (UK), the Adult Learning Strategy 2022-2027 recognises the role that community-based adult learning plays in improving educational outcomes for adults and situates it as a valuable element of the wider education system (see Box 3.6). The strategy aims to help provide local education structures with equal status and stability in funding, as well as raise greater awareness about the benefits of community-based adult learning (Scottish Government, 2022^[132]).

Box 3.6. Relevant international examples: Expanding access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches

European Union: Our Digital Village project

Led by All-Digital, a pan-European association that works to promote digital skills, the Erasmus-funded Our Digital Village project aims to intervene in rural areas by promoting the acquisition of digital and transversal skills among local communities. The project's main target groups include educational institutions offering formal and non-formal learning (e.g. schools, universities, NGOs), public institutions (municipalities), teachers/trainers of educational institutions, community organisations' educational staff, adult learners, and policymakers and stakeholders. To achieve its objectives, the project raises awareness about how digitalisation will transform education, work and life, as well co-creates high-quality educational content that reflects local needs. Our Digital Village uses self-analysis workshops to determine the intrinsic motivation of individuals and their learning needs, which will then be reflected into educational materials and activities. Teachers and trainers are trained to ensure their capacity to implement the co-designed educational content and are equipped with pedagogical skills to teach various digital fields, such as coding, robotics, microcontrollers, 3D modelling and printing, and web development.

Scotland (UK): Recognition of community-based adult learning in national strategies

The Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland 2022-2027 is the first-ever adult learning strategy in the country. It aims to create new pathways for adult learning especially for those who are disadvantaged and puts community-based adult learners at the heart of the strategy. The strategy values community-based adult learning as an essential component of the wider education system and aims to provide it with equal status and stability in funding. To this end, it puts forth numerous interventions, such as the establishment of the national Adult Learners Advisory Group, which is a diverse group of community-based adult learners who are tasked to work alongside the Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training's Adult Learning Strategic Forum for Scotland. In the strategy, the government also commits to strengthening connections between community-based adult learning with careers and employment services, collect data on the impact of community-based adult learning, provide support for structured partnerships, strengthen recognition of prior learning mechanisms, and explore the development of national occupational standards for community-based adult learning, among many others.

Source: All Digital (2023^[133]), *Our Digital Village – Co-Designed Digital Education in Rural Areas*, <https://all-digital.org/projects/our-digital-village-co-designed-digital-education-in-rural-areas/>; Our Digital Village (2023^[134]), *Homepage*, <https://ourdigitalvillage.erasmus.site/>; Scottish Government (2022^[132]), *Adult learning strategy 2022 to 2027*, www.gov.scot/publications/adult-learning-strategy-scotland-2022-27/documents/.

Recommendation 6: Expanding access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches

Expanding access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches can help increase participation in training among those who need it most. Increased access to training can help individuals from disadvantaged groups realise their full potential, obtain better labour market outcomes, and promote equality and social cohesion more effectively at the country level. A key strategy to expand access for disadvantaged groups is to increase online learning options, which can help overcome various barriers to participation, such as time constraints and costs. Furthermore, increasing funding for and recognition of local structures, such as LAOs, CLCs and NFEs, can help highlight the importance of community-based approaches in reaching disadvantaged adult learners more easily.

Thailand can undertake the following actions to expand access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches:

- 6.1. Expand access to adult learning among individuals in remote areas through inclusive online programmes.** Thailand should promote participation among individuals in remote areas in courses available in existing platforms, such as Thai MOOC, where most learning offers are also inexpensive, if not free. This entails raising awareness about the existence of the platform among local communities and promoting its increased use, possibly in partnership with actors who are already currently active in the provision of non-formal learning among disadvantaged groups (e.g. Equitable Education Fund, the Department of Skills Development, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board), as well as local actors who are responsible for providing adult learning at the local level (e.g. LAOs, CLCs, NFEs).
- 6.2. Provide adults in rural areas with connectivity support and digital literacy training.** Thailand should ensure that disadvantaged groups in rural areas, especially women, are provided with the ICT tools such as mobile phones and computers, which they would need to connect to the internet and access online learning platforms. Such tools must be tailored to their needs (e.g. with language options) in order to ensure inclusivity. In addition to providing them with the tools needed to access online programmes, disadvantaged adults should be provided with digital skills training that would allow them to navigate through online learning platforms, follow their courses with ease, accomplish digital tasks independently, and tailor the course according to their learning preferences and pace.
- 6.3. Strengthen existing local community structures (e.g. LAOs, CLCs, NFEs) to increase access to adult learning.** Thailand should continue to support the implementation of community-based adult learning opportunities that are offered by local education structures such as LAOs, CLCs and NFEs. By formally recognising community-based approaches at the political and strategic level as essential parts of the education system (e.g. through a unified strategy or separate document, as discussed in Recommendation 2 in Chapter 4), Thailand can increase the financial and human resources dedicated to these local education structures, set minimum standards for quality and relevance, and link community-based learning offers to broader national development goals.

Summary of policy recommendations

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 1: Improving the quality and labour market relevance of adult learning opportunities	
1. Improving internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for formal and non-formal adult learning	1.1. Expand internal and external quality assurance mechanisms to include adult learning providers currently excluded from existing regulations. 1.2. Strengthen the capacity of adult learning providers to conduct self-evaluations and make improvements based on results. 1.3. Introduce quality assurance labels for adult learning providers.
2. Steering adult learning provision and educational choices towards areas of skills shortage	2.1. Use skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) tools more systematically to determine labour market needs. 2.2. Disseminate information about skills shortages by introducing a government-approved list of critical skills and occupations. 2.3. Introduce financial incentives to encourage employers and adult learning providers to offer opportunities in high-demand areas, and support learners in making education and training choices aligned with labour market needs.
Opportunity 2: Reducing barriers to participation in adult learning opportunities	
3. Addressing time-related barriers through flexible adult learning opportunities	3.1. Raise awareness about existing flexible adult learning opportunities, including digital formats, to increase their take-up. 3.2. Introduce time accounts or consider incorporating them into existing learning platforms such as the NCBS. 3.3. Promote the uptake of existing training leave policies and improve their effectiveness.
4. Increasing motivation to participate in adult learning through financial and non-financial incentives	4.1. Conduct a nation-wide campaign to raise awareness about the importance of a lifelong approach to learning. 4.2. Introduce a financial incentive, such as personal income tax deductions, to motivate individuals to pursue training. 4.3. Introduce payback clauses to ensure that investments in training by enterprises and the government can lead to positive returns. 4.4. Explore the introduction of bottom-up learning models (e.g. learning accounts) to promote a stronger sense of autonomy and responsibility for lifelong learning among individuals.
Opportunity 3: Increasing participation in adult learning among disadvantaged groups	
5. Improving access to adult learning opportunities among informal workers	5.1. Introduce a targeted subsidy scheme to support training for workers in sectors with high rates of informal employment. 5.2. Implement targeted outreach campaigns to raise awareness among informal workers about available adult learning opportunities and their benefits.
6. Expanding access to adult learning among disadvantaged groups through online learning and community-based approaches	6.1. Expand access to adult learning among individuals in remote areas through inclusive online programmes. 6.2. Provide adults in rural areas with connectivity support and digital literacy training. 6.3. Strengthen existing local community structures (e.g. LAOs, CLCs, NFEs) to increase access to adult learning.

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Notes

¹ In this chapter, the term lifelong learning is used interchangeably with adult learning, although there are differences between the two. Lifelong learning is a broader concept that encompasses all forms of skills development and knowledge acquisition throughout the lifecycle, while adult learning is a component of lifelong learning that occurs in adulthood and into old age (OECD, 2021^[135]). In Thailand, as in many OECD countries, adult learning is offered primarily offered through non-formal education and training, which may also be used interchangeably with adult learning.

² Based on a survey conducted on 100 employees from Thailand between November 2022 and January 2023 (Ritu Bhandari, 2023^[136]).

³ Data based on the World Bank Enterprise Surveys, which surveyed 1 000 small, medium, and large firms across all five regions of Thailand in 2016. The following sectors were covered: food, garments, rubber and plastics production, electronics & communications, equipment, other manufacturing, retail, and other services (World Bank Group, 2016^[139]).

⁴ In the World Bank Enterprise Survey, firm size levels are determined as the following: 5 to 19 employees (small), 20 to 99 employees (medium), and 100+ employees (large).

⁵ While VET broadly refers to training that imparts to students (e.g. at secondary or tertiary levels) a set of skills and knowledge that is specific to a specific trade, occupation or vocation, CVET is specifically targeted towards adults and is carried out after initial education or training or after entry into working life (CEDEFOP, 2015^[137]; Eurostat, n.d.^[138]).

4 Strengthening the governance of the skills system in Thailand

Effective governance is essential for a responsive skills system. As skills policies intersect with multiple policy areas, their success depends on the effective co-ordination of government efforts, active engagement with non-governmental stakeholders, and the integration of comprehensive skills information systems. This chapter outlines the key elements of successful governance of skills systems and underscores its significance for Thailand. It also evaluates Thailand's current governance practices and identifies four key opportunities for improvement: (1) Enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy; (2) Strengthening a whole-of-government approach to skills policy; (3) Strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy; and (4) Improving skills information systems.

The importance of strengthening the governance of the Thai skills system

Well-functioning governance arrangements are the foundation of an effective and responsive skills system, where skills policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are impactful, mutually reinforcing and rooted in an extensive and robust evidence base. Policies aimed at developing skills throughout life and ensuring their effective use in workplaces and society, will only realise their full potential if embedded in strong governance arrangements (OECD, 2019^[1]).

Establishing well-functioning arrangements for governing skills systems is particularly challenging due to the complexity of skills policies and the wide range of actors involved in their design and implementation. Skills policies sit at the intersection of multiple policy domains including education, labour, innovation, industry, migration, and more. A diverse array of governmental and non-governmental actors are engaged in these policy areas. In Thailand, ministries such as the Ministry for Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation, and the Ministry of Labour have important responsibilities in skills related policies. Outside of government, actors such as employers, trade unions, education and training providers, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also play important roles in skills systems.

This complexity is compounded by rapid global trends such as aging populations, the digital transformation – encompassing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics – the green transition, migration, and globalisation, all of which shift labour market demand. Unexpected shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic, wars, political changes, and natural disasters further necessitate rapid adjustments and adaptations to skills policies. To help countries govern skills systems effectively in the face of these complex pressures, the OECD Skills Strategy (OECD, 2019^[1]) identifies four building blocks of strong governance arrangements for skills policy, as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Four key Pillars of Effective Governance in Skills Policy



Source: OECD (2019^[1]), *OECD Skills Strategy 2019: Skills to Shape a Better Future*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264313835-en>.

Promoting a whole-of-government approach to skills policy (building block 1) is central to fostering a common skills vision and strategy, and minimising inefficiencies, gaps, and overlaps in skills policy. A whole-of government approach includes: 1) horizontal co-ordination between different governmental departments and agencies; and 2) vertical co-ordination between different levels of government (i.e. national and subnational levels).

Effectively engaging stakeholders (building block 2) throughout the skills policy cycle is an equally important aspect of well-functioning governance arrangements. Stakeholder engagement allows policy makers to tap into stakeholders' on-the-ground expertise and insights into the real-world effects of skills policies and regulations. It also increases the perceived legitimacy of skills reforms and builds support for policy changes, while holding the government accountable. This helps ensure continuity in policy through changes in government (OECD, 2020^[2]).

Integrated skills information systems (building block 3) allow policymakers to effectively assess and anticipate skills needs, identify policy priorities, evaluate the impact of skills policies, and disseminate skills information among different target groups, thereby informing individuals' education and career choices.

This chapter provides a detailed assessment of governance arrangements of the skills system in Thailand across the first three building blocks (see Figure 4.1). It then identifies four opportunities to strengthen the governance of the Thai skills system and presents specific recommendations for each.

Overview and performance of governance arrangements

This section examines the governance arrangements of Thailand's skills system and evaluates its performance across key dimensions of the governance arrangements of skills policy. To improve skills performance, Thailand has implemented several initiatives, ranging from the establishment of co-ordination bodies for skills policies, to the adoption of strategic documents and the collection of skills data. Despite these efforts, an assessment of these arrangements and governance performance indicators highlights significant opportunities for Thailand to enhance its governance arrangements of skills policy.

Overview of Thailand's current governance arrangements

Given the multifaceted nature of skills policies, responsibilities for skills span multiple actors in Thailand. Table 4.1 offers an overview of the key governmental actors in Thailand's skills system and details their roles and responsibilities.

At the national level, skills policy is overseen by multiple ministries and agencies, some of which also oversee associated regional and local structures. To start, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is tasked with promoting and overseeing education at all levels, spanning from pre-primary to higher education across both state and private sectors. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation (MHESI) plays a crucial role in advancing and supervising higher education to align with global changes, such as technological advancements, shifting labour market demands, and international education standards, while also addressing national skills priorities. Similarly, the Ministry of Labour (MOL), among other responsibilities, conducts labour market analyses, supports skills development initiatives for workers and entrepreneurs.

Several government agencies and offices also play key roles within the skills system. These include, for instance, several organisations overseen by the MOE, such as the Office of the Permanent Secretary, the Office of the Education Council, the Office of the Basic Education Commission, and the Office of the Vocational Education Commission, as well as the Office of the Higher Education Commission, which is overseen by the MHESI. The ministry also supervises seven other independent agencies, such as the Teachers' Council of Thailand and the Office of the Welfare Promotion Commission for Teachers and Educational Personnel. Furthermore, the Department for Skills Development, overseen by the Ministry of

Labour, works to advance skill standards and align them with international benchmarks, as well as promotes collaboration between key actors in the Thai skills system.

Table 4.1. Main ministries and government agencies with responsibilities for skills policy in Thailand

Actor	Roles and responsibilities
Ministries	
Ministry of Digital Economy and Society	Promotes and supports the use of technology and digital innovation. Expands research and development as well as digital skills development to increase the country's competitiveness and enhance people's quality of life.
Ministry of Education	Promotes and oversees all education levels from pre-primary to higher education under the administration of both the state and the private sector. It formulates education policies, plans and standards; allocates resources for education; monitors and inspects education provision; and co-ordinates religious affairs, arts, culture and sports in relation to education. Currently has four main offices, each carrying distinct responsibilities: 1) Office of the Permanent Secretary; 2) Office of the Education Council; 3) Office of the Basic Education Commission; and 4) Office of the Vocational Education Commission. There are also seven additional independent agencies that are supervised by the Ministry of Education.
Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation	Promotes, supports and supervises higher education ensuring alignment with global changes and national skills demand. The ministry has academic and managerial independence to develop skills based on the country's needs and to conduct research and innovation for community development. Promotes, supports, and oversees research and innovation within higher education institutions and agencies under its supervision, including co-ordination with external agencies within the research and innovation ecosystem beyond the ministry's jurisdiction. Provides infrastructure for the development of higher education, science, research and innovation, including promoting co-operation for the production of specialised high-quality skills.
Ministry of Industry	Promotes and develops entrepreneurs and industrial sectors to be competitive in the global market through technology and innovation.
Ministry of Labour (Department of Skills Development)	Produces labour market analysis and forecasts, provides counseling services and vocational guidance to individuals. The Department of Skills Development, overseen by the Ministry of Labour promotes advancement of skill standards to align with international benchmarks, ensuring that Thailand's workforce remains competitive on a global scale. It focuses on enhancing the skill development ecosystem to support the rapid evolution of innovation and technology. Promotes collaboration between public and private sector networks to foster the development of labour skills. Aims to deliver effective and relevant skill development services that meet the needs of the changing labour market by continuously modernising its management and service systems with cutting-edge technology.
The Office of the Prime Minister	Supervises several agencies and authorities with responsibilities for skills including the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA), the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI), and the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council that Develops national social development plans and strategies with implications for skills.
Ministry of Social Development and Human Security	Provides training as well as social and professional development for target populations such as people with disabilities, the elderly, and women.
National Agencies	
Office of the Education Council (Ministry of Education)	Formulates and implement educational policies, plans, and standards aimed at improving the quality of education and enhancing skills development. Works to increase educational equity and improve employment prospects. The office conducts and supports research to inform skills policy development, while also monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of educational management. It promotes collaboration to advance education and human resource development and provides administrative support to the National Qualifications Framework Committee, particularly in relation to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework.
Office of the Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Education)	Manages the general administrative functions of the Ministry, ensuring co-ordination across its activities and executing official duties mandated by law. Is responsible for preparing the Ministry's budget and work plans, as well as monitoring, inspecting, and evaluating the implementation of these plans in line with the Ministry's policies and guidelines. Additionally, the Office handles other responsibilities as specified by ministerial regulations concerning the division of official duties.

Actor	Roles and responsibilities
The Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC, Ministry of Education)	Oversees vocational and professional lifelong learning in Thailand. It administers vocational education through both the formal school system, which includes basic and vocational streams, and non-formal education opportunities. OVEC manages approximately 431 public and 444 private colleges nationwide, offering formal vocational education and training (VET) programmes. As of 2019, OVEC is responsible for nearly one million vocational students, focusing on developing skilled workers, technicians, and technologists across nine major fields of study: industry, commerce and business administration, fine and applied arts, home economics, agriculture, fisheries, tourism and hospitality, textiles industry, and ICT.
Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (Office of the Prime Minister)	Is tasked with promoting, supporting, and developing a robust professional qualifications system. Collaborates with various professional groups to establish occupational standards and certify competencies according to these standards, thereby enabling career advancement opportunities both within Thailand and internationally. Additionally, TPQI's professional database and information system play a crucial role in supporting the development of the national workforce by facilitating the free movement of labour within the ASEAN Economic Community.
Subnational authorities and entities	
Local Administration Organisations (LAOs; Ministry of Interior)	Provide education at any or all levels according to local needs. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) supervises Thailand's local administration organisations (LAOs). Upon meeting criteria by the Ministry of Education, LAOs (including the special administrative entities of Bangkok and Pattaya) may offer education based on local needs. They are supervised and funded by the MOI, while the Ministry of Education helps to co-ordinate and provides advice to the local authorities.
Educational Service Areas (Ministry of Education)	Supervise respective educational service areas and schools under their jurisdiction. Together they comprise the Area Committee for Education, which ensures alignment between them and with national standards.
Regional Education Offices (Ministry of Education)	Set strategies for education development in alignment with national development objectives, Ministry of Education's policies, and Provincial Cluster Development Strategies. Are supervised by the Office of the Permanent Secretary.
Provincial Labour Market Offices (Ministry of Labour)	Implement labour market policies, programmes, and services, and co-ordinate with other LAOs and key actors.

Source: Descriptions of roles and responsibilities are taken from each ministry's respective websites; the Questionnaire – OECD Skills Strategy Thailand; and Ministry of Education (2017^[3]), *Education in Thailand*, www.bic.moe.go.th/images/stories/pdf/EDUCATION_IN_THAILAND_2017.pdf

Beyond these central ministries, other governmental bodies have tasks and mandates related to skills policy within their respective domains. Agencies such as the Royal Thai Police, and ministries such as the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Public Health, and others are responsible for developing curricula and training personnel tailored to their distinct needs.

Provincial and local authorities in Thailand are also key actors in the Thai skills system. Thailand is divided into 77 provinces (*changwat*) of which two specially governed districts: the capital Bangkok and Pattaya (Thailand Embassy, 2024^[4]). Local Administration Organisations (LAOs), which include provinces, municipalities, sub-districts, and special LAOs (Bangkok and Pattaya), have the authority to provide education services at any or all levels. These LAOs are supervised by the Ministry of Interior and follow procedures established by the Ministry of Education. In addition, each province has its own Provincial Education Committee, chaired by the Provincial Governor or Deputy Governor, and its own Provincial Education Office (Department of Local Administration, 2024^[5]).

In addition to the independent provision of education services by LAOs, the Ministry of Education also holds responsibilities at the regional level. The Area Committee for Education comprises Educational Service Areas, each responsible for supervision of the educational service area and schools under their jurisdiction. Furthermore, the Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education also supervises Regional Education Offices that set strategies for education development in alignment with national development objectives, the Ministry of Education's policies, and Provincial Cluster Development Strategies (MOE, 2017^[3]).

Similarly, the Ministry of Labour operates Provincial Labour Offices in each province, which play a central role in implementing skills-related labour market policies and services. These offices oversee labour affairs in line with national policies, ensuring that labour laws are enforced, and that workers' rights and welfare

are protected. In relation to skills, the Provincial Labour Offices promote employment and workforce development through local employment initiatives and training programmes that respond to labour market needs. They are also responsible for issuing work permits to foreign workers, preventing illegal labour practices, and mediating disputes between employers and employees. Through these functions, the Provincial Labour Offices contribute directly to aligning workforce skills with local labour market demands and ensuring that employment and training services are delivered effectively at the provincial level.

Thailand's performance in strengthening the governance of the skills system

While Thailand has made significant strides in introducing policies and initiatives to strengthen the governance of its skills system, it is important to assess whether these arrangements are effective and ensure that skills policies have their full potential impact. This section presents Thailand's performance in key governance indicators.

Thailand has made efforts towards promoting a whole-of-government approach to skills policies, but there is room to strengthen and expand these efforts

A whole-of-government approach aims to improve the co-ordination of government activity, ensuring greater policy coherence and optimal use of resources. This approach encompasses horizontal co-ordination – across ministries, agencies, and departments – and vertical co-ordination – between different levels of government. It applies to both formal and informal processes in the development, implementation, and management of policies, programmes, and service delivery (OECD, 2020^[2]).

Thailand has established several mechanisms to promote horizontal co-ordination and collaboration on skills-related matters. Inter-ministerial bodies in Thailand such as the Education Council, Vocational Education Council, Board of the Equitable Education Fund (EEF), and National Qualifications Framework Committee play a key role in fostering horizontal co-ordination in education and skills policies by bringing together diverse actors from across the skills system to address specific policy challenges. Furthermore, Thailand developed high-level strategic documents that help to steer skills policy. Several strategies set out broad policy priorities for the country, including the National Strategy 2018-2037 (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017^[6]) and the Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[7]). These documents play a crucial role in aligning high-level goals across ministries and bringing together experts and officials from various policy domains, which in turn helps to ensure that skills policies are co-ordinated and contribute effectively to achieving these priorities and objectives.

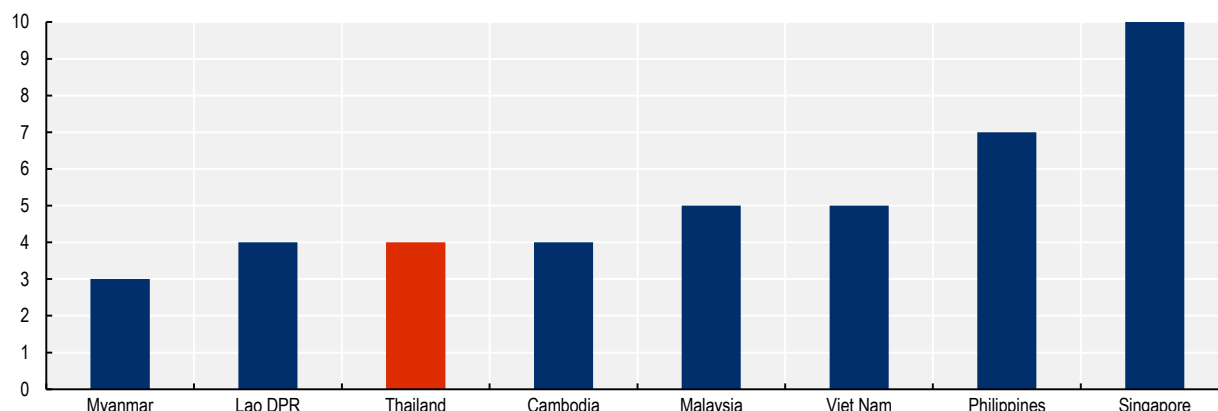
Despite these efforts, there is still considerable room to strengthen horizontal co-ordination and collaboration in Thailand. When assessing the government's ability to co-ordinate conflicting objectives into a coherent policy, Thailand ranks lower than both the OECD and ASEAN averages (see Figure 4.2). The ASEAN Human Resources Development Readiness report on Thailand further highlights this issue (ASEAN, 2021^[8]). Based on a survey of key ministries, institutions, and stakeholders within the skills system, the report indicates that the structures supporting human capital development are not sufficiently robust. Moreover, agencies consulted as part of this project have also noted that co-ordinating across multiple ministries often leads to increased bureaucracy, which can slow down decision-making and implementation, particularly when ministries have priorities or agendas.

Vertical co-ordination between national and subnational levels is also key to strong governance of skills systems, given the role and position of subnational government in Thailand's skills system. LAOs play a key role in implementing skills policies, delivering public services, and engaging with local communities (Department of Local Administration, 2024^[5]). With their increased responsibilities in education and skills policies in recent years (MOE, 2017^[3]), strong co-ordination mechanisms between the national and subnational levels of government are essential. The central link between LAOs and the national

government is the Department of Local Administration (DLA) under the Ministry of Interior, which oversees and supports the LAOs. However, the Ministry of Education sets guidelines for education provided by LAOs and manages the Area Committee for Education, which supervises Educational Service Areas and schools under their jurisdiction, aligning their strategies with national development objectives. Additionally, LAOs are represented on the Education Council, offering a potential avenue for co-ordinating national and local government efforts. The Ministry of Labour's Provincial Labour Offices also implement labour market policies and programmes at the sub-national level, co-ordinating with LAOs and other key actors.

Figure 4.2. Performance in inter-ministerial co-ordination in Thailand and selected countries, 2022

Index value (1-10)



Note: Inter-ministerial co-ordination refers to scores that countries are assigned by experts in response to the question “To what extent can the government co-ordinate conflicting objectives into a coherent policy?”. This includes the extent to which a country “introduces horizontal forms of co-ordination to mediate between different departments of the state administration”. Scores range from 1 to 10, with higher scores indicating better performance.

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022^[9]), Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI), www.sgi-network.org/2022/Good-Governance/Executive-Capacity/Interministerial-Coordination.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/oh5rce>

Despite these connections between the national and subnational levels, more could be done to improve vertical collaboration and co-ordination. LAOs are not well represented in national co-ordination bodies beyond the Education Council and are not strongly involved in policy design. Consulted agencies noted that, while subnational governments are well-positioned to adapt national policies to local contexts, co-ordination between national and subnational levels can introduce bureaucratic complexities, slowing down decision-making and implementation. This complexity not only risks delays but also inconsistencies in policy application and diminished effectiveness in achieving national objectives. The involvement of multiple ministries at the subnational level further complicates co-ordination, necessitating stronger inter-ministerial co-operation at this level.

Despite recent efforts towards engaging non-governmental stakeholders in skills policy, there is room for better involving labour market actors and civil society

Effective skills policies require active engagement with non-governmental stakeholders who play key roles within the skills system. Strong governance enables these stakeholders – ranging from educational institutions and employers to trade unions and NGOs – to leverage their strengths, knowledge, and networks to complement each other and achieve shared policy objectives. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of ownership across the skills ecosystem, ensuring that skills policies effectively respond to labour market needs and contribute to broader socio-economic goals (OECD, 2021^[10]).

Thailand has made notable progress in establishing a legal framework for stakeholder consultation in the formulation of general policies. Key legislation, such as the Regulations of the Office of the Prime Minister on Public Consultation, B.E. 2548 (2005) (Office of the Prime Minister, 2005^[11]) and the 2017 constitution, (Office of the Council of State, 2017^[12]), mandates public information dissemination and consultations. The Act on Legislative Drafting and the Outcome of Law, B.E. 2562 (2019) provides detailed guidelines for conducting stakeholder consultations (Government of Thailand, 2019^[13]). Additionally, Thailand has established a system that allows legislators to conduct online consultations, share information, and register stakeholders whose interests should be considered (Government of Thailand, 2019^[13]). However, beyond public consultations on draft legislation and regulations, stakeholder participation in developing strategic documents remains largely voluntary (OECD, 2022^[14]).

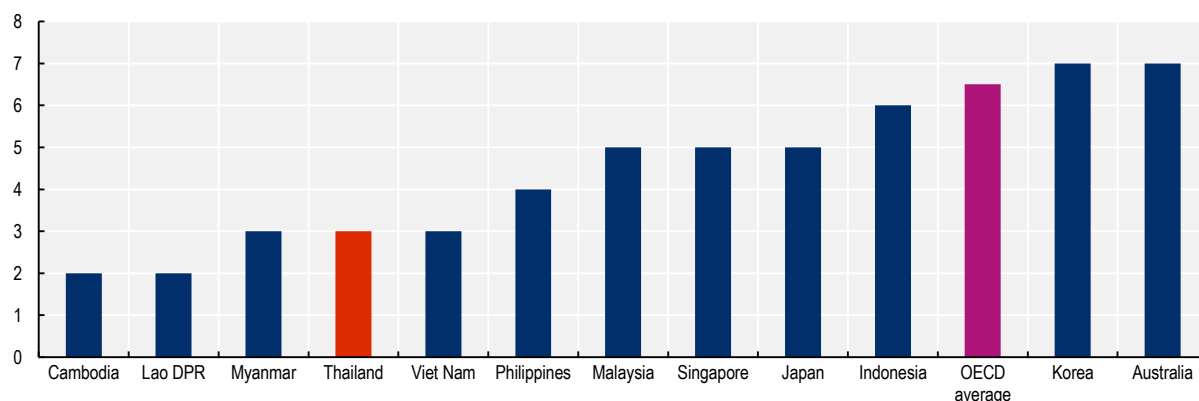
To effectively engage labour market actors, such as employers and employees, in skills policy, Thailand has established several bodies that convene public and private actors. Key examples include the Skill Development Promotion Committee, the Education Council, the National Qualification Framework Committee, and the Board of the Equitable Education Fund. Additionally, broader entities like the Joint Public and Private Sector Consultative Committee (JPPSCC) serve as effective forums for engaging both employers and workers in the development of skills policy. Specific departments within ministries, such as the Department for Skills Development, also play a crucial role in facilitating engagement with labour market actors.

In line with Thailand 4.0 (Thailand Board of Investment, n.d.^[15]), which promotes an industry-led economic model, Thailand also established councils, such as the Thai Chamber of Commerce and industry-specific bodies, to collaborate with government agencies and align training programmes with industry needs.

However, consulted Thai officials expressed that there is insufficient active engagement of non-governmental stakeholders, who often merely participate as consulted entities but not as active participants. This issue is also reflected in the ASEAN Human Resources Development Readiness report on Thailand (ASEAN, 2021^[8]) which presents findings from a survey sent out to representatives from key Ministries, institutions, and stakeholders. The survey indicates room for improvement in promoting engagement with the business sector.

In addition to involving labour market actors, Thailand has made efforts to engage with civil society organisations (CSOs), who play an important role in the skills system. For example, the Thailand *Lifelong Learning & Education Expo 2023* which was an exhibition intended to promote “Lifelong Learning and Education for Lifelong Employability”, was led by non-profit lifelong learning organisations, in co-ordination with the Ministry of Education.

However, civil society involvement in policy formulation in Thailand is low in comparison to other countries in the region as well as OECD countries. This is reflected in Figure 4.3, which presents civil society capacity and participation in policy formulation in Thailand and selected countries. The figure indicates potential for developing and strengthening mechanisms for civil society engagement for skills.

Figure 4.3. Civil society participation on policy making in Thailand and selected countries, 2022

Note: Civil society participation refers to scores that countries are assigned by experts in response to the question “To what extent does the political leadership enable the participation of civil society in the political process?”. Scores range from 1 to 10, with higher scores indicating better performance. Scores for OECD countries are taken from the Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI) scores, where the relevant question is “Does the government consult with economic and social actors in the course of policy preparation?”

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022^[16]), Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI), www.sgi-network.org/2022/Good-Governance/Executive-Capacity/Societal-Consultation; Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022^[9]), BTI Transformation Index, <https://bti-project.org/en/index/governance>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/vqjkwk>

Thailand has various tools and mechanisms for collecting and using skills information, but the coverage, standardisation, accessibility, and effective use of skills data can be improved

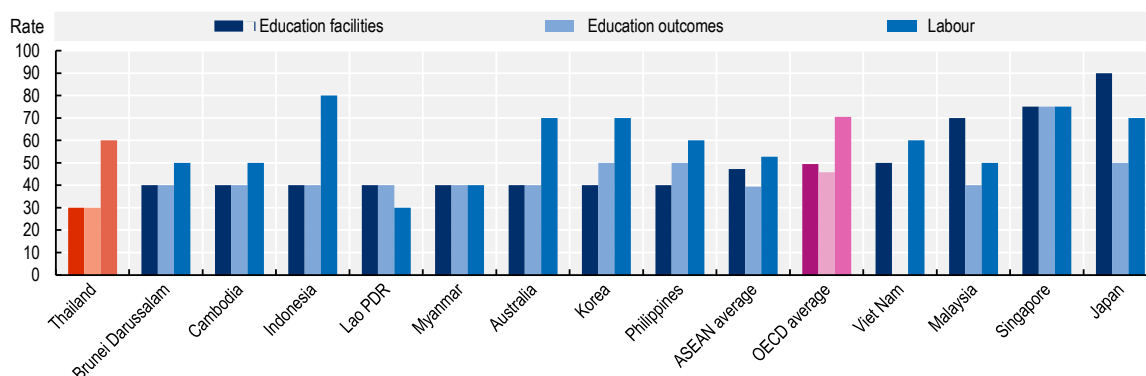
High-quality and comprehensive data are essential for shaping effective skills policies by enabling the assessment and anticipation of skills needs and the identification of policy priorities. Robust information systems allow policymakers to monitor the effectiveness of existing policies and make data-driven decisions. Strong skills information systems also ensure the availability of relevant, high-quality data that empowers individuals and stakeholders to make informed decisions about education and employment. To achieve this, effective co-ordination and information-sharing across the skills system are crucial. This ensures a holistic and accurate understanding of the skills landscape, integrating education, training, and labour market indicators into a cohesive framework.

In Thailand, several governmental bodies are responsible for collecting and maintaining skills data, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the Office of the Prime Minister, and the National Statistics Office. Additionally, Thailand participates in international assessments and surveys, such as the UNESCO Literacy and Educational Attainment Survey, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Survey (see Opportunity 4 below for further details on skills data). While these international benchmarks offer valuable insights, over-reliance on them may limit Thailand's ability to independently monitor progress and make data-driven decisions.

Despite Thailand's extensive data collection efforts, there remain gaps in data coverage, particularly in areas like adult learning and labour market skills indicators. The complexity of gathering labour market information on skills needs, use of skills, and workplace training, especially in the informal sector, presents a significant challenge. Figure 4.4 displays the data coverage rate in three skills related areas in Thailand and selected countries. The coverage rate measures the completeness of a country's statistical offerings based on five elements: the availability of indicators and disaggregations, the availability of data within the last five and ten years, and availability of data at the first and second administrative geographic levels. While Thailand performs above the ASEAN average in labour market indicator coverage, its education indicator coverage lags behind both ASEAN and OECD averages, as well as other Southeast Asian countries, highlighting the need for improved skills data collection.

Figure 4.4. Skills data coverage rates in Thailand and selected countries, 2022

Coverage rates regarding education facilities, education outcomes, and labour market indicators



Note: coverage rates measure the extent to which a country's data offerings are complete, based on data published on the national statistics office's (NSO) website or any other official country website that is linked from the NSO website. Education facilities indicators considered in the analysis include: number of schools or classrooms, number of teaching staff, and education expenditures. Education outcome indicators considered in the analysis include: enrolment rates, completion or graduation rates, and competency exam results. Labour indicators considered in the analysis include: employment rate, unemployment rate, and employment distribution across industry, occupation, and sex.

Source: Open Data Watch (2022^[17]), <https://odin.opendatawatch.com/?aspxerrorpath=/Report/glanceReport>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/eh6x8l>

Beyond coverage, it is crucial to invest in data generation and collection processes that ensure data is effectively used by policy makers. Although Thailand has implemented policies, standards, and guidelines on data management – such as the Digital Government Development Plan and the Data Governance Framework 1.0 – these do not focus on collection processes, but rather on data access and sharing after the data has been generated (OECD, 2022^[14]). The lack of stringent standards for data collection processes has led many government agencies to disclose data in non-machine-readable formats, limiting the effectiveness of data use. For instance, 96% of business registrations are still processed on paper despite the availability of an online option, illustrating inefficiencies in current practices.

Furthermore, Thailand could further improve mechanisms to identify current and future skills needs to inform and guide skills policy decisions. Skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) exercises are key to identifying future skills needs in the labour market. However, SAA exercises in Thailand are fragmented and carried out sporadically. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent the government promotes the use of SAA results through various policy measures (see more in Chapter 3).

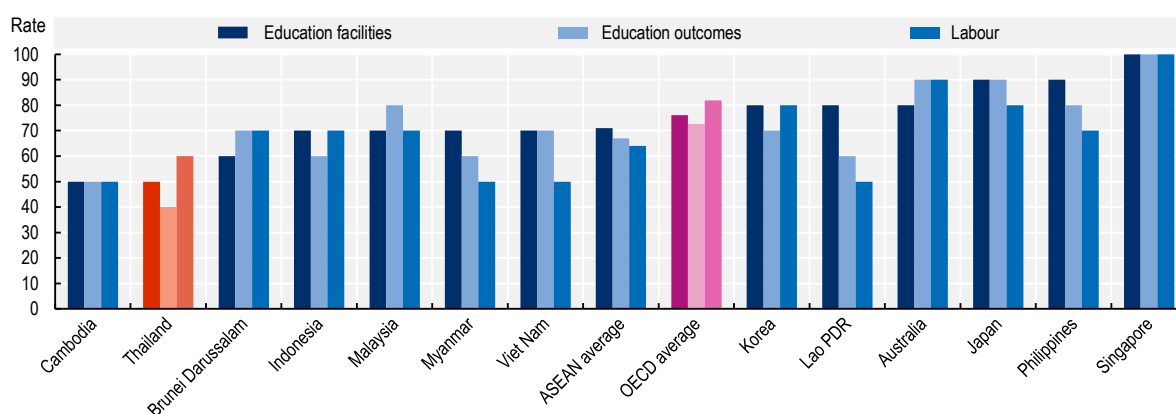
To ensure government information is open and accessible, Thailand has put several policies in place, including the Official Information Act and the Royal Decree on Criteria and Procedures for Good Governance, which mandate that government agencies proactively publish information online. Platforms like govchannel.go.th, the Open Government Data Centre, and the Government Information Centre provide citizens with access to government data, services, and mobile applications (OECD, 2022^[14]). The Official Information Act also allows all citizens to request information from all public organisations. Additionally, the Digital Government Development Plan (2017-2020) includes milestones for providing the private sector and citizens access government data (DGA, 2021^[18]).

Despite these efforts, Thailand's performance in information openness remains relatively low. Data from SAA exercises is not often fully exploited to inform neither education providers about which programmes to deliver, nor adult learners about which courses to invest in (OECD, 2020^[19]). This lack of data openness is further highlighted by Figure 4.5, which reports openness rate in three skills related areas in Thailand

and selected countries. Thailand preforms below both ASEAN and OECD averages in all fields, indicating room to improve access to information.

Figure 4.5. Skills data openness rates in Thailand and selected countries, 2022

Openness rates regarding education facilities, education outcomes, and labour



Note: Openness scores measure the extent to which a country's data can be downloaded in machine-readable and non-proprietary formats, are accompanied by metadata and whether download options exist such as bulk download and user-selection or APIs, and have an open terms of use or data license. Scores are based on data published on the national statistics office's (NSO) website or any other official country website that is linked from the NSO website.

Source: Open Data Watch (2022^[17]), Open Data Inventory, <https://odin.opendatawatch.com/?aspxerrorpath=/Report/glanceReport>.

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In addition to making data available, Thailand offers career guidance services to support students and job seekers in accessing tailored information on career paths, educational opportunities, and required skills. However, a 2022 UNICEF report highlights several systemic challenges that undermine the effectiveness of these services. These include weak co-ordination between the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education, limited collaboration among key stakeholders, and a tendency for organisations to operate in silos. The limited available mechanisms for joint planning, information sharing, or resource mobilisation, contributes to inefficiencies and limits the potential to improve both the quality and reach of guidance services. Furthermore, inadequate funding remains a critical constraint (UNICEF, 2022^[20]).

Opportunities to strengthen the governance of the Thai skills system

Thailand's performance in strengthening the governance of its skills system is influenced by a range of factors at the individual, institutional and societal level. Drawing on findings from a literature review, desk research, a policy questionnaire distributed to Thai policymakers, and in-depth virtual consultations with stakeholders, the following opportunities for improvement have been identified for strengthening the governance of Thailand's skills system:

1. Enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy.
2. Fostering a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making.
3. Strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy making.
4. Improving skills information systems.

Opportunity 1: Enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy

Strategic capacity, in the context of this chapter, refers to a country's ability to set high-level goals and priorities for its skills system, and translate them into effective actions to achieve maximum impact.

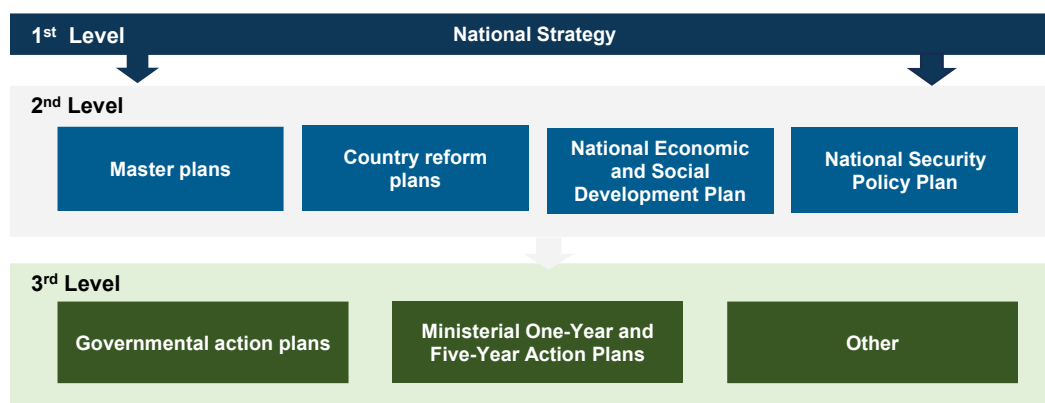
In Thailand, the main document that provides strategic direction for policy – both in the area of skills and more broadly – is the National Strategy 2018-2037 (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017^[6]). This strategy is developed by the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) under the Office of the Prime Minister, and it serves as a high-level framework guiding national policies across various domains, including national security, the economy, health, society, and the environment. This strategy emphasises human capital development, highlighting the importance of skills on Thailand’s policy agenda.

To support the implementation of the National Strategy 2018-2037, Thailand has established second-level plans, such as the Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[7]). This plan provides a detailed analysis of Thailand’s economic and social conditions, setting specific objectives, targets, and milestones. Notably, it prioritises the development of human capital for the new global era, aiming to create a highly capable workforce committed to lifelong learning and adaptability.

Ministerial level plans, considered ‘third-level plans’, are required to align with the overarching goals set in the National Strategy 2018-2037 and the second-level plans. For instance, the Higher Education Plan for Thailand’s Manpower Production and Development (2021-2027) (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2022^[21]) outlines a comprehensive strategy for enhancing human capital and lifelong learning, including pathways for improving education, higher education, vocational education and training (VET), and opportunities for re-skilling and upskilling.

This strategic, high-level three-tiered approach guides policy and aligns objectives across ministries. Skills policy is overseen by multiple ministries and agencies, making a comprehensive approach particularly important for its development and implementation. Figure 4.6 presents the structure of skills strategies in Thailand.

Figure 4.6 The structure of Thailand’s strategic framework



Source: NESDC (2023^[7]), The Thirteenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027), www.nesdc.go.th/article_attach/article_file_20230615134223.pdf.

This opportunity assesses Thailand’s current strategic framework and draws on insights from international best practices to assess how Thailand could further strengthen its strategic capacity for effectively designing and implementing skills policy. A recent OECD cross-country report (OECD, 2024^[22]) has compiled key lessons from a decade of developing and implementing skills strategies in EU member states, identifying nine best practices for countries in this area (see Box 4.1). While the lessons were developed from the experiences of EU member states, they offer practical, evidence-based guidance on addressing challenges that are also relevant to Thailand, such as ensuring coherence across policies, fostering stakeholder collaboration, and building a strong evidence base for decision-making. Rather than applying all nine lessons equally, the analysis focuses on those most pertinent to Thailand’s specific challenges and opportunities, ensuring that the scope remains targeted and actionable.

Box 4.1. Summary of lessons learnt from developing and implementing skills strategies across the European Union

The report “Insights from Skills Strategies in the European Union: Lessons Learnt for Developing and Implementing Effective Skills Policies”, identifies nine lessons that capture the essential characteristics of successful skills strategies in both their development and implementation (see Table 4.2). These lessons emerged from extensive research, including desktop research, insights from a questionnaire, consultations with government officials and other stakeholders, as well as interviews to examine selected case studies.

Table 4.2. Overview lessons learnt

Lesson	Short description
1. Establish a clear objective for the strategy	The content and form of skills strategies can vary significantly depending on their objectives, ranging from high-level documents that informally guide policy to detailed strategies with implementation plans that more directly influence policy. Clearly defining strategic and operational objectives from the outset helps determine the appropriate content and form, facilitating a smoother and more efficient development and implementation process. Consequently, clear objectives for skills strategies allow countries to develop and implement necessary skills reforms more effectively.
2. Find the right window of opportunity to develop a strategy	Timing is crucial for a skills strategy's success since changes in government and policy priorities can affect the implementation and longevity of a strategy. Initiating development early in an electoral term or in anticipation of a new administration can help to facilitate alignment with government priorities and successful implementation. Countries should also consider significant events and financing opportunities that can support skills policy reform.
3. Align the strategy with other key government strategies	Skills strategies often build upon previous efforts, and it is crucial for new strategies to capitalise on past achievements and tackle persistent challenges left unaddressed. To this end, countries should carry out ex post evaluations to assess the impact, as well as effectiveness and efficiency, of skills strategies. Skills strategies also often coexist with other related strategies and initiatives at the national and EU levels. Countries should establish clear linkages between these strategies to avoid conflicts or overlaps in policy proposals.
4. Build the strategy on a strong base of evidence	An evidence-based assessment of the skills system is crucial for identifying the scope of the skills strategy, as it helps pinpoint key issues amid limited resources. This assessment should analyse current skills, labour market mismatches, governance effectiveness, and broader economic, social, and environmental conditions to develop robust skills systems.
5. Find a champion or champions who can secure a mandate and long-term support for the strategy	Finding a high-level champion or champions for the skills strategy, from within or outside the government, is crucial for its development and implementation. Champions secure a mandate, raise the strategy's profile and engage senior officials and stakeholders, ensuring long-term support and momentum by involving ministers, deputies and key external stakeholders.
6. Adopt a whole-of-government approach for the strategy	Skills policy encompasses various policy domains, including education, employment and other policy areas. Consequently, responsibilities are often distributed across multiple ministries and levels of government. Building effective skills strategies necessitates a whole-of-government approach, fostering co-ordination among various ministries and levels of government. Countries should establish mechanisms for collaboration at the national, regional and local levels.
7. Engage with stakeholders to benefit from their knowledge and build commitment	Stakeholders, including social partners, education and training providers, learners, and community sector organisations, can offer practical insights into skills challenges, serve as key champions for strategies, and act as crucial partners in implementing skills policies. By adopting mechanisms to engage these stakeholders, countries can leverage their knowledge and insights, enhancing the strategy's social legitimacy and fostering greater commitment to its success.
8. Adopt an implementation approach that advances the strategy's objectives	The implementation approach for skills strategies depends on countries' objectives and policy traditions. Generally, formal implementation plans are developed when the objective is to directly influence policy through comprehensive or targeted reforms. In contrast, high-level reports highlighting skills challenges and opportunities are developed when the objective is to indirectly influence policy by raising awareness of skills issues and building commitment to collective action.
9. Monitor and evaluate the implementation to ensure its effectiveness	To maximise impact and inform policy making effectively, rigorous monitoring and evaluation are crucial throughout implementation. Without accountability, an implementation plan risks missing its goals and losing stakeholder support. Mechanisms like steering groups, regular reporting and tailored key performance indicators enhance monitoring efforts.

Figure 4.7 presents the alignment of the lessons with the identified recommendations for strengthening Thailand's strategic capacity.

Figure 4.7. Key lessons learnt from developing and implementing skills strategies across the European Union and relevance for recommendations on enhancing the strategic capacity policy

Recommendation 1: Develop a skills strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy

- 1 Establish a clear objective for the strategy 
- 2 Find the right window of opportunity to develop a strategy 
- 3 Align the strategy with other key government strategies 
- 4 Build the strategy on a strong base of evidence 
- 6 Adopt a whole-of-government approach for the strategy 
- 7 Engage with stakeholders to benefit from their knowledge and build commitment 

Recommendation 2: Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies

- 5 Find a champion or champions who can secure a mandate and long-term support for the strategy 
- 8 Adopt an implementation approach that advances the objectives of the strategy 
- 9 Monitor and evaluate the implementation to ensure its effectiveness 

Note: Lesson number 2 is not used in the context of this report and is therefore marked in grey.

Source: OECD, (2024^[22]), *Insights from Skills Strategies in the European Union: Lessons Learnt for Developing and Implementing Effective Skills Policies*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/0bf9e78e-en>.

Two recommendations are proposed for enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy: (1) Strengthening the coherence of skills policy through skills strategy development, and (2) Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies.

Recommendation 1: Designing a national strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy building on the OECD Skills Strategy for Thailand

Thailand's approach to the development of national strategies for skills policies is characterised by several notable strengths. First, it employs hierarchical three-tier structure (see Figure 4.6) ensuring that overarching priorities outlined in the first- and second-level strategies (National Strategy and the National Economic and Social Development Plan) effectively guide "third level" ministerial-level strategies and plans. Such third-level plans include multiple skills-related strategies such as the Higher Education Plan for Thailand's Manpower Production and Development (2021-2027), the Vocational Education and Training Strategy, the National Skills Development Plan, and the National Plan for Education.

Second, the development of first- and second-level strategies, led by the NESDB under the Office of the Prime Minister, is grounded in data analysis and evidence, ensuring they address key national challenges

across a wide range of policy topics. To achieve this, the NESDB consults with experts from various fields and engages high-level officials across ministries, establishing co-ordination mechanisms between itself, relevant agencies, and state enterprises. This evidence-based and consultative approach reflects international good practices in strategy development.

Finally, in many instances, the creation of strategies or plans is mandated by government acts, ensuring accountability for their development. Oversight bodies, composed of representatives from relevant institutions are assigned responsibility for leading this process. For example, the Office of the Education Council, which includes representatives from key ministries such as Education, Labour, and Interior, as well as representatives from civil society and academia (see Opportunity 2), is tasked with developing and updating the National Scheme for Education under the mandate of the National Education Act (Office of the Prime Minister, 1999^[23]). This inclusive structure, involving various ministries and stakeholders within the Education Council, supports coherence by aligning sectoral strategies with broader national objectives and strategies.

Addressing fragmentation, overlaps, and gaps in skills strategies

While Thailand's strategic framework helps align high-level national priorities with sector-specific and ministerial objectives, further efforts are needed to enhance coherence across strategies. A key challenge is the varying scope and objectives of existing strategies, which can lead to misalignment and inefficiencies.

First, the fragmentation of strategies can lead to overlapping priorities. For instance, the Higher Education Plan of the Ministry of Higher Education and the Vocational Education and Training Strategy of the Ministry of Education both address a wide range of topics related to skills development. Despite their distinct focuses, they cover similar topics, such as pathways for improving VET programmes, which can result in duplicated efforts or inconsistent initiatives, reducing the efficiency of policy implementation.

Second, gaps across strategies presents a risk of policy gaps in areas not explicitly addressed by any single document. For instance, lifelong learning is not directly addressed in existing strategic documents, limiting a comprehensive approach to workforce upskilling and reskilling.

Third, the absence of a unified framework establishing common strategic goals, aligning objectives, and co-ordinating efforts, can lead to conflicting priorities. Ministries often develop their strategies independently, making it challenging to address cross-cutting issues – such as lifelong learning – cohesively and comprehensively. This lack of alignment can result in inefficiencies and a misallocation of resources.

Additionally, there is insufficient collaboration ensure alignment between existing strategies. Ministries may align their strategies with high-level documents like the National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP), but there is often limited stakeholder involvement in developing ministerial-level plans and insufficient co-ordination across strategies during their development. This challenge is further compounded by the lack of explicitly assigned roles and responsibilities in the NESDP itself. For instance, while the plan outlines broad goals for workforce development and lifelong learning, it does not clearly designate which ministries or agencies are accountable for co-ordinating efforts to achieve these objectives. As a result, overlapping initiatives, inefficiencies, or overlooked priorities can emerge. Addressing these issues requires stronger co-ordination mechanisms and consistency in strategic planning across the government.

Enhancing co-ordination and stakeholder engagement

Thailand could adopt a more integrated approach to developing its skills-relevant strategies to strengthen coherence and reduce overlaps and gaps. One option is to create a unified national skills strategy, collaboratively developed by all relevant actors. This approach has been successfully implemented by several countries, including Bulgaria, Ireland and Lithuania, where a single strategy has helped to

streamline efforts and ensure alignment across all policy domains (OECD, 2024^[22]). Such strategies typically have broad scope, covering many levels of education for youth to adults, as well as guidance and transition policies for learners and workers. They also address the utilisation of skills in the labour market through the adoption of higher performance workplace practices.

The recommendations presented in this OECD Skills Strategy Assessment and Recommendations Report for Thailand could serve as a key reference in shaping the country's skills strategy. Several countries, including Poland, Northern Ireland (OECD, 2024^[22]), and Latvia (see Box 4.3), have successfully developed national skills strategies based on comprehensive OECD assessments and recommendations. This approach ensures that policy frameworks are both informed by international best practices and adapted to national priorities, enhancing their relevance and effectiveness.

Alternatively, Thailand could maintain distinct strategies for different ministries while strengthening alignment between them. Greece, for example, has developed two distinct but closely co-ordinated skills strategies, each addressing different aspects of skills policy. One strategy focuses on formal education under the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports, while the other addresses non-formal education and training for the labour force, overseen by the public employment service under the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. These strategies are aligned through governance bodies that ensure coherence, with overlapping membership and mutual input on each strategy (see Box 4.2). Whether through a unified or multi-strategy approach, ensuring alignment with additional policy efforts in related domains such as the digital and green transitions will remain crucial.

Regardless of the structure of the strategy chosen, it is essential to foster a collaborative approach to strategy development. This requires engaging officials across ministries and levels of government (see Lesson 6 in Box 4.1) and ensuring the active involvement of stakeholders such as employers, training providers, and civil society organisations (see Lesson 7). Early involvement of these key actors helps ensure strategies are well-targeted, consider implementation mechanisms from the outset, and build long-term stakeholder commitment. For example, local-level KPI targets or strategic actions may necessitate the participation of sub-national governments to ensure alignment with local needs and priorities.

Thailand can leverage existing bodies, such as the Skills Development Promotion Committee and the Education Council, or establish new co-ordination groups to support strategy development and alignment (see Opportunities 2 and 3). While this collaborative process may require additional time and resources, it aligns with international best practices and supports the creation of impactful, sustainable outcomes. Germany's Continuing Education Strategy provides a valuable example of this approach, as it demonstrates how early and inclusive collaboration among government, industry, and social partners within a designated working group can create a cohesive strategy that addresses workforce needs and fosters stakeholder commitment (see Box 4.2).

Additionally, Thailand's skills strategies should have a clearly stated objectives and mandates see (Lesson 1 in Box 4.1) and should outline the broad assignment of roles and responsibilities at the strategic level. Clearly defining mandates can reduce duplication, address gaps, and provide clarity for future implementation planning. Thailand should also leverage the existing practice of ensuring that strategies are backed by legislation or government acts. Such mandates clarify the strategy's role, the actors involved, and their responsibilities, and they provide resources and administrative capacity to ensure the strategy's success. This approach also ensures the long-term sustainability and accountability of strategies, particularly through provisions for development, oversight, and monitoring.

Strengthening evidence-based decision-making

A robust evidence base is critical for identifying priorities and designing effective policies (see Lesson 4 in Box 4.1). A skills strategy should be grounded on quantitative data on skills outcomes, shortages,

mismatches, and labour market trends, complemented by qualitative insights from experts and stakeholders.

A thorough assessment of the skills system not only informs the strategy development but also builds broad support by presenting an impartial view of its strengths and challenges. This is particularly important in Thailand, where the prioritisation of challenges can be complex due to competing interests among ministries and stakeholders. Basing skills priorities on evidence facilitates consensus and enables the development of effective policy actions. Greece's Labour Market Information tool, which supports the annual update of the Strategy for Labour Force Upskilling and Connection to the Labour Market, provides an example of using comprehensive evidence as a base to the development of a skills strategy. By providing a clear picture of the labour market, Greece could identify key challenges and opportunities for improving skills development. Opportunity 4 explores this approach in greater detail, focusing on the use of data for informing skills policy decisions.

Box 4.2. Relevant international example: Designing a national strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy building on the OECD Skills Strategy for Thailand

Germany

Building on Germany's strong tradition of inter-ministerial collaboration, the "National Continuing Education Strategy" (2019) and its follow-up "Continuation and Further Development: National Continuing Education Strategy" (2022) were developed through a joint initiative led by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy also contributed significantly, though it did not take a leading role.

The strategy involved 17 official partners across Federal, Länder, and Local levels, including the Federal Employment Agency and other key stakeholders. The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) supported the process by assisting the ministries and organising working group meetings. Effective power-sharing agreements at state and ministerial levels were essential, recognising that the broad scope of skills policy required collaboration among multiple governmental bodies. Co-ordination was ensured through clear guidelines, including consistent communication, regular meetings, and continuous information exchange.

Greece

Greece employs a unique approach skills strategy development with two distinct but interrelated strategies. The "Strategic Plan for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Youth 2022-2024," led by the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports, targets vocational education and training (VET) for students and adult learners within the formal education system. In parallel, the "Strategy for Labour Force Upskilling and Connection to the Labour Market," managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, focuses on non-formal adult education, training, and informal learning aligned with labour market demands.

This dual-strategy approach was deemed more feasible and effective than a single strategy within the Greek context. To ensure coherence, two governance bodies play crucial roles: the National Skills Council oversees the labour market upskilling strategy, while the Central Council for Vocational Education and Training manages the vocational education plan. Shared membership across these councils facilitates inter-ministerial dialogue, ensuring strategic alignment and co-ordination. Additionally, a working committee meets monthly with social partners to discuss issues and maintain co-operation between the ministries and DYPA.

Additionally, Greece offers an example of building a skills strategy on a robust evidence base. The Strategy for Labour Force Upskilling and Connection to the Labour Market is updated annually to reflect evolving labour market needs. These updates are informed by an advanced online labour market information (LMI) tool, which records and analyses labour market trends, forecasts future skills demand, and monitors changes in occupations and technology. The tool serves a diverse range of users, including DYPA, the National Workforce Skills Council, public bodies, researchers, workers, and the unemployed. It tracks job trends across occupations, education levels, genders, age groups, and employment statuses at both regional and national levels. Additionally, the tool conducts surveys and research to identify mismatches between skills supply and demand. The resulting data is compiled into reports that guide the annual updates of the strategy, ensuring its continued relevance and responsiveness to labour market dynamics.

Source: OECD, (2021^[10]), *OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Korea: Strengthening the Governance of Adult Learning*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f19a4560-en>.

Recommendation 1: Designing a national strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy building on the OECD Skills Strategy for Thailand

Designing a national strategic document to strengthen the coherence of skills policy is important for Thailand to address various challenges. The fragmentation of skills policy guidance across multiple strategic documents, risks resulting in gaps, overlaps, and conflicting objectives. Furthermore, there is a lack of clearly assigned roles and responsibilities to ensure strategic objectives can then be implemented in practice. To address these issues, Thailand should therefore take measures to strengthen the coherence of strategic of skills policy development as well as build support and commitment from all relevant government ministries, agencies, and stakeholders from the outset of the development process.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to design a national strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy building on the OECD Skills Strategy for Thailand:

- 1.1. **Adopt a more integrated approach to skills policy by either developing a single national skills strategy or strengthening the alignment of existing strategies.** Thailand could strengthen its skills strategy by adopting a cohesive approach that fosters collaboration among all relevant actors. One option is to create a single national skills strategy, collaboratively developed by all relevant government ministries and agencies, as well as stakeholders, which would address a broad range of skills policy challenges. Alternatively, Thailand could retain its decentralised approach but strengthen alignment across related strategies. Engaging officials across ministries, sub-national governments, employers, training providers, and civil society organisations early in the development process ensures that strategies are well-targeted, align with implementation mechanisms, and foster long-term stakeholder commitment. Existing structures such as the Skills Development Promotion Committee and the Education Council can support this collaborative process, which is essential for creating strategies that are inclusive, comprehensive, and sustainable.

- 1.2. Establish a formal mandate for the national skills strategy with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.** To ensure alignment and accountability, Thailand's skills strategy should include a formalised mandate that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of ministries and agencies at the strategic level. By assigning responsibilities broadly, the strategy can reduce duplication, address gaps, and provide clarity for implementation planning. Backing the strategy with legislation or government acts strengthens its legitimacy and ensures adequate resources and administrative capacity for its success. A clear mandate also supports long-term sustainability by defining the strategy's objectives, providing provisions for oversight and monitoring, and enabling ministries and agencies to work toward shared goals with well-defined accountability.
- 1.3. Ground the strategy in robust evidence and analysis.** A skills strategy grounded in robust evidence is critical for identifying priorities and designing effective policies. Quantitative data on skills outcomes, shortages, mismatches, and labour market trends, alongside qualitative input from experts and stakeholders, provides a comprehensive understanding of the skills system's strengths and gaps. In Thailand, this approach is particularly important for addressing competing interests among ministries and stakeholders, helping to build consensus and ensuring the strategy focuses on the most pressing challenges. Evidence-based planning also aligns national objectives with local needs, ensures strategies are responsive to changing workforce demands, and generates broad support through impartial and transparent assessments.

Recommendation 2: Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies

Despite the existence of multiple high-level strategies outlining ambitious goals across a broad range of skills policy areas, a significant gap remains between these strategic goals and the actual skills outcomes attained in Thailand (as described in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3). While these strategies demonstrate strategic planning, their implementation is often hindered by bureaucratic complexities and budgetary constraints, as noted by consulted Thai officials. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening Thailand's capacity to translate strategic goals into tangible results. Drawing on international best practices for successful strategy implementation (see Box 4.1) can enhance the effectiveness of these strategies and help ensure they deliver their intended impact.

Enhancing implementation through structured planning and monitoring

Identifying and securing champions, particularly among high-level officials, can help to raise awareness, sustain momentum, and drive implementation forward (see Lesson 5 in Box 4.1). By actively promoting the strategy's importance and aligning it with the interests of various actors, these champions can help build consensus and ensure that all relevant stakeholders are committed to its long-term success. Such efforts can create greater clarity, with all actors understanding their roles and motivated to contribute to the strategy's objectives.

A structured approach to implementation is also critical (see Lesson 8 in Box 4.1). Countries can enhance execution by developing formal implementation plans that outline detailed action steps, clearly defined responsibilities, allocated resources, and specify timelines for executing the strategy. These actions plans can be integrated within the main strategic documents or exist as separate, complementary documents. Furthermore, actions plans help to ensure alignment across different levels of government, which is especially important given Thailand's fragmented structure of strategies, with overlapping and sometimes complementary topics (see Recommendation 1). Latvia provides a useful example, having developed short-term implementation plans that complement its main strategy and detail specific actions with assigned roles and responsibilities, along with key performance indicators (KPIs) (see Box 4.3).

Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential to track progress and maintain the impact of these strategies. Tailored to Thailand's specific context, these mechanisms should employ a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, such as KPIs, benchmarks, surveys, and case studies. Regular reporting requirements can further support ongoing assessment, enabling timely adjustments to enhance strategy effectiveness. Bulgaria, for example developed a dedicated monitoring and reporting framework for its Action Plan for Skills (see Box 4.3), including indicators, responsibilities and governance mechanisms. In this context, oversight and co-ordination bodies, such as the NESDB and Skills Development Promotion Committee, could play an important role in reviewing progress of the implementation and holding implementing authorities accountable (see Opportunity 2).

Ensuring flexibility and adequate resourcing for long-term impact

An effective implementation and monitoring system should also allow for flexibility, enabling strategies to adapt to evolving skills needs, driven by trends such as the digital and green transitions, and shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Maintaining flexibility helps ensure strategies remain relevant to changing conditions on the ground that may not have been fully considered during the strategy's development, while still aligning with national objectives. This could entail periodic adjustments to the strategy and its action plan to address as demonstrated in the example of Latvia (see Box 4.3). Some countries, such as Greece (see Recommendation 1), adopt strategies with shorter lifespans to facilitate regular updates and ensure alignment with evolving priorities.

Finally, sufficient resources – human, financial, and institutional – must be allocated to support both implementation and monitoring and evaluation efforts. This will ensure that Thailand's strategies are not only well-designed but also effectively implemented, allowing for sustained impact and adaptability in response to changing needs.

Box 4.3. Relevant international examples: Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies

Bulgaria

Bulgaria's Action Plan for Skills highlights the importance of monitoring and evaluation in strategy implementation. Supported by the European Commission's Technical Support Instrument, Bulgaria developed the Action Plan for Skills, building on the findings and policy recommendations of the 2023 OECD Skills Strategy. The plan details measures and activities for each priority area, assigns responsible entities, sets timelines (short-term [under two years], medium-term [two to four years], and long-term [four to six years]), and identifies potential funding sources. This approach aimed to turn OECD recommendations into practical steps for efficient implementation.

A key component of this plan is a monitoring and reporting framework that includes indicators, assigned responsibilities, and governance mechanisms. Capacity-building workshops were held to prepare Bulgarian authorities for independent implementation after the project's completion.

Latvia

Latvia's Education Development Guidelines (EDG) 2021-2027, demonstrate effective implementation through structured action plans. In the EDG, a clear distinction is made between the overarching goals set for the Latvian education and skills system and the detailed implementation plans. The Guidelines from the EDG span a period of six years (2021-2027), whereas the implementation plans have shorter lifespans. Currently, Latvia has separate implementation plans for 2021-2023, 2023-2025, and

2026-2027, which distinguishes it from other strategic documents that generally have only two implementation phases.

As part of the update process, Latvia integrates opinions and recommendations derived from mandatory national framework reporting, alongside EU data, to inform decision-making. The State Chancellery oversees the monitoring of implementation and is responsible for authoring these reports, which contributes to the coherence of Latvia's policy documents.

Philippines

The National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (NTESDP) 2023-2028, developed by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), serves as a comprehensive roadmap to empower the Filipino workforce with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in a rapidly evolving global economy.

The TESDA was mandated to develop such a strategy under Republic Act No. 7796 and has received strong endorsements from high-level officials. TESDA's secretary general, Suharto Mangudadatu, was instrumental in championing the NTESDP, as well as in ensuring alignment with broader national visions and plans such as the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) and the Philippine Labor and Employment Plan. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has also expressed public support for the NTESDP, thereby helping foster broad support among relevant stakeholders.

Source: OECD, (2021^[10]), OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Korea: Strengthening the Governance of Adult Learning, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f19a4560-en>; TESDA (2025^[24]), National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (NTESDP), www.tesda.gov.ph/About/TESDA/47; TESDA (2023^[25]), National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (NTESDP) 2023-2028, www.tesdacalabarzon.com.ph/node/147#:~:text=The%20National%20Technical%20Education%20and%20Skills%20Development%20Plan,to%20provide%20Filipinos%20with%20smart%20and%20innovative%20skills.

Recommendation 2: Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies

Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies is important for Thailand to achieve its ambitious goals, aligning the implementation with lessons from international best practices. This recommendation highlights the importance of securing a champion that can advocate and raise awareness of the strategy, establishing strong implementation practices, and developing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to ensure effective implementation of existing strategies, in line with international best practices:

2.1. Secure a champion(s) that can promote broad awareness and support for the strategy(s).

To ensure the successful implementation of Thailand's strategic goals, it is essential to foster broad awareness and support across all levels of government and among key stakeholders in the skills system. This involves securing champions, such as senior officials within key ministries, such as the Ministers of Education or Labour, or influential figures in key bodies or agencies, like the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC). These champions can advocate for the strategy, raise awareness, and drive its objectives forward. By actively promoting the strategy's importance and aligning it with the interests of various actors, these champions can help build consensus and ensure that all relevant stakeholders are

committed to its long-term success. They can also secure the strategy's mandate and support legislative or structural changes needed to implement the strategy.

2.2. Establish strong implementation practices that ensure effective achievement of strategic goals. Effective implementation practices are crucial for translating Thailand's strategic framework into tangible outcomes, which would entail the development of formal action plans that clearly outline responsibilities, allocate resources, and timelines for implementing actions. This would help to ensure that the efforts of different governmental bodies are aligned, which is especially important for Thailand because of the complexity, overlap and fragmentation of strategic documents. It is also essential to ensure flexible and responsive management of the strategy, ensuring that it remains aligned with both national objectives and on-the-ground realities.

2.3. Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the strategy's implementation. Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is crucial for ensuring the successful implementation of Thailand's skills strategies. These mechanisms should combine quantitative and qualitative tools, such as KPIs, benchmarks, surveys, and case studies, to track progress and allow for timely adjustments. Oversight bodies like the NESDB and the Skills Development Promotion Committee could play a pivotal role in reviewing progress, holding implementing authorities accountable, and ensuring alignment with national objectives. To maintain relevance in the face of evolving skills needs, strategies should incorporate flexibility through periodic reviews and adjustments, as seen in countries like Latvia and Greece. Additionally, sufficient resources – human, financial, and institutional – must be allocated to support these processes, ensuring strategies are not only effectively monitored but also adaptable to changing conditions.

Opportunity 2: Fostering a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making

As outlined in the overview section of this chapter, responsibilities for skills policies in Thailand are shared across multiple ministries, agencies, and sub-national authorities. While collaboration across governmental entities is important when developing and aligning strategic priorities, as is described in the previous opportunity, establishing mechanisms to facilitate ongoing collaboration and co-ordination among these entities is crucial to ensure the long-term responsiveness and effectiveness of the country's skills system. This opportunity explores the current mechanisms for fostering a whole-of-government collaboration on skills policy in Thailand as well as potential actions towards enhanced co-ordination and collaboration.

Two recommendations are proposed for fostering a whole of government approach to skills policies: (1) strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination among government ministries and agencies, and (2) strengthening vertical collaboration and co-ordination across the national, provincial, and local levels.

Recommendation 3: Strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination among government ministries and agencies

Thailand has established several inter-ministerial and inter-agency bodies to enhance horizontal co-ordination and collaboration on skills policies, summarised in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Key bodies in Thailand that promote inter-ministerial co-ordination and collaboration on skills policies

Body	Role	Participating Ministries and Stakeholders
The Education Council	Develops and implements educational policies and standards to enhance human resource development, improve education quality, and promote equal opportunities; supports policy research, monitors and evaluates educational management, and develops evaluation systems for education and workforce development; manages legal work related to education; and fosters collaboration to advance skills development.	The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security; the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society; the Ministry of Interior; the Ministry of Labour; the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation; the Ministry of Education; the Office of the Council of State; local administrative organisations (LAOs); professional organisations; religious groups; and academics
The Board of Directors of the Equitable Education Fund	Manages the Equitable Education fund, designed to provide financial support to disadvantaged children and youth.	The Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Interior; the Office of the Prime Minister; the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security; civil society organisation representatives; and private sector representatives
The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Committee	Oversees the implementation of the new NQF, ensuring that quality standards are maintained across occupations and training programmes. Works to align these standards with the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and develops systems for recognising learning achievements and accumulating credits.	The Ministry of Labour; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Commerce; the Ministry of Tourism and Sports; the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives; the Ministry of Transport; the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society; the Ministry of Public Health; the Office of the Prime Minister; the Federation of Thai Industries; the Thai Chamber of Commerce; Tourism Council of Thailand.
The Skills Development Promotion Committee	Develops and implements skills policies, provides policy advice to ministers, sets and enforces standards for skills development programmes and standardised testing, raises awareness of standards among employers, and promotes the establishment of training centres.	The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Industrial; the Budget Bureau, the Board of Investment, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Industrial Federation of Thailand, the Thai Bankers Association, the Travel Industry Council of Thailand; and four experts appointed by the prime minister

Source: Ministry of Labour, (2014^[26]), the Skills Development Promotion Act B.E. 2545 (A.D. 2002), www.mol.go.th/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/02/311en.pdf

The bodies presented above play a crucial role in aligning high-level goals, increasing transparency among governmental institutions, identifying gaps and overlaps in policies, and providing a strong foundation for collaboration on specific issues. They also offer critical advice to high-ranking officials on policy decisions or organisational reforms and serve as consultative platforms in the development of policies and strategic documents.

Ensuring clear mandates for effective co-ordination

The mandates, goals, scope of topics, and levels of representation of these collaborative bodies vary significantly. For instance, the Education Council is a body with a broad mandate and diverse representation, comprising 41 members, including representatives from six ministries, the Office of the Council of State, and several non-governmental organisations such as local administrative organisations (LAOs), professional organisations, religious groups, and academics. This Council is tasked with developing and implementing educational policies, as well as fostering collaboration to advance education and human resource development. In contrast, other bodies have more narrowly defined mandates. The Board of Directors of the Equitable Education Fund, for instance, focuses specifically on managing the fund designed to provide financial support to disadvantaged children and youth. This body includes representatives from various ministries, government agencies, civil society, and the private sector, reflecting its more targeted scope compared to the broader mandate of the Education Council.

Another notable collaborative body is the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Committee. The Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the new NQF, ensuring that quality

standards are maintained across occupations and training programmes. It also works to align these standards with the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and develops systems for recognising learning achievements and accumulating credits. The Committee's membership includes policymakers, public and private sector representatives, and experts, with the Secretary-General of the Education Council serving both as a member and as the secretary. To fulfill its responsibilities, the Committee may establish subcommittees and working groups as necessary. Although the NQF Committee has a broader scope compared to the Board of the Equitable Education Fund, it operates with a clearly defined mandate that focuses on specific policy topics and levers, ensuring a structured and targeted approach to its work.

The Skills Development Promotion Committee also stands out as a key co-ordination body. This Committee includes representatives from relevant ministries, the Board of Investment, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Industrial Federation of Thailand, the Thai Bankers Association, and the Travel Industry Council of Thailand. Additionally, four members appointed by the prime minister (two experts and two representatives of employers and employees) contribute their expertise. Chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the committee was established under the 2002 Skills Development Promotion Act. It is tasked with developing and implementing skills policies, providing policy advice to ministers, setting and enforcing standards for skills development programmes and standardised testing, raising awareness of standards among employers, and promoting the establishment of training centres. The committee can also form sub-committees as needed (Ministry of Labour, 2014^[26]).

Establishing a dedicated mechanism for inter-ministerial co-ordination

All these co-ordination bodies in Thailand include both governmental representatives and non-governmental stakeholders. While this inclusive approach offers many benefits, Thailand could consider establishing a dedicated mechanism for inter-ministerial co-ordination that operates independently of non-governmental participation. Such a mechanism would provide government actors with a focused platform to discuss policy matters openly and candidly, fostering constructive dialogue and consensus-building on key issues. By facilitating direct discussions among ministries and agencies, this mechanism could strengthen a whole-of-government approach to skills policies, ensuring greater alignment of government efforts and a more coherent and effective policy framework.

This mechanism for inter-ministerial co-ordination could take the form of a dedicated body that would bring together representatives from various ministries and agencies, including both senior management and operational-level staff, to discuss and align overarching goals, formulate a unified strategic approach to addressing key skills challenges, and identify areas for improvement or potential synergies. This body would focus on co-ordinating efforts across ministries and agencies, driving institutional changes where necessary or initiating new measures when critical gaps are identified. As mentioned in Opportunity 1, such a body could also be tasked with developing and overseeing implementation of a national skills strategy. The High-Level Skills Implementation Group (HLSIG) in Ireland (see Box 4.4) is a strong example of effective inter-ministerial co-ordination. It provides a streamlined platform for government actors to align skills policy priorities, enabling candid discussions and co-ordinated decision-making.

Strengthening mandates, membership, and informal collaboration

In establishing a new co-ordination body, Thailand can draw on international good practices (OECD, 2024^[27]) to help ensure its long-term success. These practices can also inform the improvement of existing bodies where needed, to support their effectiveness.

First, a clear mandate and well-defined roles are essential for co-ordination bodies to function effectively. Collaborative efforts are more likely to yield meaningful results when objectives and responsibilities are explicitly articulated and supported by an official mandate. In Thailand, bureaucratic complexities and misalignments between ministries – often stemming from overlapping or unclear missions and

responsibilities – frequently hinder co-ordination, making clarity in mandates particularly important. For instance, bodies with broad responsibilities such as the Education Council play a valuable role in gathering insights, sharing information, and aligning objectives across stakeholders. However, their wide-ranging responsibilities and lack of specificity can make it challenging to translate objectives into concrete outcomes. In contrast, more narrowly focused entities, such as the NQF Committee, operate under more clearly defined mandates with specific decision-making powers, enabling them to achieve tangible results within their defined areas of expertise. This comparison highlights the importance of equipping all co-ordination bodies, regardless of their scope, with clear mandates and specific goals. A well-structured mandate strengthens collaboration, enhances accountability, and increases the likelihood of translating policy objectives into meaningful action.

While many councils and committees in Thailand derive their mandates from government acts, as noted in Opportunity 1, the level of specificity in the mandates varies. In some cases, the legal framework establishes the existence of a body and its broad purpose but does not clearly articulate its operational goals or mechanisms for achieving them. This lack of detail can lead to overlapping responsibilities, gaps in co-ordination, or limited impact. By refining its approach to defining mandates through legislation, Thailand could ensure that each body has explicitly detailed roles, objectives, and decision-making authority. Strengthening these mandates would help shift co-ordination efforts beyond discussion and information-sharing, enabling bodies to drive meaningful and sustained policy outcomes.

Second, it is important to curate the appropriate membership for the body's purpose. Involving high-ranking officials in governance bodies is essential for securing support and driving internal changes within their organisations. However, it is equally important to include technical-level experts who can continuously implement decisions, drive outcomes, and provide valuable insights from the operational level (see the Labour Market Advisory Council in Ireland, Box 4.4). In Ireland's LMAC, for instance, formal sub-groups (with more technical-level officials and experts) convene more frequently than the main council to allow continued discussion. Beyond seniority, the success of a co-ordination body hinges on assigning personnel with strong expertise and excellent co-operation skills. Moreover, effective facilitation of discussions and robust secretariat support are crucial, requiring highly skilled professionals capable of managing conflicting views while steering the group toward tangible results.

Third, collaborative bodies need adequate and targeted funding to function effectively. Allocating sufficient time for members to participate and fostering relationships that build trust between institutions are also important, as these relationships often take time to develop.

Last, when multiple collaborative bodies exist to address different sub-topics within the broader skills domain (e.g. one addressing academic education and another focused on vocational training), strong communication mechanisms are essential to ensure coherence and promote synergies. For example, in Ireland, co-ordination is maintained through regular high-level meetings – typically held every two to three months – between the departments that oversee the High-Level Skills Implementation Group (HLSIG) and other key bodies. These meetings allow for alignment of strategies and decision-making across related initiatives (see Box 4.4). Overlapping representation, as employed in Greece (see Opportunity 1), could also help enhance alignment across bodies.

To complement and support these co-ordination bodies, Thailand could establish dedicated co-ordination functions, such as a dedicated individual or position, within each relevant ministry and agency. These functions would help map existing policies from across the skills system, promote bilateral collaborations, help align policies and actions with those of other governmental institutions, and encourage participation in collaborative bodies.

In addition to formal bodies, informal channels – such as joint events and workshops – can further strengthen inter-ministerial connections and collaboration. In Thailand, where co-ordination between ministries and agencies is often hindered by bureaucratic silos, informal mechanisms can serve as valuable tools for breaking down barriers and encouraging co-operation. These channels promote the

formation of positive relationships between officials from various institutions, facilitating knowledge sharing and information exchange that may not occur in more formal settings. Informal collaboration can also create opportunities for piloting innovative initiatives and identifying synergies across policies. For example, in Singapore, the Civil Service College (CSC), under the Public Service Division (PSD), offers various programmes and events to foster professional and informal connections between civil servants at various levels from across the government. These initiatives span from leadership development programmes to events and seminars on various cross-cutting topics.

In Thailand, informal mechanisms could be leveraged to complement existing co-ordination bodies, particularly in addressing cross-cutting issues like skills mismatches, lifelong learning, and regional disparities. For example, regular cross-ministerial workshops focused on specific skills challenges, such as preparing for the digital transition or addressing regional labour shortages, could encourage open dialogue, build trust, and generate actionable insights. Additionally, informal mechanisms could support the implementation of Thailand's skills strategies by encouraging collaboration between central and subnational government actors, who may otherwise have limited opportunities to interact.

Box 4.4. Relevant international examples: Strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination between ministries/government agencies

Ireland

The High-Level Skills Implementation Group (HLSIG)

The High-Level Skills Implementation Group (HLSIG) is a newly established governmental body aimed at promoting a whole-of-government approach to skills policy implementation in Ireland. It comprises of representatives from five governmental departments and twelve national agencies with roles and responsibilities in skills policy. The group meets approximately every two months (as needed) in closed sessions, involving senior civil servants (e.g. Director-general level). The establishment of this purely governmental body in 2023 came as a result of an evaluation of the National Skills Council (NSC). Unlike the NSC, which had included both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, the HLSIG is exclusively composed of government representatives.

The primary objective of the HLSIG is to support high-level skills policy priority setting and alignment across the government, drawing on guidance from the NSC. The NSC has been transformed into forum for stakeholders to provide insights on current labour market needs and offer recommendations on skills policy to the government, while the HLSIG drives the implementation of these policies. By operating without non-governmental stakeholders, the HLSIG serves as focused platform for internal government co-ordination, enabling frank discussions and more direct decision-making on skills policy matters. This separation also strengthens stakeholder engagement forums by ensuring they are dedicated to collecting insights and feedback from external actors, free from government influence, thereby enhancing their effectiveness.

The Labour Market Advisory Council (LMAC)

The Labour Market Advisory Council (LMAC) serves as an advisory body to the Minister for Social Protection and the Government concerning the efficient operation of the labour market.

Chaired by an independent labour market expert, the Council includes representatives from various government departments. Additionally, within its subgroups it comprises representatives from relevant state agencies, employer bodies, unions, individual employers, academics, and community and voluntary sectors.

The LMAC is responsible for providing labour market situation analysis and evaluations, collecting perspectives and inputs from key labour market stakeholders, and providing policy advice to the government on labour market policy. The Council also has an active role in implementing and developing governmental labour market strategies. To effectively achieve these goals, the Council has two, technical-level, operational subgroups: The Evaluation Subgroup, and the Employer Engagement Subgroup. These groups help drive results and engage governmental and non-governmental actors at the implementation level.

Full council meets quarterly, with each session lasting approximately four hours, in addition to one annual full-day meeting. The sub-groups convene more frequently (once every 1-2 months) than the main council and consist of technical experts, government officials, and social partners who focus on implementing the Council's strategic priorities. Meetings are held in closed session, though membership may vary, especially in subgroup meetings, depending on the topic under discussion. The minister for social protection attends Council meetings, and subgroup meetings occasionally include participation from high-level officials, such as junior ministers and senior officials, reflecting strong governmental engagement in the Council's work.

Alignment across bodies

Given the related and sometimes overlapping themes of the LMAC, NSC and HLSIG, the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) hold high-level meetings every 2-3 months, in the context of an existing DSP-DFHERIS High-Level Group. Moreover, the DSP is represented at the HLSIG.

Singapore

The Civil Service College (CSC) in Singapore, a statutory board under the Public Service Division of the Prime Minister's Office, serves as the central institution for learning and development within the nation's public service. Its mission is to develop public officials into effective leaders and skilled professionals, fostering a future-ready public service.

A notable CSC initiative is the *Learning and Development Community Engagement Series*, which aims to strengthen the capabilities of public service officials. For instance, in April 2024, CSC organised an event at the Housing and Development Board's *My Learning Space*, bringing together approximately 500 officers from over 80 agencies to explore topics such as competency-driven growth and redefining purposeful work.

These events (typically closed to the public) not only enhance individual competencies but also promote inter-agency collaboration and knowledge sharing. Additionally, CSC offers targeted training programmes, such as *Partnership and Engagement 101*, designed to equip officials with essential skills for stakeholder engagement. Participants learn to identify engagement opportunities, communicate effectively, and establish meaningful relationships, thereby enhancing their collaborative efforts across various sectors.

Source: OECD, (2024^[27]), *Strengthening the Governance of the Swedish Skills System: Final Report*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e1ecc914-en>; Civil Service College Singapore, (2024^[28]), Annual Report 2023-2024, www.csc.gov.sg/files/CSC_Annual_Report_FY2023.pdf; Civil Service College Singapore, (2025^[29]), Civil Service College Singapore, www.csc.gov.sg/.

Recommendation 3: Strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination among government ministries and agencies

Strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination among government ministries and agencies is important since responsibilities for skills policies are shared across multiple ministries and agencies. Effective co-ordination through strong formal and informal mechanisms is crucial to enhance ongoing alignment of goals and activities, addressing any gaps, overlaps, and fostering synergies.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to strengthen horizontal collaboration and co-ordination between ministries and government agencies:

- 3.1. Establish a dedicated inter-ministerial co-ordination body for skills policy.** Thailand could benefit from a dedicated inter-ministerial co-ordination body focused exclusively on aligning governmental efforts in the skills policy domain. This mechanism would operate independently of non-governmental stakeholders and bring together representatives from key ministries at both senior and operational levels. Its primary role would be to align overarching goals, identify key skills challenges, and uncover opportunities for institutional improvements or synergies. It could also be charged with the development and oversight of a national skills strategy. To strengthen existing co-ordination bodies, Thailand could establish dedicated co-ordination functions within each relevant ministry or agency. These functions would help to map policies, foster bilateral collaboration, align actions across institutions, and enhance participation in inter-agency co-ordination efforts.
- 3.2. Strengthen co-ordination bodies for skills policy, including newly established ones, in line with international best practice.** To ensure the effectiveness of Thailand's existing or newly established inter-ministerial and inter-agency co-ordination bodies, Thailand can align them with lessons drawn from international best practices. This includes clearly defining the mandates, roles, and decision-making powers of these bodies to ensure that their efforts lead to tangible outcomes. Carefully curating the membership of the bodies is key, ensuring a mix of high-ranking officials to secure institutional support and technical experts who can implement decisions and provide ground-level insights. Moreover, adequate and targeted funding, alongside skilled facilitation and secretariat support, is essential for these bodies to function effectively and manage conflicting views while driving concrete results. When multiple, closely related bodies exist, it is important to ensure alignment in their activity through regular meetings and shared membership.
- 3.3. Leverage informal co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms to better support a whole-of-government approach to skills.** In addition to formal co-ordination bodies, Thailand can enhance inter-ministerial collaboration through informal mechanisms such as joint workshops, leadership development programmes, and cross-agency seminars. These channels can help break down bureaucratic silos, facilitate knowledge sharing, and foster stronger relationships between officials across government agencies. Informal mechanisms could complement existing co-ordination structures, particularly for addressing cross-cutting skills challenges such as digital transformation, lifelong learning, and regional labour market disparities. Regular cross-ministerial workshops and targeted networking opportunities could help align policy efforts, encourage innovation, and strengthen co-operation between central and subnational authorities.

Recommendation 4: Strengthening vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels

To foster a whole-of-government approach to governance of Thailand's skills system, it is also essential to strengthen vertical co-ordination and collaboration between the national, provincial, and local levels. Enhanced co-ordination across these levels can leverage local expertise and insights, ensuring that national policies are adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs and contexts of Thailand's provinces, while remaining consistent with national priorities and standards.

Provincial and local authorities in Thailand play a central role in Thailand's skills system. The country is divided into 75 provinces (*changwat*) and two specially governed districts: the capital Bangkok, which is often counted as the 76th province, and Pattaya (Thailand Embassy, 2024^[4]). A variety of actors at the provincial and local levels hold responsibilities for skills policy (see Table 4.1 in the overview and performance section of the chapter).

Local Administration Organisations (LAOs) play an important role in implementing policies, providing public services, and engaging with local communities (Department of Local Administration, 2024^[5]). These organisations encompass all levels of subnational government, including provinces, municipalities, sub-districts, and special LAOs (Bangkok and Pattaya). LAOs have the authority to provide education services at all levels, making them key actors in education and skills development.

The Department of Local Administration (DLA), under the Ministry of Interior, oversees and supports the LAOs by developing and advising the LAOs on local development plans, offering guidance on policy implementation, and providing financial support in to strengthen the capacity and efficiency of the LAOs in public service provision (Department of Local Administration, 2024^[30]). Concurrently, the Ministry of Education establishes the conditions and guidelines that determine when and how LAOs can take responsibility for providing education services, including the specific requirements they must meet to manage schools and allocate educational resources. Recent decentralisation efforts have transferred responsibilities such as overseeing sub-district libraries and child development centres from the Ministry of Education to the LAOs. Additionally, each province has its own Provincial Education Committee, chaired by the Provincial Governor or Deputy Governor, alongside a provincial education office. These structures provide oversight and co-ordination for education within their jurisdictions, ensuring alignment with national priorities.

Strengthening the capacity and resources of subnational authorities

Although the LAOs are independently responsible for the provision of education services, the Ministry of Education retains certain key responsibilities at the subnational level to ensure alignment between national policy design and local implementation. The Area Committees for Education, under the Basic Education Commission of the Ministry of Education, oversee Educational Service Areas, their offices, and the schools under their jurisdiction. These committees are responsible for academic supervision, budgeting, personnel management, and general administration, helping to maintain coherence between national and local educational policies.

In addition, the Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education supervises 18 regional education offices, which play an important role in aligning provincial education strategies with national objectives, ministry policies, and Provincial Cluster Development Strategies. These offices support provincial development through academic initiatives, research and development, and the monitoring and evaluation of provincial education offices, (The Government of Thailand, 2013^[31]; MOE, 2017^[3]). Similarly, the Ministry of Labour operates Provincial Labour Offices in each province, tasked with implementing labour market policies, programmes, and services while co-ordinating with other LAOs and key actors.

In countries where subnational authorities have significant responsibilities in the skills system, ensuring alignment between local policies and national priorities is very important. This can be achieved by involving

national agencies in subnational activities and establishing clear lines of authority, structured co-ordination mechanisms, and strong supervision. These measures can help prevent policy fragmentation, ensuring that local initiatives complement rather than duplicate or contradict national efforts. This structured approach enhances policy coherence, mitigates inefficiencies, and strengthens the effectiveness of the skills system.

As responsibilities are delegated to provincial and local levels, it is essential to empower LAOs to adapt national policies to local contexts, while maintaining oversight to ensure alignment with national level priorities. This is particularly important in Thailand, where significant regional disparities in education outcomes and labour market characteristics present unique challenges. However, Thai experts consulted during this project indicated that subnational authorities often lack the resources to fully implement skills policies and effectively govern local skills systems.

To overcome the challenge of limited resources and capacity among subnational authorities – hindering their ability to fully implement skills policies and effectively govern local skills systems – Thailand should strengthen support for these authorities. Strengthening their human, institutional, and strategic capacity is essential to ensuring the effective design and implementation skills policies. This could be achieved through nationally funded pilot programmes designed to build local-level skills policy capacity. A relevant example is Thailand's National Village and Urban Community Fund, which supports local villages in developing vocational trainings infrastructure for local human capital development (The National Village and Urban Community Fund Office, 2024^[32]).

These pilot programmes should be collaboratively developed with selected LAOs and scaled up based on their success. Pilots offer a cost-effective method to test initiatives on a smaller scale before broader implementation. Furthermore, these pilot programmes can help align local initiatives with national objectives and strengthen sub-national capacities to ensure nationally funded programmes and skills policies meet local needs and are effectively implemented. Importantly, these pilots can also help to address challenges that result from having multiple ministries overseeing the same bodies at the subnational level. For instance, while the Ministry of Interior oversees LAOs, specific functions, such as education, fall under the purview of ministries like the Ministry of Education. Designing pilot programmes in partnership with selected LAOs provides an opportunity to clarify governance arrangements, improve co-ordination among ministries, and reduce inefficiencies, which can otherwise be costly.

To strengthen support for provincial and local levels, it is important to dedicate special attention and outreach to underperforming and under-represented LAOs to address specific challenges and gaps. Such efforts can help reduce regional disparities and ensure that underperforming regions receive the necessary support to improve their performance.

Establishing a network for subnational representation in national policy making

While top-down approaches, where the national government guides and supports subnational authorities, are essential, it is equally important to establish robust bottom-up co-ordination channels. These channels can facilitate the collection of insights on what works, foster stronger commitment to national decisions, and leverage subnational strengths to enhance national policies. Representation of LAOs in the Education Council is subnational involvement in policy making in Thailand (see Recommendation 3). However, additional efforts are needed to ensure that subnational inputs are systematically reflected in national policy decisions. Increasing the representation of subnational authorities at the national level is particularly challenging due to the large number of provinces and the significant variation between them in terms of labour markets and educational needs.

To address the challenge of ensuring meaningful and systematic representation of subnational authorities in national policy making, Thailand could establish a network of officials across regions to strengthen co-ordination among LAOs and enhance their representation at the national level. More specifically,

Thailand could establish a structure where designated provincial skills development co-ordinators are tasked with leading discussions on skills in their respective regions. These co-ordinators would facilitate collaboration across LAOs, ensuring that local perspectives are heard. To be effective, the managers should have a specialised knowledge of skills policies and possess a clear understanding of the unique skills needs of their province or locality.

In addition to fostering collaboration across regions, provincial skills development co-ordinators would play an important role within their own respective provinces by leading local skills fora. These fora would convene key stakeholders – such as Provincial Labour Offices, Provincial Education Committees, education providers, and non-governmental actors – to facilitate co-ordination and dialogue (see more in Opportunity 3). By aligning local initiatives with regional needs, these fora could play a key role in addressing local skills-related challenges, aligning initiatives with local needs, and improving the implementation of national policies.

At the national level, a network of provincial skills development co-ordinators could help strengthen co-ordination and capacity-building among provinces by facilitating regular discussions on regional and local skills challenges, promoting the exchange of information, and sharing effective practices across LAOs. By fostering peer learning and collaboration, this network could help provinces adopt proven strategies, improving the overall effectiveness of skills policies at the subnational level. Additionally, by systematically identifying regional needs and successful local initiatives, the network would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of provincial and local priorities, helping to inform national-level decision-making. The co-ordination of this network could be managed by a dedicated officer or director responsible for representing the LAOs in national discussions. This officer, potentially housed within a national agency such as the Department of Skills Development (DSD), would focus on representing the provincial and local perspectives at the national level, advocating for local skills needs, and recommending policy adjustments where necessary. Given the large number of provinces, smaller focus groups could be established as needed, focusing on specific policy areas, with focus group outputs then distributed across the broader network.

To further amplify the voice of the sub-national level in national discussions, the network should appoint representatives to participate in national co-ordination bodies and discussions. These representatives would present consolidated view of subnational challenges, share successful practices, and advocate for policy changes that reflect local priorities. representatives could be periodically rotated to balance the large number of provinces with equal geographical representation. Norway's Regional Skills Fora and Regional Directors Network can provide an example for such a structure (see Box 4.5).

Box 4.5. Relevant international example: Strengthening vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels

Norway

Regional Skills Fora

The Norwegian Regional Competence Fora (RCF) play a key role in enhancing regional economic growth and workforce development. Established in seven regions, each RCF aims to foster collaboration among educational institutions, businesses, and government entities at the national, regional, and local levels to address specific regional skills needs. They focus on improving the quality of education and training programmes and promoting lifelong learning initiatives. Each RCF tailors its efforts to the unique needs and priorities of its region, working closely with stakeholders to support skills development, economic growth, and competitiveness. Their activities include mapping and aligning local and regional skills supply with demand.

Regional Directors Network and connection to national level

Co-ordination across regions, is managed by a network of Regional Directors of Skills and Education who meet regularly. A smaller group of these Directors has been chosen to prepare for these network meetings and meets monthly with the Ministry of Education and Research to ensure alignment between national and regional levels of government. Additionally, a network of regional officials responsible for skills and education policies has been established to enhance collaboration among regions and other key stakeholders, with quarterly meetings.

Regional Competence Fora (RCF) also engage in both formal and informal networks and ad hoc meetings to foster co-operation. Interaction between regions/RCF and the national government primarily occurs through the Skills Policy Council. The network of Regional Directors has appointed one Director to represent regions/RCF in both the Skills Policy Council and its operational group.

Source: OECD, (2024^[27]), *Strengthening the Governance of the Swedish Skills System: Final Report*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e1ecc914-en>.

Recommendation 4: Strengthening vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels

Strengthening vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels is crucial for Thailand because of the important role that subnational authorities and subnational ministerial offices play in the skills system.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to strengthen vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels of government:

- 4.1. Strengthen subnational skills policy capacity through pilot programmes, direct engagement, and targeted support.** Thailand could enhance subnational skills policy capacity by implementing nationally funded pilot programmes, fostering direct engagement with Local Administrative Organisations (LAOs), and providing targeted support to underperforming regions. These programmes should be collaboratively developed with selected LAOs and then scaled up based on their demonstrated success. Particular attention should be given to underperforming and underrepresented LAOs to address gaps and challenges, ensuring they receive the targeted support needed to improve their performance. By directly involving subnational authorities in these pilots, the programmes can facilitate active engagement in policy development, align national strategies with local needs, and build stronger local governance capacity. Furthermore, the national government should provide tailored support to ensure these efforts result in improved outcomes, particularly in regions facing persistent challenges.
- 4.2. Establish provincial skills development co-ordinators and a collaborative network to foster collaboration and peer learning across LAOs.** Thailand should introduce provincial skills development co-ordinators within each province to enhance co-ordination among local stakeholders, including labour offices, education providers, and non-governmental actors. These co-ordinators would lead local skills fora in their respective regions to address skills-related challenges, align initiatives with local needs, and improve the implementation of national policies. To promote collaboration across LAOs, a network of these provincial skills development co-ordinators should be established. This network would meet regularly to share information,

promote peer learning, and identify opportunities to scale up or replicate successful policies across regions. By connecting provincial skills development co-ordinators, the network would strengthen communication and knowledge sharing, thereby helping to address regional disparities, build local capacity, and facilitate the adoption of innovative approaches throughout the Thai skills system.

- 4.3. Amplify the voice of subnational authorities in national skills policy discussions through the network of provincial skills development co-ordinators.** To ensure that the perspectives of subnational authorities are reflected in national policy making, Thailand should designate a main officer or director for the provincial skills development co-ordinators' network. This officer, potentially housed within a national agency, such as the Department of Skills Development (DSD), would serve as a liaison between the network and national authorities. Their role would be to represent subnational perspectives, advocate for local priorities, and provide input to inform national strategies. Furthermore, the network should appoint representatives to participate in national co-ordination bodies and discussions. These representatives would present a consolidated view of subnational challenges, share successful practices, and propose policy changes to address local needs. This approach would not only amplify the voice of LAOs at the national level but also strengthen vertical co-ordination and alignment between local and national skills policies.

Opportunity 3: Strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy making

Strengthening engagement with non-governmental stakeholders is essential for enhancing the governance of Thailand's skills system in. Their expertise and diverse perspectives help to ensure that skills policies are responsive to both societal and economic objectives, fostering more effective and inclusive policy development.

Thailand has made significant progress in establishing a legal framework for stakeholder consultation in policy formulation. The regulations of the Office of the Prime Minister on Public Consultation, B.E. 2548 (2005) require government institutions to share information about projects with significant public impact and conduct credible consultations where necessary, with oversight by the relevant minister or governor to ensure compliance (Office of the Prime Minister, 2005^[11]). Section 77 of the 2017 Constitution further strengthens these requirements by mandating stakeholder consultations before enacting laws, requiring public disclosure of outcomes, and incorporating post-implementation impact evaluations (Office of the Council of State, 2017^[12]). Additionally, the 2019 Act on Legislative Drafting and the Outcome of Law specifies consultation mechanisms, including an online system managed by the Digital Government Development Agency to ensure transparency and stakeholder inclusion (Government of Thailand, 2019^[13]). Despite these advancements in legislative and regulatory consultations, stakeholder engagement in strategic planning remains voluntary. Ministries and agencies are responsible for fostering participatory governance and developing effective mechanisms for meaningful engagement highlighting the need for further institutional support to enhance stakeholder involvement in broader policy processes (OECD, 2022^[14]).

This opportunity explores avenues for enhancing engagement with non-governmental stakeholders in skills policy, including strengthening stakeholder engagement bodies, building a culture and capacity for stakeholder involvement, and developing strategies to engage hard-to-reach groups in skills policy discussions.

Two recommendations are proposed to strengthen stakeholder engagement in skills policies: (1) Strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement, and (2) Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach stakeholders.

Recommendation 5: Strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement

One important mechanism for strengthening stakeholder engagement is the establishment of designated bodies or structures for to promote co-ordination and collaboration between government and stakeholders. Thailand has established several such entities, including the Education Council, the National Qualifications Framework Committee, and the Skills Development Promotion Committee. These bodies bring together governmental and non-governmental actors to shape skills policies (see Opportunity 2). By doing so, they foster greater involvement of diverse stakeholders in skills policy development and enhance co-ordination between the government and private sectors.

While national level bodies are important, engaging stakeholders at the sectoral level is also very important for identifying specific labour market needs and aligning curricula and skills policies accordingly. Thai agencies such as OVEC and the Basic Education Committee (BEC) have established sector-specific committees to engage with industries. Additionally, Thailand is currently promoting the 4.0 economic model, which encourages competition and innovation by supporting specific geographical zones and industries. The model includes a sector-based approach with several incentive schemes to drive productivity and innovation, including investment in human capital, advanced technological training, specialised training centres, and more (Thailand Board of Investment, n.d.^[15]). As part of this effort, Thailand has established sectoral skills councils, some led by the DSD, to work closely with government agencies to align training programmes with industry needs.

Enhancing stakeholder engagement bodies and structures

Despite the activities of these bodies, officials consulted for this project have indicated that the full potential of stakeholder engagement remains unrealised. A particular challenge is that stakeholders often do not actively participate in policy development and implementation. Instead, their involvement is often limited to providing general input, rather than engaging in meaningful, collaborative decision-making or contributing to the implementation of policies. Additionally, many of these councils or committees lack the mandate and resources necessary to make a meaningful impact. To address these gaps, these bodies can be strengthened by drawing on lessons from international best practices in effective stakeholder engagement (OECD, 2024^[27]).

One key lesson is the importance of carefully selecting members to ensure the engagement body effectively serves its purpose. Membership should include experts and professionals who possess both field-specific knowledge and a strong commitment to policy development. An open call and selection process – such as that used for Ireland’s National Skills Council – can help ensure that participants are both highly qualified and genuinely motivated to contribute to policy discussions (see Box 4.6). Through an open call, clear criteria can be established in advance, specifying the number of representatives needed from different stakeholder groups – such as businesses, trade unions, industry associations, and civil society organisations – while maintaining a balanced and inclusive composition. This approach allows for the selection of individuals who not only bring relevant expertise but also demonstrate an active interest in shaping skills policy, reducing the risk of purely *ex officio* representation, where organisations simply appoint a delegate without regard to their level of engagement.

Another key lesson is the importance of clear and effective communication throughout the engagement process. Stakeholders should have a clear understanding of the body’s purpose and their specific roles within it. Transparency should be maintained at every stage, enabling stakeholders to provide feedback on outputs or decisions and ensuring they understand how their inputs will be utilised. Demonstrating the impact of their contributions is critical to building trust, fostering active participation, and sustaining engagement. Moreover, transparent communication promotes accountability on the part of the government, ultimately contributing to more effective and impactful outcomes.

When defining the role and mandate of a body or any engagement mechanism, it is important to ensure they are both realistic and aligned with stakeholders' capacity to participate effectively. Bodies with vague or overly ambitious scopes may struggle to deliver meaningful outcomes. A project-based approach can help address this challenge by establishing short-term working groups within a body (e.g. a council or committee), each tasked with achieving specific objectives. Such an approach provides a more targeted and effective means of engaging stakeholders in policy design and implementation, making participation more focused and effective, even within broader, high-level governance structures.

Strengthening sectoral-level engagement and co-ordination

While national level bodies are important, engaging stakeholders at the sectoral level is also very important for identifying specific labour market needs and aligning curricula and skills policies accordingly. Thai agencies such as OVEC and the Basic Education Committee (BEC) have established sector-specific committees to engage with industries. Additionally, Thailand is currently promoting 'Thailand 4.0' as a new economic model, which encourages competition and innovation by supporting specific geographical zones and industries. The model includes a sector-based approach with several incentive schemes to drive productivity and innovation, including investment in human capital, advanced technological training, specialised training centres, and more (Thailand Board of Investment, n.d.^[15]).

To further support this new economic model, enhance workforce skills and align education and training with industry requirements, Thailand has established Sectoral Skills Councils (SSCs). Many SSCs are supported by the DSD and include representatives from government, education and training institutions, and industry. SSCs are currently in place for sectors such as automotive, tourism, construction, information and communication technology (ICT), and agriculture and food. Their core responsibilities include identifying skills gaps, developing industry-recognised skill standards, collaborating with training providers to adapt curricula, offering policy advice, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities in response to evolving sectoral demands.

Despite this progress, challenges remain. Skills training content is not always updated quickly enough to reflect fast-changing technological developments. Moreover, co-ordination among ministries and agencies remains fragmented, resulting in a duplication of efforts as employers and associations are often asked to provide the same information multiple times to different actors. Engagement with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) also remains limited in many sectors, and there is scope to develop more targeted training for emerging industries, such as green energy and the creative economy.

To better capture the specific skills needs of the labour market, Thailand could further strengthen the structure and effectiveness of its sectoral engagement frameworks. Building on existing SSCs and other mechanisms across ministries and agencies, Thailand can enhance co-ordination to minimise redundancy, improve clarity in stakeholder roles, and expand outreach to SMEs and underserved sectors (see Recommendation 6). Strengthening the mandate of SSCs and providing them with adequate tools, funding, and institutional support would ensure they can play a more central role in aligning workforce development with sectoral needs. In doing so, Thailand could draw on international models – such as Korea's sector councils – which provide an integrated platform for stakeholder engagement, skills forecasting, and curriculum reform across economic sectors (see Box 4.6).

Diversifying stakeholder engagement mechanisms

Beyond formal bodies, additional tools and mechanisms can be used to engage stakeholders more actively. These include more informal mechanisms such as public consultations on policy proposals, stakeholder workshops or roundtables, online platforms, and targeted communication with key actors. Adopting such tools, as explored further in the following recommendation, can diversify engagement and make it more inclusive.

To sustain these efforts, Thailand can strengthen its capacity for stakeholder engagement on skills policies by developing resources to support ministries and agencies in establishing impactful stakeholder engagement mechanisms and fostering a culture of stakeholder involvement. For example, Israel's Governance and Society Department in the Prime Minister's Office developed a user-friendly toolkit outlining key considerations and steps for effective stakeholder engagement (see Box 4.6). Another example is Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)'s Engagement and Outreach Strategy which aims to guide the organisation's approach in developing and nurturing meaningful partnerships with stakeholders. Adopting such approaches and providing support and training to civil servants in Thailand could help governmental bodies determine the most appropriate engagement tools for various scenarios and how to use them effectively.

Box 4.6. Relevant international examples: Strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement

Australia

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA)'s Engagement and Outreach Strategy aims to guide the organisation's approach in developing and nurturing meaningful partnerships with stakeholders, aligning with JSA's mission to advise Australia's government and other stakeholders on current, emerging, and future skills needs.

The strategy is built on five key principles: inclusivity, effectiveness, two-way communication, transparency, and ease of engagement. These principles ensure that stakeholder input significantly influences the design, delivery, and enhancement of JSA's initiatives, fostering a dynamic and responsive engagement process. Moreover, the strategy identifies various engagement risks (e.g. consultation fatigue, stakeholder conflicts of interest, etc.) and outlines corresponding mitigation measures. It also defines success metrics to measure the effectiveness of engagement efforts.

Ireland

Ireland's National Skills Council (NSC) was established in 2017 by Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025. Between 2017 and 2023, the Council served as an advisory body to the Government of Ireland on skills policy, bringing together relevant departments (ministries), education and training providers, and business representatives. In 2023 the NSC was reformed in order to establish a more "industry-led" approach. The membership was therefore reformed to give greater prominence to non-governmental stakeholders.

In order to identify new NSC members, DFHERIS opened an "expression of interest" process, receiving many applicants from a broad range of stakeholders including large companies and SMEs, education and training providers, and others. DFHERIS then shortlisted candidates based on an assessment against internally defined criteria, including the aim to include diverse representation from across the skills system held follow-up discussions with the shortlisted candidates. This process was intended to help sort through and identify potential NSC members with genuine motivation to facilitate active participation and engagement in NSC meetings later on. It is expected that NSC members would also raise awareness of the importance of effective skills development and use through their networks on the ground, underscoring the importance of selecting the right candidates as NSC members.

Israel

The Public Participation Guide in Government Work in Israel serves as a comprehensive guide for integrating public participation into government decision-making processes. The document outlines the principles, methodologies, and tools for effectively involving the public in various stages of policy

development and implementation. It emphasises the importance of transparency, inclusiveness, and responsiveness in governance, and aims to strengthen public trust in governmental institutions. It also provides tools for identifying the most relevant engagement mechanism in different scenarios as well as the types of stakeholders to engage, providing best practice examples.

Korea

Industrial skills councils were established in Korea in 2015 to promote industry-led skills development. These councils now cover 17 industries and are responsible for developing National Competency Standards (NSC), recommending appropriate training options, overseeing the work-study dual system, monitoring developments in the labour force, and publishing annual “industrial manpower status reports”, among other duties. Financed by the Ministry of Employment and Labour (MoEL), each council comprises 20 representatives from employer associations, unions, the MoEL and other experts.

In addition to industrial skills councils, Korea has sectoral human resource development councils established by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. Efforts have been made to enhance co-ordination between these councils to minimise overlap and foster synergies in their operations.

Source: OECD, (2024^[27]), Strengthening the Governance of the Swedish Skills System: Final Report, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e1ecc914-en>; Office of the Prime Minister, (2020^[33]), Public Participation Guide in Government Work, www.gov.il/he/pages/public_sharing_guide; Jobs and Skills Australia (2023^[34]), *Engagement and Outreach Strategy*, www.jobsandskills.gov.au/about/engagement-and-outreach-strategy; OECD, (2021^[10]), OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Korea: Strengthening the Governance of Adult Learning, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f19a4560-en>.

Recommendation 5: Strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement

Strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement is essential for effective governance of the skills system in Thailand. These stakeholders – such as employers, unions, and training providers – offer valuable expertise and diverse perspectives that are crucial for shaping skills policies that align with both societal and economic objectives. While Thailand has established methods for stakeholder engagement, such as dedicated bodies and legal frameworks, more could be done to refine and expand these efforts.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to strengthen engagement with non-governmental stakeholders:

- 5.1. Strengthen the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement bodies.** Thailand should strengthen existing stakeholder engagement bodies, such as the Skills Development Promotion Committee and the Education Council by ensuring that membership is carefully curated to include experts with relevant expertise and a commitment to policy development. The inclusion of professionals who can effectively represent their organisations and contribute to the policy making process is crucial. Moreover, ensuring clear and transparent communication throughout the engagement process is important for fostering trust and active participation among stakeholders, who should be informed about the body’s purpose, mandate, their roles within it, and the impact of their contributions. Additionally, employing a project-based approach, where short-term working groups are established to achieve specific goals, can help actively involve stakeholders in policy design and implementation, driving more effective and targeted outcomes.

- 5.2. Strengthen and co-ordinate sectoral stakeholder engagement mechanisms through existing and emerging structures.** Building on Thailand's existing Sectoral Skills Councils (SSCs) supported by the Department of Skill Development (DSD), as well as other sectoral engagement efforts across ministries, Thailand should enhance and formalise sectoral-level stakeholder engagement mechanisms to more effectively respond to the evolving skills needs of key industries. This includes strengthening the mandate and capacity of SSCs, ensuring their sustained collaboration with training providers, and expanding representation to include SMEs and emerging sectors. Efforts should also be made to co-ordinate sectoral engagement across government institutions to minimise redundancy and reduce the burden on stakeholders. These mechanisms should be informed by international good practices and equipped with adequate tools and resources to carry out skills gap analysis, curriculum development, and policy advice in their respective sectors.
- 5.3. Enhance stakeholder engagement by adopting additional tools and strengthening capacity-building efforts.** Thailand can incorporate a range of tools for stakeholder engagement such as public consultations, stakeholder workshops or roundtables, online platforms, and targeted communication. To ensure sustainable and impactful stakeholder engagement, ministries and agencies should be supported with tools, resources, and training tailored to their needs. For example, Thailand could develop a stakeholder engagement toolkit or provide training to civil servants in stakeholder engagement strategies. These efforts can help foster a culture of collaboration while ensuring consistent and impactful interactions with stakeholders and enhance Thailand's overall ability to design and implement skills policies that align with labour market needs.

Recommendation 6: Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach stakeholders

Effective stakeholder engagement is critical to ensuring that skills policies are inclusive, responsive, and representative of all economic actors. However, existing mechanisms often fail to incorporate the perspectives of harder-to-reach groups, such as SMEs, minority communities, CSOs, and informal sector workers. Strengthening engagement with these stakeholders requires targeted strategies, innovative consultation methods, and institutional support to ensure their voices contribute meaningfully to policy discussions.

Improving the representativeness of existing stakeholder engagement mechanisms

Engaging effectively with non-governmental stakeholders is essential for the development and implementation of inclusive and responsive skills policies. However, traditional stakeholder engagement mechanisms often prioritise employer associations, trade unions, or other representative organisations, which may not adequately capture the perspectives and needs of harder-to-reach groups. These groups include SMEs, minority communities, civil society organisations (CSOs), and informal sectors. Such actors often lack the financial capacity to participate in policy making or are not represented by unions or umbrella organisations capable of voicing their needs. In Thailand, the informal sector is particularly significant due to its size and the unique skills challenges it presents (see Chapters 1 and 3).

Several existing efforts in Thailand could be leveraged to engage these groups more effectively. As outlined earlier in this section, Thailand's legal framework requires government bodies to consult affected parties under certain conditions. However, while these laws and regulations facilitate communication with some hard-to-reach groups, they do not establish a formal framework specifically for consulting these stakeholders on skills policies or define mechanisms for doing so effectively.

In parallel, steps have been taken to expand stakeholder representation in certain contexts. For example, the Thai Chamber of Commerce has taken steps to broaden its membership to include SMEs (The Thai Chamber of Commerce, 2024^[35]). In line with this approach, Thailand's formal stakeholder engagement bodies for skills policies, described in Opportunity 2 and in Recommendation 5, could be expanded to strengthen representation from a wider range of hard-to-reach groups, including SMEs, CSOs, and others. For example, the Skills Development Promotion Committee includes important stakeholders such as the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Industrial Federation of Thailand, the Thai Bankers Association, and the Travel Industry Council of Thailand, but does not include representatives from groups such as small businesses or from key sectors in the informal economy, where there are high rates of informal employment, such as agriculture. Expanding representation in such bodies could strengthen their capacity to develop policies that are responsive to the needs of all economic actors.

Leveraging local partnerships to engage hard-to-reach groups

Several promising initiatives in Thailand demonstrate how partnerships can facilitate engagement with hard-to-reach groups. For instance, public-private partnerships at the provincial level can help identify local skills needs and strengthen collaboration between employers and education and training providers. For example, Phetchaburi Province has established partnerships with important sectors such as tourism and hospitality, enabling employer representatives to communicate skills needs and collaborate on improving regional skills policies.

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Destination Marketing Forum 2024, held in Cha-Am, Phetchaburi, illustrates the benefits of such partnerships in addressing skills gaps. Organised in partnership with Phetchaburi Province, the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), and the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA), and with support from the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the event promoted community-based tourism as a driver of local employment and economic opportunity. Discussions at the forum highlighted how local tourism businesses can build capacity in areas such as sustainable tourism management, digital marketing, and service excellence to meet industry needs. The event also demonstrated how collaboration between national and provincial authorities, in co-ordination with the private sector, can help shape training opportunities that align with local labour market demands, ensuring that skills development efforts effectively support workforce needs in tourism and hospitality. While similar partnerships were more widespread in the 1980s, their sustainability now depends largely on the priorities and resources of individual provinces. Many provinces face challenges in sustaining these initiatives due to funding constraints, underscoring the need for sustained national support.

Expanding inclusive and innovative engagement mechanisms

Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach groups requires adopting more inclusive and flexible approaches. A variety of consultation methods – such as workshops, information-sharing events, and both virtual and in-person discussions – can make participation more accessible. Diversifying engagement approaches can help accommodate the varying logistical needs and preferences of different actors, particularly those in the informal economy. For example, Korea has successfully implemented Civic Participatory Service Design Teams, where citizens, civil servants, and experts collaborate to design new public policies or services (see Box 4.7). This approach enables participation from a wide range of stakeholders, including those without formal organisational representation.

Digital tools can also offer significant potential for broadening engagement. Platforms like online surveys and consultations allow stakeholders to provide input more easily. For instance, Seoul, Korea's "mVoting" app facilitates real-time citizen participation by enabling individuals to propose, comment, and vote on policy solutions. Such tools can enhance civic engagement and provide the government with direct feedback from a diverse array of stakeholders.

Provincial and local authorities are particularly well-placed to lead engagement efforts with communities, SMEs, and informal economy actors. Their in-depth knowledge of local dynamics enables these authorities to tailor strategies to meet community-specific needs. Establishing provincial skills councils or forums, as practiced in countries like Norway (see Opportunity 2), could provide structured platforms for local engagement. These councils could convene stakeholders to discuss local skills needs, share information, and collaborate on policy initiatives, fostering more responsive and co-ordinated approaches to skills development.

Provincial skills development co-ordinators, as proposed in Opportunity 2, could play an important role at the subnational level by leveraging relationships with community leaders and small enterprises. Acting as intermediaries, they can ensure the needs of these groups are effectively communicated to national policymakers. Their role could be important for building trust and fostering relationships, especially with actors in the informal economy who may require additional support to transition into the formal economy and access skilled labour, trainings, and other governmental services.

Building institutional support for underrepresented groups

To ensure that the voices of hard-to-reach groups are heard in policy making, Thailand could establish and strengthen representative advisory bodies focused on the needs of SMEs, minority communities, and informal sector workers. In the United States, Presidential Advisory Commissions provide tailored recommendations to policymakers on advancing educational and economic equity for historically underrepresented groups such as Black Americans (see Box 4.7). Thailand could adopt a similar approach by establishing and supporting advisory bodies that represent SMEs, minority communities, or actors in the informal economy. Government support – through dialogue sessions, funding, and training – could facilitate the formation and sustainability of such bodies. Ministries could also play an important role in helping raise awareness of these bodies and conducting outreach to ensure broad participation from diverse groups.

Supporting networks and umbrella organisations that unite stakeholders with shared policy goals can significantly amplify their collective voice in policy discussions. For example, the United Kingdom's National Council for Voluntary Organisations (see Box 4.7) play a vital role in bringing together smaller or less visible groups, ensuring their concerns are considered in policy debates. By providing these organisations with sufficient resources and capacity-building support, the government can enhance their advocacy efforts, fostering more inclusive and representative policy making that reflects the diverse needs of Thailand's population.

To further institutionalise engagement, advisory bodies and umbrella organisations representing hard-to-reach groups could be included in national engagement bodies. Their participation in formal discussions would help ensure that Thailand's skills policies reflect the full diversity of its workforce, fostering a more inclusive and resilient labour market.

Box 4.7. Relevant international examples: Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach non-governmental stakeholders

Korea

Civic participatory service design teams

The Korean government introduced civic participatory service design teams to actively involve citizens in shaping public policies and services. These teams consist of citizens, civil servants, and experts, who collaborate to design new policies or improve existing ones. Each team, comprising 8-15 members, works on specific policy tasks for three to four months, using methods like field studies and brainstorming to identify citizens' needs more effectively. Unlike traditional approaches, this service design process closely examines customer experiences, behaviours, and environments to uncover deeper insights. The initiative was piloted in 2014 and has formed over 200 such teams in various fields due to their success.

The “mVoting” app in Seoul, Korea

Seoul's “mVoting” mobile application has enables citizens to propose policy solutions and participate in decision-making at any time. The app is accessible to anyone who can verify their identity with a Korean phone number or social media account, ensuring secure and fair participation by preventing duplicate votes. While this authentication method excludes those without mobile phones, a PC version of mVoting is available for online participation. The app also ensures that intermediate voting results remain hidden to prevent bias and offers social network sharing options that can be controlled to avoid conflicts over sensitive issues. These features promote broad participation while safeguarding citizens' privacy and personal information.

United Kingdom

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) is an umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector in England. It provides support, resources, and a collective voice for its members, which include charities, social enterprises, and community groups. It advocates for the interests of the sector and helps shape policies that affect these organisations.

United States

In the United States, the Presidential Advisory Commission on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans advises the President on improving educational outcomes of Black Americans. The Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach supports the U.S. Department of Labour in assessing the employment and training needs of veterans. The committee provides recommendations on training initiatives and employer outreach activities to promote veteran employment.

Source: OECD, (2021^[10]), OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Korea: Strengthening the Governance of Adult Learning, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f19a4560-en>, Seoul City (2020^[36]), mVoting: Online Participation at the Municipal Level in Seoul, <https://participedia.net/case/5554>; NCVO, (NCVO, n.d.^[37]), About NCVO, www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/.

Recommendation 6: Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach stakeholders

Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach non-governmental stakeholders, such as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), minority communities, civil society organisations (CSOs), and actors in the informal economy, is essential for enhancing the Governance of the skills system in Thailand. Such actors have important stake in skills policy discussions but may be under-represented in existing fora.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to strengthen engagement with hard-to-reach stakeholders:

- 6.1. Diversify engagement methods to make participation accessible to hard-to-reach groups.** To effectively incorporate the perspectives of SMEs, minority communities, CSOs, and actors in the informal economy into skills policy, Thailand should diversify engagement methods when developing skills policy. This can include organising workshops, virtual consultations, and information-sharing events. Adopting innovative approaches, including virtual and in-person options, should can help accommodate logistical needs and preferences of diverse stakeholders, particularly those without formal organisational representation. For example, Korea's Civic Participatory Service Design Teams, as well as digital tools such as the "mVoting" app in Seoul can ensure that these stakeholders are active participants in policy design rather than passive consultees. By adopting similar practices, Thailand can ensure more inclusive and responsive policy making, capturing the perspectives of SMEs, minority communities, and informal workers.
- 6.2. Leverage provincial and local authorities to support localised engagement.** Provincial and local authorities are uniquely positioned to engage effectively with local communities, SMEs, religious groups, and actors in the informal economy due to their understanding of local dynamics. To capitalise on this potential, Thailand can establish provincial skills councils or forums similar to those in Norway (see Opportunity 2). These councils would provide structured platforms for local engagement, enabling stakeholders to share information, discuss skills needs, and collaborate on tailored policy initiatives. Provincial skills development co-ordinators, as proposed in Opportunity 2, could play a vital role by leveraging their relationships with community leaders and small enterprises to communicate local needs to national policymakers. Their trust-building efforts are particularly critical for engaging actors in the informal economy, who may require additional support to access training, transition into the formal economy, and benefit from government services.
- 6.3. Support and strengthen representative advisory bodies and umbrella organisations.** Thailand should establish and strengthen advisory bodies representing hard-to-reach groups, ensuring their voices are integrated into national policies. Additionally, supporting networks and umbrella organisations that bring together representatives from smaller or less visible groups, can amplify their collective voice, ensuring their concerns are adequately represented in policy debates. By providing these organisations with resources and capacity-building support, the government can foster more inclusive and representative policy making. Additionally, including these advisory bodies and umbrella organisations in national engagement bodies and forums would ensure their perspectives are represented in high-level discussions.

Opportunity 4: Improving skills information systems

Enhancing the availability and effective use of skills information is essential for strengthening the governance of Thailand's skills system. High-quality data is crucial for accurately assessing current skills needs, anticipating future needs, formulating evidence-based policies, and assessing the impacts of these policies. For instance, combining data on employer skills needs across regions and industries with graduation statistics from education and training programmes can guide targeted investments in specific high-demand fields. Moreover, accessible, high-quality data empowers individuals and stakeholders to make informed decisions about education and employment. This could include information on potential labour market returns from specific training programmes, current labour and skills shortages, and the workforce implications of technological advancements (see Figure 4.8 for more details).

This Opportunity provides advice for developing a comprehensive data framework by standardising data collection processes across agencies, promoting data sharing, and integrating this information into a centralised platform. Additionally, investments should be made in online systems that guide career and education choices and to improve co-ordination of in-person guidance services.

Two recommendations are proposed to improve skills information systems in Thailand: (1) Improving the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy, and (2) Enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services to improve accessibility and meet diverse user needs.

Recommendation 7: Improving the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy

Reliable and comprehensive skills data is essential for designing effective policies that align education and workforce development with labour market needs. While Thailand collects skills-related data through multiple ministries and institutions, challenges remain in ensuring data coverage, co-ordination, and usability. Strengthening data governance, improving integration across agencies, and leveraging international best practices can help Thailand develop a more responsive and data-driven skills policy framework.

Enhancing co-ordination and addressing data gaps

Several ministries and institutions – including the Ministry of Education, the National Statistics Office, and the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI) – collect and manage skills-related data. Table 4.4 provides an overview of the ministries and institutions responsible for skills-data collection and management.

Table 4.4. Overview of ministries and institutions with responsibilities for collecting or managing skills-related data

Name of ministry or institution	Responsibilities
Ministry of Education	Collects education data through schools, institutions, and standardised tests conducted by National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS).
Office of the Prime Minister	Collects additional educational data via external quality assessments of educational institutions conducted by the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA).
National Statistics Office	Conducts large-scale surveys across various social and economic indicators, including education and labour.
Digital Government Development Agency (DGA)	Developing a standardised data infrastructure and providing guidelines and support for data collection and utilisation across government agencies.
Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI)	Maintains a professional database and information system that supports national workforce development, particularly within the ASEAN Economic Community.

Source: Ministry of Education, (2017^[3]), *Education in Thailand*, www.bic.moe.go.th/images/stories/pdf/EDUCATION_IN_THAILAND_2017.pdf; OECD (2022^[14]), *Open and Connected Government Review of Thailand*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e1593a0c-en>.

Thailand also participates in several high-quality international tests and surveys, providing valuable information for policymakers (see Table 4.5). Participation in these tests and surveys allows Thailand to learn from international good practice in data collection as well as to assess the skills outcomes of its population with peers internationally.

Table 4.5. Overview of international survey data available for Thailand

Name	Latest available year	Responsible body
Catalogue of Learning Assessment 2.0	2018	CO
International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)	2022	IEA
International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS)	2018	IEA
Literacy and Educational Attainment Survey	2021	UNESCO
Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)	2022	OECD
Survey of Formal Education	2022	UNESCO
Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)	2019	IEA
Skills use Enterprise Survey	2019	World Bank
Future of Jobs Survey	2023	World Economic Forum
Research and Experimental Development Survey	2021	UNESCO
Survey of Cultural Employment	2016	UNESCO

Despite these efforts, gaps remain in key areas such as adult learning and labour market skills indicators, as outlined in the Overview of Thailand's current governance arrangements. These gaps are further evidenced by data coverage rates published by the Open Data Watch (see Figure 4.4).

Data collected by different ministries is not always aligned with user needs. For instance, while the Ministry of Labour and LAOS gather industry-specific skills data, limited co-ordination with the Ministry of Education results underutilised insights when setting education priorities (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023^[7]). These challenges are further compounded by disparities in institutional data capacities, overly protective data management practices, and the fragmented responsibilities and overlapping roles among local, provincial, and central authorities. Together, these challenges highlight the need for stronger alignment between data collection processes and their application (OECD, 2022^[14]).

Improving data integration and accessibility

Thailand's data initiatives are often fragmented, leading to the collection of data in incompatible formats and difficulties in cross-agency data sharing. Variation in data security practices and standards create further barriers to interoperability, with a lot of data being presented in non-machine-readable formats, limiting its usability for analysis and decision-making (OECD, 2022^[14]). Addressing these inefficiencies requires investments in digital infrastructure, harmonised data collection standards, and improved co-ordination among government entities.

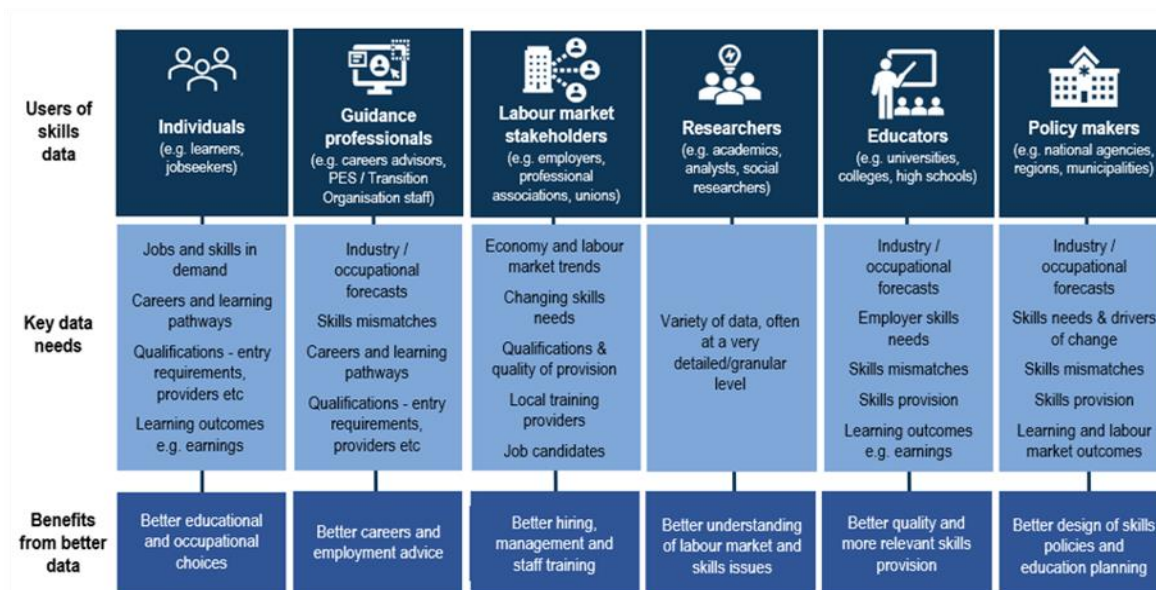
Ensuring that skills data is effectively used for policy making also requires a workforce equipped with advanced data management, analysis, and technology skills. However, Thailand currently faces a shortage of such expertise, limiting the ability to fully harness the potential of an open and data-driven public sector (OECD, 2022^[14]).

Leveraging existing initiatives to strengthen data governance

Thailand has already implemented several policies to overcome these challenges. The Digital Government Development Plan (2017-2022), for example, sets objectives aligned with developing integrated information systems, such as creating a more cohesive government, enhancing IT infrastructure, and citizen-centric services (DGA, 2021^[18]). Additionally, the Data Governance Framework 1.0, developed in 2018, highlights the importance of effective data governance to support Thailand's digital economy and society, addressing challenges like data duplication, quality issues, and security concerns. However, these initiatives often focus on data access and sharing after the data has been generated, overlooking the critical need for unified data generation processes (OECD, 2022^[14]). Additionally, to enhance human capital for better data practices, Thailand has established the Thailand Digital Government Academy (TDGA), which provides training and promotes data standards across the public and private sectors. Thailand can build on these existing initiatives to strengthen its skills information system and better collect and use skills data to inform policy making.

To ensure comprehensive data coverage and use, it is essential to clearly identify the priorities and gaps within the skills data landscape. To this end, Thailand can conduct surveys, research, and consultations with relevant stakeholders. This assessment would require a comprehensive mapping of existing data sources to identify skills data gaps and overlapping efforts in data collection. Moreover, Thailand could conduct an assessment of user needs across various stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, employers, workers, education and guidance providers, and others, as each of them have different needs (see Figure 4.8). For instance, individuals need information on job and skills demand as well as potential career and learning pathways, while researchers often require granular data to link variables such as education and skills with outcomes such as income, health, or social mobility. Canada's Labour Market Information Council (LMIC) provides a strong example of how users and institutions responsible for collecting and generating skills data can successfully identify and address gaps in skills data (see Box 4.8).

Figure 4.8. Skills data users and needs



Source: OECD, (2024^[27]), *Strengthening the Governance of the Swedish Skills System: Final Report*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e1ecc914-en>.

Thailand could use the insights gained from the analysis of data priorities and gaps to guide the development of a conceptual framework for skills data needs. This framework would define the key types of skills data required to support policy decisions, workforce planning, and skills data user needs. It would also establish principles for data integration, accessibility, and usability.

Building on this conceptual framework and the comprehensive mapping of existing skills data collection efforts outlined in the assessment above, Thailand could develop a skills data action plan to address identified gaps, minimise redundancies, and improve the overall coherence of its skills data ecosystem. This action plan should provide specific guidance on data collection methods, ensuring that datasets are compatible, interoperable, and align with common standards across institutions. By establishing clear protocols for data collection and management, the action plan can help integrate information across agencies and facilitate more efficient policy decision-making.

To further support data sharing and integration, Thailand could develop technical systems and platforms to facilitate seamless data exchange across ministries and agencies. Malaysia's Government Central Data Exchange (MyGDX), which integrates data across government agencies and facilitates secure and efficient data sharing, can serve as a model for Thailand in creating a centralised and integrated data infrastructure (see Box 4.8).

To support development of a comprehensive data framework and tools for improved data sharing, Thailand should fully leverage existing initiatives and align skills data collection efforts with the broader governmental data landscape. Ministries and agencies responsible for skills policy should work to integrate existing cross-governmental tools and services, such as data-sharing platforms and unified standards, which are not yet fully implemented across the government (OECD, 2022^[14]). This includes applying existing guidelines, such as the Data Governance Framework 1.0, expanding training initiatives through institutions like the Thailand Digital Government Academy (TDGA) or other targeted programmes, and utilising existing data platforms and infrastructure. Active engagement in the development of these cross-governmental data initiatives is also critical to ensure that skills data needs and gaps are communicated to the relevant agencies and ministries responsible for government data.

Establishing a cross-ministerial forum for skills data governance

To support these efforts, Thailand should establish a cross-ministerial forum or working group dedicated to strengthening the governance of skills data. This body would co-ordinate data collection initiatives, address fragmentation, and improve interoperability across agencies. It could also oversee the development of the conceptual framework for skills data needs, ensuring that key indicators align with the needs of various users and guiding the implementation of an action plan for data collection and integration. Moreover, the forum could engage broader user groups, including policymakers, local administrative organisations, researchers, and others, to identify and address diverse skills data needs.

The forum should include experts from all relevant ministries and agencies involved in skills data collection and use. These could include representatives from the Office of the Education Council (Ministry of Education), the Office of the Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Education), OVEC (Ministry of Education), the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (Office of the Prime Minister), the Department of Skill Development (the Ministry of Labour), the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation, and the Ministry of Industry. Additionally, it should involve representatives from Local Administrative Organisations (LAOs) and other data-related agencies such as the National Statistics Office and the Digital Government Development Agency.

Establishing this group as part of a broader inter-ministerial collaboration body, as recommended in Opportunity 2, would ensure alignment with overarching skills policy objectives. Sweden's Data Infrastructure Working Group, which operates under its Inter-agency Cooperation Structure for Skills and Lifelong Learning, provides a strong example of how collaboration among ministries can improve data governance and enhance policy responsiveness. Thailand could adapt this model to strengthen its own skills data infrastructure (see (Box 4.8).

By improving co-ordination, addressing data gaps, and leveraging existing initiatives, Thailand can build a more integrated and effective skills information system. This will enable policymakers to make data-driven decisions that support workforce development, enhance labour market resilience, and ensure that Thailand's skills policies are responsive to evolving economic needs.

Box 4.8. Relevant international examples: Improving the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy

Canada

Canada's Labour Market Information Council (LMIC), a non-profit organisation established in 2017, plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality and accessibility of skills data across the country. Acting as a bridge between diverse stakeholders, the LMIC facilitates collaboration among federal, provincial, and territorial governments. Its Board of Directors includes senior officials from across Canada, and its activities are guided by input from a National Stakeholder Advisory Panel and a Labour Market Information Expert Panel.

The LMIC conducts ongoing consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, including research centres, educational institutions, and businesses, to identify data gaps and address challenges in the labour market information (LMI) system. These challenges include the need for more localised data, improved methodologies, and better alignment of data with user needs. Insights from these consultations inform the LMIC's strategic goals, as detailed in its Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

Malaysia

Malaysia's Government Central Data Exchange (MyGDX) is a secure data-sharing platform designed to integrate information across government agencies and facilitate the delivery of end-to-end online services. By aggregating data from various sources, MyGDX streamlines access, reduces processing times, and minimises redundancies. Since its launch in 2018, the platform has enabled government agencies to share and merge frequently used data sets efficiently, thereby enhancing the performance of government service delivery.

To address privacy and data security concerns, MyGDX establishes clear data-sharing protocols, restricting access to authorised agencies. It aligns data collection standards across agencies to ensure compatibility, reduce inconsistencies, and improve data quality. Robust security frameworks further protect data during transmission and storage, safeguarding against unauthorised access and potential breaches. These measures support efficient and secure data sharing, enhancing the effectiveness of government service delivery.

Sweden

As part of the Inter-Agency Cooperation for Skills and Lifelong Learning (MSV), which brings together agencies with responsibilities for skills to co-ordinate and collaborate on skills policy, Sweden has established several technical-level working groups (WG). One of these groups is the skills data infrastructure WG, which brings together various agencies to discuss ongoing skills data initiatives, identifying gaps, overlaps, and potential collaborative projects. It also works to engage in dialogue with other key governmental agencies who engage in data and digital government more broadly, as well as with non-governmental stakeholders to stay informed on needs and ongoing initiatives.

Source: LMIC (2023^[38]) *Perceptions of LMI: Feedback from the Canadian ecosystem*, <https://lmic-cimt.ca/perceptions-of-lmi-feedback-from-the-canadian-ecosystem/#toc2>; LMIC (2024^[39]) *Navigating labour market information: Challenges faced by career development professionals*, <https://lmic-cimt.ca/navigating-labour-market-information-challenges-faced-by-career-development-professionals/>; OECD, (2024^[27]), *Strengthening the Governance of the Swedish Skills System: Final Report*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e1ecc914-en>; MyDGX (2025^[40]), *About MyGDX*, www.mygdx.gov.my/en/landing-page/about?theme=second-theme; MyGovernment, (2025^[41]), *Malaysian Governmental Central Data Exchange*, www.malaysia.gov.my/portal/content/30083?utm_source=chatgpt.com; GovInsider, (2018^[42]), *Malaysia launches government-wide data sharing platform*, https://govinsider.asia/intl-en/article/malaysia-launches-government-wide-data-sharing-platform?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Recommendation 7: Improving the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy

Improving the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy should be a priority for Thailand. Developing a comprehensive skills data framework that meets the needs of policymakers from across the government as well as non-governmental actors is key to designing effective, evidence-based skills policies as well as to informing education, training and career choices. Achieving this will require collaborative efforts to identify skills data needs and implement technologies that facilitate data sharing and utilisation.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to improve the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy:

- 7.1 Develop a comprehensive skills data framework, based on a robust assessment of user needs.** To ensure that skills data effectively supports policy development and decision-making, Thailand should create a comprehensive skills data framework that fully encompasses all relevant indicators. This framework should be informed by a thorough assessment of the needs of various stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, employers, and education providers. It should also build on a robust mapping of existing data sources across the skills system. Through this process, Thailand can identify key data gaps and priorities, ensuring that the framework captures all relevant indicators necessary for informed skills policy.
- 7.2 Align data collection standards and improve technical infrastructure, building on existing governmental data initiatives.** Align data collection standards and strengthen engagement with existing governmental data initiatives. Improving the interoperability of data across different government ministries and agencies is crucial for effective skills policy. Thailand needs to address the current fragmentation in data initiatives by standardising data collection processes and ensuring that different datasets are compatible with each other. Ministries and agencies should actively engage with broader governmental data initiatives – such as training opportunities, and efforts to unify standards – to leverage existing expertise and align skills policy with the government’s broader data-driven focus. This includes for example, incorporating guidance from the Data Governance Framework 1.0, expanding training initiatives through Thailand Digital Government Academy (TDGA). Additionally, strengthening technical infrastructure is essential for seamless data sharing and utilisation. Thailand should develop secure integration platforms, enhance interoperability tools for cross-agency data exchange, and ensure stakeholders have the technical capacity to effectively use the data.
- 7.3 Strengthen co-ordination in skills data collection by establishing a cross-ministerial forum.** Establishing a dedicated cross-ministerial forum on skills data infrastructure is essential for enhancing co-ordination and collaboration among various institutions. This forum would bring together experts from relevant ministries, local authorities, and data agencies to share information, identify gaps, and develop co-ordinated strategies for improving skills data collection, sharing, and utilisation. Such a forum could be established as a working group under a broader inter-ministerial co-ordination body on skills, such as the one recommended in Opportunity 2, and as exemplified by Sweden’s Data Working Group under the Inter-agency Cooperation Structure for Skills and Lifelong Learning. By fostering ongoing dialogue and collaboration, this forum can ensure that Thailand’s skills data infrastructure is robust, responsive, and aligned with the needs of all stakeholders.

Recommendation 8: Enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services to improve accessibility and meet diverse user needs

While the collection of high-quality comprehensive data to inform policy making is essential, ensuring skills data is open and accessible to all relevant actors is equally important. These actors include workers, unemployed, learners, parents, employers, education and training providers, community organisations, and researchers. Informing these key actors about labour market needs, occupational prospects, and related education and training pathways can empower them to make choices that align with their personal needs and preferences as well as with the needs and prospects of the labour market.

Thailand has made significant progress in improving the availability and accessibility of government information through key legislative measures like the Official Information Act (1997) and the Royal Decree on Criteria and Procedures for Good Governance (2003), which mandate proactive online publication of government information and empower citizens to request information. Central platforms such as govchannel.go.th, the Open Government Data Centre, and the Government Information Centre have been developed to provide citizens with access to a broad range of data, open statistics, and government services. These efforts are further supported by initiatives like the Digital Government Development Plan (2017–2020) and the introduction of APIs for accessing data from key agencies (OECD, 2022^[14]).

However, challenges persist in disseminating skills information to individuals and stakeholders. Many agencies maintain separate open data initiatives that are not integrated into central platforms. As a result, platforms like GovChannel act as search engines rather than unified repositories. Additionally, the implementation of open government laws is inconsistent across ministries and agencies, and the process for citizens to request information remains unclear and unevenly enforced. These gaps hinder transparency and limit the potential benefits of open government initiatives for citizens and stakeholders.

Skills information is made publicly accessible through various channels, including the Department of Employment's open data portal. The portal offers detailed labour market information from survey and administrative sources. Additionally, the Department of Employment's Smart Job Centre offers employment forecasts and wage information at the occupation level. The DSD's online training portal provides information on available public training provided by the DSD. The STEMPlus Platform, overseen by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, enhances the alignment of skills supply and demand by integrating data from educational institutions and industries, with a particular focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields to address workforce needs (see Box 4.9).

However, Thailand could further strengthen its information systems to make them more comprehensive, relevant, and tailored to individual needs. Currently, only a limited number of online portals provide information on skills needs, labour market trends, and learning opportunities. Moreover, these efforts remain fragmented across sectors and industries, as well as across different types of services, such as education, training and employment. They also rely on diverse data sources, collected by different ministries, agencies, private sector actors. This fragmentation makes it difficult to create a cohesive overview or develop tools that effectively guide individuals toward personalised information and services. Moreover, Thailand should aim to provide more real-time labour market information that can help job matching, guide career and training choice, as well as policy-related decision making (The World Bank Group, 2021^[43]).

Enhancing digital platforms for skills information

To strengthen the dissemination of skills information, Thailand could establish a dedicated online platform. This platform would serve as a comprehensive resource, informing citizens, employers, education and training providers, and researchers about labour market needs, occupational prospects, and related education and training pathways. The platform should include results from Skills Assessment and Anticipation (SAA) exercises, as described in Chapter 3, as well as updated labour market indicators, prospects in various fields and occupations, and more.

While the new platform could build on existing models, like the STEMPlus Platform, it should adopt a broader, cross-sectoral approach, offering personalised features such as career quizzes, AI-driven chatbots, links to relevant services, and tailored recommendations to guide users through career options, training programmes, and labour market trends. Such an approach can help support individual, in making informed choices that align both with their personal circumstances and preferences and with labour market trends. The My Career Website in Flanders (see Box 4.9) provides a good practice example for such an initiative.

Improving co-ordination of career guidance services

In addition to online resources, Thailand provides a variety of in-person career guidance services to support students and job seekers in accessing tailored information on career pathways, educational opportunities, and the skills required in the labour market. primarily delivered through educational institutions for students engaged in learning and training, as well as Provincial Labour Offices that cater to job seekers. Civil society organisations (CSOs) also play a critical role in guidance provision, particularly in remote areas where public services may be less accessible.

Despite these efforts, guidance systems in Thailand faces several challenges (UNICEF, 2022^[20]). The reach and quality of these services vary significantly across regions and populations, creating disparities in access. Additionally, weak co-ordination between government ministries and service providers, coupled with insufficient guidelines and support for guidance counsellors, hinders their ability to deliver accurate, up-to-date advice on available opportunities and current labour market needs. These issues are compounded by inadequate funding, which limits the capacity of guidance providers to deliver high-quality services equitably. While workshops and seminars have been organised to bring stakeholders together from across the skills and career guidance system (Ministry of Labour, 2022^[44]), greater efforts are needed to align standards, enhance service quality, and ensure equitable access to relevant guidance services nationwide.

To address the disparities in access and quality of guidance services across regions and populations, Thailand should prioritise strengthening co-ordination among key actors in the guidance system, including government ministries, Provincial Labour Offices, educational institutions, and civil society organisations. Establishing formal mechanisms for collaboration, such as a national task force or regular inter-agency forums, can help align efforts and ensure that all stakeholders work toward shared goals. Additionally, co-ordination efforts at the subnational level, under the oversight of the provincial skills development co-ordinators (see Opportunity 2), are essential to aligning goals, needs, and standards on the ground.

Expanding access to guidance services for hard-to-reach groups

Many guidance providers require additional support to effectively serve hard-to-reach groups, such as minority and rural communities and informal sector workers. Strengthening guidance services for these groups requires targeted investment in resources, training, and outreach strategies. Providing guidance providers with the necessary tools and up-to-date advice on career pathways, training opportunities, and labour market needs is essential. This includes increasing funding to ensure access to relevant materials and expanding training programmes to build the capacity of counsellors, particularly in underserved regions.

Ensuring equitable access to guidance services also requires focused attention on minority communities, rural areas, and informal sector workers. While decentralising guidance services can help ensure that they are tailored to local needs, central government oversight and resources are necessary to maintain service quality and consistency. Developing culturally sensitive guidelines and outreach strategies can further enhance engagement minority and rural communities. Additionally, expanding digital platforms can help bridge accessibility gaps, particularly in areas where in-person services are limited.

Thailand could draw lessons from Skills Development Scotland's (SDS) all-ages guidance approach (see Box 4.9), which demonstrates how a well-coordinated, lifelong system of guidance can integrate digital and in-person services to meet diverse user needs, even in a decentralised context.

Box 4.9. Relevant international examples: Enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services to improve accessibility and meet diverse user needs

Flanders, Belgium

The Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB), Flanders' public employment service, acts as a career planner for all adults in the region. Through its "My Career" (Mijn Loopbaan) website, VDAB offers resources such as job search tips, skills assessments, information on occupations with strong labour market prospects, and training opportunities via VDAB programmes and partners. The site features several interactive tools, including a job preference test, a tool that matches skills from users' CVs to suitable jobs, and a career pathway test that suggests next steps in one's career. Additionally, the website guides users toward in-person support, such as applying for career guidance vouchers (loopbaancheques). These vouchers provide seven hours of subsidised career coaching every six years at designated career coaching centres, resulting in a personalised development plan.

STEMPlus in Thailand

STEMPlus is a platform designed for the development and planning of STEM human resources. It bridges the gap between workforce supply and demand by integrating and analysing data from both the education and industry sectors. This includes statistics on workforce production from educational institutions, skill requirements identified by key industries, and benefits and incentives related to STEM workforce development and employment. The platform serves three main target groups: enterprises (for talent recruitment and employee development), students and the general public (through skill assessment tools), and training centres (by providing accreditation for STEM training courses).

Scotland (United Kingdom)

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) serves as Scotland's national skills body, offering career services for all ages, guiding individuals from school through to further education and employment. SDS provides careers information, advice, and guidance, connecting people with professionally qualified careers advisors. It operates local career centres across Scotland and manages the "My World of Work" website, a key resource for career information and advice. SDS also supports the continuous professional development of career practitioners, collects national data to monitor service quality, and collaborates with various agencies and stakeholders. Additionally, SDS uses a strong evidence base to enhance its guidance services and actively promotes employer involvement in education through national programmes and regional employer groups.

Source: OECD Skills Strategy Questionnaire Thailand; VDAB (2025^[45]), Website VDAB, www.vdab.be/; Skills Development Scotland, (2025^[46]), Website Skills Development Scotland, www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/.

Recommendation 8: Enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services to improve accessibility and meet diverse user needs

Enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services is important to improve accessibility and meet diverse user needs. Effectively using data to guide decisions about education, training, and careers is crucial for a thriving skills system. Providing accessible and actionable skills information empowers individuals to make informed choices that align with their goals and abilities, while also enabling policymakers and stakeholders to design evidence-based policies that respond to current and future labour market needs. This information can be delivered through in-person guidance, as well as online portals and digital services that connect users to relevant opportunities.

Thailand can undertake the following specific actions to provide guidance and accessible skills information to individuals and stakeholders:

- 8.1 Establish a comprehensive and integrated online platform for skills information.** Thailand should develop a dedicated online platform to serve as a centralised resource for skills information, labour market trends, and educational and training pathways. Building on existing initiatives such as the STEMPlus Platform, the new platform should adopt a broader, cross-sectoral approach, incorporating personalised features like career quizzes, AI-driven chatbots, and tailored recommendations. It should also integrate real-time labour market data, results from Skills Assessment and Anticipation (SAA) exercises, and updated occupational forecasts. This platform can empower individuals and stakeholders to make informed decisions that align with personal preferences and labour market needs while addressing the current fragmentation in information systems.
- 8.2 Strengthen co-ordination and collaboration across the guidance system.** To improve the delivery of skills information and career guidance, Thailand must enhance co-ordination among key actors, including government ministries, Provincial Labour Offices, educational institutions, and civil society organisations (CSOs). Establishing formal mechanisms, such as a national task force or inter-agency forums, can align efforts and create a unified framework for guidance services. At the subnational level, local skills managers should oversee co-ordination to ensure alignment between local needs and national priorities. Greater collaboration will ensure that guidance services are consistent, comprehensive, and effectively linked to broader labour market strategies.
- 8.3 Enhance the capacity and inclusivity of in-person guidance services.** Improving in-person guidance requires targeted investments in training and resources for guidance providers. Expanding professional development opportunities for counsellors and equipping them with up-to-date tools and materials will enhance their ability to provide accurate and relevant advice on career and training pathways. Ensuring equitable access to guidance services should be a priority, with tailored strategies to reach rural areas, disadvantaged populations, and minorities. Decentralisation can help adapt services to local needs, but central oversight is essential to maintain quality and standards. Digital platforms should complement in-person guidance by expanding access where physical services are limited.

Summary of policy recommendations

Recommendations	Specific actions
Opportunity 1: Enhancing the strategic capacity to design and implement skills policy	
Recommendation 1: Designing a national strategy to strengthen the coherence of skills policy building on the OECD Skills Strategy for Thailand	1.1. Adopt a more integrated approach to skills policy by either developing a single national skills strategy or strengthening the alignment of existing strategies 1.2. Establish a formal mandate for the national strategy with clearly defined roles and responsibilities 1.3. Ground the strategy in robust evidence and analysis
Recommendation 2: Ensuring effective implementation of existing skills-related strategies	2.1. Secure a champion(s) that can promote broad awareness and support for the strategy(ies) 2.2. Establish strong implementation practices that ensure effective achievement of strategic goals 2.3. Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the strategy's implementation
Opportunity 2: Fostering a whole-of-government approach to skills policy making	
Recommendation 3: Strengthening horizontal collaboration and co-ordination among government ministries and agencies	3.1. Establish a dedicated inter-ministerial co-ordination body for skills policy 3.2. Strengthen co-ordination bodies for skills policy, including newly established ones, in line with international best practice 3.3. Leverage informal co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms to better support a whole-of-government approach to skills
Recommendation 4: Strengthening vertical collaboration and co-ordination between the national, provincial, and local levels	4.1. Strengthen subnational skills policy capacity through pilot programmes, direct engagement, and targeted support 4.2. Establish provincial skills development co-ordinators and a collaborative network to foster collaboration and peer learning across LAOs 4.3. Amplify the voice of subnational authorities in national skills policy discussions through the network of provincial skills development co-ordinators
Opportunity 3: Strengthening stakeholder engagement in skills policy making	
Recommendation 5: Strengthening mechanisms and capacity for effective stakeholder engagement	5.1. Strengthen the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement bodies 5.2. Strengthen and co-ordinate sectoral stakeholder engagement mechanisms through existing and emerging structures 5.3. Enhance stakeholder engagement by adopting additional tools and strengthening capacity-building efforts
Recommendation 6: Strengthening engagement with hard-to-reach stakeholders	6.1. Diversify engagement methods to make participation accessible to hard-to-reach groups 6.2. Leverage provincial and local authorities to support localised engagement 6.3. Support and strengthen representative advisory bodies and umbrella organisations
Opportunity 4: Improving skills information systems	
Recommendation 7: Improving the collection and use of skills data to inform skills policy	7.1. Develop a comprehensive skills data framework, based on a robust assessment of user needs 7.2. Align data collection standards and improve technical infrastructure, building on existing governmental data initiatives 7.3. Strengthen co-ordination in skills data collection by establishing a cross-ministerial forum
Recommendation 8: Enhancing the co-ordination and delivery of skills information and guidance services to improve accessibility and meet diverse user needs	8.1. Establish a comprehensive and integrated online platform for skills information 8.2. Strengthen co-ordination and collaboration across the guidance system 8.3. Enhance the capacity and inclusivity of in-person guidance services

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OECD Skills Strategy Thailand

Assessment and Recommendations

Skills are central to shaping a better future and to enabling countries and individuals to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world. Megatrends such as digitalisation, globalisation, demographic change and climate change are reshaping work and society, generating a growing demand for higher levels and new sets of skills.

OECD Skills Strategy projects offer a strategic and comprehensive approach to assessing countries' skills-related challenges and opportunities, and to supporting the development of more effective skills systems. The OECD works in close collaboration with countries to develop policy responses that are tailored to their specific skills needs. The work is guided by the OECD Skills Strategy Framework, which supports analysis and dialogue on how countries can: 1) develop relevant skills over the life course; 2) use skills effectively in work and society; and 3) strengthen the governance of their skills system.

This report, *OECD Skills Strategy Thailand: Assessment and Recommendations*, identifies key opportunities and presents targeted recommendations to strengthen the skills of youth in initial education, foster greater participation in adult learning, and strengthen the governance of the skills system.



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