2. Educational Situations and Trends

2.1 Educational System

According to the National Education Act, B.E. 2542 (1999), proclaimed on 20 August 1999, the education reform has been implemented to expeditiously provide 12-year basic education, covering 6-year primary education, 3-year lower secondary education and 3-year upper secondary education. The compulsory education is extended from 6 years to 9 years, together with tuition fee exemption for years 10-12. Also, the Act provides an opportunity for educational institutions to be able to offer and manage any pattern of education based on their own needs, i.e. formal and non-formal education, or even free-style education.

Nonetheless, Thailand's school enrollment rates of school-age population in primary and secondary education are still lower than those in some other Asian countries and in all European and American countries (Table 4.11).

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[2] Labour force in the informal sector means the labour market that lacks systems for employment, welfare, and protection under the social security law.

Table 4.11 Enrollment Rates of School-Age Population in Basic Educational System in Various Countries, 2001/2002

Primary education enrollment		Secondary education enrollment	
Country	**Rate (percent)**	**Country**	**Rate (percent)**
WHO/SEAR		**WHO/SEAR**	
Sri Lanka	105.0	Sri Lanka	82.0[1]
Maldives	96.0	India	59.7[1]
Indonesia	92.0	Thailand	55.0[1]
Bangladesh	87.0	Nepal	54.6[1]
Thailand	86.0	Indonesia	47.0
India	83.0	Bangladesh	44.0
Myanmar	82.0	Myanmar	35.0
Nepal	70.0	Maldives	31.0
Bhutan	16.0[1]	Bhutan	5.0[1]
North Korea	n.a.	North Korea	n.a.
ASEAN		**ASEAN**	
Malaysia	95.0	Brunei	81.9[1]
Vietnam	94.0	Singapore	75.6[1]
Philippines	93.0	Malaysia	69.0
Indonesia	92.0	Vietnam	65.0
Singapore	91.4[1]	Philippines	56.0
Brunei	87.9[1]	Thailand	55.0[1]
Thailand	86.0	Indonesia	47.0
Cambodia	86.0	Myanmar	35.0
Laos	83.0	Laos	31.0
Myanmar	82.0	Cambodia	21.0
World (top ten)		**World (top ten)**	
Sweden	102.0	Japan	101.0
Norway	101.0	Sweden	99.0
Belgium	101.0	Canada	98.0
Iceland	101.0	Norway	95.0
United States	101.0	United Kingdom	95.0
United Kingdom	101.0	Finland	95.0
Finland	100.0	France	92.0
Canada	100.0	Netherlands	90.0
Netherlands	100.0	Switzerland	88.0
France	100.0	Austria	88.0

Sources: Human Development Reports, 2002-2004.

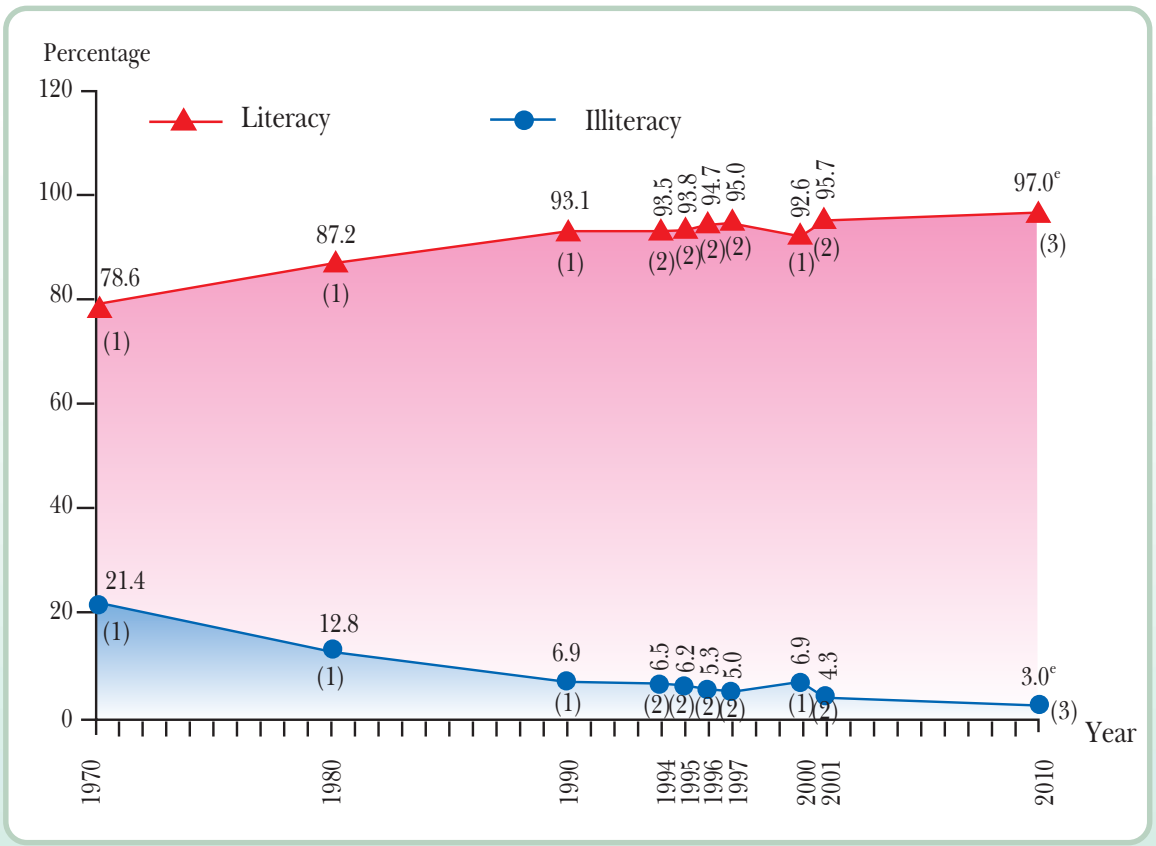
Note: [1] Data for 1998. The listing of countries is done in order of their enrollment rates.

2.2 Knowledge, Capability and Skills of Thai People

2.2.1 Literacy Rate

The literacy rate among Thai population aged 15 and over rose from 78.6% in 1970 to 95% in 1997. The trend, however, reversed after the economic crisis (Figure 4.13), but slightly rose to 95.7% in 2001. Yet, the rate remains much higher than the average for other developing countries (74.5%). Although Thailand's literacy rate ranks first among the 10 ASEAN member countries,[3] its illiteracy rate was recorded at 4.3% in 2001. It is estimated that the literacy rate will be as high as 97% in 2010.

Figure 4.13 Literacy and Illiteracy Rates of Thai Population Aged 15 and over, 1970-2010



Sources: (1) Data for 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000 were derived from the Population and Housing Censuses. National Statistical Office.

(2) Data for 1994-1997 and 2001 were derived from UNDP, Human Development Reports, 1997-2003.

(3) UNESCO, Principal Regional Office for Asia and Pacific. Literacy in Asia and the Pacific.

[3] UNDP, Human Development Report, 2003.

Nevertheless, when considering the reading rate among the Thai people, it was found that only 35.4 million people (61.2%) read regularly, and on average for 2.99 minutes per day (Table 4.12).

Table 4.12 Percentage of Thai Population Aged 6 Years and Over Who Read Regularly, by Reading Period, Region of Residence, Sex and Age Group, 2003

Administrative region, sex and age group	Percentage of reading population[1]	Time spent on reading[2] (minutes/day)	
		Per person (entire population)	Per reading person
Reading	61.2	2.99	67.49
Non-reading	38.8	-	-
Administrative region			
Urban	74.4	5.94	69.28
Rural	54.7	1.67	64.79
Sex			
Female	57.7	2.18	65.10
Male	64.8	3.83	68.97
Age group			
6 - 9	77.4	n.a.	n.a.
10 - 14	90.0	1.28	68.99
15 - 24	80.4	3.47	79.67
25 - 59	54.3	2.84	59.28
60 and over	24.4	4.43	84.72

Sources: [1] Report on the Reading of Population Survey, 2003. National Statistical Office.
[2] Report on the Reading Time of Population Survey, 2001. National Statistical Office.

Notes: [1] Population aged 6 years and over.
[2] Population aged 10 years and over.

2.2.2 Learning Rate

The learning rate of Thai people is still rather low at only 58.7% (2003) and there are wide disparities between those for the regions and between urban and rural residents (Table 4.13). Besides, a survey on children and youths revealed that, in 2002, such people had the capacity and skills in foreign languages and computer use of less than 50% (Table 4.14).

Table 4.13 Learning Rate of Thai People, 1992-2003

Unit: Percent

Region and area	1992	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Urban	57.1	60.0	61.7	65.2	65.4	66.4	67.5	68.6	70.0
Rural	36.5	41.0	42.2	45.3	46.9	48.1	49.4	50.8	52.9
Region									
- Central	41.0	48.2	49.4	50.9	52.1	54.1	52.4	53.2	58.6
- North	36.2	38.6	40.7	43.3	43.5	45.0	46.6	48.2	49.9
- Northeast	39.6	44.1	45.0	48.6	51.0	51.7	54.8	55.7	56.5
- South	43.6	47.5	48.5	52.6	53.8	54.3	56.3	58.7	58.7
- Bangkok	61.6	64.8	66.8	72.5	72.1	72.6	73.1	73.7	75.7
Whole country	42.3	47.1	48.5	51.8	53.0	54.1	55.3	56.6	58.7

Source: Data from the Workforce Survey (3rd Round) of the National Statistical Office, analyzed by the Bureau of Development Evaluation and Dissemination, NESDB.

Note: Learning rate is the level of literacy and basic computation required for daily livelihood; to attain such a level, a person should have had 5-6 years of formal schooling or equivalent.

Table 4.14 Percentage of Children and Youths Aged 11-24 Years With Computer and Language Capability by Area, Region, 2002

Unit: Percent

Capability	Whole country	Area		Region				
		Urban	Rural	Bangkok	Central	North	Northeast	South
- Computer use	41.3 (6.4 million)	42.7	33.7	38.5	45.5	48.0	30.3	37.4
- Language for communication purposes	29.2 (4 million)	34.1	27.0	31.4	29.6	34.3	18.0	49.4
- English	82.4	89.9	78.2	94.3	95.3	92.1	75.0	64.0
- Chinese	1.5	2.1	1.1	2.9	1.3	0.9	2.3	0.5
- Other	16.1	8.0	20.7	2.8	3.4	7.0	22.7	35.5

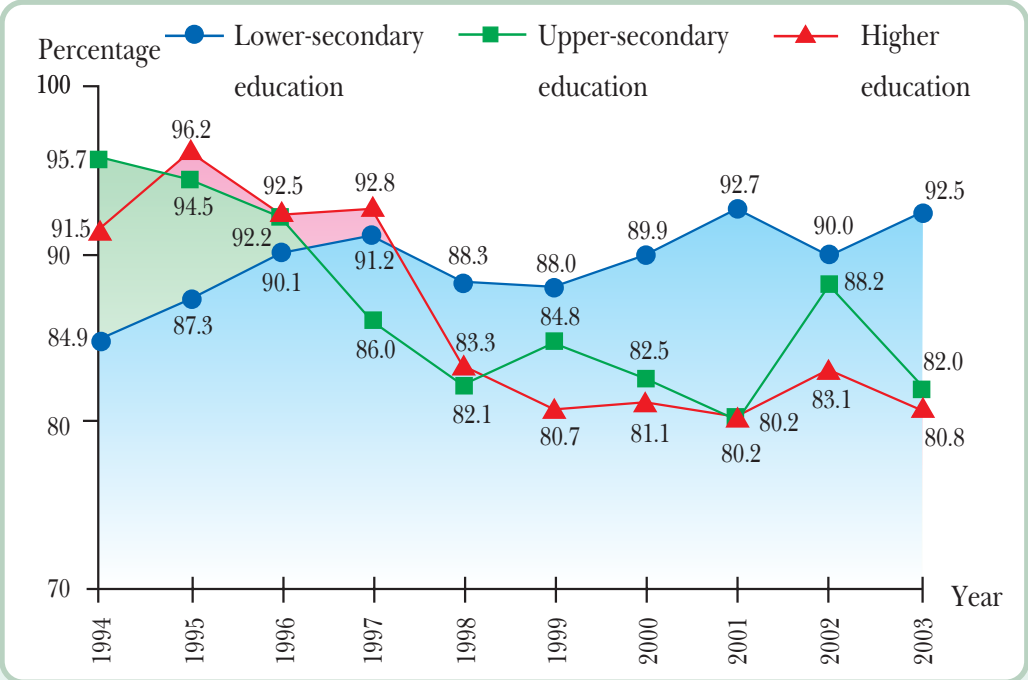
Source: Report on the Survey of Children and Youths, 2002. National Statistical Office.

2.3 Education Opportunities

2.3.1 Educational Continuation

The rates of students continuing their education from primary to lower-secondary, from lower to upper-secondary, and from upper-secondary to higher education tended to be rising during the pre-economic crisis period. But the rates dropped during the crisis and rose again after the crisis was over (Figure 4.14).

Figure 4.14 Rates of Educational Continuation by Educational Level, Academic Years 1994-2003



Source: Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education.

With the higher rate of educational continuation, coupled with an increase in the average duration of education among Thai population aged 15 and over from 6.6 years in 1996 to 7.8 years in 2003 (Table 4.15), the proportion of labour force (2003) with primary schooling has dropped to 63.8%. It has been projected that the proportion of workers with primary education will drop further to only 39.9% in 2020, while those with higher education will rise from 11.9% in 2003 to 22.5% in 2020 (Table 4.16).

Table 4.15 Average Years of Schooling for Thai People, 1996-2003

Age group	Years of schooling							
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
15-21 years	8.8	9.0	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.6	9.7	9.8
15-59 years	7.2	7.4	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.7	7.8	7.9
60 years and over	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.9
Average (15 years+)	6.6	6.8	7.0	7.1	7.2	7.4	7.6	7.8

Source: Reports on Thai People's Educational Attainment, 2000 and 2003. Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education.

Note: An estimate for 2003.

Table 4.16 Structure (Percentage) of Labour Force by Educational Level, 1995-2020

Educational level	1995[(1)]	1997[(1)]	1999[(1)]	2001[(1)]	2002[(1)]	2003[(1)]	2010[(2)]	2020[(2)]
Primary and lower	78.0	75.2	69.8	66.3	65.6	63.8	55.9	39.9
Lower-secondary	8.9	10.1	12.0	12.7	13.0	13.7	14.7	14.6
Upper-secondary	3.3	3.6	5.0	6.2	6.8	7.2	8.7	14.3
Vocational	4.7*	4.8*	5.0*	3.4*	3.3*	3.3*	6.6	8.7
Higher	5.1	6.2	8.2	11.3	11.3	11.9	14.1	22.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: [(1)] Data for 1995-2003 were derived from the Reports of the Workforce Surveys 3rd Round, 1995-2003. National Statistical Office.

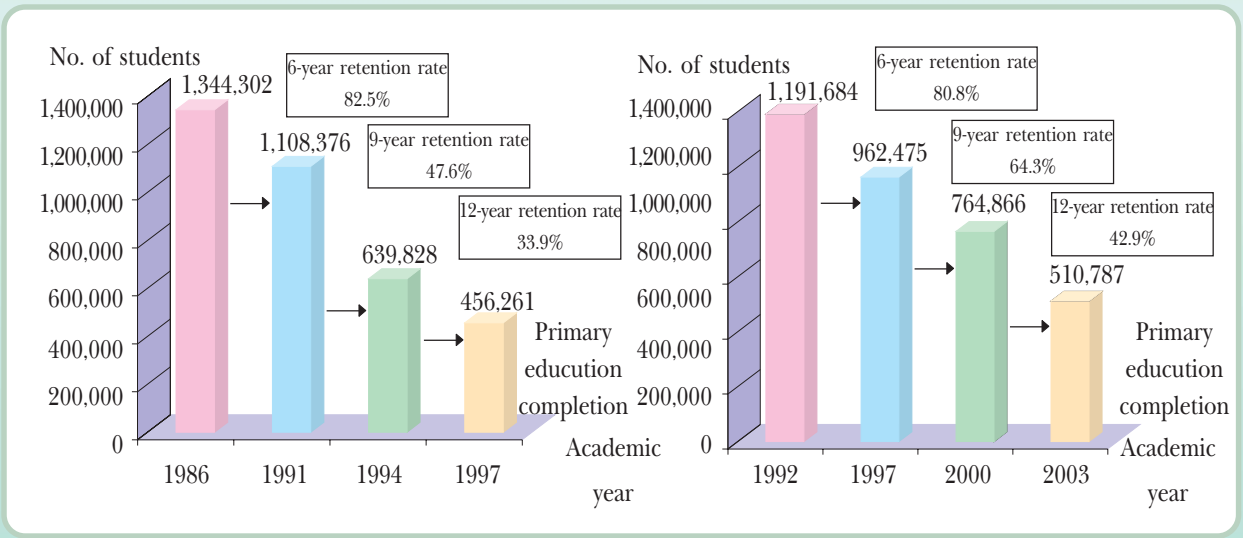
[(2)] Data for 2010-2020 were derived from the Report on Thailand's Social and Economic Trends. Thailand Development Research Institute

Note: * Including graduates from vocational and teacher-training colleges for 1995-2000

2.3.2 Education Retention Rate

The students retention rates have been improving, essentially for the primary educational level, but the rises for those at the lower-secondary and upper-secondary educational levels are rather slow. The 12-year retention through upper-secondary education is only 42.9% (Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15 Comparison of Student Retention Rates, Academic Years 1986-1997 and 1992-2003



Source: Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education.

2.4 Quality of Education

The Thai educational system tends to focus on memorization rather than strengthening of analytical skills for problem solving and self-study, resulting in low educational achievements below 50% for both primary and secondary levels. Thai children's capability is weaker in terms of rational and systematic analysis and synthesis (Table 4.17). Besides, the Thai educational system cannot compete with those in other countries as evidenced in the results of the academic Olympics contest. In the contest, Thai students' mathematics and science capabilities were lowest among the five Asian countries participating in the event, except for 2002-2004 when Thailand was ranked fourth, better than Singapore and Vietnam (Figure 4.16). Most Thai students have a problem with answering a question that requires the application of knowledge for further analysis and problem solving, and the measuring of process skills. As a result, a lot of Thai people lack the skills for analysis which is a basis for creating life-skills, leading to failure or inability to resolve a problem or situation related to health risks.

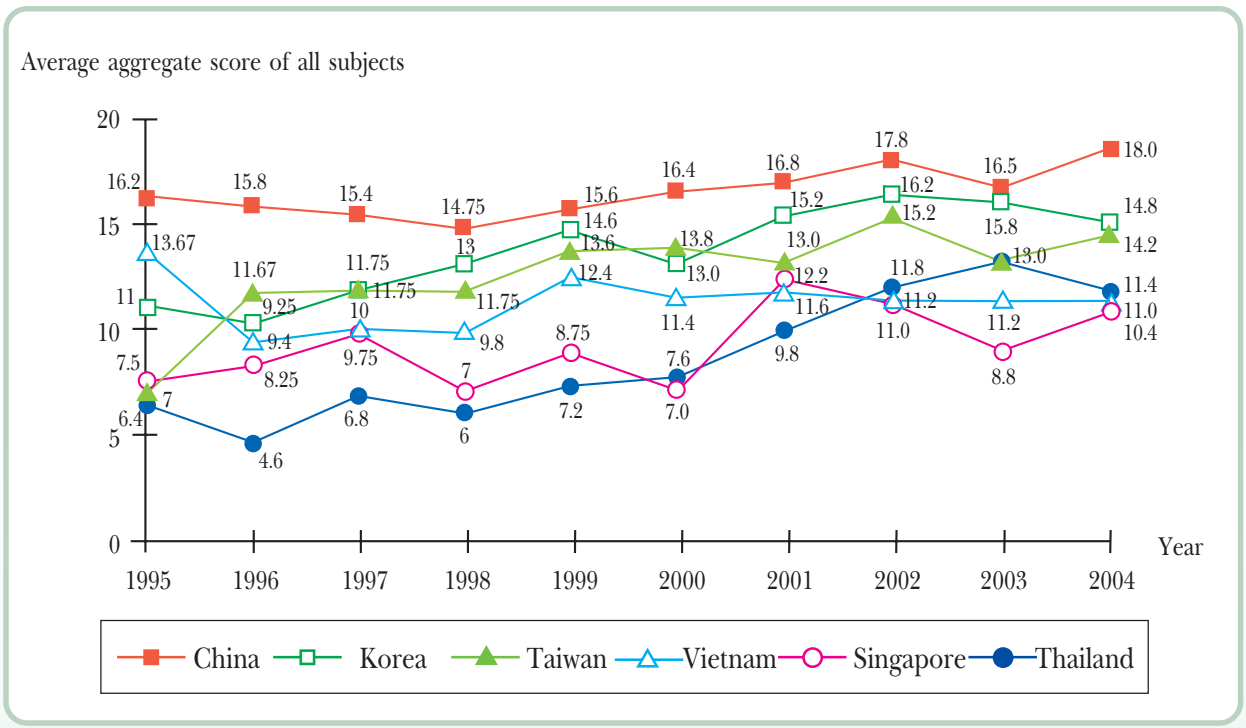
Table 4.17 Learning Achievements and Attitudes of Primary and Secondary School Students, 2000-2003

Learning achievement / Educational level		Average score (percent)			
		Mathematics	Science	Thai language	English
1. Primary	2001	46.9	n.a.	54.3	49.6
	2002	49.9	n.a.	50.6	47.4
	2003	41.7	42.4	45.2	41.1
2. Lower-secondary	2000	31.2	40.4	53.0	38.9
	2001	32.4	n.a.	46.3	38.9
	2002	39.1	n.a.	46.7	45.3
	2003	35.0	38.1	54.0	37.9
3. Upper-secondary	2003	34.0	48.8*	44.5	39.1
Learning attitude / Educational level		**Computational**	**Analytical**	**Language capability**	
- Upper-secondary	2000	38.3	43.1	37.2	
	2001	41.7	39.6	38.7	
	2002	38.0	42.9	39.2	
	2003	38.9	38.3	40.7	

Source: Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education.

Notes:
1. Assessments of students' learning achievements for primary and lower-secondary levels, 2001-2002, in three subjects: Thai language, English and mathematics.
2. For 2000-2003, the assessments of upper-secondary school students' learning attitudes were undertaken in three aspects: computational, analytical and language capabilities.
3. For 2003, there was also an assessment of learning achievements for upper-secondary school students.
4. * For physical/biological sciences.

Figure 4.16 Results of Olympic Scientific Knowledge Contest of Students from Thailand and Other Asian Countries, 1995-2004



Source: Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education.

Note: Average aggregate score of all subjects means an average score of 5 subjects (mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology and computer science) for each year.