

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

**Thailand: Position Paper**

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**Topic 001: Governance and its Effects on Education**

Governance and its Effects on Education is an integral issue that plagues many countries throughout the world. Education is the single most important privilege in the world. It provides humans with knowledge, which enables us to create, inspire and change the world. However many people, most importantly children and adolescents do not have access to formal education because they live in developing countries. Governance is often at the root of this issue, as poor governance hinders the creation and implementation of quality education. Corruption, political instability and financial crises are factors that lead to poor governance and result in a continuous cycle of poverty that is extremely hard to break.

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral parliament. There is a King who is head of state, a Prime Minister who is head of government, a senate and a lower house which is the legislative branch of the Thai government. Unfortunately, Thailand has been embroiled in anti-government protests since November 2013, and has faced political unrest for close to a decade, following a military coup that ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in 2006. This political turmoil has stalled the passage of meaningful and needed reform within the education system, despite a national education budget that has doubled over the last decade. Under the National Education Act, 12 years of free public schooling is guaranteed to all Thai citizens, with a 2002 amendment also guaranteeing two years of free preschool. Higher education and college however is not free which leads to an incredible large gap in the enrollment rates between the rich (mainly people living in urban areas) and the poor (mainly people living in rural areas). This has happened despite the government’s active policy to foster education loans for poor college students. These inequalities in education need to be eliminated to break the cycle of poverty.

In the [Thai hierarchy system that governs most professional setting](http://www.nakedfarang.com/working/businesshierarchy.php)s including schools and colleges, it is very taboo for an employee to ever question anything someone ranked higher does. To challenge someone in greater power implies that you do not trust his or her expertise or judgment. The hierarchy system disallows a free flow of new ideas and innovations because anybody who is not of an established rank within the system is unable to voice their ideas or concerns. Furthermore this rigid hierarchy system protects the corruption that is [corroding Thailand’s schools](http://saminbangkok.com/2015/09/07/how-the-thai-school-system-fucks-me-up/), by making the people in power untouchable. UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Regional Bureau for Education have commissioned a series of in-depth studies on education financial planning in Thailand focusing on MTEFs (a transparent planning and budget formulation process). However this is not enough. Thailand needs to continue to work with UNESCO and other non-governmental organizations to fix this corruption problem and implement quality education.

**Topic 002: Preservation of world heritage sites**

World Heritage Sites are cultural and natural places around the world that hold outstanding and significant value to communities and countries everywhere. UNESCO works to identify, preserve and protect these sites on behalf of various cultures and governments. Every year, member states are permitted to apply for certain cultural sites to receive the designation of a World Heritage Site. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the World Conservation Union (WCU) considers all tentative sites and vote once a year to determine whether or not they require preservation and protection. However the World Heritage Committees continue to face two main dangers/challenges to these sites: Climate Change and War. There has been a lack of action taken by member nations on these issues, thus further debate and action is integral to successfully preserving and protecting humanity's most valuable sites.

Thailand has five places that have been designated World Heritage sites. Three are cultural sites: The Ban Chiang Archaeological Site, the Historic City of Ayutthaya, and the Historic Town of Sukhothai and Associated Historic Towns, while two are natural sites: The Dong Phayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex and the Thungyai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildfire Sanctuaries. Unfortunately these valuable and historic sites have been damaged by climate change and war. In northeastern Thailand, floods have damaged the 600 year-old ruins of Sukhothai and the ruins of Ayutthaya, which served as the capital from the 14th to the 18th centuries. Furthermore, because of irrigation and flooding, the proposed construction of a dam was brought to the attention of the IUCN (the official advisory body on nature to UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee) when they discovered that this dam would be located in the country’s Western Forest Complex and adjacent to the Thungyai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuaries, two World Heritage Sites. Due to the habitat destruction that would occur because of the dam, this project was terminated however the implementation of dams around the world negatively impact World Heritage Sites.

Thailand is working hard to protect its World Heritage Sites. For example, the Historic City of Ayutthaya is managed as a historical park. It is protected by Thai law under the Act on Ancient Monuments, Antiques, Objects of Art and National Museums and enforced by the Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture. In addition to formal legal protection, committees for the preservation and development of all World Heritage Sites in Thailand at the national and local levels have been established as well as a number of special-interest heritage conservation non-governmental agencies. Thailand needs to continue to work with international organizations such as UNESCO and IUCN as well as domestic non-governmental agencies to develop, protect and preserve its World Heritage Sites from factors such as climate change and war.

**Topic 003: Supporting and Accomplishing Education 2030**

Education 2030 places a focus on an educational approach that promotes increased and expanded access, inclusion, equity, quality, and learning at all levels. However a large proportion of children are not able to receive this education due to conflict or natural disasters. Violent conflicts and extreme weather events create conditions that usually destroy educational institutions. Without establishing proper mechanisms to maintain education systems in areas of unrest, it is impossible to ensure equitable and inclusive education for all individuals. Cultural differences also hinder the implementation of this educational approach. The variation in cultures around the world results in a wide range of teaching styles and perceptions of what a quality education should be defined as. Education 2030 represents Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” (United Nations).

Like many other nations throughout the world, Thailand is involved with the implementation of Education 2030. On September 1, 2016, OECD and UNESCO met with the Office of the Education Council in Thailand to provide education policy advice regarding the Education 2030 plan to the Thai government. It was the first time that the OECD and UNESCO have joined forces to provide concerted education policy advice to a country. This review covered four policy domains: curriculum, student assessment, teachers and school leaders, and information and communication technology in education. It also identified key policy issues and challenges facing the Thai education system and provided recommendations for the government to consider in its reforms. The key recommendations of this review are: establishing effective, efficient and transparent curriculum review and revision processes, developing common student performance standards to guide assessments at all levels of the education system, establishing minimum criteria for entry into teacher preparation in consultation with pre-service program providers and prioritizing investment in infrastructure and connectivity in remote areas to ensure equity of access. This review and implementation of Education 2030 will greatly help Thailand develop their system into more equitable and quality education for all. This is an excellent first step however Thailand needs to and will continue to work with UNESCO and international governments to support and implement Education 2030.

**Citations:**

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