

# Youth Employability Scoping Study



Presented to  
**UNICEF Thailand**

by  
**Thailand Development Research Institute**

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## List of Acronyms

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ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DJOP	Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection
DOE	Department of Employment
DSD	Department of Skill Development
EEF	Equitable Education Fund
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education System
iSEE	Information System for Equitable Education
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MHESI	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MSDHS	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
NCYDP	National Child and Youth Development Plan
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NESDC	National Economic and Social Development Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NS	National Strategy
NSDP	National Social Development Plan
NSE	National Scheme of Education
NSO	National Statistical Office
OBEC	Office of Basic Education Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONIE	Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RTG	Royal Thai Government
SE	Social Enterprise
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TDRI	Thailand Development Research Institute
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund  
WEF World Economic Forum





# Executive Summary

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## Introduction

Young people are the future of tomorrow, yet they face many challenges impeding a smooth transition to attain decent work and fulfil their aspirations. Thailand is currently facing momentous social and technological changes. Technological advancement means that although new roles will be created in the labour market, certain traditional roles will become redundant, with human resources being replaced by artificial intelligence (AI) and automation. With an ageing society imminent, it is vital that young people own the skills needed to contribute positively to the twenty-first century world of work. Yet, at present, Thailand's education system does not equip all students with the skills needed to transition successfully into this new world of work, and many young people remain excluded from opportunities, or are not reaching their potential, especially the most disadvantaged. Furthermore, educational mismatch, whereby a young person's educational ability is not aligned with the job they are performing, means that some skills are being wasted, or that graduates are not accessing the roles they desire.

Strategic decisions are crucial to surmount these imminent challenges and transition successfully to the era of Thailand 4.0. Therefore, the national agenda must address the need for youth to develop skills equipped for the future job market, and for all citizens to benefit from lifelong learning opportunities to continually update and improve their skills. Furthermore, innovative partnerships between the public and private sector, and business collaboration with educational centres, are needed to ensure that young people can access available roles in the labour market. If the potential of Thailand's youth population is harnessed alongside job creation, this will result in productive and fulfilling employment for young people, which in turn will boost the economy, industry, and enhance the government's ability to support Thailand's ageing population.

The following report has studied the overview of current and future snapshots of labour market trends and the landscape of employability in Thailand. The primary objective of this research is to develop an understanding of the situation of employment; to identify the young people not in education, employment and training (NEETs); to identify challenges facing young people's employability in Thailand; and to understand the role that key players, such as public and private partnerships, can play. Overall, this study aims to fill in the gap in both current and past research from other related entities to enhance the youth pathway to employability.

## Research methods

This study focuses on young people aged 15–24 years and assesses differences between the age groups of 15–19 and 20–24, as well as the gender perspective. Primary researches were conducted with two main groups: public and private entities, and young people. The two focus group discussions were formulated with a total of 99 participants from 46 entities. The events were conducted between September–December 2019. More than half of the participants are from the public sector. Meanwhile, three notable startups and social enterprises focusing on enhancing youth employability were interviewed qualitatively.

Accordingly, a total of 26 students from Wat Udom Rangsi School participated in the focus group discussion, while two school counsellors were interviewed to provide more insights. For youth not in education, employment and training (NEET), a total of 15 male youth at the Juvenile Detention Centre (Baan Metta) were interviewed, and eight male youth participated in a focus group discussion at

Suan Aoi Community, Klong Toey, Bangkok. The fieldwork was conducted from September–October 2019.

Some limitations should be mentioned when considering the findings of this research. Firstly, while focus group discussions are a good instrument to validate a proposed concept, it may be challenging to build a concept based on focus group discussions with 99 participants. Secondly, the NEETs interviewed in this study are all male, as no female youth participated in the focus group discussion at Suan Aoi Community even with the support from a local non-governmental organization. This has inevitably affected this study's ability to propose findings in relation to gender perspectives, which is an area that deserves further focus. Furthermore, the 2018 Labour Force Survey (LFS) data could not truly reflect the root causes of educational mismatch due to its limited queries. As it was not originally designed to reflect such problems, the LFS data merely estimates the targeted population, such as NEETs, by weighting method. Despite the limitations, the study presents the overview of current situation and trends, the demographic profile of NEETs, and role that related entities can play to support young people to become the backbone of Thailand over the coming decades.

## **Key Findings**

- The Royal Thai Government (RTG) is working on education reform but quality of education remains an issue, along with a lack of teachers and a secondary education curriculum which does not provide students with the necessary level of skills needed for the twenty-first century labour market.
- The current school-based careers guidance system is insufficient to ensure that each student receives individualized support and appropriate careers advice.
- The Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) and the private sector can play a vital role in skilling the youth population, especially in terms of reaching those who have dropped out of school and other disadvantaged groups.
- Internships and scholarships – which can provide a much-needed career boost for young people who have financial burdens – are currently oversubscribed.
- Gender disparity remains an issue; female youth are more susceptible to the societal pressures caused by teenage pregnancy or marriage, and are more likely to be unemployed than male counterparts.
- Collaboration between the public and private sectors exists, but more is needed.
- Social enterprises (SEs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) currently struggle to access funding.
- There is a need to harmonize supply and demand to ensure a steady stream of graduates are linked to appropriate jobs upon completion of their studies.
- Legislation is currently acting as a barrier for the 15–19 age group to engage in employment.
- Thailand's institutional framework does not currently have a policy aimed exclusively at the employability of young people.

## **Young people's education and skills need updating to match twenty-first century labour market demands**

Thailand is rapidly greying. The total fertility rate (TFR) will drop from 1.62 per cent in 2010 to 1.55 per cent in 2020. The population under 15 years dropped substantially from 14.27 million to 11.51 million, on average decreasing 2.13 per cent annually between 2008 and 2018. Thus, young

people are valuable human resources to help sustain the economy and shoulder the increasing dependency ratio. Young people accounted for 16.78 per cent of the total population or 9.45 million in 2018, yet more than half of young people aged 15–24 are not in the labour force. Moreover, the labour force participation rate of young workers decreased from 48.91 to 43.14 per cent between 2008 and 2018. This portrays that even with a decreasing population, Thai youth are participating less in the labour market.

However, there are positives to be seen in these statistics, as data supports the fact that young people are attending fee-free basic education more than previously. For example, the share of young people who attained only primary and lower education has decreased from 25.60 per cent to 20.83 per cent between 2008 and 2018, and more than half of young workers attained the compulsory educational level which ends at Grade 9 (Secondary 3). Nevertheless, many students are leaving education only able to perform low-skilled occupations which are at risk of becoming redundant in the world of digital transformation. Furthermore, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Thai students also trail far behind the OECD average in terms of reading, mathematics and science, with Thailand's mean reading performance lower in 2018 than in any previous assessment.<sup>1</sup> This suggests that basic levels of competency, especially reading skills, still require attention and should be prioritized alongside development of other soft skills such as communication, problem-solving and analytical skills. Therefore, there is a need to both improve and re-think the educational curriculum to ensure all students leave school with a skill set that matches the demands of the labour market, and with the self-knowledge and guidance to achieve their aspirations.

There is also a need to promote an interest in new and emerging industries as some traditional jobs are phased out or reduced. According to Cisco (2018), 1.7 of agricultural workers in Thailand are most at risk of displacement due to a changing job landscape, followed by the manufacturing workers (0.84 million) and wholesale and retail workers (0.91 million). The concerning issue is that approximately 31 per cent of Thai youth (aged 15–35 years) believe that their knowledge and skills could last for most of their life, the highest rate among the six ASEAN countries surveyed. On the contrary, only 43 per cent of youth believe that their education and skills have to be constantly updated, the lowest among six-surveyed ASEAN countries. Therefore, more needs to be done to encourage young people in Thailand to see the benefits of lifelong learning, with countrywide opportunities to re-skill and re-train supported by the Royal Thai Government (RTG).

### **Legislation, lack of skilled jobs and gender disparity impede pathways to employability**

According to the ILOSTAT database, in 2018, Thailand had one of the lowest youth unemployment rates (4.9 per cent) in the region compared to other countries. Nevertheless, the youth unemployment rate is nearly seven times higher compared to the total population, and the number of young workers is declining. Three influential factors challenging young people's pathways to employability that should be taken into consideration are: (1) legislation; (2) lack of skilled jobs; and (3) gender disparity.

Firstly, the Labour Protection Act (1998) serves as a double-edged sword. The Act aims to prevent the use of child labour and exploitation, prohibiting certain working conditions for workers aged 15–18 years old. However, the law does not specify what job roles young people in this age group could perform. Therefore, employers tend to avoid employing workers below 18 years of age due to the legal complexity and fear of violating the law. Consequently, youth aged 15–19 years have a higher

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<sup>1</sup> OECD, *Results from PISA 2018: Thailand Country Note* (2019).

unemployment rate (5.13 per cent) compared to the older cohort (4.62 per cent). This scenario has also been reiterated by the Director of the Federation of Thai Industries.

Secondly, although research proves that quality education (both formal and informal) enhances employability, it is found that graduates with a bachelor's degree have the highest unemployment rate (17.22 per cent), while those with lower primary education have the lowest unemployment rate (2.43 per cent). Education mismatch is likely to be one of the main causes of graduate unemployment.

Mismatch often occurs when there is oversupply in certain job positions, causing those unemployed to end up applying for lower qualified jobs. Mismatch happens either when someone works in an irrelevant field in relation to their education background (horizontal mismatch) or when one works in a lower position compared to one's highest degree (vertical mismatch). Vocational graduates are facing the most serious mismatch. Approximately 47 per cent of vocational graduates (industrial craftsmen/technicians) work in lower paid positions. They also spend longer time looking for jobs compared to the academic group; more than 4 per cent of them have to spend up to 12 months looking for a job; usually, it takes between 1 to 2.9 months. In addition, the majority of young workers enter the labour market in the trade and service sectors which are generally not related to their education background. The skill mismatch of youth is therefore one of the key challenges for decent work.

Having a quality education has a significant impact on job performance as it prepares young people for the jobs of tomorrow. It can be inferred, therefore, that high-skilled jobs as well as qualified young workers are limited in the Thai labour market. Hence, a drive to create productive employment opportunities for youth (including high-skilled jobs) through skill development and policy measures is requisite. Several researches have shown that investments in education have long-term positive effects on labour market outcomes for youth. Statistics also suggest that higher education can lead to higher earnings and decent work.

Thirdly, gender disparity remains as an obstacle within the Thai labour market, especially among youth. Female youth have a higher unemployment rate (5.92 per cent) compared to their male counterparts (3.92 per cent), and also tend to be lower paid. In the past decade, the number of unemployed young men has decreased by 4.3 per cent on average while the rate for young women remains barely unchanged, even though women are more active in looking for jobs compared to their male counterparts. Several studies show that, in the past three decades, gender disparity trends in Thailand have been alleviated but still remain significant. This can be implied as a contributing factor leading to the high number of female youth in the NEET population. More research is recommended to identify further reasons for the higher unemployment rate for the female youth cohort.

### **Disadvantaged youth represent Thailand's untapped potential**

While the total youth population is decreasing, the population of disadvantaged youth or those in the NEET category has increased on average 0.54 per cent annually between 2008 and 2018. Currently, 13.40 per cent of the total youth population in Thailand are NEETs.

According to the LFS, nearly 70 per cent of NEETs are female, and 70 per cent of them are household workers. This group tends to drop out of school and become household workers, with pregnancy being a major reason for dropping out of education; 88 per cent of female students who dropped out after Grade 10 and 11 (7,000 drop-outs) did so due to pregnancy or having children. Marriage at a young age appears to be another influential factor for female household workers (though not for the male group). Approximately 30 per cent of female household workers are married and have completed merely lower-secondary education in both age groups of 15–19 and 20–24 years. For the latter group, more than 67 per cent are married and have attained secondary or lower education.

A higher number of those categorized as too young or unable to work due to illness or disability is found in male youth compared to their female counterparts aged 15 to 24 years, which represent 25.91 per cent and 7.05 per cent in the male and female NEETs, respectively. Nevertheless, the root causes for the too young and/or unable to work categorizations were not addressed in the LFS.

Another concerning issue is the rising number of the resting group among young people in Thailand, which had an annual growth rate of 12.04 per cent between 2008 and 2018. The youth male population shares a higher number in the resting group with approximately 146,000 persons compared to female (around 78,000 persons). At the ages of 15–19, the concentration of young people in the resting group lies among those with primary and lower-secondary education, with approximately 77 per cent and 51 per cent shares of male and female, respectively. Marriage status is more prevalent in females (13 per cent) compared to males (3.5 per cent). There is also a significant increase in the number of Thai youth in the resting group, with a higher proportion of young males compared to females. This issue raises serious concerns for related entities given that the youth population is already declining, while the resting group shows an increasing trend.

There is therefore a need to conduct further research to identify the underlying motivations behind young people's NEET status. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions conducted for this study, along with secondary data sources, suggest that the main causes of NEET which require further study include: 1) **Insufficient mechanisms to support slow learners** or those with a learning disability, who tend to have difficulty catching up with other students, with teacher heavy workloads being a contributing factor (Isranews Agency, 2016); 2) **Lack of social support**, such as a lack of parental support/guidance at home, and negative community-wide influences including friends who are NEETs and the risk of re-offending for those who have been in juvenile detention; 3) **Low socio-economic background**: nearly 6 per cent of Grade 10–11 students who dropped out of school come from the poorest quintile. This group of young people mostly drop out before continuing to higher secondary education because there is no longer free tuition support from the government, while some drop out even earlier to earn a living; 4) **Lack of career guidance and knowledge of potential roles**: the rising number of resting youth in the NEET group suggests that young people may lack understanding of both their own capabilities and how their own skills relate to potential roles in the labour market; and 5) **Gender disparity**: pregnancy and marriage have an impact on female youth who may drop out of education early and become household workers.

### **Social Enterprises (SEs) and public-private partnerships require more support**

There has been a growing trend among NGOs and SEs, run by millennials (Gen Y) and Gen Z, who play significant roles in contributing to skill development of young people both in formal and informal education. However, these private sectors and NGOs currently struggle to access funds and have limited human resources. Even though the RTG has established the Social Enterprise Promotion Act 2019, it remains at the initial stage, as the Office of Social Enterprise and the funds are not yet concretely established. Furthermore, in Thailand, public and private partnership remains on a small scale compared to other countries.

### **The institutional framework needs to address youth employability**

Meanwhile, the institutional framework, especially long-term policies and plans, does not have an exclusive policy on the employability of young people. Though development guidelines aimed at developing systematic thinking skills, creativity and essential working skills among young people can be found in the medium-term plan, the medium-term policy does not address the issue of youth

unemployment. Moreover, the agency responsible for coordinating those agencies does not possess sufficient authority and resources to perform the duty efficiently.

## **A data-driven approach is needed to support disadvantaged young people**

The RTG has adopted the 20-year National Strategy (NS) which aims to develop Thai citizens of all ages to become good, skillful, quality citizens, realizing multiple intelligences; and promote conditions that encourage human capacity development in the twenty-first century. In support of these aims, the RTG has set up the Equitable Education Fund (EEF) as the main mechanism to tackle Thailand's educational disparity, together with other ministries namely the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) and the Ministry of Labour (MOL).

The EEF was established under the Equitable Education Act 2018 and is under the supervision of the Prime Minister. With the annual budget of over 1,900 million baht, the EEF's main objective is to provide financial support for children and youth who are in greatest need and to reduce educational inequality by forming a partnership with different groups and conducting systematic research to support and develop teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, the Information System for Equitable Education (iSEE) platform application was developed to create a database of children with identification of their individual profile. The platform provides data on the identities of disadvantaged students who are from a low-income background and are not in education in order to perform a conditional cash subsidy policy. With support from the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), the iSEE data contains information on over 4 million disadvantaged youth who are both in education and not in education. The contribution of NGOs and SEs would benefit significantly from access to this data. Although the outcome and efficiency of the EEF could not be fully assessed as most of its projects are in the early stages and several projects are ongoing, this is a promising development which should be monitored and evaluated to ensure that successes can be built upon and expanded.

## **Conclusion**

Inequality remains the root cause of the socio-economic dilemma which has been embedded in Thai society for decades. Disadvantaged young people, many of whom are NEET, are the byproducts of gender and income disparity and uneven development, while young people with disabilities and slow learners are sometimes excluded from an education system in which 'one size fits all'. This creates unequal opportunities and barriers for young people to attain quality education, to acquire a decent job and to pursue their goals.

Even though income is rising among Thais and young people, numerous studies reveals that disparity has not improved much when viewed through both an economic and gender lens. Despite improvements in recent decades, gender disparity and discrimination in the labour market remain an issue for female youth, who have a higher rate of unemployment even though they tend to be more proactive in searching for employment. Furthermore, although more research needs to be conducted in this area, findings suggest that for female NEET, teenage pregnancy and marriage are potential factors which limit their involvement in the labour market.

Technological transformation poses a huge opportunity as new industries and skills take precedence over traditional job roles, but Thailand's young people currently lack the skill sets and opportunities to excel in this new labour market. Only half of the young workers attained secondary education, while more than one million young people are NEET, with the majority only attaining secondary education. This group of young people are vulnerable and at risk of being left behind. Opportunities to re-skill, train and re-engage with the educational system or world of work need to be

opened up to bring those currently excluded into the fold. The EEF is a positive development, but the RTG could take further steps, including collaborating with the private sector, to ensure that Thailand's young people have the skills and opportunities to power the transformative changes taking place in the labour market.

Lastly, the institutional framework currently has no exclusive policy aimed at supporting youth employment and tackling levels of youth unemployment. The medium-term plan has developed guidelines for essential skills but there is no mechanism currently in place to treat skill development for youth separately. Coordination between agencies is also lacking and requires strengthening.

## **Scope for further research**

This research offers some insights into the situation for youth employability in Thailand, reflects on Thailand's institutional framework in relation to youth employment and skill development, and identifies some of the key challenges that need to be addressed to unleash the potential of young people and align skill development with labour market demands. However, the study has found that in-depth research into some of the issues highlighted concerning young people is still lacking and requires further attention. The following areas are suggested for further research in order to gather data which can provide valuable insights for formulating improved policies to support Thai youth employability:

### **1) Understand key drivers influencing the NEET group**

The LFS was utilized as the main data source in this study, but due to its limited queries it was not possible to precisely identify reasons for NEET status, which may vary depending on an individual's gender, socio-economic status, and level of education. In particular, further research to understand the situation of female NEETs would be beneficial, especially household workers (since they are the majority of NEETs) and the drivers behind the increasing rate of NEETs in the resting group, especially young males.

### **2) Assess quality/relevance of the education system**

More research needs to be conducted into the RTG's educational reforms to address quality of teaching, including the need to improve basic levels of student competency in literacy and STEM subjects, and to ensure that teaching methods reach learners of different abilities so that no student is left behind and all young people can develop the requisite skills needed to meet twenty-first labour force demands.

### **3) Address institutional and legislative barriers**

While the intention of the Labour Protection Act (1998) is to protect young people, research revealed that the requirements of the Act are impeding the 15–19 age group from accessing employment opportunities. Therefore, more research needs to be conducted into potential barriers caused by the legislation. Furthermore, research could be conducted to identify ways to strengthen and improve collaboration between government agencies, the private sector, NGOs and SEs in order to support youth employability.

## 1.1 Background

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), together with other United Nations (UN) agencies, has taken a strategic decision to invest more strongly in programmes and solutions that enable young people to gain the skills necessary for employment and entrepreneurship so that they can build a future for themselves and their communities. Jobs (employment and entrepreneurship) result from several factors including a foundation of core skills; access to education and training opportunities; motivation and ability; and support for continuous learning. Youth employment also depends on a balanced approach to supply-side and demand-side interventions, with established intermediation services to enable young people to navigate their way to available jobs and a meaningful career path. It is also important to ensure that all young women and men receive equal opportunities to enhance their employability and improve their lives.

Secondary school is an important channel through which young people acquire skills that improve opportunities for decent jobs. Thailand has been working on Education Reform since 1999. The country recently completed its second round of education reform (2009–2018) and developed National Education Standards (2018). The objective of the second reform focused on four areas: (1) learning achievement; (2) English for communication; (3) technology proficiency; and (4) preparing a good citizen. However, the Thai education system is still struggling with ongoing issues related to both quality and quantity of education.

Currently, Thailand is facing two seismic social and technological shifts, which could multiply the severity of the problems, namely: (1) an ageing society requiring a young labour force to support the elderly; and (2) advancements in technology that place a significant portion of the labour force at risk of being replaced by automation and AI. Both emerging technological and demographic changes will have an impact on shaping the socio-economic situation of the country. This will have a clear impact on the labour market and anticipating changes is important. The job agenda, skills for future jobs, the role of the private sector, and skills development for employability<sup>2</sup> will increasingly become priorities for the country.

In Thailand, according to the National Statistic Office’s (NSO) *Labour Force Survey* (2018), young people have nearly seven times the adult<sup>3</sup> unemployment rate (0.72 per cent). The figure shows that while unemployment is rather benign, high youth unemployment (4.87 per cent) suggests a rather painful transition for young people as they attempt to enter the labour force. Moreover, the proportion of young people aged 15–24 years who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is high, at 11.34 per cent, and higher for young women (16 per cent) compared to young men (6.80 per cent).

Concerns include a mismatch between labour market requirements and educational attainment, low-paid jobs, especially for people from low socio-economic background, inability to access job information and reskilling opportunities, and lack of employment opportunities for marginalised and young people including those with disabilities.

The solution to the aforementioned problems will be context-dependent, as what is best practice in another country may not be the best fit for Thailand. Dealing with problems and challenges of youth

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<sup>2</sup> **Employability** refers to the skills, knowledge and competencies that enhance a worker’s ability to secure and retain a job, progress at work and cope with change, secure another job if he/she so wishes or has been laid off and enter more easily into the labour market at different periods of the life cycle (ILO, *Resolution Concerning Youth Employment*, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Persons aged 25 years old and above.



employability in Thailand must involve the collective action of numerous stakeholders guided by evidence-based policies and backed by rigorous research.

## 1.2 The Scope of the Study

In Thailand, the Act on National Promotion and Co-ordination of Youth, B.E. 2521 (1978), Article 3 defined youth as those persons aged not more than 25 years. Later, in the Act on National Promotion of Children and Youth B.E. 2550 (2007), the age range of 18–25 years was defined as youth. Nevertheless, 15–25 years was operationally defined as youth in the National Plan for Children and Youth Development B.E. 2555–2559 (2012–2016), whereas the age range of 18–25 years was again adopted as the definition of youth in the Second National Plan for Children and Youth Development B.E. 2560–2564 (2017–2021). Meanwhile, the UN definitions<sup>4</sup> of children and youth overlap:

- Children: 0–17 years
- Adolescents: 10–19 years
- Young people: 10–24 years
- Youth: 15–24 years

In terms of employment, the Labour Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998) defined the age of employment at fifteen and older. However, employment of workers between the ages of 15–18 carries some specific conditions. Based on the research questions and the definitions of young people, the study focuses on youth aged 15–24 and assesses differences between the age groups of 15–19 and 20–24 years, as well as gender differences. Moreover, the study explores the demand and supply sides relating to youth pathways to employability. The terms “youth” and “young people” are thus used interchangeably. The study also covers both formal and non-formal education. Formal education includes secondary education, technical and vocational education (TVET), and higher education. While non-formal education comprises lifelong learning opportunities for the out-of-school population ranging from primary to vocational levels, it is important to identify gaps which UNICEF Thailand should prioritise to promote decent work for young people, especially disadvantaged groups.

## 1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 To develop an understanding of the situation of employment, including an overview of market trends and skills in demand by employers in the public and private sectors both currently and in the future.

1.3.2 To understand the main challenges that young people face when looking for employment and the opportunities that are on offer to them in terms of skills-building.

1.3.3 To understand the make-up of the NEET group and the causes for this.

1.3.4 To identify opportunities for partnerships between the private and public sectors that could foster twenty-first century skills development among young people and create paths to employability.

1.3.5 To identify gaps in current data and information on young people employment and employability that hinder decision making.

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<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, *A Situation Analysis of Adolescents in Thailand 2015–2016* (2016).

## **1.4 Research Area and Methodology**

### **1.4.1 Research Area**

The study provides an overview of current labour market trends and snapshots of future employment as well as the landscape of employability to help identify what types of job will continue to be relevant alongside new and emerging/future jobs in Thailand. It also identifies the key players who are providing skills training, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and other opportunities to prepare youth for the labour market. The study provides an authoritative overview of current labour market trends and snapshots of business opinions on training and strategic skill needs, along with an overall assessment of the economic, social and technical drivers of market growth. In addition, this study aims to develop and fill the gap in current and past research from other related entities for further pragmatic policy recommendations.

### **1.4.2 Methodology**

The study applies both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the qualitative study, the study includes both primary and secondary sources of information as follows:

#### (1) Primary sources

- Various methods were used, such as focus group discussion sessions and/or in-depth interviews (see Appendix B and Appendix C).

#### (2) Secondary sources

- National strategies and policies relevant to future work of young people.
- Related researches and studies within the past ten years.
- Examples of related training programmes/apprentices/projects and other opportunities which enhance the pathways to employability provided either by the government or private sector.

Statistical data from well-established organizations and government agencies – such as the National Statistical Office, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, etc. – were analysed quantitatively.

At the end of the study, a public forum with at least 50 participants from the public sector, private sectors, academia and CSOs was conducted to distribute findings to the public.

## **1.5 Research Structure**

The research is divided into eight sections (for more details see Appendix A).

- The first chapter gives an overview of the study.
- The second chapter addresses the situation of youth employment in Thailand.
- The third chapter presents an overview of Thailand's institutional framework for youth employment.
- The fourth chapter identifies key challenges for youth employability.
- The fifth chapter focuses on the NEET group (Not in Employment, Education or Training)
- The sixth chapter portrays the opportunities for key players involved in youth employability.
- The seventh chapter presents the importance of statistical data.
- The last section provides a summary of the key elements and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 2: The Situation of Youth Employability in Thailand

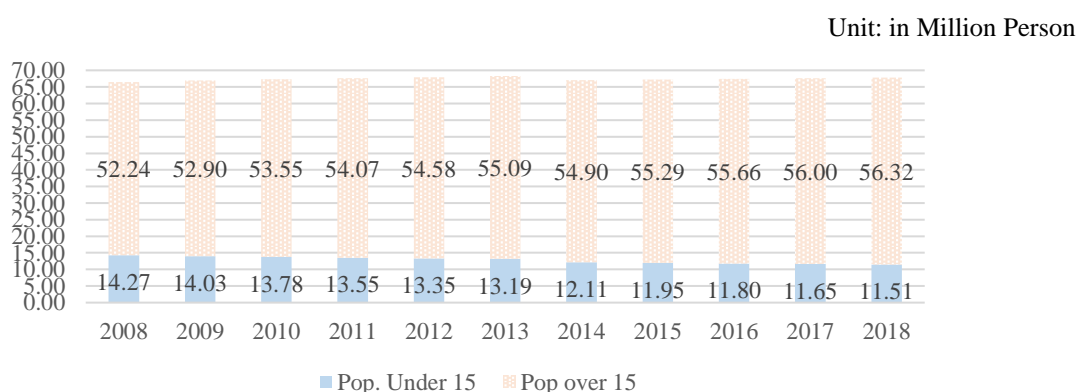
This chapter presents an overview situation of the youth population in terms of employability, the roles young people undertake in the labour force, as well as labour market trends among the youth labour force.

### 2.1 Overview of Youth Population

Thailand is facing two seismic changes which include an ageing society and technological advancement, placing young people at the forefront of the long-term stability and success of the Thai economic sector. Although technology can be harnessed to optimise young workers' productivity by boosting higher outputs with lower inputs, while also providing access to information through which young workers can acquire knowledge and upgrade their skills, it also presents challenges. Increased automation and AI advances will render some roles redundant, so even though new employment opportunities will arise, young workers will require support as this adjustment and transformation takes place in the labour market.

The number of births during the past decade has dropped from 811,384 persons in 2007 to 702,755 persons in 2017. The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) forecasts that the total fertility rate (TFR) will drop from 1.62 per cent in 2010 to 1.55<sup>5</sup> per cent in 2020, leading to a decreasing number of the population. In 2018, the total population in Thailand is 66.20 million, with a 13.65 per cent share of young people aged 15–24.<sup>6</sup> Figure 1 shows that the number of the population under 15 years between 2008 and 2018 dramatically dropped from 14.27 million to 11.51 million, or averagely decreasing 2.13 per cent annually within 10 years. According to the Population Reference Bureau (2017), the youth population aged 15–24 in Thailand is predicted to decrease from 9.1 million in 2018 to 6 million by 2050.

**Figure 1** Thailand Population between 2008 and 2018



Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) (2018).

<sup>5</sup> Population forecast between 2010–2030 from the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

In Thailand, the eligible age for legal work is 15 and over. According to the Labour Protection Act (1998),<sup>7</sup> young people aged between 15–18 can be employed with some conditions. From the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the population aged 15 years old and over can be classified into two types: (1) total labour force; and (2) not in the labour force. The population who are included in the total labour force refers to workers who are currently either employed or the unemployed who are available and actively looking for work.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, the population who are not in the labour force are persons who are household workers, studying, either too young or unable to work due to illness or disability, and others. Reasons for being not in the labour force are not necessarily negative (for example, being in education or providing childcare), although this group also includes discouraged jobseekers, who are not looking for work due to the belief that there are no jobs available.<sup>9</sup>

According to Figure 1, the youth population accounts for 16.78 per cent of the total population. The share of youth population relatively decreases as a result of the decline in the TFR, which causes a drop in the labour force. Furthermore, the number of youth not in the labour force (5.34 million) is greater than those in the labour force (4.11 million). It is supported by the fact that with the expanded opportunity of a fifteen-year-fee-free basic education, young people tend to remain in education longer rather than entering the world of work (Office of the Minister Newsline 2016).

Table A1 provides an overview of the youth population between the ages of 15–24 within the past decade. Currently, there are 38.38 million persons in the total labour force. Of those, 37.27 million are employed persons, while 0.35 million are unemployed. According to Table A1, the youth labour force is considered to be 10.71 per cent of the total labour force.

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<sup>7</sup> The Labour Protection Act (in Thai) is available at: [http://lb.mol.go.th/ewt\\_news.php?nid=224](http://lb.mol.go.th/ewt_news.php?nid=224)

<sup>8</sup> The definition is active during the survey week.

<sup>9</sup> For more information on persons outside the labour force, please see ILO, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market, Ninth Edition* (2016), pp. 111-12.

## 2.2 Youth in the Labour Market

The employment rate represents the labour market equilibrium between labour demand and labour supply. Market equilibrium reveals demand for labour and a certain amount of labours being employed. Market equilibrium can also be used to estimate current and future demand and supply by applying assumption from previous period and its natural level. Hence, the market demand can be observed from the employment statistic in each dimension (by sector, by occupation, by education level, etc.).

### 2.2.1 Youth Employment

The structure of the youth labour force is significantly related to population trend. The number of youth in employment has declined in the past decade, with a share as low as 10 per cent in the labour market. An expansion in educational opportunities – such as free tuition and education loans – has directly impacted the number of youth in the labour force, as they tend to remain in school longer before deciding to work. It has also resulted in the decline in the youth labour force participation rate (LFPR), which has slightly dropped since 2008 (Table A2). In addition, most workers are likely to enter the labour force from the age of 20 and above, which is the age at which an individual can legally work without requiring parental consent.<sup>10</sup> It can be inferred that youth are likely to wait until the legal age to enter the labour force, or are likely to choose to finish at least a diploma before participating in the labour market.

Most young workers aged 15–24 years receive at least 12 years of compulsory education; 55 per cent of young workers attained secondary education level (Table A3). During the past decade, young people's education attainment has improved, and the proportion of young people with only primary education and lower has decreased. At the same time, the number of young people attaining higher education has continuously surged; the proportion of young people with university graduation increased from 6.27 per cent in 2008 to 9.50 per cent in 2018.

Considering working status, more than half of young workers are private employees<sup>11</sup> (Table A4), followed by those who work for a family business, which ranks second highest, at more than one million young people. This is because Thai households are still largely agricultural, although within the past decade the trend has shifted from the agriculture sector to the service sector (Figure 2). Employment in retail and wholesale relatively dominates compared to other economic activities. Therefore, youth who work as service and sales workers rank the second highest (22.88 per cent in 2018), whilst most youth workers still work in the skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery sectors (24.98 per cent in 2018) (Table A5).

Approximately 80 per cent of private employees are in the older youth cohort (20–24 years). Nearly 60 per cent of private employees are male in both age cohorts, while 15 per cent are household heads (66 per cent of whom are male). Having a young female as household head makes no difference to income since male and female household heads earn a similar amount, and females earn even higher in the 15–19 age bracket. Moreover, female young workers are employed more in professional, managerial, and services-related occupations while male workers tend to work as skilled agricultural,

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<sup>10</sup> It is illegal in Thailand to employ individuals who are under 15 years of age. While workers aged 15-18 years can work with some conditions and restrictions (see section 3.2), 20 years is the legal age at which individuals have the right to work without parental consent.

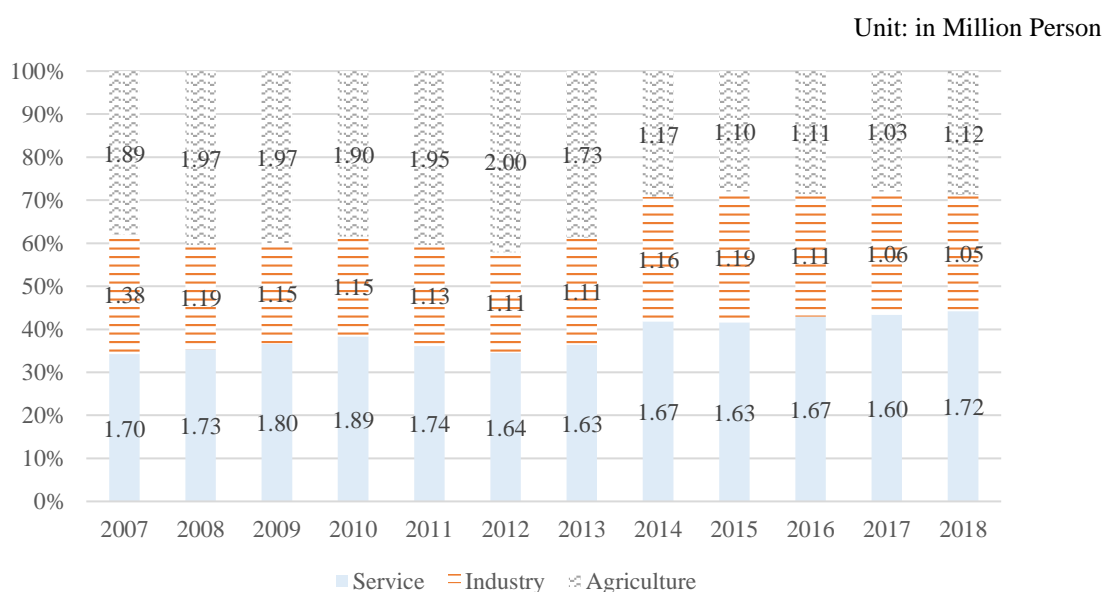
<sup>11</sup> A private employee is a person who works for pay for a non-governmental municipal office, a private employer or government enterprise (NSO, 2018).

forestry and fishery workers, assemblers, or in elementary occupations requiring a lower skill level. (Table A6–7)

By and large, the younger cohort (15–19 years) tends to work more as contributing family workers compared to the older cohort above 18 or 20 years old, who have the benefit of more experience, education including a degree, and, most importantly, are no longer subject to any employment restrictions. Hence, the older cohort have twenty-two times the number of youth working as government employees compared to the younger cohort, thirteen times more as state enterprise employees, six times more as self-employed persons or own account workers,<sup>12</sup> and five times more as private employees (Table A9).

Nevertheless, if occupations are grouped by skill level under the ILO’s definition,<sup>13</sup> it is shown that most young people, especially young men, are employed with a primary skill requirement or skill level 2 role, which are generally obtained through the completion of secondary education (ISCED-97). Skill level 2 involves the ability to read, write and perform simple arithmetical calculations as well as interpersonal communication skills.

**Figure 2** Share of Youth Employment by Economic Sectors between 2007 and 2018



Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

## 2.2.2 Youth Unemployment

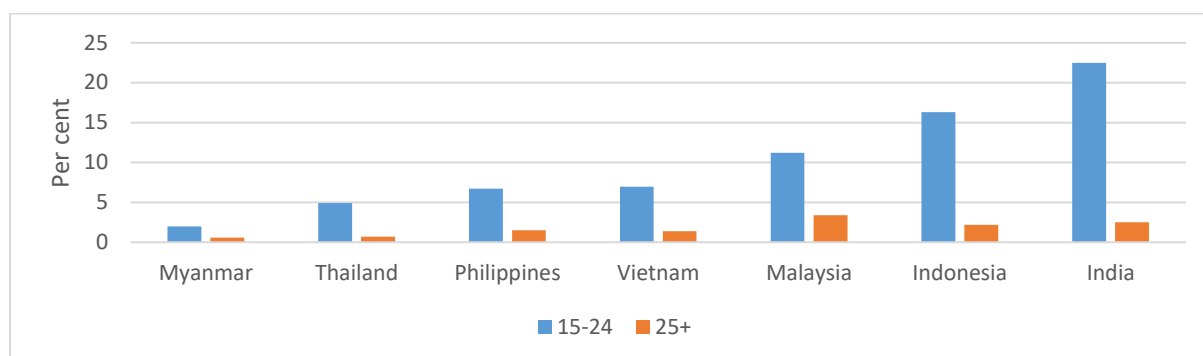
According to the ILOSTAT database, in 2018, Thailand had one of the lowest youth unemployment rates (4.9 per cent) in the region (Figure 3) compared to Malaysia (11.2 per cent), Indonesia (16.3 per cent) and India (22.5 per cent). Similar to other countries, the adult unemployment rate is significantly lower than the youth. In Thailand, youth have seven times the adult unemployment rate while in Indonesia and India the rates are almost eight and ten times higher. This signifies a difficult transition trend of youth to employment in the region. According to the Labour Protection Act 1998, young people between the ages of 15–18 can be employed in some types of jobs with limited working

<sup>12</sup> An own account worker is a person who operates an enterprise on his own account or jointly with others in the form of a partnership either for profit or dividends but without engaging any employee (NSO, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Under the ILO definition, skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers and service and sales workers fall into skill level 2 (International Standard Classification of Occupations: ISCO-08).

conditions and special treatment. Furthermore, some employers require male candidates who have passed military conscription. In some cases, eligible candidates must be at least 21 years old.

**Figure 3** Comparison of Youth Unemployment Rate among Seven Countries in 2018



Source: ILO, ILOSTAT database (2018).

Note: the unemployment rate in Thailand is retrieved from the LFS, 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter (2018).

During the past decade, the youth unemployment rate has fluctuated. In the first five years (2008–2012), the rate continuously decreased annually, although the rate has begun to rise since 2012. In addition, gender becomes one interesting factor, since the unemployment rate more likely appears in female youth (5.92 per cent) rather than in male youth (3.92 per cent) (Table A10).

According to the LFS (2018), age also plays an influential role since young people aged 15–19 years tend to have a higher unemployment rate (5.13 per cent) compared to those aged 20–24 years (4.62 per cent) (Table A11). From an employer perspective, it can be implied that employers prefer to employ youth aged 18 or 20 years<sup>14</sup> onwards to avoid the restrictions and legal complexity of the Labour Protection Act (1998). The difference in unemployment rates between the two cohorts could also be due to differences in educational attainment, skills and experience which facilitate the transition into employment. The older age group tend to have attained more skills and education and accumulated work experience, while the younger youth cohort may not be aware of the exact types of job they could perform. Nonetheless, the youth unemployment rate is considerably high and constructive policies are required to tackle the problem.

Focus group discussions with over 31 key participants (see Appendix B) revealed that the complexity of child labour protection laws has tended to result in employers not wanting to hire young people under 20:

*“Employers tend not to hire adolescents in order to cut down the problems. Of course, we, the private sector, would like to hire Thai workers more than migrant workers... But the laws should be less complex to facilitate both employers and employees... Also, youth tend to have low skills, so if we hire them, we have to train them...”* –Anonymous

Education is another factor to take into consideration. According to Table A12, even though young people receive higher levels of education overall, their higher education background does not guarantee a lower unemployment rate; in fact, bachelor degree graduates have the highest unemployment rate (17.22 per cent), while lower primary education has the lowest unemployment rate (2.43 per cent). Table A5 shows that young people are mostly hired in elementary jobs with a primary

<sup>14</sup> Under Thai law, the legal age for working without parental consent is 20 years.

skill requirement. It can be implied, therefore, that there are limited opportunities for young people to attain high-skilled jobs.

For young people with higher education, one of the most common problems is that they have studied in a faculty that does not match the market demand or their true aspirations. Youth in Thailand tend to select a subject or faculty depending on parental preferences and future salary upon graduation (Aka, 2018). In addition, evidence reveals that high expectations from parents can sometimes put pressure on young people (TCIJ, 2019). In this case, youth may not be aware of their own aspirations and needs, as well as fail to deal with failures. This may explain the mismatch and high resting rates in this group, as this group may require longer to discover themselves and their true aspirations. Thus, it is vital that parents support and encourage their children to pursue their passion in order to fulfil their potential (Phetparee 2019). However, an increase in higher education unemployment can also be considered as a mismatch in both quality and quantity of education, both of which present challenges for the Thai education system. The unemployment rate for those with higher education also suggests a gap on the demand side, implying that measures to support job opportunities for high-skilled young people may be needed.

### **2.2.3 Labour Market Demand**

Statistical forecasting by the National Statistical Office of Thailand (NSO) relies on estimation based on historical data. The NSO studied the labour demand trends in the Thai labour market between 2017 and 2021 by forecasting the supply of labour based on LFS data between 2011 and 2016. As aforementioned, the labour market equilibrium reveals a demand for labour and a certain amount of workers being employed. The forecast of employed persons aligning with assumptions, methodology and forecasting model applied on specific market characteristics can be used to project future supply and labour demand trends in each dimension. Accuracy of forecasting is capped within forecasting errors where its bounds depend on periods from the current point of data. The NSO's study reveals that, between 2017 and 2021, labour demand is on a downward trend, from 37.69 to 37.37 million persons. The changing landscape of work as a result of technological advancement and business transformation could partly explain this trend (NSO, 2017).

Workers who attained lower education will remain the second highest in demand (after primary education) at 6.27 million persons, but they will also have one of the highest declining rates in terms of demand, on average -18.79 per cent between 2017 and 2021. While those with higher secondary education and bachelor's degree have seen increasing demands, on average between 7 to 7.5 per cent, the demands for those with master's degrees or higher have seen the most striking increase at 11.56 per cent (Table A13).

For occupations, even though the demand for agricultural workers is in decline, the agricultural sector still has the highest number of workers – at approximately 7.51 million persons between 2017 and 2021 – followed by retail and street/market vendors. Those who have seen the highest increase in terms of demand are waiters and bartenders, at over 68 per cent, followed by statisticians and sales representatives at 49 and 48 per cent respectively (Table A14–15).

Although estimation based on historical data can provide reasonable projections, it is still weak in providing analysis of actual conditions of specific employment market. The current methodology used is precise only when it is applied to low volatility markets or a large pool of employment markets. It cannot be applied to highly volatile markets or emerging markets since many variables tend to be omitted. As a result, estimation may not fully guarantee future market outcome. The lack of precise information on labour demand is perceived as one of the underlying factors for the skill mismatch. Nonetheless, determining the labour market demand is a challenging task. One of the most effective



way is to conduct a ‘Labour Demand of Establishment Survey’ to understand more fully the demand from enterprises, but this type of survey is not routinely conducted in Thailand, with the most recent previous survey dating back to 2013.

## 2.2.4 Youth Wage and Earning

Under the Thai Labour Protection Act (1998),<sup>15</sup> the working day should not exceed eight hours, and workers are allowed to work no more than six consecutive days per week. In addition, young people under the age of 18 are prohibited to work overtime. Therefore, the average working hours each week should not exceed 48 hours. Hours of work and age groups are directly reflected in wage and earning. As shown in Table A16, young people between the ages of 15–18 tend to work in part-time jobs since the total hours of their working week has to be less than 44 hours. Less working hours mean less earnings (Table 1). During the past decade, the wages of young people have fluctuated not only from the economic trend but also as a result of government policy. Since 2013, the national daily minimum wage has been at THB 300 or US\$ 9.92,<sup>16</sup> which has caused a shift in the wage structure of all age groups. The compound annual growth rate was merely 0.86 per cent between 2008 and 2010. It later increased to 14.64 per cent annually between 2011 and 2013 (Table 1). Education background is also one of the key factors in wage earning, as young people with higher educational attainment are likely to receive a higher wage. However, there is no clear difference in earning among young people who have received lower secondary education and lower (Table A17).

**Table 1** The Average Monthly Wage of Private Employees by Age Group between 2008 and 2018

Unit: THB/month

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
15	3,674	3,217	3,361	4,807	4,622	5,659	6,165	5,333	5,491	5,689	5,193
16	3,879	3,775	4,141	4,246	4,944	5,533	6,242	6,534	6,190	6,182	4,883
17	3,994	3,974	4,264	4,732	5,635	6,418	6,362	6,405	6,491	6,495	6,211
18	4,438	4,296	4,513	4,924	5,730	6,398	7,125	7,301	7,071	7,386	7,321
19	4,527	4,405	4,919	4,970	6,164	7,119	7,629	7,558	7,344	7,861	7,924
20	4,603	4,615	4,804	5,471	6,125	7,244	7,629	7,929	8,193	8,599	8,519
21	4,931	4,946	5,258	5,475	6,499	7,497	8,299	8,390	8,204	8,564	8,603
22	5,330	5,453	5,286	5,896	7,197	8,915	8,817	9,151	8,961	9,073	9,129
23	5,868	5,575	6,128	6,333	7,400	9,122	9,826	9,399	9,438	9,256	9,880
24	6,176	5,989	5,963	6,910	7,761	8,580	10,443	10,475	10,071	10,238	10,168
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,138</b>	<b>5,035</b>	<b>5,272</b>	<b>5,741</b>	<b>6,684</b>	<b>7,944</b>	<b>8,726</b>	<b>8,791</b>	<b>8,677</b>	<b>8,830</b>	<b>8,952</b>

Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

Young people earn the highest wage per month in the industrial sector (US\$ 311.97), followed by the service (US\$ 307.44) and agricultural (US\$ 183.66) sectors. It can be perceived that there are differences in wages between male and female. Young males earn higher than their female counterparts by 14 per cent in the agricultural sector and 4.3 per cent in the industrial sector (Figure A1) since work in the industrial and agricultural sectors tend to be labour-intensive (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2019; World Economic Forum (WEF), 2016), while female youth earn 9.3 per cent higher than males in the service sector, perhaps due to women being stereotypically associated with an image of friendliness and hospitality compared to men. For instance, female youth earn 20.69 per cent higher wages per month compared to males in communication and information services (Figure

<sup>15</sup> The Thai Labour Protection Act (in Thai) is available at: [http://lb.mol.go.th/ewt\\_news.php?nid=224](http://lb.mol.go.th/ewt_news.php?nid=224).

<sup>16</sup> Calculated at the exchange rate of US\$1: THB 30.23.

A2). Nevertheless, the causes of the gender wage gap in the Thai labour market still remain to be clearly identified, whether the gap is due to the sectors women generally work in or due to other factors (Chandoevrit, 2018).

Furthermore, age also plays a significant role in wages and there is a growing trend in percentage differences. In 2018, youth aged 20–24 years earned approximately 28 per cent higher wages than those aged 15–19 years (Figure A3–4). The wage per month between the two age groups (15–19 and 20–24 years) has widened the gap, as the percentage difference is approximately 40 per cent. In 2008, young workers aged 20–24 years earned around US\$33 higher than those aged 15–19 years. In 2018, young workers aged 20–24 years earned approximately US\$99 more, further widening the gap. Moreover, for female youth, there tends to be a higher wage gap between the two age groups compared to male counterparts.

## **2.2.5 Gender Disparity in the Labour Market**

According to Chandoevrit (2018), gender disparities in Thailand have been alleviated in the past three decades; despite this, the gender wage and unemployment gaps remain evident in Thai society, especially for the 15–29 age group. In 2017, female youth aged 15–29 had a higher unemployment rate (4.6 per cent) compared to their male counterparts (3.7 per cent). Moreover, it is found that nearly 10,000 young men are employers, while only slightly over 1,700 young women are (Table A8). Similarly, there are more young males in managerial roles than young females (Table A9). Chandoevrit also points out that the Thai labour market has discriminated against women with a belief that pregnancy increases costs for the employer. The study found that female applicants are questioned whether they are pregnant in some companies. This is due to the law which allows women to take paid maternity leave for three months. Bui and Permpoonwivat (2015) found that the gender wage gap in Thailand has narrowed over the years. While the degree of discrimination in each sector is measured by the share of the “unexplained” part<sup>17</sup> out of the total wage gap, which became moderate in 2013, the gap remains significant in some sectors, such as real estate and water and electrical supplies. By and large, gender disparity is still a significant issue in the Thai labour market. Whilst the gender gap has narrowed in recent decades, it remains as an obstacle to the pathways to employability for female youth.

## **2.3 Employability**

According to the ILO, core employability skills include those acquired through basic education, such as reading and writing, technical skills, as well as professional and personal attributes such as honesty, reliability and attendance (Brewer, 2013). Hence, it can be implied that with quality and relevant education – though not limited to formal education – the pathway to employability is promoted, although this needs to be reinforced with available and sufficient jobs in the labour market. Non-formal education also offers skills development opportunities and lifelong learning that can enhance knowledge and competencies enabling youth to attain decent work.

### **2.3.1 Quality Education and Employability**

The value of education, especially higher education, is to prepare students for the jobs of today and the future (Nauffal and Skulte-Ouasis, 2018). According to the ILO, core employability skills

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<sup>17</sup> According to Bui and Permpoonwivat (2015), the paper applied the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition technique to decompose the group wage differential between male and female groups into one part that is explained by differences in the observed characteristic (due to endowments and productivity differences) and other unexplained part attributable to differences in the estimated coefficients (due to discrimination). The unexplained part incorporates the effects difference of unobservable characteristics between groups.

consist of the following four elements: learning to learn, communication, teamwork and problem-solving (Brewer, 2013). These skills and abilities may not be required for every job, but a good combination of this skillset is desirable and can be developed through work experience. Støren and Aamodt (2010) conducted a comparative survey among graduates in 13 countries (between 5–6 years after graduation) to reveal the relationship between quality education and employability. The study indicated that quality indicators have a significant effect on job performance, yet have only a minor influence on the chance of being employed. In the twenty-first century, it is not mandatory that people must work in a field related to what they have studied. Rather, importance is placed on whether they have obtained essential skills and work in a relevant occupation in the market (Forbes, 2015). Therefore, quality education is not confined only to formal education. Non-formal and informal education can also provide quality education and stimulate pathways to employability.

Non-formal and informal education (or “*Kor-Sor-Nor*” in Thai) is managed by the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) under the MOE. ONIE offers courses to everyone who is keen to acquire lifelong learning, and courses are available across the country in districts with non-formal education (NFE) centres. NFE centres offer a curriculum ranging from primary to higher secondary education, with equivalent credit to higher secondary school in the formal education. NFE graduates are eligible for continuing onto tertiary education as well. Informal education offers courses in the perspective of lifelong learning, such as professional training programmes, life skills development, social and community development and sufficiency economy learning process (ONIE, n.d.). The courses can be taken through various paths, such as self-learning, group learning in NFE centres and tele-learning through seven satellite-transmitted educational channels from the Royal Sponsored Project and the MOE. Therefore, non-formal and informal education provide a range of opportunities for young people who have either dropped out of school or could not access formal education to acquire a pathway to employability.

### **2.3.2 Changing Patterns and Digitalisation of Recruitment Mechanisms**

As the twenty-first century world introduces new employment opportunities, young people face numerous challenges along the pathway to employability. New jobs are emerging while other jobs are diminishing or becoming redundant. Modern jobs are aligned with new skillsets compatible with new technologies (WEF, 2018). Thus, as job opportunities for young people in Thailand are going on a different trajectory, traditional teaching and learning methods are increasingly becoming insufficient for the modern world.

The world is changing in such a way that many job roles currently carried out by human resources may be replaced by artificial intelligence, automation and algorithms. According to the WEF (2018), 90 per cent of the surveyed companies are looking to automate work and 85 per cent of them are hiring new permanent staff with skills relevant to technologies; while 79 per cent of the surveyed companies aim to retrain existing employees, and 76 per cent of companies expect their employees to pick up skills on the job.

In the past decade in Thailand, young people looking for work have departed from rural to urban areas, shifting from the agricultural to non-agricultural sectors to acquire a higher income and productivity (Figure A5). At present, young people are mostly employed in the service sector (Figure A6). Hence, the recruitment market has also become more competitive. Accordingly, various online platforms have been introduced to serve as a medium between employers and jobseekers, such as JobsDB, LinkedIn, Thai Internships Recruitment, Line Jobs, etc. These online platforms offer job opportunities ranging from entry level to executive level. The introduction of intermediation services such as online platforms can be considered positive to facilitate young people’s access to employment

opportunities, although young people who have the technological and communication skills to utilize online platforms to seek work will have an advantage over those who cannot.

Thai Internship Recruitment Co., Ltd. is one of the largest platforms for internship opportunities and entry-level jobs targeting university students and vocational students. It receives over 30,000 internship-seekers per year, while the internship opportunities stand at 4,776 from over 3,000 firms. Even the internship landscape is competitive. Ms. Siangchaeo, Managing Director of Thai Internship Recruitment Co., Ltd., points out that while firms wish to employ young people and would love to join the apprenticeship programmes, they have to select top-tier students as positions are limited. She also cites that the key elements most employers seek from young people are skills and characteristics involving both hard and soft skills.

*“We serve as a platform to match SMEs and new jobbers or students who are keen to hone their skills. Basically, from my experience as a recruitment platform provider, employers seek only two main values which are mind-set and skills...”* Ms Siangchaeo, Managing Director of Thai Internship Recruitment Co., Ltd and CEO of DayWork.

### **2.3.3 Youth Entrepreneurship**

One of the main challenges facing young people in Thailand in terms of employability development is mindset. According to the World Economic Forum ASEAN Youth Survey 2019, 31.9 per cent of youth in Thailand (aged 15–35) expressed the desire to become entrepreneurs, ranking second place out of six surveyed countries.<sup>18</sup> However, they appear to lack a growth mindset, which is a core value for building a successful business. Approximately 31 per cent of young people in Thailand believe their knowledge could last for most of their life, while merely 43 per cent of them recognize that their education and skills have to be constantly updated, which is the lowest among the six ASEAN surveyed countries, and also lower than the ASEAN average of 52.4 per cent (WEF, ASEAN Youth Survey, 2019).

It appears that the aspirations of young people could be empowered and driven by technology. With soft skills and working knowledge in digital platforms, young people could become small and micro-traders, using e-commerce platforms, online payment systems and social media to empower their businesses (Ibid., 2019). Yet in Thailand, youth entrepreneurship is not widespread; less than 1 per cent of Thai youth aged 15–24 are business owners, of which 85 per cent are men (Table A4 and A9). It is not common for Thais to run a business at a young age, though there are several cases of self-made billionaires<sup>19</sup> who started their enterprises in their early 20s and 30s.

As a serial entrepreneur, Ms. Siangchaeo identifies consistency and lifelong learning as essential skills for young people to become successful entrepreneurs.

*“Consistency is key. Passion can be found easily, especially for youth who are creative and have lots of ideas...but when there are obstacles...Consistency is the key to help you overcome problems relentlessly and bring you to success. In addition, lifelong learning and self-improvement are important because we have to keep learning new things everyday...”* said Ms. Siangchaeo Managing Director, Thai Internship Recruitment Co., Ltd. and CEO, DayWork.

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<sup>18</sup> The countries surveyed were Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Itthipat "Tob" Peeradechapan is one of the most successful young entrepreneurs who dropped out of college in his early 20s to start a small business and later founded a Thai snack brand called Taokaenoi (the “Little Boss” in Thai) which had a market share of 69 per cent of the Thai seaweed snack market (Forbes 2018).

Aytekin Tank (2019), CEO and founder of JotForm, agrees that continuous learning is critical for entrepreneurs.

*“Knowledge is increasingly valuable, especially when it drives innovation or is applied to leverage new technologies. That’s why learning is the single most important investment you can make in your business...”*

Therefore, it could be inferred that youth in Thailand face two key challenges in becoming entrepreneurs: developing the appropriate mindset and skillset for success. They strive to become entrepreneurs but a certain number of them still lack a growth mindset compared to their counterparts in other countries. Furthermore, according to the 2018 PISA results, Thai students scored lower than the OECD average in all three categories: mathematics, science and reading. Even though Thai students scored higher in mathematics and science than in the previous assessment (at 3 and 4 points respectively), their reading score dropped by 16 points, showing a downward trend.

However, for a more nuanced picture, it should be acknowledged that necessity-driven self-employment can result from a lack of more formal employment opportunities. Self-employed youth or own account workers currently make up 9.6 per cent of employed youth, with approximately 85 per cent in the older cohort and more than half being male (Table A8). Although the share of self-employed youth is declining, according to a poll administered by the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) in 2018, 20.6 per cent of the children surveyed desired to be self-employed or work as a freelancer in the future. In this case, the self-employment trend may not only be necessity-driven but also influenced by the changing lifestyle of the new generation.

Similar to youth entrepreneurship, new technologies can promote and support self-employed youth by facilitating access to markets and enabling skills acquisition. For instance, Fastwork is one of the largest freelancing platforms in Southeast Asia, with over 150,000 downloads. It offers work opportunities to self-employed youth, enabling them to perform tasks in which they are specialized, ranging from telesales to web analytics (Crunchbase, 2020).

## **2.4 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter presents the overview situation of young people and labour market trends. Thailand’s youth are the backbone of the future labour force, yet the youth unemployment rate is substantially higher compared to the overall population, with female youth faring worse compared to their male counterparts. Key problems include education mismatch and the Labour Protection Act, which protects youth from violation and labour intensiveness in the workplace, whilst simultaneously creating anxiety among employers in employing young people under 18 years of age. Furthermore, the lack of precise information regarding labour market demand remains an obstacle for youth employability. This presents a challenge for young people, especially those who have to earn a living to support their families. Meanwhile, gender disparity remains a huge challenge to the pathways to employability for female youth. Also, youth entrepreneurship in Thailand remains low, as less than 1 per cent of youth are business owners. This is due to the fact that most young people have only completed a lower secondary level of education. It is therefore difficult for them – especially at such a young age – to become entrepreneurs since they would have to bear additional expenses and uncertainty. Several pieces of research indicate that quality education (both formal and informal) has a substantial effect in preparing young people for the jobs of tomorrow. The changing job landscape in the twenty-first century presents a challenge for the Thai government to find a suitable mechanism to develop both hard and soft skills among young people to ensure their employability.

## Chapter 3: An Overview of Thailand Institutional Framework on Youth Employability and a Review of Selected Literature

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This chapter provides an overview of Thailand institutional framework on youth employability. It consists of four sections: (1) the country's strategies and policies; (2) laws; (3) implementing agencies; and (4) a brief review of studies related to youth employability.

### 3.1 Thailand's Policies and Strategies on Youth Employability

At present, there are six major policy frameworks relating to youth employability as follows.

#### 3.1.1 National Strategy 2018–2037: The 20-Year National Strategy (NS)

The NS is the country's first long-term strategy, launched in 2017. It sets the country's goal for sustainable national development with the vision of becoming a developed country. The NS recognizes that Thailand faces several challenges impeding national development. For example, the economic structure has yet to be fully driven by innovative technology, and the Thai labour force has yet met the expected requirements and demands of the labour market. In addition, there are other threats arising from an ageing society, disruptive technology, complex connectivity due to regional integration and liberalisation in different sectors, as well as climate change and ecological degradation.

Regarding the future scenario of industries and consequent future employment, the NS has six key strategies. Strategy 2 – the national competitiveness enhancement – comprises a strategy on “developing future industries and services” including integrated medical industry; digital, data and artificial intelligence industry and service; and transport and logistics industry and service. Strategy 2 also includes “developing a modern entrepreneurship-based economy.”

Strategy 3 – human capital development and strengthening – sets the guidelines for the future employability landscape. This strategy aims to develop Thai people of all ages to become good, skilled and quality citizens. Its key development guidelines include promoting human development at all stages of life (school age, adolescence, working age and elderly years); improving learning processes to accommodate changes in the twenty-first century; realising multiple intelligences; and promoting conditions that encourage human capacity development.

It can be argued that the NS supports the country's future employability landscape, however, the realisation of the goal and plan of the NS depends upon the NS being successfully implemented. Also, the NS is Thailand's first 20-year plan and its achievement is subject to many uncertainties, including political instability and the continuation of the long-term plan. To achieve its long-term goal, the NS must be continuously and consistently monitored and updated. Accordingly, Article 5 of the National Strategies Preparation Act B.E. 2560 stipulates that governmental policies, the preparation of the country's development plan, national security policies and plans, as well as the national annual budget, must be consistent with the NS.

Although Article 11 of the Act stipulates that the NS must be reviewed and updated every five years, the revision of the NS must be approved by the national assembly. That may not be enough since the gap between policies and implementation is conditional upon many other factors, especially the effectiveness of implementing agencies and their resources, the difficulty of the mission, and unexpected circumstances. Therefore, closer, more frequent and effective monitoring is recommended.

### **3.1.2 The Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) 2017–2021.**

The Twelfth NESDP (2017–2021) serves as a medium-term policy guideline. It covers the NS's first five years of implementation. During the plan period, Thailand will undertake a range of reforms aimed at solving various long-term accumulated fundamental problems (NESDB n.d., 1).

The NESDP aims to develop Thai people of all ages to acquire the skills, knowledge and capability needed for sustaining meaningful lives. In particular, development guideline 3.2.2 aims at developing systematic thinking skills, creativity and essential working skills required by the labour market among adolescents and young people (Ibid., 85). Like the NS, the implementation of the Twelfth Plan should be closely monitored. In this regard, the NESDB is lawfully authorised by the National Economic and Social Development Board Act 2018 to review all government and state enterprise projects and programmes and submit its recommendations to the cabinet for suitable actions.

### **3.1.3 National Scheme of Education (NSE) 2017–2036**

Presently, the NSE provides a framework for agencies responsible for education development to follow during the target period. By nature, the NSE directly supports youth employability. The objectives of the NSE are: 1) to develop a quality and effective educational system and process; 2) to produce quality Thai citizens with qualifications, skills and capabilities as required by the Constitution, the National Education Act, and the NS; 3) to establish Thailand as a society of high-quality learning, morals and ethics as well as national harmony and cooperation for sustainable development; and 4) to free Thailand from the middle-income trap and income inequality (OEC, 2017). The strategies of the NSE are also based on the NS (Table A18).

### **3.1.4 Higher Education Policies**

Since May 2019, the Office of Higher Education Commission has been transferred to the newly-established Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI), which is responsible for policies and implementation related to higher education. The policies on higher education directly support youth employability. Under Article 5 of the Higher Education Act 2019, the objectives of higher education are: 1) to develop human resources to become specialised in a field or profession for which they show aptitude; 2) to develop human resources to be fully-rounded people, physically, mentally and intellectually equipped with the necessary skills to be good citizens, to have discipline, to be proud of their country, to understand the country's society and culture, to be able to adapt to the ever-changing global society, to be responsible to their families, communities, society and the country, to participate in solving social problems and to live happily with other people; and 3) to respond to the NS, the economic and social development plan and higher education plan, and to prepare the country's human resources through higher education as well as to promote or encourage training and lifelong learning to build occupational skills.

The higher education policies and objectives do not raise the problem of, nor solutions for, the excess supply of educated workers. Yet, there are a few studies on the manpower requirements of the country, for example, a study on manpower requirements for education planning and manpower development (Office of the Education Council, 2010) and a study on the direction of employment in Thailand in the era of industry 4.0 (MOL, 2019). How much these studies are applied is a subject for further research.

### 3.1.5 Labour Policies

Thailand's labour policies are mainly under the Ministry of Labour (MOL). At present, the Ministry has three levels of policies: a long-term policy called the 20 Year Strategic Framework for the National Human Resources Development 2017–2036 (MOL, 2016); a medium-term labour policy – the Labour Master Plan 2017–2021 (MOL, 2016b); and annual labour policies (MOL, 2018; 2019).

The long-term policy closely follows the NS. It provides a guideline for the country's preparation for the future job landscape and for the changes envisaged in the next 20 years. The policy consists of four phases, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive:

- 1) **Productive Manpower (2017–2021):** The first phase aims to develop Thailand's human resources to become multi-skilled through re-skilling and STEM<sup>20</sup> skills to support a smooth and more efficient transition to work in line with the future era of Thailand 4.0;
- 2) **Innovative Labour Force (2022–2026):** The second phase aims to develop the country's human resources to become global citizens, with the ability to apply technological innovation to improve productivity in complete continuation from Thailand 4.0, whereby labour regulations will be designed to respond to new forms of employment in the digital time, and workers equipped to work in multicultural conditions and cross-border employment;
- 3) **Creative Labour Force (2027–2031):** The third phase aims to create a creative labour force towards labour and livelihood sustainability with a view to achieving the United Nations' sustainable development goals with full employment, productivity and decent work;
- 4) **Brain Power (2032–2036):** The fourth phase aims to achieve a society of intelligent workers able to use their competency to work in high productivity careers and earn high income (MOL, 2016, Chapter 3).

To implement the first phase of the long-term policy, the MOL has formulated the Labour Master Plan 2017–2021. For each constituent year of the master plan, an annual policy is formulated containing annually emphasised policies of the MOL. The only policy on youth employment is to promote the employment of 10,230 young persons. Such a small target reflects that the MOL's policies on youth employability are not pronounced. Nevertheless, youth can benefit from the MOL's activities on employment services, skill development and labour protection.

### 3.1.6 National Youth Policies

In 2011, the National Child and Youth Development Plan (NCYDP) 2012–2016 was formulated and implemented followed by the Second NCYDP 2017–2021, which was approved in 2018. The policy of the second NCYDP aims for children and youth to have a good quality of life suitable for their age, physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and intellectually; to have learning skills fit for the twenty-first century; to be creative citizens capable of adjusting to global changes; to be self-responsible; to have a civic mind; and to participate in social development (NCYDP Committee 2018, a). These qualities support youth employability.

The Second NCYDP has 5 policy strategies: (1) developing the capacity and immunity of children and youth; (2) strengthening environments to be conducive to the efficient development of children and youth; (3) promoting child and youth participation in development processes; (4)

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<sup>20</sup> STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.



promoting the role of and mobilising every party's cooperation in child and youth development; and (5) developing innovation in the management of child and youth development.

Although the aforementioned strategies do not directly address youth employability, the third strategy can arguably be interpreted as including the employment aspect of youth participation in development. Moreover, it is understandable that youth policies are overseen by many agencies. In particular, the policy on employment is overseen by the MOL; while the policy on youth education is responsible for by the MoE and the MHESI. Thus, the Second NCYPD does not place much emphasis on youth employment.<sup>21</sup>

### **3.2 Laws related to Youth Employability**

At present, a few Thai laws relate to youth employability, including the following:

#### **(1) Education Act 1999, amended (Number 2) 2002, and amended (Number 3) 2010**

The Education Act 1999 specifies the education policy principles, objectives and system of Thailand from preschool to higher education.<sup>22</sup> The Act stipulates that the government must provide everyone with equal rights and opportunity to free basic education not less than 12 years (Article 10), and basic education is compulsory for nine years for children aged 7–16 years (Article 17).<sup>23</sup> It also identifies three types of education: formal education (consisting of basic education and higher education), non-formal education and informal education (Article 15).

Education under the Act includes knowledge about oneself and relationship with the society; scientific and technological knowledge and skills, including conservation of natural resources and environment; knowledge of religions, art, culture, sport and Thai wisdom; knowledge and skills in mathematics and languages, with a focus on Thai language utilisation; occupational knowledge and skills; and how to live happily (Article 23). Evidently, education directly provides youth with knowledge, the main component of employability.

#### **(2) Education Act (Number 4) 2019**

The Act was amended to transfer higher education from the Education Act 1999 to new laws on higher education, and from the responsibility of the MoE to the MHESI.

#### **(3) Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation Act 2019**

The Re-organization of Ministries, Bureaus, and Departments Act (Number 19) 2019 stipulates that the MHESI be established and charged with the duty to promote, support and oversee higher education, science, research and innovation, with a view to promoting the country to catch up with the changing world and other legitimate duties (Article 17/1). The government also promulgates the Act on Administrative Regulations of the MHESI 2019. The Act authorises the MHESI to promote, support and oversee higher education, science, research and innovation with a view to developing the country to catch up with the changing world with academic and management freedom and developing manpower to satisfy the country demand (Article 7 (1)); to establish important ecosystem and infrastructure for the development of high education, science, research and innovation; and to promote

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<sup>21</sup> See more discussion in section 3.2.1 on the Child and Youth Development Act 2007 and 2017, and section 3.3 on implementing agencies.

<sup>22</sup> From 2019 onwards, higher education now falls under the Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation Act under the MHESI.

<sup>23</sup> The Office of Education Council disclosed that in 2017-2018, while 90 per cent of children could access compulsory education, inequality of education quality still appeared (OEC, n.d.).

cooperation with other government agencies, the private sector, local administration and foreigners or foreign agencies in creating high level specialists and conducting research or innovation (Article 7 (3)).

#### **(4) Child and Youth Development Acts 2007 and 2017**

In 2007, the National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act 2007 (NCYDP 2007) was enacted to perform the following actions:

1. Establish the National Committee on the Promotion of Child and Youth Development (NCYDP Committee).
2. Designate the MSDHS to be in charge of youth development and to solve problems which can negatively affect children and youth.
3. Establish child and youth councils at various administrative levels and request the cooperation of government agencies and the private sector to cooperate, promote and support those councils (Wanwanuch n.d.,3). The National Child and Youth Council are represented in the NCYDP Committee.
4. Promote the role of NGOs and community organizations in child and youth development.

In 2017, the Child and Youth Development Act (Number 2) was promulgated to update the 2007 one. The salient features of the 2017 law include specifying more details regarding child and youth councils; and supporting and promoting education for children with disabilities, children with learning disabilities and gifted children with a view to promoting good morals, good quality of life and ability to obtain employment and live freely (Article 4).

#### **(5) The Labour Protection Act 1998, amended (Number 2) 2008, (Number 3) 2008, (Number 4) 2010, (Number 5) 2017, (Number 6) 2017, (Number 7) 2019**

Although this Act is mainly for the protection of workers in general, it stipulates the minimum age for employment of young workers. Employers are forbidden to employ anyone under the age of 15 years (Article 44). An employer employing a person aged less than 18 years must inform a labour inspector within 15 days of the date of employment and inform a labour inspector within seven days after the date of the employee quitting the job (Article 45). Employers are not allowed to employ a person under 18 years to do work between the hours of 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. without written permission from the Director General of the Department of Employment or a designated person (Article 47). Employers are not allowed to employ a person under the age of 18 years to work overtime or on holidays (Article 48). Employers are not allowed to employ a person under 18 years to work in certain jobs listed in the Act (Article 49) or in certain forbidden places (Article 50). Employers are not allowed to call for any employment guarantee from persons under 18 years (Article 51). The Act also establishes a wage committee to set wage rates for students and conditions on employing students such as uniform, work time, break, holiday and place of employment (Wage Committee 2012).

#### **(6) The Skill Development Promotion Act 2002, amended (Number 2) 2014**

The Act aims to promote skills development to coincide with the private sector and set skill standards, skill test, skill quality assurance, skill development fund and contribution, skill training benefits and Skill Development Promotion Committee. The Act is not specifically aimed at young people, but they can participate in skills training and skill tests.

#### **(7) Other laws**

There are other laws and policies applicable to young people including the Child Protection Act 2003; the Child Adoption Act (No. 3) 2010; the Juvenile and Family Court Procedure 2010; the Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act 1996; the Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act 2007; and the Persons with Disabilities Education Act 2008 (UNICEF 2016, 10). There are also the

Civil and Commercial Code 1925, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991 (acceded 1991); the ILO C. 182: Worst Forms of Child Labour 1999 (ratified 2001); and the ILO C. 138: Minimum Age for Admission to Employment 1973 (ratified 2004).<sup>24</sup>

### 3.3 Implementing Agencies

Implementing agencies are important actors in minimising the gap between policies and their implementation. Thus, they deserve due consideration. There are three major areas of implementing policies on youth employability, namely education, skill training and competencies. Correspondingly, there are three major agencies responsible for the respective policy implementation: the MoE and the MHESI, the Department of Skill Development (DSD) under the MOL, and the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) under the MSDHS.

Basic education, informal education and vocational education are under the responsibility of the MoE. Since May 2019, the Ministry consists of the Education Council, the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC), and the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) (Article 3, National Education Act (Number 4) B.E.2562). As mentioned earlier, higher education is now overseen by the MHESI, particularly, the Office of Higher Education Commission, public higher education institutes and private higher education institutes.<sup>25</sup>

Skill training is carried out by a number of government agencies, particularly the DSD, private agencies and NGOs. Some skill training providers are listed in Table A19.

The DCY has been established under the MSDHS since 2015. It is responsible for determining policies and undertaking duties with a focus on the capability enhancement and development of children and youth, right protection of children and youth and welfare promotion of children, youth and families. In this regard, policies, measures and mechanisms have been developed to support the public and private sectors and the results from the implementation of the said policies and measures have been followed up and evaluated to ensure the well-being and life security of children and youth. In addition to the Strategy and Plan Division, the DCY has four operational divisions as follows:

- Child and Youth Development Promotion Division
- Child and Youth Protection Division
- Child Adoption Centre
- Child Support Grant Operation Centre

Among the mechanisms to strengthen the efficiency of implementing agencies, the Civil Service Commission and the Public Sector Development Commission are tasked to look after the performance of government agencies. Nevertheless, there are many factors determining the success of policy implementation, for example, the nature of the policies, policy objectives, political feasibility, technological feasibility, resource adequacy, the nature of implementing agencies, the internal structure of implementing agencies and the attitude of implementing staff (Silosichai, 2011). The size of the target population is another crucial factor, as the bigger the size, the more difficult it is to deal with.

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<sup>24</sup> A list of laws applicable to Thai children and adolescents is given in Annex IV of UNICEF's *A Situation Analysis of Adolescents in Thailand 2015–2016* (2016).

<sup>25</sup> They are under the regulation of the Higher Education Commission, the Office of Higher Education and the Minister of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (Article 7, Private Higher Education Act B.E. 2564, amended (Number 2) B.E. 2550), the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (Private Higher Education Act (Number 3) B.E. 2562).

### 3.4 Brief Review of Studies related to Youth Employability

In view of space constraint, only a few studies related to youth employability are briefly presented below. Technically, this section is not a complete literature review. The purpose of this section is merely to provide a brief overview of the contents of studies on youth employability.

#### 3.4.1 The Situation of Youth

The first extensive study on youth in Thailand, entitled *Country Monograph on the Profile of Youth of Thailand*, was conducted by ESCAP in 1984. The study, which was conducted by a group of Thai experts, provides a background on Thailand's young people in various aspects. The information includes young people employment and development during the 1980s such as their economic, social and demographic background; economic aspects of their lives; educational opportunities and problems; health situation and needs; political participation; main social and cultural issues affecting their lives; government policies and programmes and services by NGOs. The Monograph provides details of three main aspects of youth development: planning and policies, administrative organization, and projects and services. The Monograph notes that tactful strategies and appropriate methods used for each project are key measures of success. Hence, project implementers of each type (e.g. vocational training, youth leaders training, youth centre promotion and establishments, research on youth development) should have a chance to get together to share ideas and pool experiences to improve their implementation (Ibid., 219).

Three decades later, in 2016, the *Situation Analysis of Adolescents in Thailand 2015–2016* was undertaken by UNICEF. The analysis adopts the United Nations' definitions of children, adolescents and young people (adolescents: aged 10–19 years; children: aged 0–17 years; youth: aged 15–24 years; and young people: aged 10–24 years (Ibid., 7)). However, it also points out the problem of inconsistent data disaggregated by age and different age categories and definitions (child, adolescents, young person, youth), which overlap and cause disjointed data systems. Thus, data disaggregated for children (0–18 years, or 6–15 years) is also used, while the discussion overlaps on children, adolescents and young people. As the Situation Analysis notes, “The confusion surrounding definitions may be one reason why adolescents are virtually invisible in national financing plans and budgets. This presents a huge gap” (UNICEF, 2016, 45).

The analysis reviewed the Children and Youth Development Act 2007 and the National Children and Youth Development Plan 2012–2016.<sup>26</sup> It also provides a review of adolescents in Thailand with respect to their education, sexual and reproductive health, non-communicable diseases and mental health, social protection, vulnerable groups and a bottleneck analysis. With regards to institutions, the study asserts that political volatility prevents cohesive administrative efforts from implementing policies and ensuring consistent enforcement (Ibid., 45). Although this may be true, it should be noted that the causes of the inefficient implementation of youth policies are due to many other factors, not just political ones. For example, youth employability is overseen by a number of agencies, including the MoE, the MHESI, the MOL, the private sector and NGOs.<sup>27</sup> The analysis remarks that, while the DCY is responsible for formulating and coordinating youth policy across government ministries and agencies, “the Department is underfunded and lacks the authority to efficiently

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<sup>26</sup> An update may be needed because the Act was amended in 2017 (as mentioned earlier) and the Plan was replaced by the Second National Children and Youth Development Plan 2017–2021 in 2018. The contents of the 2017 Act and 2017–2021 Plan are given earlier in this chapter.

<sup>27</sup> The division of roles among these agencies is discussed in the section on implementing agencies.

coordinate. It operates within a complex institutional framework, which makes it essentially ineffectual, at least when compared with more powerful ministries and agencies” (UNICEF 2016, p. 12).

The analysis also points out that a large number of students are excluded or are at risk of being excluded from the school system. Few adolescents have access to after-school or recreational programmes, which means they are left home alone for a long period of time without proper adult supervision. However, it is not entirely accurate for the analysis to argue that there is no special facility for students with disabilities as there is the National Office for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, under the MSDHS, responsible for policies and actions on persons with disabilities (MSDHS 2018).

Another study on the situation of young people in Thailand was undertaken by Leurcharusmee (2019). The study finds, for example, that for youth aged 15–19, 77 per cent of females are in school and only 12 per cent are employed, thus 11 per cent are NEET. For males, 67 per cent are in school and 23 per cent are employed, thus 10 per cent are NEET (Ibid., 1). This leads the author to conclude that female youth stay in school longer and are more likely to become NEET. This is not correct, however, as the percentage of youth in school is a matter of number or proportion but does not specify the duration of staying in school; also, as discussed below, there is no direct causal relation between level of education and being NEET. The study finds that urban youth tend to have higher levels of education and are less likely to be NEET. Yet, it also asserts that higher education does not imply a lower chance of becoming NEET. Similar to other studies, the study finds that when it comes to employment, youth are likely to work in agriculture (1 million workers) followed by wholesale and retail and manufacturing (0.8 million workers) and that male youth are employed more than female youth. It also finds that young people work similar hours as adults but tend to earn less than adults.

According to the study, in 2017, there were 0.17 million unemployed youth, and 1.44 million NEETs. Youth unemployment was found to be greater than that of adults, especially among educated young people. Nevertheless, youth with higher education in engineering and business administration were less likely to be unemployed than others, while young people living with parents or grandparents were found to remain in school longer unless married.

### **3.4.2 Jobs of the Future**

The impact of technological change on youth future employment in Thailand has been forecasted. In 2018, Cisco in cooperation with Oxford Economics conducted a study entitled *Technology and the future of ASEAN jobs: The impact of AI on workers in ASEAN's six largest economies*, with the goal of acquiring a better understanding of the next decade's opportunities, challenges, and what technological change will mean for ASEAN workers. In particular, the study aims to provide advice on the role technology will play in different industries and occupations. The study leveraged data on 433 occupations across 21 industries from the six largest ASEAN countries (ASEAN-6) including Thailand to model the impact of the technology adoption patterns on the 275 million full-time equivalent workers employed in the ASEAN-6 by 2028. Its findings include the displacement effect of technology on ASEAN-6 jobs, how technology will create new jobs across the region, what the new labour market will look like, the reskilling challenge and reflections for the future.

For Thailand, the study's panel of experts developed a ten-year modelling scenario which envisages Thailand taking advantage of a lack of legacy infrastructure to establish a cloud intensive and 5G broadband network in major cities. According to the scenario, Thailand in 2028 is regionally competitive in analytics, with a young, digital savvy labour force and a supportive government policy. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is partially integrated into business functions through the cloud, but not to

the same extent as in Singapore and Malaysia with regards to automating decision making, recruitment and operational decisions (Ibid., 49). The model for Thailand forecasts that the three sectors at risk of most displacement are agriculture (1.7 million displaced, 14.5 per cent of labour force); manufacturing (0.84 million displaced, 11.6 per cent of labour force); and wholesale and retail (0.76 million displaced, 10.4 per cent of labour force). Conversely, the three sectors in line for the most job creations are manufacturing (1.2 million jobs created, 16.3 per cent of labour force); wholesale and retail (0.91 million jobs created, 12.4 per cent of labour force); and hotels and restaurants (0.55 million jobs created, 17.4 per cent of labour force). The number of jobs at risk of being replaced in agriculture and mining are 1,056,408 skilled agricultural workers, 1,186 craft and related workers, 12,314 plant and machine operators and assemblers, and 120,901 elementary workers. On the other hand, jobs to be created in manufacturing include 27,039 technicians, 23,127 professionals, 20,833 clerical support workers, 107,047 craft and related workers, 114,047 plant and machine operators and assemblers, and 20,692 elementary workers (Cisco Systems 2018, p. 49). At this juncture, time and space constraints do not permit a comprehensive review and assessment of the study.

In a study looking at the impact of technological change on the future employment of young people in Thailand, Saowanee and Kumpol (2019) explore the problems of the declining productivity of Thai workers and the trends which indicate that robots, AI and the IoT (Internet of Things) are taking the place of workers. The authors argue that to prevent an undesirable lose-lose scenario—technological change accompanied by a large pool of workers in the informal sector—it is critical that businesses take an active role in supporting their existing workers through reskilling and upskilling, while individuals should take a proactive approach to their own lifelong learning, and governments need to create an enabling environment, rapidly and creatively, to assist in these efforts. To keep up with rapid technological change, 54 per cent of Thai workers need reskilling and upskilling, both in technical and human skills. The authors suggest that workers in the future must be prepared to work or cope with robots and automatic systems. In order to do that, youth need lifelong learning and employability skills. The authors also recommend that: 1) the private sector should cooperate with the public sector to invest in skill training to meet rapidly changing demands; 2) skill needs for the future should be closely linked with the education system; and 3) there should be a tripartite mechanism to cooperate in skill training. It should be noted at present the DSD has already been cooperating with the private sector based on the Skill Development Promotion Act of 2004 and 2014.

### **3.5 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter provides an overview of the institutional framework regarding government policies, plans, laws and implementing agencies on youth employability. While there are more studies that have not been covered by this present study and a more extensive review of the literature is certainly recommended, a few observations can be summarised as follows. Firstly, the institutional framework, especially the long-term policies and plans, does not have an exclusive policy on youth employability. However, development guidelines aimed at developing systematic thinking skills, creativity and essential working skills among young people can be found in the medium-term plan, although the medium-term policy does not raise the issue of unemployment in the youth age group. Secondly, while there are laws that deal with youth employability, the existing law on skill development does not treat youth specifically. Thirdly, activities on youth employability are carried out by many agencies without strong or effective co-ordination and co-operation both at the policy and implementation levels. Moreover, the agency responsible for coordinating those many agencies does not possess sufficient authority and resources to perform the duty efficiently. Fourthly, there is a need for more studies on the political aspect of the institutional framework related to youth employability as this was not touched on in this chapter.

## Chapter 4: Key Challenges for Youth Employability

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This chapter identifies key challenges for youth employability in the twenty-first century. It explores what mismatch has occurred in the labour market and obstructed pathways to employability for young people. Factors other than curricular contributing to skills deficit are discussed.

### 4.1 Skills Landscape in the Twenty-first Century

Acquiring a higher skill often offers higher productivity and broadens opportunities for employment (World Bank 2010). However, skills are not invincible, especially in the twenty-first century world where there are new emerging technologies and professions. Currently, 75 million job roles may be replaced by AI, automation and algorithms, while 133 million emerging job roles will fill the gap (ILO, 2017; WEF, 2018).

According to *The Future of Jobs Report* (WEF, 2018), in Thailand, all industries are expected to have a huge skill gap, in which at least 50 per cent of the labour force will require skill training and re-skilling. In addition, between 73 and 80 per cent of the labour force in three key manufacturing sectors – automotive; electrical and electronics; and textiles, clothing and footwear – are at high risk of automation (ILO, 2017). Moreover, by 2022, the share of new professions is projected to increase from 16 per cent to 27 per cent in all industries, while the share of redundant professions is projected to decrease from 31 per cent to 21 per cent (WEF, 2018). The report also estimates that 51 per cent of the total Thai labour force will have to reskill and upskill both in technical and human skills similar to the overall global trend, which is at 54 per cent.

Yet, youth in formal education and the NEET group tend to share distinct views. According to focus group discussions, youth in formal education place the importance of skill training more on academic and technical skills, such as improving English fluency or numeracy, compared to youth in the NEET group who place more importance on practical skills and their daily routine, such as welding, drawing and discipline. Thus, it can be implied that the landscape of skill development and future career paths may look different for the two groups of youth.

The twenty-first century world is being driven by innovation which is leading to changes in the labour market. Workers nowadays require a different mix of skills than in the past (WEF, 2015). Therefore, the concept of twenty-first century skills has emerged to meet the demands of the twenty-first century marketplace (see Annex III). As Thailand is striving forward to Thailand 4.0, Thai education must be reformed as Education 4.0. It is also crucial that Education 4.0 addresses curriculum and text revision, as well as enhances students' future skills (Chularut, 2018). The approach must be in line with what the Independent Committee for Education Reform (ICER) set out in the first and fifth objectives of the Education Reform plan, namely educational system and learning reform with the new Education Act and supporting laws; and curriculum reform in accordance with the twenty-first century world.

### 4.2 Education and Employability

As mentioned in 2.3, quality and relevant education promotes employability, which will assist young people when confronted with new challenges and changes. According to Chularut (2018), future skills are the twenty-first century skills necessary for the forthcoming changes in the world and society. Besides many learning strategies and learning processes, to develop twenty-first century skills, instructors must adopt STEM education, active learning and problem-based learning in classrooms. By doing so, learners are likely to become skillful learners who are able to create innovation in the future.



*“I believe that Thai education is very important in preparing a foundation for me.”* Grade 9 students at Wat Udom Rangsri School, Bangkok, Thailand.

*“...I think that I still have to learn and study a lot. My current knowledge is not good enough... I have to study harder...”* Male student in Grade 9, 15, Wat Udom Rangsri School.

*“...I want to graduate from the NFE programme very soon and earn a degree, so I can have decent work and support my family... With Secondary 3 (Grade 9) degree alone, I can find jobs but they are dangerous like carrying heavy stuff.”* Male, 17, in Suan Aoi Community, Friends International Thailand’s workshop.

Surprisingly, according to the focus group, most students as well as youth NEET believe that they are not yet competitive and are keen to learn. They believe that earning at least a degree or a diploma from school or training would create a better pathway to a good life. In fact, such findings from the focus group discussions contradicts the findings from the ASEAN Youth Report (2019), which suggested that young people aged 15–35 years in Thailand have the lowest growth mindset among other ASEAN countries, pointing out that 31 per cent of Thai youth believe their education and skills will last for most of their life.

Nevertheless, higher education attainment does not always guarantee employment. As mentioned in Chapter 2, bachelor’s degree graduates have the highest unemployment rate compared to other education levels (NSO, 2018). This suggests that educational mismatch occurs mainly at the tertiary education level since there are various specialized subjects that neither truly serve the existing market demands, nor learners’ true aspirations.

### **4.3 Mismatch**

Alongside unemployment of youth, skill mismatch also needs to be considered to solve long-term employability, since part of the unemployed population are absorbed in mismatched employment. Mismatch problems are less worrying than unemployment, but they can still cause economic inefficiency. Mismatch can be detected when the employment of a certain job position does not correspond with a person’s level of education (Pholphirul, 2016). Mismatch happens when a person works in a field which is either irrelevant to his/her education background (horizontal mismatch) works in a position that is lower than his/her highest degree (vertical mismatch). Both types of mismatch are present in the 15–24 age range employment. Mismatch also often occurs when there is oversupply in certain job positions, causing the leftover unemployed to either wait longer to find a job position or end up applying for lower qualified jobs.

The group that faces the most serious mismatch problems are vocational graduates, as 47 per cent of industrial craftsmen and technicians work in low paid positions (Chenphuengpaw and Rukkiatwong, 2019). According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED, 1997), vocational graduates in the science and information, business and services, biological science, and computer spheres are classified as skill level 4. Table A20 reveals that these graduates are among the most vulnerable to mismatch as they are highly concentrated in the retail and service sector which requires skill level 2. As a result, they earn lower income and their skills are not fully utilized (Table A21). However, the reason they have to take lower-paid jobs may not only be due to skill mismatch, but because their performance and work quality might fail to meet the standard of higher positions.

Vocational graduates also spend a long time looking for jobs. Table A22 reveals that there are more young people from the vocational graduate group entering the labour market than those from the academic group, at 37.49 per cent compared to 26.28 per cent. However, the vocational group tend to

spend a longer time, up to 12 months, searching for a job (more than 4 per cent). Normally, the duration of time spent on a job search for both groups is between 1 to 2.9 months.

It must be noted that the majority of young people from both vocational and academic groups enter the labour market in the trade and service sectors. That a higher number of vocational graduates are employed in the retail and services sector than in the craftsman and related sectors strongly emphasizes the fact that their skills and training may be wasted.

Skill mismatch is one of the key challenges for decent youth employment. Unlike general employability problems, mismatch involves specific education level and the labour market demand of each sector. Addressing mismatch requires policies that target specific groups and collaboration with employers in order to harmonise labour supply and demand, not only in terms of quantity, but also the specific skills and training needed to meet job requirements. Therefore, policy that provides labour market information on both the demand and supply sides is crucial to resolve the mismatch problem.

#### **4.4 School Drop-out Rate**

In Thailand, educational attendance reduces by each education level (Figure A7), with the drop-out rate increasing with the higher level of education. According to the MOE (2017), the reasons for youth drop-out have changed from poverty to the students themselves and their social context (e.g. not interested in studying, migration and pregnancy). Nevertheless, despite free education, poverty tends to lead students to drop out after completing secondary 3 in order to work (Grade 9), when the fee-free twelve-year compulsory education terminates.

In 2018, the drop-out rate<sup>28</sup> is highest in higher secondary education (0.44 per cent) followed by lower secondary (0.21 per cent) and primary education (0.06 per cent). The main reasons for dropping out of education are as follows: migration (27.46 per cent); family problems (21.82 per cent); difficulties in adapting (21.79 per cent); earning a living (13.03 per cent); marriage (9.44 per cent); low-income (3.89 per cent). However, the overall drop-out rate reduced substantially from 1.68 per cent to 0.17 between 2008 and 2018 (OBEC, 2018). One of the key reasons for the decline is the fifteen-year free education instituted in 2010, which has significantly decreased drop-outs caused by poverty.

Table 2 presents the data of one million students between 2002 and 2013, tracking them from primary to tertiary education level. The study discovered a higher drop-out rate at the higher education level: in each batch, 28 per cent of students dropped out after completing lower secondary education and 39 per cent of students dropped out before completing higher secondary education, while only 32 per cent of youth completed tertiary education.

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<sup>28</sup>The data presents only 5.82 million students under OBEC.

**Table 2** Average Number of Students in 3 Batches entering Grade 1 in the Academic Year 2000, 2001 and 2002 until Grade 12 in 2011, 2012 and 2013

Unit: Thousand

Number of students in each level	Grade 1	Grade 6	Grade 9/VC 1	Grade 10/VC 2	Grade 12/VC 3	Year 1 (including diploma)	Attained Tertiary Education
Number of students (average of 3 batches entered Grade 1 in 2000–2002)	1075	977	886	777	657	614	334
Number of drop-out students since Grade 1	0	98	189	299	418	461	731
Cumulative Drop-out rate	0.00	9.14	17.57	27.79	38.90	42.86	67.98

Sources: Office of the Permanent Secretary, MOE, Student Profile B.E. 2545–2556 (collected by NSO); NSO, Population and Housing Census B.E. 2543; Office of the Education Council, Education in Thailand B.E. 2554–2556 (Data forecasted with cohort by Dr. Rungnapa Chitrotchanarak, Quality Learning Foundation), as cited in TDRI (2016).

Note: reduced 2 per cent of overlapped students in each education level in the academic year B.E. 2556 (estimation of 2.9 hundred thousand of overlapped students).

Over 80 per cent of students who dropped out at secondary 3 are male (Lapprathana 2019). The drop-out rate reduces to 29 per cent in secondary 4 and 5, with 65 per cent being females (Figures A8). Pregnancy is found to be strongly related to in the drop-out rate for females in the upper secondary level. This issue raises concerns over the increased number of NEETs, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 4.5 Career Guidance System

Although the career guidance system in Thai schools has a strong framework to promote employability, effective implementation remains difficult due to limited human resources within schools.

The Department of Employment provides a systematic framework for successful career guidance, attitude and career assessment to promote self-understanding, self-determination and self-adjustment. The career guidance is introduced in schools from Grade 9 (Secondary 3) onwards for students to be able to discover themselves, and to understand different occupations and labour market trends. Generally, career guidance is provided by school counsellors. According to the focus group discussion with students at Wat Udom Rangsi School,<sup>29</sup> they think that career guidance is very helpful in guiding them about what they could pursue in the future. While most of the interviewed students believe that the MOE's courses do not really match their future career preferences – such as to become military personnel, flight attendants, historians, shop owners etc. – they believe the offered courses provide them with a good foundation for the future and are useful for them, regardless.

<sup>29</sup> The first focus group discussion was conducted on 17th September 2019 at Wat Udom Rangsi School, Thailand. The participants were 26 students from Grade 9 and 2 school counsellors.

Nevertheless, according to the interview conducted for this study, school counsellors admit that the school's human resource is limited. Therefore, it is very challenging to support and advise all students effectively, especially those who are at risk of dropping out.

*“I have to admit that these students are slow-learners...but we are trying to help them to stay on track (not to drop-out). Our school provides 12-year-free education but after Grade 9 (S.3), they are on their own. We try to encourage them to go onto vocational education since it is more practical for them; if they want to study in the university, it is going to be very competitive... I have to admit that the number of teachers in this school is low compared to students, especially the school counsellors. We have only two of us and one intern, while there are more than 2,400 students. Thus, it is hard to monitor and take care of every student to keep them on track.”* Ms Pradabmook, School Counsellor, Wat Udom Rangsi School.

The main reasons for drop-out, according to the interviewed teachers and students, are: 1) loss of interest to study further; 2) pregnancy; and 3) migration. It is hard for teachers to monitor and give advice to students inclusively, especially the school counsellors since they tend to be outnumbered by students. Counselling work requires tailor-made efforts to provide efficient recommendations, but this was difficult to do in reality. Hence, the responsibility also falls on classroom teachers. Unfortunately, this further impedes their ability to perform their duties efficiently. According to the Equitable Education Fund (EEF), in 2015, teachers had to spend 32.5 per cent of their time conducting assessments and administrative works. Even though the percentage reduced from 2014 and the rate is similar to other countries in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the rate should be further reduced in order to maximize teacher's efficiency and inclusiveness among students (Isranews Agency, 2016).

#### **4.6 Concluding Remarks**

Young people in Thailand face educational challenges on the pathway to employability. The skill landscape in the changing world urgently calls for education and curriculum reform to align with the twenty-first century world and labour market demands. Education is key to promoting employability and supporting young people to attain decent work. Nevertheless, statistics show that 28 per cent of youth dropped-out after completing compulsory education at Secondary 3 or Grade 9, while less than 30 per cent completed tertiary education. This poses a challenge to the Thai labour market as only a minority of students attain skill level 4 and can perform high-skilled jobs. Besides external factors, the problem of education mismatch remains unsolved as there is no clear information between market supply and demand. Moreover, the career guidance system is still not implemented efficiently and inclusively due to staff shortages and the limitations of career guidance in school. Although school drop-out is lower than in the past, it may still contribute to a rising NEET rate. Thus, the potential of Thailand's youth is not yet fulfilled.

## Chapter 5: The NEET Group (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

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This chapter provides an overview of the NEET population in Thailand and its demographic data. Young people in this group can be categorised into four groups:<sup>30</sup>

1. **Household workers:** persons who engage in household work without being paid.
2. **Too young/unable to work:** the “too young” group comprises the 15-18 age group, while “unable to work” refers to persons who cannot work because of physical or mental disability or chronic illness.<sup>31</sup>
3. **Resting:** persons who are taking a “rest” between jobs or voluntarily idle.
4. **Unemployed youth:** youth who did not work even for one hour, had no jobs, business enterprises, or farms of their own, from which they were temporarily absent, but were available for work during the survey week.

Household workers have the largest share (54 per cent) in the NEET group, followed by the resting group (18 per cent), unemployed youth (15 per cent) and lastly the too young/unable to work group (13 per cent) (see Table A23).

### 5.1 Background

Young people under 18 years of age tend to stay in education before entering the labour force. Considering the age profile, the trends between schooling and household working are significantly related. The number of schooling actively increases and dramatically declines between the age of 15–18 years, while the household work trend runs adversely within the same age group. Furthermore, gender is a significant factor in the household worker and resting categories, in which the percentage of girl household workers is higher than for boys, while the resting trend among boys is rising (Table 3–5).

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<sup>30</sup> The categories are unofficially translated from the LFS’ statistical standards (in Thai) (2004), available at: <http://statstd.nso.go.th/definition/projectdetail.aspx?periodId=58> (Accessed: 3 April 2020).

<sup>31</sup> The definitions are adapted from Chapter 2 of the NSO’s *Labour Force Survey* (2018), available at: [http://www.nso.go.th/sites/2014en/Survey/social/labour/LaborForce/2018/Full%20Report\\_q3\\_18pdf.pdf](http://www.nso.go.th/sites/2014en/Survey/social/labour/LaborForce/2018/Full%20Report_q3_18pdf.pdf) (Accessed: 15 May 2020).

**Table 3** Non-Labour Force Male Youth between 2008 and 2018

<b>Male</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>In Number</b>						
Household Worker	36,700	50,546	35,443	37,210	54,965	69,585
Studying	2,036,434	1,989,798	2,028,059	2,015,958	1,993,212	1,948,579
Too young/Unable to work	105,818	107,733	96,916	81,915	100,193	108,922
Resting	43,495	37,179	68,888	104,617	146,374	146,306
Others	81,567	107,119	98,409	111,255	92,174	70,556
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,304,014</b>	<b>2,292,375</b>	<b>2,327,716</b>	<b>2,350,955</b>	<b>2,386,918</b>	<b>2,343,948</b>
<b>In %</b>						
Household Worker	1.59	2.20	1.52	1.58	2.30	2.97
Studying	88.39	86.80	87.13	85.75	83.51	83.13
Too young/Unable to work	4.59	4.70	4.16	3.48	4.20	4.65
Resting	1.89	1.62	2.96	4.45	6.13	6.24
Others	3.54	4.67	4.23	4.73	3.86	3.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table 4** Non-Labour Force Female Youth between 2008 and 2018

<b>Female</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>In Number</b>						
Household Worker	689,709	642,176	619,991	585,492	636,879	608,955
Studying	2,223,421	2,213,675	2,201,098	2,288,157	2,241,553	2,173,802
Too young/Unable to work	50,324	38,628	53,310	55,139	51,999	59,642
Resting	28,504	30,972	33,334	43,555	72,453	78,201
Others	71,738	103,110	170,025	102,353	86,805	71,260
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,063,696</b>	<b>3,028,561</b>	<b>3,077,759</b>	<b>3,074,697</b>	<b>3,089,688</b>	<b>2,991,859</b>
<b>In %</b>						
Household Worker	22.51	21.20	20.14	19.04	20.61	20.35
Studying	72.57	73.09	71.52	74.42	72.55	72.66
Too young/Unable to work	1.64	1.28	1.73	1.79	1.68	1.99
Resting	0.93	1.02	1.08	1.42	2.34	2.61
Others	2.34	3.40	5.52	3.33	2.81	2.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table 5** Youth Population segregated in Non-Labour Force and NEET groups between 2008 and 2018 (see Table A23 for NEET percentage share)

Unit: Person

Types	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	Annually Average Growth Rate (%)
Household Workers	726,409	692,722	655,434	622,702	691,843	678,539	-0.68
Resting	71,999	68,151	102,222	148,172	218,827	224,507	12.04
Too young/Unable to work	156,142	146,361	150,227	137,054	152,192	168,564	0.77
Unemployed	245,719	172,253	131,868	186,183	206,649	194,786	-2.30
<b>Total NEET</b>	<b>1,200,269</b>	<b>1,079,487</b>	<b>1,039,751</b>	<b>1,094,111</b>	<b>1,269,511</b>	<b>1,266,396</b>	<b>0.54</b>
<b>Total Non-Labour Force</b>	<b>5,367,710</b>	<b>5,320,936</b>	<b>5,405,474</b>	<b>5,425,652</b>	<b>5,476,606</b>	<b>5,335,807</b>	<b>-0.06</b>
<b>Total Youth</b>	<b>10,522,833</b>	<b>10,447,804</b>	<b>10,295,927</b>	<b>9,638,159</b>	<b>9,595,722</b>	<b>9,448,461</b>	<b>-1.07</b>

Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

In 2018, the NEET group accounted for 23.73 per cent of youth in non-labour force and 13.40 per cent of the total youth population aged 15–24 (Table A23). Data shows the trend of youth in non-labour force growing from 0.95 million in 2008 to 1.07 million in 2018, and the overall NEET group slowly increasing during the past decade at 0.54 per cent annually (Table 5). Although the overall NEET trend rarely changes, the non-labour force under the resting group had an average annual growth rate of 12.04 per cent. Moreover, the resting rate is high in every age group.

Young people in the NEET group are usually those with limited access to opportunities, either due to family background or social context. According to in-depth interviews, focus group discussions,<sup>32</sup> and secondary data sources, the main root causes of NEET can be tentatively conceptualised as follows:

- (1) **Insufficient mechanisms to support slow-paced learners:** Young people in the NEET group are mostly either slow-paced learners or have a learning disability.<sup>33</sup> They tend to have difficulty catching up with other students, and teachers are not always able to assist every student as they also have heavy workloads (Isranews Agency, 2016). Hence, slow-paced learners are often left behind with confusion about the subjects they are learning, which leads them to question why they have to continue studying. Moreover, the ‘one-size fits all’ central assessment system hurts this group of students, causing them to fall further behind.

<sup>32</sup> The in-depth interview with the NEET group was conducted on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019 with 15 young people (all male) at a Juvenile Detention Centre (Baan Metta). The third focus group discussion was conducted with young people (all male) on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at Suan Aoi Community, Klong Toey district, Bangkok, Thailand. The operation was supported by Friends International.

<sup>33</sup> The categorization of the “unable to work” group will be discussed in Section 5.5.

*“School is very hard to study. There are numbers and texts. I found it very hard for me...I normally skip the classes...”* Male NEET, 17, Juvenile Detention Centre.

(2) **Family background:** Young people in the NEET group mostly live in separated families (living with only a mother/father, or relatives). For example, a high proportion (67.52 per cent) of youth in Juvenile Detention Centres come from a broken family background (DJOP Information Centre, 2018). It is therefore likely that these young people lack guidance and support to keep on track. In addition, they mostly come from a low-income background, which signals that they also tend to have economic burdens. Figure A9 illustrates that nearly 6 per cent of Grade 10–11 drop-outs came from the poorest quintile. This group of youth mostly drop out before continuing to higher secondary education because there is no longer free tuition support from the government, while some drop out even earlier to earn a living.

*“I left school at Grade 10 (S.4) because of my family...I want to continue studying but I need to have money first...”* Male NEET, 16, Suan Aoi Community.

(3) **Lack of social support/community influence:** According to the focus group with youth in formal education,<sup>34</sup> most of the interviewed students know friends who are NEETs, and some had even thought about dropping out from school themselves. Reasons cited included the curriculum sometimes being too difficult to understand and the influence of dropped-out friends. The school counsellor in the focus group explained that community plays a vital role. Likewise, Ms Bunsuk, the Interim Country Programme Director of Friends International, also shared the view that the community is an obstacle. For example, those in juvenile detention who return to their old community filled with drugs and larceny are often led back into the same old vicious cycle; statistics reinforce this notion, as 16.72 per cent of youth are prosecuted more than once (DJOP Information Centre, 2018).

*“The community plays an influential role here...there are drugs in the village. Sometimes kids may get attracted into the cycle easily. We try to visit students’ homes and talk to them...but some of them just don’t want to study.”* Ms Pradabmook, school counsellor at Wat Udom Rangsri School.

(4) **Lack of career guidance and knowledge of potential roles:** Some in the NEET group struggle to find a career that excites them. Despite their high-level skills, new graduates also seem to struggle to find a job after graduating. As mentioned earlier in 2.2.2, this leads to a rising resting rate among youth. Due to a lack of proper guidance, young people may not be able to discover their passion, know their capability and understand what roles they could perform.

## 5.2 Gender in the NEET group

According to Table 3 and 4, the total number of female youth in the non-labour force group is nearly 3 million persons higher than male (approximately 2.3 million). The male NEET group has an annual average growth of 2 to 3 per cent, while there is a slight decrease among females at 0 to -1 per cent for both age groups of 15–19 years and 20–24 years (Table A23–26).

In 2018, the share of youth who are male (33.19 per cent) and female (66.81 per cent) in the NEET group constitutes 8.80 per cent and 18.12 per cent of those groups’ total population, respectively.

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<sup>34</sup> The focus group discussion was conducted on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at Wat Udom Rangsri School, Thailand. The participants were 26 students from Grade 9 and 2 school counsellors.



One of the main reasons that the number of female NEETs is high is due to the fact that they tend not to enter the labour force after dropping out from school and instead become household workers. This may be caused by traditional Thai social norms in which women are expected to stay at home, perform housework and raise children. Table A26 and A27 reveal that approximately 70 per cent of female NEETs are household workers in both age groups (15–19 and 20–24). Pregnancy could also play a role, as statistics show that 88 per cent of female students dropped-out after Grade 10 and 11 (7,000 drop-outs) due to pregnancy or having children (Figure A10).

The number of male NEETs is relatively lower compared to female since they tend to enter the labour force to earn a living, though approximately 34–36 per cent of them are resting (aged 15–24 years), which is higher than female (10–13 per cent) (Table A23–26). At the age of 15–19 years, the female NEET population is already high (223,807 persons) compared to their male counterparts (172,725 persons) (Table A24 and A26). At the age of 20–24, the percentage difference between female and male in the NEET population rises even more: the total male NEET population aged 20–24 is 247,653 persons, while the total female NEET population aged 20–24 is 622,211 persons (Table A25 and A27). This illustrates a growing divergent trend as the female NEET population increases with the older age range.

The aforementioned problems of NEET status and teenage pregnancy could, to some extent, be influenced by social norms, such as ideas embedded in Thai culture in which women traditionally take responsibility for household work. For example, according to a recent survey with nearly 6,500 respondents, 58 per cent of men and 43 per cent of women believe that women should be responsible for housework (Milieu Insights, 2019). The data shows that the norms have not changed much from the past, though 48 per cent of women believe that both men and women should be responsible for housework. Another issue could be the rarely discussed topic of sex, which may serve as a causality for teenage pregnancy, as there is insufficient safe space for youth to learn and understand this issue (Mahavongtrakul 2019). Pressure from families regarding studying could be another contributing factor. According to Thai Health, 87 per cent of young Thais talk with their parents merely 10 minutes per day. Parents also tend to set a high expectation for their children to earn a place at respected universities (Aka, 2018). Young people then try to enter any faculty, in order to gain a place at university, leading to further mismatch and resting since they may not have a passion to work in a field in which they are not interested, or may even take a gap year to find their preferred career path.

### **5.3 Household Workers**

Age, gender, marital status and education level are significant factors for household workers, who constitute approximately 53.58 per cent of total NEETs. The higher number of household workers can be found in the 20–24 age group (484,940 persons) compared to the 15–19 age group (193,601 persons). There is also a clear gender distinction between male (69,585 persons) and female (608,955 persons); 73.45 per cent of female household workers and 53.76 of male household workers are aged 20–24 years (Table A24–27). Moreover, the concentration of household workers falls among those with lower and higher-secondary education (Table 6 and 7).

**Table 6** Share of Male Household Worker by Education Attainment, Marital Status and Age Group in 2018

Gender	Male					
Age	15–19			20–24		
Education Level	Marital Status					
	Single	Married	Divorced	Single	Married	Divorced
Lower than primary education	3.03	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.00
Primary Education	26.80	3.24	0.00	10.53	1.08	0.00
Lower Secondary Education	43.62	2.85	0.00	20.20	4.90	0.00
Higher Secondary Education	15.07	0.00	0.00	22.52	6.50	1.26
Vocational Education	3.29	0.00	0.00	2.77	0.00	0.00
Diploma	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.73	2.15	0.00
Bachelor's Degree	0.00	0.00	0.00	15.53	0.00	0.00
Others	2.10	0.00	0.00	2.29	0.34	0.00
Unknown	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	100.00			100.00		

Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table 7** Share of Female Household Worker by Education Attainment, Marital Status and Age Group in 2018

Gender	Female					
Age	15–19			20–24		
Education Level	Marital Status			Marital Status		
	Single	Married	Widow/ Divorced/ Separated	Single	Married	Widow/ Divorced/ Separated
Lower than primary education	0.80	2.74	0.11	0.13	1.92	0.00
Primary Education	10.68	16.77	1.32	2.41	12.03	0.85
Lower Secondary Education	15.14	31.51	4.35	4.26	30.14	1.70
Higher Secondary Education	8.17	5.80	0.40	5.34	23.28	1.77
Vocational Education	0.92	0.64	0.04	0.64	4.80	0.27
Diploma	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.50	4.44	0.67
Bachelor's Degree	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.38	2.02	0.00
Others	0.10	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Unknown	0.00	0.22	0.00	0.14	0.30	0.00
Total	100.00			100.00		

Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

Marriage at a young age appears to be one of the influential factors for female household workers, but not for their male counterparts. Approximately 30 per cent of female household workers are married (with the assumption due to pregnancy) and have completed merely lower-secondary education in both age groups of 15–19 and 20–24. For the latter group, more than 67 per cent are married and have attained secondary or lower education. On the other hand, there is no clear relationship between marriage and male household workers. Nearly 44 per cent of male household workers aged 15–19 who completed lower-secondary education are single, while approximately 23 per cent of male household workers aged 20–24 are single and have completed higher-secondary education. It can be

implied that teenage pregnancy may lead to marriage, which later leads to female youth becoming household workers, while male youth enter the labour force to earn a living after marriage, as expected by embedded social norms.

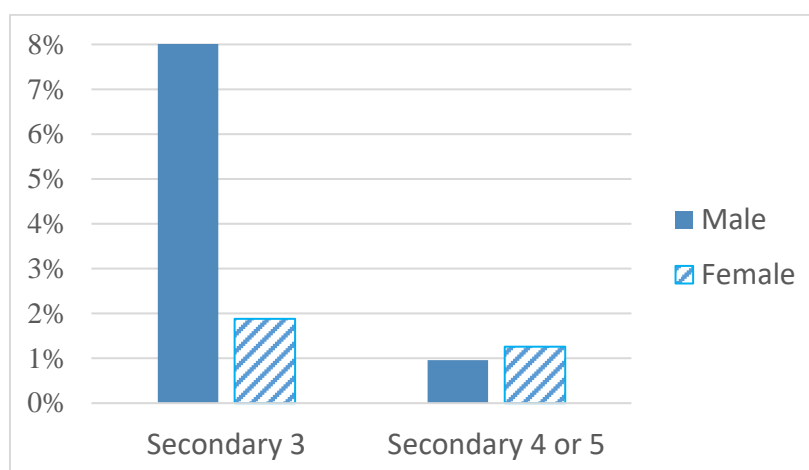
However, there is an interesting correlation which shows that there is a higher percentage of male household workers than female among those with a higher education level. Approximately 16 per cent of male household workers have attained a bachelor's degree and are single; while female household workers with the same education level share around 2 per cent each for single and married status. By and large, female youth who avoid pregnancy at a young age tend to do better in school, leading to better employability compared to their male counterparts (O'Dea et al, 2018). It can be implied, therefore, that teenage pregnancy is one of the key factors hindering pathways to employability for female youth. On the other hand, male graduates may face difficulties in transitioning to the labour market likely due to skill mismatch and limited job opportunities.

## **5.4 A Closer Look**

According to the ILO (Elder, 2015), young people in the NEET group indicated that they did not actively seek work or were not available to take up work. As the ILO puts it, "One cannot assume that it is their goal to have a job. The majority in this category in almost all countries are young women tending to the household. Even if someday they would hope to gain employment outside of the home – ignoring cultural barriers – the reality is that at that point in time, they were not available to work" (Elder, 2015). A household worker is categorised in the non-labour force group; they do not get paid or may not produce any economic productivity. However, in Thai society, household workers provide an indirect economic benefit to the breadwinners and family by cooking, taking care of children and housework since the cost of having children is very high. While men mainly go to work and earn income, having a female family member who performs housework also reduces the cost of living (lower expenses on laundry, meals, etc.). It is difficult to analyse the household workers group since they may shift back to the labour force after taking care of their child or children at a certain period. Furthermore, their contribution as caregivers should not be dismissed, as they play a vital role in family life and child development. Therefore, it may be worth taking a closer look at the NEET group by excluding household workers.

Surprisingly, when household workers are excluded from the data, the number of male youth NEETs (350,794 persons) is higher than female (237,064 persons) at nearly 40 per cent difference. As can be seen in Figures A11–14, male youth NEETs are higher than female in both the 15–19 and 20–24 age groups. This is backed up by statistical data which reveals that male students (8 per cent) have a higher drop-out rate compared to female students (almost 2 per cent) after completed Grade 9 or Secondary 3 in the Thai educational system (Figure 4). This pattern is similar to the DJOP statistics in 2018 which revealed that 40.12 per cent of juvenile offenders merely attained lower-secondary education, 92.29 per cent are male youth; and 51.12 per cent of the cases involved drugs. This illustrates that male youth who dropped out from schools are more likely to enter the labour force or have the tendency to be prosecuted for getting involved with drugs, compared to female youth who are likely to become household workers.

**Figure 4** Drop-out Rate by Completed Education Level and Gender



Source: Lapprathana, ‘Thailand MICS 5 Secondary Analysis: School dropout at the upper-secondary level and teenage pregnancy’ (2019)

*“I left school because of the teacher...I had a dispute (punched) with the teacher (gender not specified); he/she insulted my mom. So, I walked away from school at Grade 9 (Secondary 3) and never went back...”* Male NEET, 17, at Suan Aoi Community, who is now applying for Non-Formal Education.

Nevertheless, the number of juvenile offenders represents only 0.42 per cent (22,542 persons) of youth not in the labour force (5,335,807 persons). Therefore, it can be misleading to suggest that the entire youth NEETs share the same characteristics or root causes as shown in the DJOP statistics and samples from the focus group and in-depth interviews. However, due to the limitation of data availability on the NEETs, this method of data collection seems to be the most pragmatic way to set assumptions and conceptualise some of the root causes of NEET.

## 5.5 The Too Young and Unable to Work Group

As listed in the LFS, “too young” refers to a person aged below 18 years old who is neither in education nor employment. The population data on the “too young” group was retrieved from young people aged 15–17 comprising 11,145 males and 2,242 females. The “unable to work” category refers to persons who are unable to work or study due to illness or disability. Nevertheless, the root causes for the “too young” and/or “unable to work” categorization were not addressed in the LFS. Consequently, it can merely be implied that the surveyed persons may not be ready either to work or to study during the survey week.

In order to provide a comprehensive overview, the “too young” group was combined with the “unable to work” group, covering those aged 15–24. Doing so, the data shows a growing trend of the non-labour force youth who are in the “too young/unable to work” group with a compound annual growth rate of 0.77 per cent from 2008 to 2018, representing around 13.3 per cent of the total NEETs (Table 5 and Table A23). The “too young/unable to work” group is also found to be concentrated in male youth, over 100,000 persons higher than female (59,643 persons).

The higher number of the “unable to work” group is found in those aged between 19 and 24, which represent 32.19 per cent and 7.36 per cent in the male and female NEETs, respectively (Table A25 and A27). Butchon et al. (2019) point out that more than one third of children could not attend school due to their disabilities. Even though the government has the policies to support youth with disabilities, it is crucial to re-evaluate and optimise their effectiveness, as a significant percentage of young people with disabilities are currently missing out on educational opportunities.

## 5.6 The Resting Group

Another concerning issue is the rising number of young people in the “resting” group in Thailand, which had an annual growth rate of 12.04 per cent between 2008 and 2018 and represents 21 per cent of the total NEETs. There is no certain definition for the “resting” group in the LFS. In the present study, the resting group refers to persons who are taking a “rest” between jobs or voluntarily idle or relaxing during the survey week.

The population of male youth shares a higher number in the resting group with approximately 146,000 persons compared to female (around 78,000 persons). The older the age group, the higher the resting population (LFS, 2018).

At the ages of 15–19, the concentration of youth in the resting group lies among those with primary and lower-secondary education, with approximately 77 per cent and 51 per cent shares of male and female, respectively. Marriage can be found more in the female group (13 per cent) compared to male (3.5 per cent). At the ages of 20–24, the shares of the resting group concentrate less on those with primary and secondary education compared to the younger cohort. The resting population can also be found in a relatively high percentage of those with bachelor’s degree and diploma graduates, which could be an indication that youth in this group may face difficulties transitioning into employment.

In the 20–24 age group, 45 per cent of resting males and 23 per cent of resting females have obtained primary and secondary education; while around 36 per cent of resting males and 51 per cent of resting females have attained vocational education, diploma and/or a bachelor’s degree. This shows that job opportunities are limited for young women compared to young men, especially in the industrial and agricultural sectors where men dominate. Hence, gender disparity in the labour market remains a critical issue that needs to be solved.

Within the resting group, married status can be seen in both age cohorts, with young married women, mostly with lower-secondary education, having higher percentage shares than young married men. The relationship between marriage and resting” increases with age, with females representing a higher share in marriage (22 per cent) compared to male (10 per cent) in total (Table 8–9).

There is a significant increase in the number of young people in the resting group in Thailand, with a higher proportion of young males compared to females overall. This issue raises serious concerns for related entities given that the youth population is already declining. Hidden reasons for this trend could potentially be related to education mismatch and the struggle to find enthusiasm for a particular career, while marriage at a young age plays a critical role for women in this aspect. Therefore, career counselling and curriculum reform may offer some potential solutions, enabling unemployed youth in this group to understand their potential and identify their preferences through practice rather than merely theoretical knowledge. Accordingly, a culture of gender equality and female empowerment should be instilled in society so that young women as well as young men can realise and fulfil their potential.

**Table 8** Share of Male Population in the Resting Group by Education Attainment, Marital Status and Age Group in 2018

Unit: Per cent

Gender	Male					
Age	15–19			20–24		
Education Level	Marital Status					
	Single	Married	Divorced/ Separated	Single	Married	Divorced/ Separated
Lower-Primary Education	3.29	0.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Primary Education	37.15	1.29	0.00	6.69	3.44	3.90
Lower-Secondary Education	37.09	1.58	0.00	25.12	3.31	3.64
Higher-Secondary Education	17.20	0.00	0.00	13.33	2.96	0.00
Vocational Education	1.73	0.00	0.00	5.64	0.37	0.62
Diploma	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.12	0.18	0.26
Bachelor's Degree	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.42	0.00	0.00
Total	100.00			100.00		

Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table 9** Share of Female Population in the Resting Group by Education Attainment, Marital Status and Age Group in 2018

Unit: Per cent

Gender	Female					
Age	15–19			20–24		
Education Level	Marital Status					
	Single	Married	Divorced/ Separated	Single	Married	Divorced/ Separated
Lower-Primary Education	4.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.72	0.00
Primary Education	21.79	3.12	0.00	0.94	0.98	0.00
Lower-Secondary Education	25.09	7.49	0.00	10.71	12.10	0.00
Higher-Secondary Education	31.56	2.45	0.61	11.52	6.14	2.58
Vocational Education	3.60	0.00	0.00	7.87	0.81	1.38
Diploma	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.18	0.84	0.00
Bachelor's Degree	0.00	0.00	0.00	32.23	0.00	0.00
Total	100.00			100.00		

Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

## 5.6 Unemployed Youth

It is notable that youth unemployment rate is critically high compared to that of adults, though in Thailand the rate is relatively low compared to other countries. Despite the declining trend, unemployed youth represent over 15 per cent of NEETs. Most young people in Thailand are passive jobseekers. Nearly 80 per cent of unemployed youth are not looking for work but are available if there are job opportunities.

The number of unemployed young women is higher compared to young men at 3.75 per cent in 2018. Over time, the number of unemployed young men has reduced while for young women the number has increased steadily (Figure 5-6). Between 2008 and 2018, the annual unemployment growth rate for young men was at -4 to -6 per cent on average. Similarly, for young women in the younger age cohort, the annual unemployment growth rate was at -5 per cent. Yet for young women aged 20–24 years the rate increased on average 2 per cent annually, despite the significant decrease between 2010 and 2012.

While women appear to be more active in looking for jobs and have higher education compared to men (Figure A15), they have a higher unemployment rate. Nonetheless, young female workers are mostly employed in the service sector rather than the agricultural sector, which means their job roles tend to be less seasonal and not underemployed.<sup>35</sup>

**Table 10** Number of Unemployed Male Youth Population by Category and Age between 2008 and 2018

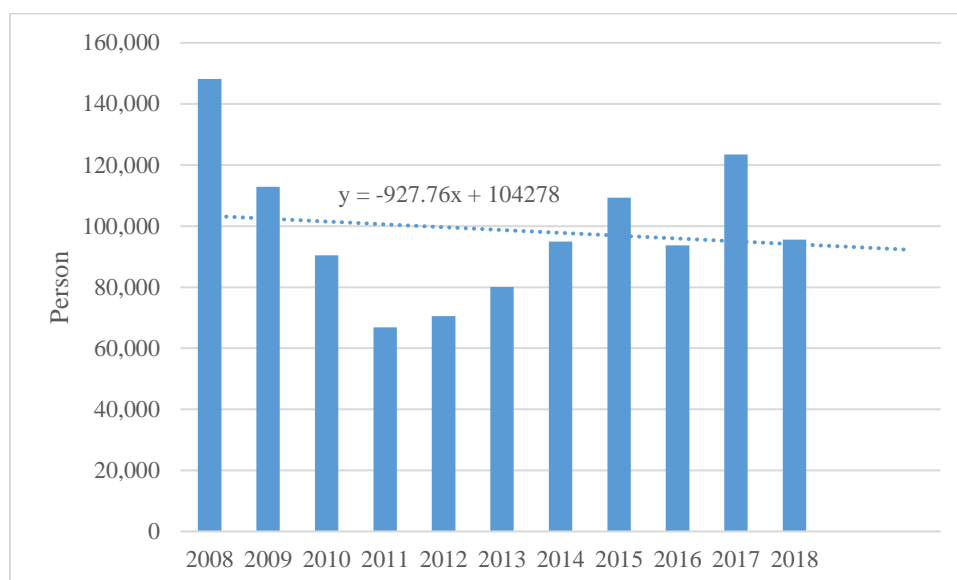
Unit: Persons

Category	Age	Number of Male Youth Unemployment						Average Growth Rate (%)
		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	
Looking for work	15–19	10,541	4,740	3,114	4,694	2,515	4,493	-8.17
	20–24	15,984	10,044	12,623	16,960	22,191	12,515	-2.42
Total Youth Looking for Work		26,525	14,784	15,737	21,654	24,706	17,008	-4.35
Not looking for work but available for work	15–19	40,328	23,608	21,749	26,953	20,406	22,956	-5.48
	20–24	81,342	52,036	33,073	46,343	48,563	55,602	-3.73
Total Youth Not Looking for Work		121,670	75,644	54,822	73,296	68,969	78,558	-4.28
<b>Total Unemployed Youth</b>		148,196	90,428	70,559	94,950	93,674	95,566	-4.29

Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

<sup>35</sup> Underemployed workers refer to workers who work less than 35 hours per week and prefer to work more.

**Figure 5** Number of Unemployed Male Youth Population between 2008 and 2018



Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table 11** Number of Unemployed Female Youth Population by Category and Age between 2008 and 2018

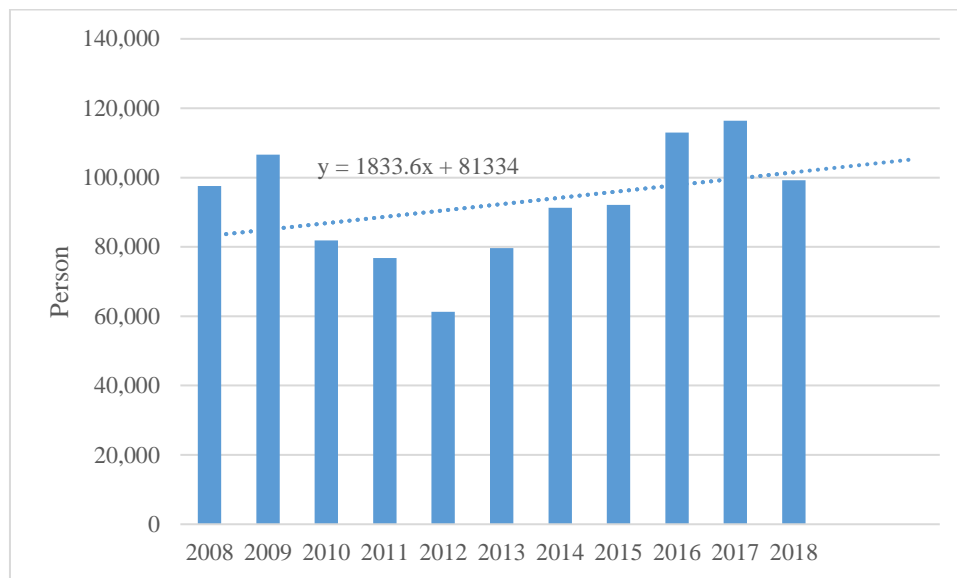
Unit: Persons

Category	Age	Number of Unemployed Female Youth Population						Average Growth Rate (%)
		2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	
Looking for work	15–19	7,353	1,592	4,504	3,245	4,637	6,684	-0.95
	20–24	14,821	29,374	12,441	14,398	23,614	16,862	1.30
Total Youth looking for work		22,174	30,966	16,945	17,643	28,251	23,546	0.60
Not looking for work but available for work	15–19	25,036	15,695	11,386	10,779	11,659	12,843	-6.46
	20–24	50,314	35,164	32,977	62,811	73,065	62,831	2.25
Total Youth not looking for work		75,350	50,859	44,363	73,590	84,724	75,674	0.04
<b>Total Unemployed Youth</b>		<b>97,523</b>	<b>81,825</b>	<b>61,309</b>	<b>91,233</b>	<b>112,975</b>	<b>99,220</b>	<b>0.17</b>

Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)



**Figure 6** Number of Unemployed Female Youth Population between 2008 and 2018



Source: Author calculated from NSO, *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

## 5.7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter provides an overview and analysis of the NEET population in Thailand from existing data. The NEET group is considered to represent 13.40 per cent of the Thai youth population and experienced an annual growth rate of approximately 1 per cent between 2008 and 2018. This raises another serious concern over the future of the Thai labour force, as the total fertility rate is reducing, while the existing youth population tend to delay entering the labour force.

Gender and age play significant roles among the NEETs. The older the age group, the higher the number of NEETs. There is also a high number of female NEETs who are household workers due to long-embedded norms in Thai culture; many females tend to be married at a young age, while married male youth tend to enter the labour force to earn a living. Similarly, the number of unemployed female youth is higher compared to men, though they are more active in looking for a job. However, there is a striking increase in the number of male youth in the resting group compared to female.

The information on NEET remains limited, however, as the LFS does not provide further information on the root causes of NEET. The in-depth interviews and focus group discussions conducted for this study are limited to merely some certain samples of NEETs. Moreover, there is an information gap between employers and young people regarding the job roles the employers could or wish to employ and the type of roles young people are equipped to perform. Most importantly, there is no exclusive entity to tackle the NEET problem in Thailand. Therefore, more studies of the root causes of NEET are required.

## Chapter 6: Key Players in Youth Skill Development

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This chapter presents the opportunities for key players, both government and private sectors, who can support and offer leverage in youth employability in Thailand. This chapter also presents key policies and programmes (public and private) that support re-skilling and on the job training, as well as re-training for those who lose their jobs and future opportunities.

### 6.1 Skill Development by Government Agencies

As mentioned in section 3.2, numerous initiatives and training have been implemented by the government entities led by the MOE and the MOL to build professional competencies, linguistic skills and digital skills of Thai citizens, especially for youth (Bangkokbiznews 2019).

The Science-based Technology College (SBTVC) was established in 2009 through a coalition between the MOE and the Ministry of Science and Technology<sup>36</sup> to provide vocational training and incubate skill training at all levels, offering a project-based learning curriculum in response to the market demand (SBTVC, n.d.).

According to the Department of Skill Development (DSD), between 2008 and 2016, the number of students who did not proceed to higher secondary education was 380,573, while in 2018, the number was 147,644. Students who dropped out tended to enter the labour market and mostly become low-skilled labourers (The Manager Online 2019). To tackle this dilemma and achieve the Labour Force Transformation policy of the MOL, the DSD has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with related government agencies,<sup>37</sup> namely the Office of the Ombudsman, OBEC and the MOE, to establish the Skill Development Project for low-income students who did not study further after compulsory education, with the aims to develop professional and practical skills of young people before they enter the labour market and elevate their standard of living so that they can acquire decent work in the future (The Office of the Thai Ombudsman, 2019). The curriculum mainly focuses on technical education programmes aligned with market demand, such as those for welders, mechanics, tailors, etc. (The Manager Online 2019).

The MoU is regarded as a robust head-start to develop students who are in need since it settles a common framework among different agencies, which will later operate vertically in each scope of work. The project is an ongoing process.

The Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI), a public organization under the management of the Prime Minister's Office, aims to develop Thailand's national professional qualification systems, support professional groups in establishing professional standards based on international standards, certify organizations that provide professional qualifications, and serve as the information centre for professional qualification and professional standard systems. It has created over 1,222 qualifications, covering 44 professionals and 481 occupations. TPQI has integrated its work and serves as a missing link between the public and the private sectors, including the MOL, the MOE and

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<sup>36</sup> The Ministry of Science and Technology has since transformed into the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation.

<sup>37</sup> The signatories are as follows: The Office of the Ombudsman Thailand, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education (Office of the Permanent Secretary), the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (Office of the Permanent Secretary, the Department of Social Development and Welfare), the Office of Basic Education Commission, the Department of Local Administration, the Department of Skill Development and the Department of Employment.

other relevant organizations to develop human resources and ensure that skills and capacities match market demand. TPQI has also ensured inclusive processes in the development of its curricula, training courses and professional certification processes, which enable professionals, including students, to obtain professional certifications certifying their capacity and skills. The goal is to help students advance in their future career paths and make a decent living as well as help Thailand to become a knowledge-based economy and society, which in turn will enhance the country's competitiveness (TPQI 2019).

## **6.2 Skill Development by Private Sector and NGOs**

In contrast with government agencies, private sector and NGOs do not have a definite role and duties.

There are few corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects related to the skill development of young people, but the impact varies. The major role of private sector in skill development is internship opportunities. Internship is one of the most important skill development tools and is normally offered by large companies where they can utilize low experience employees. Especially for vocational education, most vocational education curricula require a pre-graduate internship to make sure graduates' skills are compatible with practical work. Big companies that have high recruitment capacity are requested to join the dual vocational programme, which is elaborated in the following section.

CP All Public Company Limited is a commendable corporation that invests in education as part of its chain of recruitment. The company provides education and training for potential recruits through the Panyapiwat Technological College and Panyapiwat Institute of Management which it supported financially. With a strong connection to the company and large pool of demand, Panyapiwat claim 100 per cent guaranteed employment after graduation. Moreover, CP All has more than 10 affiliated companies that constantly demand new recruits every year (Panyapiwat Technological College, 2020). They also guarantee that the job positions offered by CP All or affiliated companies are suitable for the graduates' educational backgrounds. To equip graduates with academically suitable and practical work, the curricula combine theoretical learning alongside practical studies such as internships that match the courses (Work-based Education); while internship positions are offered by appropriate business organizations that align with interns' field of study. In this way, graduates will gain meaningful work experience and be ready to be employed straight after graduation.

Furthermore, there has been a growing trend among Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Social Enterprises (SEs), run by millennials (Gen Y and Gen Z), who play significant roles in contributing to skill development of young people both in formal and informal education. For instance, A-Chieve, Career Visa, EdVisory and EdWINGS are social enterprises focusing on career path consulting solutions and incubating entrepreneurship with soft skills, such as creativity, innovation and critical thinking. Career Visa, for example, provides career coaching services with affordable prices for people to consult with specialists in each field. For informal education, Friends International, an international non-governmental organization (INGO), focuses on helping NEETs who are detained in juvenile detention centres or live in poor villages by providing them with career counselling and soft skills development, such as how to submit an application form and emotional self-regulation. These entities believe that hard skills alone are not enough and may not be suitable for young people who are slow-learners or are vulnerable, such as those from low-income families or involved with drugs and larceny.

Nevertheless, these private enterprises and NGOs face similar challenges which are access to funds and limited human resources. Even though the RTG has established the Social Enterprise

Promotion Act (2019), it remains at the initial stage. Furthermore, the Office of Social Enterprise and the funds are not yet concretely established. However, there is the Regulation of the Office of the Prime Minister on the Civil Society Organizations Promotion 2015, which established the Civil Society Organization Promotion Board in collaboration with the MSDHS. The board's objective is to promote SEs and civil society activities. Yet, funds from these entities remain difficult to access. Therefore, SEs and NGOs mostly have to rely on foreign funds and CSR funds from private companies.

*"We have to admit that funding is our main challenge..."* Mr Reth, Friends International.

*"It would be great if there was legal support in terms of access to funding by the government sector."* Ms Srirat, EdWINGS.

### **6.3 Skill Development by Public and Private Partnership**

Producing workers with skills that the private sector demand is the main thrust of public and private partnership. The dual vocational programme was introduced to prepare students with practical knowledge and skills for employment by moving the classroom into the workplace. In 1984, Thailand first adopted dual vocational education with support from the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH* (GTZ) by running a pilot project in a public vocational school in Ayutthaya Province; later the project was expanded to other provinces. In 1995, the Department of Vocational Education revised the curriculum to support credit transfer from the apprenticeship, and the full dual vocation programme officially started. However, in 2015, merely 90,000 students had joined the dual vocational programme or approximately 14 per cent of the total 650,000 vocational students in that year (Chenphuengpaw and Rukkiatwong, 2019). This is considered rather low compared to other countries implementing similar programmes (see Figure A16). The reason for such low enrolment could be due to the lack of systematic quality assurance system for both students and firms, while firms joining the programme also had to bear lots of expenses.

To enhance Thailand's competitiveness and labour force productivity, the government has adjusted its implementing strategies to develop human resource foundations to build practical skills and adaptability to fast-moving technology (Bureau of Publications 2017). As such, public and private cooperation is crucial. In 2019, the DSD created a network with 22 private organizations to support skill development efforts. This joint effort produces training for a total of 8,848 building electricians, metal foundation and sheet installers and building painters, providing trainees with hands-on experience with advanced technological instruments. The network has also helped save the government budget as it has contributed over 10 million baht for training purposes (Thailand Plus, 2019).

In fact, a solid framework between public and private partnership for youth skill development has been established since 2016. However, it remains on a small scale. For example, the National Science and Technology Development Agency has collaborated with Maejo University Chiang Mai College of Agriculture and Technology, along with five private companies, such as Chiang Mai Seed Co., Ltd., to develop young people's knowledge and entrepreneurship skills on seed production and business law to foster them to become successful local entrepreneurs. Participants were given a six-month apprenticeship opportunity with the companies to learn about all of the production pipelines of the industry. At present, 42 participants have attained a bachelor's degree and vocational education under the project, while 70.8 per cent of the participants still work in the agricultural sector and seed production (National Science and Technology Development Agency, n.d.).

## 6.4 The Equitable Education Fund (EEF): A New Approach

The EEF was established under the Equitable Education Act 2018 and is under the supervision of the Prime Minister. With an annual budget of over 1,900 million baht, the EEF's main objectives are to provide financial support for children and youth who are in greatest need; and to reduce educational inequality by forming a partnership with different groups and conducting systematic research to support and develop teacher effectiveness. According to its annual report in 2018,<sup>38</sup> the EEF has launched seven key projects in response to its objectives (EEF, 2018), four of which are ongoing (for further details see Annex IV). The projects include the following:

1. A conditional cash transfer programme to disadvantaged students under OBEC 2018 (duration: November 2019 to April 2019)
2. The Early Childhood Development Demonstration Institute Project for Educational Equality Promotion (duration: March 2018 to February 2022)
3. The Educational Opportunities for Students in Remote Areas to be the New Generation of Teachers to improve the Quality of the Community School project (duration: October 2018 to September 2019)
4. The School Quality Improvement Project (duration: March 2019 to September 2020)
5. The Vocational Innovation Scholarship Programme (duration: October 2018 to present)
6. The Pilot Skills Development System Project for Underprivileged Labour (duration: April 2018 to March 2019)
7. The Area-based Education Management Programme (duration: March 2019 to December 2020)

The policy implementation and projects of the EEF are remarkable. With its funding, numerous initiatives and developmental projects can be implemented on a large scale. Given its entity as a fund, the EEF can perform in a new direction, and can indeed lead to a strong partnership between the public and private sectors. Nevertheless, the outcome and efficiency of the EEF could not be fully assessed as most of the projects are still in the early stages and several projects are ongoing.

## 6.5 The National-Building Youth Project

By the end of 2019, over 200,000 graduates are expected to be unemployed and the number may reach 500,000 by 2020. The RTG has introduced the Nation-building Youth Project, a paid volunteer project under the supervision of the MHESI, consisting of three sub-projects. The three sub-projects are expected to instantly absorb 50,000 unemployed graduates along with 10,000 internship position graduates at the initial phase. The projects also aim to develop rural communities by applying science and technology to alleviate poverty and inequality and improve the well-being of their members (Workpoint News, 2019).

The first sub-project recruits a maximum of 50,000 unemployed graduates with less than three years of work experience to carry out rural development work. The contract offers a monthly payment of between 10,000–15,000 baht, for a total of 12 months. The second sub-project recruit a maximum of 10,000 internship positions for junior and senior university students. The position pays 5,000 baht monthly with a maximum internship duration of five months. The last sub-project is the start-up and business innovation funding project aimed at undergraduates and university personnel to start a business or an innovation to promote the well-being of the rural community. All of the projects require applicants to stay in a rural community for at least four months. Applicants must also be committed to

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<sup>38</sup> The information is based on the EEF *Annual Report 2018* as the annual report for 2019 is not yet available.

collaborating. Nevertheless, the concrete implementation plan of the project is not yet revealed by the MHESI (Matichon Online, 2019).

## **6.6 Case Study: Mechai Bamboo School**

Mechai Bamboo School is located in Buriram Province, in the Northeastern part of Thailand. It was founded by Mechai Viravaidya, founder and chair of the Population and Community Development Association (PDA). With the cooperation of the private sector, the School-Based Integrated Rural Development programme (or School-BIRD) endeavours to change schools from a place where children simply come and go into a lifelong centre for purposes the community deems appropriate.

This development model is central to the progress of community and economic development, where people improve their practical knowledge by using the school as a lifelong learning centre for the entire community (Mechai Pattana, n.d.).

Education expenses at the school are funded by social enterprises that have been established by Mechai Viravaidya. Instead of education fees to be paid, students and their parents are obligated to create community externality by planting 365 trees and conducting 365 hours of community service. The school calendar is also planned differently from other schools, as the school term closes during rice planting and harvesting seasons to enable students to participate in rice farming. Furthermore, school days during the semester run from Thursday to Monday, which allows outsiders to visit and teach at the school on the weekends.

The school provides entrepreneurship lessons through various activities. Mechai School gives students the opportunities to make their own decisions; for example, students participate in teacher selection and the evaluation process. Admission of students to attend the Mechai School begins in Grade 7. The selection method is developed by a committee made up of existing students at the school. Other than that, students are given revolving funds to operate businesses that provide positive externality to their community. They participate in the purchasing committee, which enables them to learn budgeting, planning, transparency, and negotiation skills on progressing their businesses. These activities promote leadership at an early age and let them experience and learn from real practices.

Mechai School, a successful case study of social enterprise collaboration under Mechai Foundation, is regarded as a role model for rural development focusing on youth, education and community as a whole. In addition, Mechai School education model encourages the idea of project-based learning and elective workshop course. Decision-making lessons are provided through activities, which encourage students to learn from their mistakes and dare to make a decision at an early age.

### **6.6.1 Limitations**

Although the benefits to social and community are regarded as huge, adopting the Mechai School model in other areas is difficult for several reasons. First, the start of the school project requires investment funding for basic facilities and well-trained human resources to adopt the same model. Second, it requires a continuous stream of funding as the student business is not guaranteed to be successful and school operating costs are to be paid overtime. Third, Mechai School is designed to be uniquely suited to its community context, such as community working seasons, activities for communities to create externality value, and school location as a community centre. Thus, replication of the Mechai School model may not be suitable for other contexts since most of its core activities have to be adapted locally. The model can be applied elsewhere, but modifications are needed properly to suit a certain community, which may lead to a completely new trial of the model. The case study of

Mechai School is therefore considered to be a large project requiring considerable efforts to achieve success.

## **6.6.2 Using a data-driven approach**

The Mechai school model has limitations as it necessitates a high amount of funding and commitment from the private sector. Moreover, it is arduous to identify and recall disadvantaged students to attend school. The alternative approach would be a data-driven approach, which has initially been implemented by the EEF in collaboration with OBEC. In 2018, the Information System for Equitable Education or iSEE platform was piloted to identify disadvantaged students individually at the local level; the data was linked with a 13-digit identification number. Nearly 400,000 disadvantaged students in the iSEE database received the conditional cash subsidy in eleven provinces.

The iSEE database can also be useful in other ways. For example, statistical data gathered from the iSEE platform shows that roughly 90 per cent of students at Wat Huay Kaew School – a case study under this present research – either do not live with their parents, live with divorced parents, or live in a remote community which results in difficulty getting to school. By and large, most students face poor living conditions that correlate with the reason for having a low academic performance, since sometimes these students have to skip class to earn a living for their family. The school recognizes that academic education alone may not be sufficient. Hence, the school also focuses on promoting professional skills based on students' career interests to ensure that graduate students can earn a living or enter a career with an attached skillset. Therefore, students in Wat Huay Kaew School receive career guidance class earlier than in other schools; post-graduation planning is prepared during Grade 7 and 8 (Equitable Education Fund 2019 (a)).

## **6.7 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter discusses a range of key players who are involved with young people's development, especially in regards to skill training and development. It is noticeable that there are collaborations between the government and the private sector for skill training. These projects aim to enhance youth employability inclusively by providing training to students in both formal and informal education. Nevertheless, the adoption of dual vocational education is relatively low in Thailand compared to other countries since there is no systematic quality assurance system in dual vocational education (for both students and firms).

The key players in building youth employability skills are government agencies, while the private sector tends to play an ad hoc role, especially as there is no incentive for them to commit to youth employability development. Meanwhile, other players need financial support to sustainably support young people. Overall, the youth employability development mechanism has to rely on public policy. Nonetheless, effective public policies require current and future information on labour market demand and employment requirements, which are mostly provided by the private sector.

Table A12 shows that bachelor's degree graduates have the highest unemployment rate. The national building project has been introduced to alleviate wasted opportunities, but it only works as a short-term solution and does not cover those who have dropped out of the education system. To build sustainable employment conditions, upskilling and reskilling training must be provided, and education institutions have to adapt to produce graduates with skills that match employers' needs. Hence, it is crucial to connect educational institutions to employers and develop youth employability through work-integrated learning. There are official programmes approved by the MoE available as optional choices for youth, including dual vocational education for higher education and corporate education at the

undergraduate level. These programmes offer curricula where both students and employers are committed to a long-term contract. Internship is another simple option to develop youth employability. Many bachelor and diploma programmes require a period of pre-graduation internship to ensure graduates undergo work experience, which might offer them the chance of gaining employment after they graduate. The MoE should therefore consider enhancing the frequency and quality of internships, particularly in the fields of study that have a high unemployment rate.

It is noticeable that incentives provided by the government agencies may not be sufficient to attract the private sector on a large scale since employment conditions vary in different businesses. As can be seen in the CP All case, the company and its affiliated companies have managed to produce curricula that prepare graduates to serve their labour demand without governmental support. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the government to either provide subsidies to expand these kinds of initiatives or replicate the CP All model in other industries.

The partnership between the public and private sectors remains relatively low, especially with SEs and NGOs, because public entities cannot fund private entities directly. This is unfortunate since the NGOs and SEs are crucial players involved in supporting young people, especially NEETs, but they face difficulties in funding. Currently, there is no fund from the government to serve as a resource to empower NGOs and SEs. The EEF has been set up to solve this missing information, but access remains limited. Data on unemployed persons are required to create accurate and responsive policies for the targeted groups. Nevertheless, collaboration in terms of data sharing is not apparent among both the public and private sectors. The method of data collection is asymmetric among the entities, leading to various data sets as well as gaps and overlapping lines. As such, opportunities for youth to enhance their skills remain limited, especially for those who have dropped out of the education system. It is a pity since young people are generally more responsive to skill development compared to adults, yet their potential remains untapped (Table A28).



# Chapter 7: The Importance of Statistical Data

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## 7.1 Limitations of LFS Data

The LFS data could not truly reflect the root causes of educational mismatch due to its limited queries. As it was not originally designed to reflect such problems, the LFS data merely estimates the targeted population, such as NEETs, by weighting method. It mainly covers general issues such as labour force status, labour force by sector, employment, unemployment, work status, etc. It could not project the true reasons for the mismatch, besides categorising skill level and subjects in education.

In reality, the mismatch involves numerous factors – not only skill mismatch and education mismatch with the job landscape. Many samples reveal that the mismatch is also related to employee and employer preferences. An employee who chooses to work in an occupation that does not match their degree may still be able to generate income or follow their aspiration (Boonbandit 2019). On the other hand, one may work in a skill level 2 jobs (services and sales workers, craft and related trade workers, etc.) despite the fact that one has graduated from higher education and is capable of skill level 4. The reason could be that the person is not qualified for those jobs requiring skill level 4. However, it would be misleading to assume such scenarios in every case. One may choose to work in the job requiring skill level 2 voluntarily or the skill level 2 may already generate sufficient income, such as those who work in services. Thus, it is very difficult to conclude the reasons for mismatch through the existing data from the LFS.

Forecasting statistics, such as the LFS, are applied by using the weighted ratio of the total population to predict the amount of population in each category. However, such data cannot precisely identify individuals within each group. Moreover, information regarding the NEET group is very limited. For example, the LFS shows a high number of female household workers and a high number of male youth in the resting group. However, once household workers are taken away from consideration, the rates of male and female NEETs are reversed. What classifies as “resting” is another area worth considering in more detail. The LFS could not provide further insights into the categories of household worker, too young/unable to work and resting beside their demographic structure, since the LFS has its limited questionnaires. Hence, it would be difficult and inefficient for the government agencies and related entities to implement policies and developmental programmes, such as the conditional cash transfer, without real-time and individual data, to know how to reach the right target groups and the right locations.

## 7.2 A Data-Driven Approach: Using the iSEE Platform

According to Dr. Prasarn, Chairman of the Educational Equality Fund Management Committee, the iSEE platform application was developed to create a database of children with identification of each individual’s profile. The platform provides big data on the identities of disadvantaged students from a low-income background and are not in education to perform the conditional cash transfer policy effectively. With support from OBEC, the iSEE data comprises information of over 4 million disadvantaged youth who are in and not in education. The data is linked with the 13-digit national identification number of young people and their families, along with the big database of six key public

entities.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, iSEE can provide valuable data, such as household income, photos of houses, health information of youth, their risk behaviour, attendance rate, academic performance, etc (Equitable Education Fund 2019 (b)).

The database of the iSEE platform precisely identifies each child with an in-depth profile constructed by three levels of screening and examination addressed in the following processes:

1. Examining the empirical data of both income and household status from real conditions using ‘Application CCT’<sup>40</sup>
2. Verifying the data from three parties (parents, teachers and village leaders)
3. Affirming the data by the school board, comprising of 150,000 individuals (parent representatives, government officials, village leader and religious leader – more than five persons in each school).

The iSEE platform is public and accessible.<sup>41</sup> It visualises in-depth data, such as economic status, drop-out reasons, the most common problems facing youth, and their demands at the national and local levels in every provinces and district. In the academic year 2018, it revealed that there were almost 1.2 million out-of-school students aged 15–21 years, of which 900,000 are youth aged 18–21. More than 40 per cent are from contractor and farmer families who receive uncertain amount of income per month. The common root causes of school drop-out can be seen as follows: 1) Students do not want to study or are bored with their teachers; 2) No scholarship; 3) Slow learners; 4) Low-income background; and 5) Must earn a living. The iSEE platform also revealed that bullying and online harassment is the most common problem faced by youth. The top five demands of out-of-school students to pursue formal education are listed as follows: 1) Scholarship; 2) Money; 3) Teacher’s attention; 4) Travel subsidy; and 5) Break-up with friends who are a bad influence. In the academic year 2016,<sup>42</sup> nearly 80 per cent of out-of-school students wanted to attain non-formal education, while the rest wanted to pursue vocational training.

It can be implied that money and access to scholarships remain the most crucial factors to support Thai student’s participation in school. Statistics illustrate that a significant number of students are being left behind and failing to acquire quality education, despite the government’s immense investment in education, which is equivalent to 4.8 per cent of the country’s GDP, and is as high as the global average (4.9 per cent) and OECD’s average (5.7 per cent) (EEF, 2018). That many students are still left behind could be due to the fact that the government’s subsidy is not yet reaching the target groups needed to make a difference.

With the adoption of the iSEE platform, a new method of data collection has been developed which could lead to a more efficient implementation of educational subsidy provision. Dr. Prasarn further emphasised that the EEF aims to provide educational opportunities that lead to further self-improvement. The EEF utilizes the iSEE platform as an instrument to tackle root causes since it can identify the “exact problem and exact person” in collaboration with OBEC. This platform can also track

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<sup>39</sup> The six key entities are the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Finance, and the Office of National Economic and Social Development Council.

<sup>40</sup> CCT refers to a Conditional Cash Transfer, which is a demand-side financing provided by EEF to over 500,000 disadvantaged individuals to alleviate the inequality.

<sup>41</sup> The iSEE platform can be accessed at <https://isee.eef.or.th/>

<sup>42</sup> Data from the academic year 2016 is used as the iSEE database for the academic year 2018 is not yet completed on this subject.

and inspect procedures related to the conditional cash transfer, thereby promoting transparency and enhancing impact assessment measure (Equitable Education Fund 2019 (b)).

As aforementioned, the iSEE platform was supported by a collaboration among six entities. Thus, it can be inferred that the iSEE database could be further adapted for strategic management and policy implementation to tackle the problem of disadvantaged and out-of-school students ranging from the top management level to operational level.

### **7.3 Concluding Remarks**

Data limitation has been one of the key challenges for policy formulation and strategic management for both the public and private sectors. Normally, the key data source is retrieved from the National Statistical Office, which uses a weighting method to estimate the population at the macro-level. The LFS and other surveys are useful for shaping overall policy at the national level. However, the survey questions were not designed to study labour mismatch and NEET; thus, its functions could only provide part of the answer. The mismatch problem was answered through the horizontal and vertical mismatch analysis, but it did not truly reflect the whole picture involving other factors, such as individual preferences. Estimation and macro-view alone are not sufficient to tackle the problem efficiently.

Meanwhile, education and the youth population are regarded as two of the most crucial factors for shaping the country's direction in the future. The RTG is aware of the problem and has set up the EEF to specifically address these problems, introducing the iSEE platform, with support from collaboration among government sectors. The iSEE platform is able to reveal precise data since it can identify individual students' problems or demands. Thus, the EEF's move towards using the iSEE is arguably on the right track. In the near future, data distribution to the public is recommended by the research team as it would empower other related organizations, such as NGOs and SEs, to use the data for their own operations and perspectives in supporting young people in Thailand.

## Chapter 8: Summary and Conclusion

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### 8.1 Summary

The Royal Thai Government has foreseen the problems relating to labour and education in the near future and understands that these pressing issues must be taken seriously. Hence, human capital development is addressed in the latest national development plan. These problems can be roughly divided into two types: firstly, on the supply side, the ongoing issues of school drop-out, the NEET group, and outdated educational practices which do not equip young people with employability skills; secondly, on the demand side, the upcoming challenges resulting from the technological revolution, and the need to ensure there are pathways to access sufficient high-quality roles for young people in the labour market.

Employment statistics highlight that young people are among the highest represented in the unemployment rate group. For those employed, most undertake basic roles which only need general skills. Moreover, lower secondary education and lower education appear to have no significant effect on average earnings. Gaps in working hours can be an indication that youth aged 15–19 tend to be employed in part-time jobs. Net earnings also vary according to sector, whereby industrial sector workers earn highest and agricultural sector workers earn lowest. Differences among genders, wage and unemployment gaps are found to be significant in all age groups with clear distinction in ages between 15–24 years.

Youth employability needs to be promoted through quality and relevant education. Both formal and non-formal education offers skill development opportunities and lifelong learning which also enhance knowledge and competencies enabling young people to attain decent work. Non-formal education plays a role in providing opportunities for young people who have dropped out of school or unable to fully commit to formal education. With a dynamic labour market affected by disruptive technology, current job roles are being replaced, and the demand for twenty-first century skills is growing. Therefore, educational organizations have to be aware of these changes and adapt accordingly to ensure that young people are equipped with skills, knowledge and ability to attain decent work.

Policy and strategies are addressed under the six policy frameworks which cover educational, labour, and adolescent and youth issues. The main priority of the national strategy is to ensure that the employability skills of the Thai labour force are compatible with the new S-curve (ten targeted industries) in order to keep up with the impact of the industrial revolution. With the declining number of human resources, young people are the main target group since they will become the backbone of the future labour force. Yet, concerns have been raised over the skills deficit as seen in the low PISA scores of 2018 and the rising number of the NEETs – with a high number of females and alarming rise in the number of males.

Government entities alone cannot successfully tackle the various issues influencing youth employability. It is crucial for related entities to also implement inclusive approaches in skill training, including upskilling and reskilling, to optimize the potential of young people and ensure that their skills are competitive and match the demand of the twenty-first century labour market. While NGOs and SEs aim to fill in the gaps left by public entities in skill training, career counselling and entrepreneurship opportunities, their initiatives mostly remain small scale due to limited budget. Establishing a dialogue or a working group consisting of all key players (including employer and employee organizations) would be one effective approach to re-think and resolve the current structural problems.

In the digital era, data analytics has become an essential instrument for policymakers and practitioners to tackle problems more precisely and to maximize their outputs with fewer inputs. The EEF, for instance, was set up with huge funding to transform the educational policy and reform landscape. It has established the revolutionary iSEE platform, which can identify disadvantaged students individually. This is a huge step for collaboration among the Thai public sector to advocate for young people attaining employment. While it is still not clear if the EEF will be a success, its initiatives so far have laid the groundwork for promoting youth employability as well as improving access to education through a data-driven approach, which could also be developed further by related entities.

## 8.2 Conclusion

Inequality remains the root cause of the socio-economic dilemma embedded in Thai society. This has created unequal opportunities and barriers to attaining a quality education, a decent job and limits young people's ability to pursue their aspirations.

Disadvantaged young people, due to gender and income disparities and uneven development, are at risk of being left behind. Even though income is rising among Thais and young people, numerous studies reveal that disparities have not improved much when viewed through both an economic and gender lens. By and large, women still face gender inequality; they often receive lower wages and have a higher unemployment rate compared to men. Young people are also significantly affected by uneven development, as families may be separated for economic reasons as workers depart from rural to urban areas in order to look for wage which pays up to six times more (Figures A5–6). In other words, parents may have to leave their children to earn a living, meaning that young people living in this household type may lack proper guidance during a pivotal time in their lives.

Furthermore, although technological advancement will introduce innovative developments and new job roles to Thai society, it also poses a risk since millions of job roles risk becoming redundant; it is estimated that 51 per cent of the Thai labour force must reskill themselves. Moreover, by 2021, Thailand will become an aged society, where the dependency ratio will increase. Yet, statistics show that a high number of young people drop out of school, with only 32 per cent completing tertiary education. It is concerning that more than half of youth both in and not in the labour force only attained secondary education and therefore can mostly perform only low-skilled jobs. The LFS also portrays that more than one million young people are not in education, employment, and training. While the majority of them attained secondary education, this group of NEET youth are vulnerable and at risk of being left behind, and more needs to be done to re-engage them.

Education level is not the only concerning factor. It was found that young people who completed bachelor's degrees and could perform high skilled jobs have the highest unemployment rate compared to other education levels. While this could suggest some young people are searching to find the right job for them – a luxury only afforded to those who are economically secure – it could also indicate that there are a lack of high-skilled roles in the labour market, or that graduates lack the guidance and networking opportunities to find the right roles to match their skill set. Furthermore, as some industries decline and others emerge, reskilling and upskilling are critical. However, according to the WEF survey (2019), 31 per cent of young people in Thailand still have a fixed mindset and believe that their skills and knowledge are relevant for the rest of their life. More needs to be done, therefore, to encourage a positive mindset among young people regarding the benefits of lifelong learning and to promote the development of skills to meet the needs of the future labour market.

To tackle educational disparities, the RTG has set up the EEF along with the MOE, MSDHS and MOL. Yet most of the collaborations remain at the initial stage, whilst the disparity has been

embedded in Thai society for decades. The RTG has also adopted the 20-year National Strategy, which aims to develop Thai people of all ages to become good, skillful, and quality citizens capable of realizing multiple intelligences and promoting conditions that encourage human capacity development in the twenty-first century. In reality, however, statistics reveal that more than one million youth are vulnerable and at risk of being left behind. This, therefore, raises the question whether the concept of twenty-first century skills and the government policies might be too luxurious and far from the current situation, which demand an urgent need for basic skill levels to be met, alongside the development of other soft skills to enhance employability.

### **8.3 Recommendations for Further Research**

This research provides an overview of the landscape of Thai youth employability, including Thailand's institutional framework and its relation to young people. However, an in-depth study of specific issues is still lacking. Further research into those issues, especially the NEET group, would provide valuable insights for formulating a better policy for Thai youth employability.

The LFS was utilized as the main data source in this study, however, it has limitations in certain areas such as those concerning NEETs and disadvantaged students. Nearly 70 per cent of NEETs are female, with males constituting the majority of the resting group and females constituting the majority of household workers. Even though a focus group and in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain insights from young people themselves, the interview samples conducted for this research were all male and did not include any female NEETs. Therefore, further research focusing on female household workers and the resting group is highly recommended to gather more insights on the NEET problem.

In addition, there is no specific law or working group that treats youth distinctly. Further research questions must cover government policies, plans and laws along with implementing agencies, in order to offer recommendations on how to shape Thai human capital development in the long term. The iSEE platform was introduced in late 2019 by the EEF, but remains in an experimental stage for data distribution. Most importantly, as the world is changing rapidly in the twenty-first century, there is a need to reconceptualize the notion of employability. Further studies on the issue are recommended in order to assess whether current Thai educational reform is adequate to equip young people to enter the twenty-first century labour market.

Therefore, the following areas are highlighted for further research:

#### **1) Factors influencing the NEET group**

It would be beneficial to conduct further research into the experiences of different NEET age groups to identify barriers affecting young people at different stages of their development. Although the term NEET is all-encompassing, the reasons behind NEET status may vary based on socio-economic background and level of education. More in-depth knowledge is particularly needed on the drivers behind the resting group, as there has been a significant rise in the number of young males in this category. Furthermore, as 70 per cent of NEETs are female, more in-depth research is also needed to understand the young female experience in terms of gender disparity. For example, research could be conducted to gather more data on the influence of social/cultural norms, whether teenage pregnancy rates are driving the high number of NEET females in the household workers group, and whether female young people are discriminated against by employers (regarding provision of maternity pay/assumptions about their ability to carry out a role). Lastly, research could be undertaken to identify the specific barriers faced by young people with disabilities in the NEET group.

## **2) Quality and relevance of the education system**

For the 15–19 year age group, more research needs to be conducted into the RTG’s educational reforms and whether more can be done to address issues of staff shortages (both teaching staff and career counsellors), as well as quality of teaching (outdated curriculum, need to increase basic levels of student competency in literacy and STEM subjects, need for more interactive teaching methods, inclusivity of teaching methods/resources/facilities to reach learners of different abilities). In particular, it is vital to identify whether the education system provides the skills and guidance young people require to meet twenty-first century labour force demands.

For the 20–24 year age group, more research needs to be conducted into the reasons for skill mismatch, and to locate the gaps that exist in making the transition from education to employment. Research in this area would help to improve the knowledge around career opportunities for vocational and academic graduates, as well as provide a basis to harmonize supply and demand to ensure that high-skilled graduates are linked to appropriate jobs upon completion of their studies.

## **3) Institutional and legislative barriers**

Research revealed that the provisions of the Labour Protection Act (1998) were felt to be prohibitive and impeded the 15–19 age group accessing employment opportunities. While the Act’s intention is to protect young people, more research needs to be conducted in order to address whether the legislation needs to be amended, or whether this barrier could be overcome through a robust communication campaign and clearer guidelines for employers on hiring employees in this age group. Furthermore, Thailand’s medium-term and long-term plans do not have a specific policy dedicated to young people and employability. Research could be conducted to identify how government agencies can work together and collaborate more efficiently with other sectors to support young people’s employability.

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## Annex I – Tables and Figures

### Tables

**Table A1** Structure of Population between the Ages of 15 to 24

Unit: Person

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Annually Average Growth Rate (%)
<b>Labour force</b>	<b>5,155,124</b>	<b>5,154,346</b>	<b>5,126,868</b>	<b>4,978,196</b>	<b>4,890,453</b>	<b>4,654,123</b>	<b>4,212,507</b>	<b>4,140,867</b>	<b>4,119,116</b>	<b>3,958,428</b>	<b>4,112,654</b>	-2.23
Employed Person	4,890,875	4,928,899	4,935,573	4,825,265	4,743,554	4,477,442	4,002,873	3,926,378	3,903,248	3,699,308	3,902,395	-2.23
Unemployed Person	245,719	219,517	172,253	143,610	131,868	159,725	186,183	201,380	206,649	239,833	194,786	-2.30
Seasonal Worker	18,530	5,931	19,042	9,321	15,031	16,956	23,451	13,109	9,219	19,287	15,473	-1.79
<b>Not in Labour force</b>	<b>5,367,710</b>	<b>5,340,269</b>	<b>5,320,936</b>	<b>5,403,945</b>	<b>5,405,474</b>	<b>5,544,890</b>	<b>5,425,652</b>	<b>5,489,938</b>	<b>5,476,606</b>	<b>5,574,287</b>	<b>5,335,807</b>	-0.06
Household Worker	726,409	791,024	692,722	742,560	655,434	711,562	622,702	627,476	691,843	683,725	678,539	-0.68
Studying	4,259,856	4,126,599	4,203,474	4,253,792	4,229,157	4,223,592	4,304,115	4,356,141	4,234,765	4,279,688	4,122,381	-0.33
Too young/Unable to work	156,142	155,705	146,361	144,017	150,227	172,907	137,054	138,685	152,192	193,645	168,564	0.77
Resting	71,999	75,428	68,151	83,562	102,222	201,741	148,172	180,418	218,827	216,751	224,507	12.04
Others	153,304	191,513	210,229	180,014	268,434	235,087	213,608	187,218	178,979	200,478	141,815	-0.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,522,833</b>	<b>10,494,615</b>	<b>10,447,804</b>	<b>10,382,141</b>	<b>10,295,927</b>	<b>10,199,013</b>	<b>9,638,159</b>	<b>9,630,805</b>	<b>9,595,722</b>	<b>9,532,715</b>	<b>9,448,461</b>	-1.07

Source: Author calculated from the National Statistical Office (NSO) *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) (2018)



Percentage Structure of Population between the Ages of 15 to 24

Unit: Percent

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Annually Average Growth Rate ( )
<b>Labour Force</b>	<b>48.99</b>	<b>49.11</b>	<b>49.07</b>	<b>47.95</b>	<b>47.50</b>	<b>45.63</b>	<b>43.71</b>	<b>43.00</b>	<b>42.93</b>	<b>41.52</b>	<b>43.53</b>	<b>-2.23</b>
Employed Person	46.48	46.97	47.24	46.48	46.07	43.90	41.53	40.77	40.68	38.81	41.30	-2.23
Unemployed Person	2.34	2.09	1.65	1.38	1.28	1.57	1.93	2.09	2.15	2.52	2.06	-2.30
Seasonal Worker	0.18	0.06	0.18	0.09	0.15	0.17	0.24	0.14	0.10	0.20	0.16	-1.79
<b>Not in Labour Force</b>	<b>51.01</b>	<b>50.89</b>	<b>50.93</b>	<b>52.05</b>	<b>52.50</b>	<b>54.37</b>	<b>56.29</b>	<b>57.00</b>	<b>57.07</b>	<b>58.48</b>	<b>56.47</b>	<b>-0.06</b>
Household Worker	6.90	7.54	6.63	7.15	6.37	6.98	6.46	6.52	7.21	7.17	7.18	-0.68
Studying	40.48	39.32	40.23	40.97	41.08	41.41	44.66	45.23	44.13	44.89	43.63	-0.33
Too young/Unable to work	1.48	1.48	1.40	1.39	1.46	1.70	1.42	1.44	1.59	2.03	1.78	0.77
Resting	0.68	0.72	0.65	0.80	0.99	1.98	1.54	1.87	2.28	2.27	2.38	12.04
Others	1.46	1.82	2.01	1.73	2.61	2.30	2.22	1.94	1.87	2.10	1.50	-0.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>-1.07</b>

**Table A2** Total Labour Force between the Ages of 15 to 24 from 2008 to 2018

Unit: in Million Persons

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
15	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.09	0.10	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.07
16	0.19	0.21	0.16	0.18	0.16	0.14	0.11	0.09	0.10	0.08	0.11
17	0.25	0.27	0.27	0.24	0.23	0.20	0.17	0.17	0.15	0.16	0.14
18	0.44	0.41	0.45	0.41	0.43	0.37	0.30	0.29	0.27	0.26	0.30
19	0.41	0.41	0.42	0.42	0.36	0.36	0.33	0.31	0.34	0.31	0.29
20	0.63	0.58	0.61	0.62	0.68	0.60	0.51	0.50	0.51	0.50	0.49
21	0.70	0.67	0.61	0.67	0.69	0.56	0.52	0.50	0.53	0.53	0.53
22	0.67	0.77	0.74	0.70	0.69	0.74	0.66	0.63	0.62	0.61	0.62
23	0.90	0.84	0.88	0.85	0.78	0.85	0.83	0.80	0.80	0.76	0.76
24	0.84	0.86	0.87	0.80	0.76	0.78	0.73	0.82	0.77	0.71	0.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.16</b>	<b>5.15</b>	<b>5.13</b>	<b>4.98</b>	<b>4.89</b>	<b>4.65</b>	<b>4.21</b>	<b>4.14</b>	<b>4.12</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>4.11</b>
Youth Pop.	10.54	10.52	10.49	10.45	10.38	10.30	10.20	9.64	9.63	9.60	9.53
Youth LF Participation Rate	48.91	48.98	48.85	47.65	47.10	45.20	41.30	42.96	42.77	41.25	43.14

Source: Author calculated from the National Statistical Office (NSO) *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) (2018)

Share of total Labour Force between Ages of 15 to 24 from 2008 to 2018

Unit: Percent

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
15	2.33	2.52	2.34	1.81	2.04	1.29	1.19	1.21	0.97	1.01	1.70
16	3.68	4.08	3.12	3.61	3.27	3.01	2.61	2.17	2.43	2.02	2.68
17	4.84	5.24	5.26	4.82	4.70	4.30	4.04	4.11	3.64	4.04	3.41
18	8.53	7.96	8.77	8.23	8.79	7.96	7.13	7.00	6.55	6.57	7.30
19	7.95	7.96	8.19	8.43	7.36	7.74	7.84	7.49	8.25	7.83	7.06
20	12.21	11.26	11.89	12.45	13.91	12.90	12.11	12.08	12.38	12.63	11.92
21	13.57	13.01	11.89	13.45	14.11	12.04	12.35	12.08	12.86	13.38	12.90
22	12.98	14.95	14.42	14.06	14.11	15.91	15.68	15.22	15.05	15.40	15.09
23	17.44	16.31	17.15	17.07	15.95	18.28	19.71	19.32	19.42	19.19	18.49
24	16.28	16.70	16.96	16.06	15.54	16.77	17.34	19.81	18.69	17.93	19.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table A3 Youth Labour Force by Education Attainment between 2008 and 2018**

Unit: Person

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2018</b>
Lower than Primary Education	154,831	182,316	170,142	198,723	209,627	193,185
Primary Education	1,164,951	1,080,243	965,531	740,809	741,187	663,244
Lower Secondary Education	1,977,693	1,966,627	2,013,805	1,602,991	1,428,679	1,410,868
Higher Secondary Education	906,135	880,240	853,614	755,111	838,364	873,280
Vocational Education	276,376	335,726	279,485	236,362	216,332	213,164
Diploma	317,385	318,781	294,506	237,711	257,696	302,243
Bachelor's Degree	337,612	328,158	289,266	385,227	388,478	390,380
Master's Degree	477	1,506	3,128	4,119	1,406	1,429
Others	8,107	12,458	6,084	25,476	14,328	32,870
Unknown	11,556	20,813	14,891	25,979	23,018	31,991
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,155,124</b>	<b>5,126,868</b>	<b>4,890,453</b>	<b>4,212,507</b>	<b>4,119,116</b>	<b>4,112,654</b>

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)**Share of Youth Labour Force by Education Attainment between 2008 and 2018**

Unit: Per cent

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2018</b>
Lower than primary education	3.00	3.56	3.48	4.72	5.09	4.70
Primary Education	22.60	21.07	19.74	17.59	17.99	16.13
Lower Secondary Education	38.36	38.36	41.18	38.05	34.68	34.31
Higher Secondary Education	17.58	17.17	17.45	17.93	20.35	21.23
Vocational Education	5.36	6.55	5.71	5.61	5.25	5.18
Diploma	6.16	6.22	6.02	5.64	6.26	7.35
Bachelor's Degree	6.55	6.40	5.91	9.14	9.43	9.49
Master's Degree	0.01	0.03	0.06	0.10	0.03	0.03
Others	0.16	0.24	0.12	0.60	0.35	0.80
Unknown	0.22	0.41	0.30	0.62	0.56	0.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table A4 Youth Employment by Work Status between 2008 and 2018**

Unit: Person

Status	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Employers	18,837	21,373	15,084	12,117	10,869	11,657
Own Account Workers	461,109	491,992	458,333	372,787	346,256	373,372
Contributing Family Workers	1,774,232	1,765,223	1,871,071	1,138,982	1,110,213	1,131,889
Government Employees	183,157	232,446	185,278	148,266	140,140	148,798
State Enterprise Employees	33,305	25,264	21,293	16,494	24,756	30,494
Private employees	2,411,755	2,397,207	2,189,147	2,232,528	2,174,177	2,070,213
Moonlight Employees				79,216	96,356	127,392
Members of Producers' Cooperatives	8,481	2,069	3,348	2,484	481	8,580
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,890,875</b>	<b>4,935,573</b>	<b>4,743,554</b>	<b>4,002,873</b>	<b>3,903,248</b>	<b>3,902,395</b>

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)**Share of Youth Employment by Work Status between 2008 and 2018**

Unit: Person

Status	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Employers	0.39	0.43	0.32	0.30	0.28	0.30
Own-Account Workers	9.43	9.97	9.66	9.31	8.87	9.57
Contributing Family Workers	36.28	35.77	39.44	28.45	28.44	29.00
Government Employees	3.74	4.71	3.91	3.70	3.59	3.81
State Enterprise Employees	0.68	0.51	0.45	0.41	0.63	0.78
Private employees	49.31	48.57	46.15	55.77	55.70	53.05
Moonlight Employees	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.98	2.47	3.26
Members of Producers' Cooperatives	0.17	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.01	0.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table A5 Youth Employment by Occupation between 2008 and 2018**

Unit: Person

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2018</b>
Managers	10,265	13,696	8,316	20,446	11,179	14,251
Professional	92,632	96,876	99,024	108,519	110,724	108,104
Technicians and associate professionals	164,910	157,944	100,615	146,436	113,159	126,462
Clerical support workers	222,700	240,312	177,819	204,104	201,187	203,394
Service and sales workers	834,633	923,497	871,178	846,875	857,309	892,691
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	1,755,966	1,762,403	1,800,288	1,018,798	961,165	974,752
Craft and related trades workers	672,949	670,229	561,117	563,081	565,049	544,351
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	467,539	433,536	421,946	436,711	417,349	412,181
Elementary occupations	667,490	636,452	702,895	650,038	660,082	621,880
Others	1,791	629	356	7,866	6,045	4,329
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,890,875</b>	<b>4,935,573</b>	<b>4,743,554</b>	<b>4,002,873</b>	<b>3,903,248</b>	<b>3,902,395</b>

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)**Share of Youth Employment by Occupation between 2008 and 2018**

Unit: Per cent

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2018</b>
Managers	0.21	0.28	0.18	0.51	0.29	0.37
Professional	1.89	1.96	2.09	2.71	2.84	2.77
Technicians and associate professionals	3.37	3.20	2.12	3.66	2.90	3.24
Clerical support workers	4.55	4.87	3.75	5.10	5.15	5.21
Service and sales workers	17.07	18.71	18.37	21.16	21.96	22.88
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	35.90	36.03	36.81	20.83	19.65	19.93
Craft and related trades workers	13.76	13.58	11.83	14.07	14.48	13.95
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	9.56	8.78	8.90	10.91	10.69	10.56
Elementary occupations	13.65	12.90	14.82	16.24	16.91	15.94
Others	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.20	0.15	0.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table A6** Private Employees by Gender and Age in 2018

Age	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>Private Employee</b>	<b>In Number</b>			<b>In %</b>		
aged 15–19 years	274,174	135,112	409,286	66.99	33.01	100.00
aged 20–24 years	1,006,103	782,215	1,788,318	56.26	43.74	100.00
<b>Total</b>	1,280,277	917,328	2,197,605	58.26	41.74	100.00
<b>Private employees who are the Household Head</b>	<b>In Number</b>			<b>In %</b>		
aged 15–19 years	18,059	5,274	23,333	77.40	22.60	100.00
aged 20–24 years	202,065	104,811	306,876	65.85	34.15	100.00
<b>Total</b>	220,124	110,085	330,209	66.66	33.34	100.00

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table A7** Average Income per Month of Private Employees by Gender and Age in 2018

Unit: Baht/Month

Age	Male	Female	Total
<b>Private employees</b>			
aged 15–19 years	7,106	6,958	7,057
aged 20–24 years	9,201	9,620	9,385
<b>Total</b>	8,752	9,231	8,952
<b>Private employees who are the Household Head</b>			
aged 15–19 years	7,295	8,005	7,455
aged 20–24 years	9,677	9,573	9,641
<b>Total</b>	9,480	9,498	9,486

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table A8** The Number of Employed Youth by Work Status, Gender and Age in 2018

Unit: Person

Status	Male			Female			Total		
	15-19	20-24	Total	15-19	20-24	Total	15-19	20-24	Total
Employers	1,243	8,672	9,915		1,742	1,742	1,243	10,414	11,657
Own Account Workers	34,788	191,297	226,085	18,348	128,939	147,287	53,136	320,236	373,372
Contributing Family Workers	246,155	481,720	727,875	140,076	263,938	404,014	386,232	745,658	1,131,889
Government Employees	4,584	56,577	61,161	1,779	85,858	87,637	6,363	142,435	148,798
State Enterprise Employees	875	18,467	19,342	1,295	9,857	11,152	2,170	28,324	30,494
Private Employees	249,880	941,636	1,191,516	122,359	756,337	878,696	372,240	1,697,973	2,070,213
Moonlight Employees	24,294	64,467	88,761	12,753	25,878	38,631	37,047	90,345	127,392
Members of Producers' Cooperatives	2,019	4,795	6,814	810	956	1,766	2,829	5,751	8,580
<b>Total</b>	563,837	1,767,631	2,331,469	297,421	1,273,505	1,570,927	861,258	3,041,137	3,902,395

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

Share of Employed Youth by Work Status, Gender and Age in 2018

Unit: Per cent

Status	Male			Female			Total		
	15–19	20–24	Total	15–19	20–24	Total	15–19	20–24	Total
Employers	0.22	0.49	0.43	0.00	0.14	0.11	0.14	0.34	0.30
Own Account Workers	6.17	10.82	9.70	6.17	10.12	9.38	6.17	10.53	9.57
Contributing Family Workers	43.66	27.25	31.22	47.10	20.73	25.72	44.85	24.52	29.00
Government Employees	0.81	3.20	2.62	0.60	6.74	5.58	0.74	4.68	3.81
State Enterprise Employees	0.16	1.04	0.83	0.44	0.77	0.71	0.25	0.93	0.78
Private Employees	44.32	53.27	51.11	41.14	59.39	55.93	43.22	55.83	53.05
Moonlight Employees	4.31	3.65	3.81	4.29	2.03	2.46	4.30	2.97	3.26
Members of Producers' Cooperatives	0.36	0.27	0.29	0.27	0.08	0.11	0.33	0.19	0.22
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100



**Table A9** The Number of Employed Youth by Occupation, Gender and Age in 2018

Occupation	Male			Female			Total		
	15–19	20–24	Total	15–19	20–24	Total	15–19	20–24	Total
Managers	837	6,570	7,406		6,845	6,845	837	13,414	14,251
Professional	1,192	33,321	34,513	1,991	71,600	73,591	3,184	104,921	108,104
Technicians and associate professionals	2,555	51,321	53,876	2,321	70,266	72,586	4,875	121,587	126,462
Clerical support workers	5,021	54,048	59,069	9,815	134,511	144,325	14,836	188,558	203,394
Service and sales workers	80,165	272,359	352,524	111,083	429,084	540,167	191,248	701,443	892,691
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	211,043	492,096	703,139	82,904	188,709	271,613	293,947	680,805	974,752
Craft and related trades workers	85,080	342,420	427,500	24,838	92,012	116,851	109,918	434,433	544,351
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	35,841	225,652	261,493	13,950	136,738	150,687	49,791	362,390	412,181
Elementary occupations	142,103	286,201	428,304	50,520	143,056	193,576	192,623	429,257	621,880
Others		3,644	3,644		685	685		4,329	4,329
<b>Total</b>	563,837	1,767,631	2,331,469	297,421	1,273,505	1,570,927	861,258	3,041,137	3,902,395

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

Unit: Per cent

Occupation	Male			Female			Total		
	15–19	20–24	Total	15–19	20–24	Total	15–19	20–24	Total
Managers	0.04	0.28	0.32		0.44	0.44	0.02	0.34	0.37
Professional	0.05	1.43	1.48	0.13	4.56	4.68	0.08	2.69	2.77
Technicians and associate professionals	0.11	2.20	2.31	0.15	4.47	4.62	0.12	3.12	3.24
Clerical support workers	0.22	2.32	2.53	0.62	8.56	9.19	0.38	4.83	5.21
Service and sales workers	3.44	11.68	15.12	7.07	27.31	34.39	4.90	17.97	22.88
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	9.05	21.11	30.16	5.28	12.01	17.29	7.53	17.45	24.98
Craft and related trades workers	3.65	14.69	18.34	1.58	5.86	7.44	2.82	11.13	13.95
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	1.54	9.68	11.22	0.89	8.70	9.59	1.28	9.29	10.56
Elementary occupations	6.10	12.28	18.37	3.22	9.11	12.32	4.94	11.00	15.94
Others		0.16	0.16		0.04	0.04		0.11	0.11
<b>Total</b>	24.18	75.82	100.00	18.93	81.07	100.00	22.07	77.93	100.00

**Table A10** Youth Unemployment Rate by Gender between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Per cent

Gender	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Male	4.83	3.68	2.97	2.25	2.40	2.80	3.79	4.47	3.81	5.21	3.92
Female	4.67	5.12	3.93	3.82	3.14	4.44	5.35	5.43	6.81	7.32	5.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.77</b>	<b>4.26</b>	<b>3.36</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>4.42</b>	<b>4.86</b>	<b>5.02</b>	<b>6.06</b>	<b>4.74</b>

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)**Table A11** Youth Unemployment Rate between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Per cent

Age Group	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
15–19	5.89	4.47	3.20	2.53	3.18	3.66	4.77	5.48	4.34	6.63	5.13
20–24	4.34	4.18	3.42	3.02	2.52	3.36	4.32	4.69	5.21	5.90	4.62
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>1.18</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>0.66</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>0.96</b>

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)**Table A12** Youth Unemployment Rate by Education Attainment between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Per cent

Level of Education	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Lower than primary education	2.34	0.71	2.73	0.67	1.32	1.11	1.20	1.02	1.66	0.97	2.43
Primary education	3.73	2.68	2.39	1.27	1.54	1.92	3.28	3.43	3.51	4.56	3.28
Lower secondary education	3.32	3.58	2.03	1.89	1.66	1.95	3.34	2.84	2.38	4.08	3.26
Higher secondary education	5.03	2.56	1.52	2.80	2.72	2.33	3.57	3.86	3.36	4.40	3.43
Vocational education	4.57	6.02	3.14	2.71	2.62	5.11	3.94	3.60	4.61	6.71	5.00
Diploma	9.50	9.56	5.01	5.93	4.51	8.51	4.70	8.26	7.66	11.53	4.70
Bachelor's degree	13.08	12.81	18.66	12.20	12.83	13.97	15.06	18.06	21.92	18.32	17.22
Master's degree	30.10					3.57	8.05			30.10	
Others				0.72				1.18			
Unknown	4.44	3.06	0.00	1.92	2.19	3.57	1.57				0.97
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.77</b>	<b>4.26</b>	<b>3.36</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>4.42</b>	<b>4.87</b>	<b>5.02</b>	<b>6.06</b>	<b>4.74</b>

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table A13** Forecasted Labour Demand Trends in Thai Labour Market by Education Attainment between 2017 and 2021

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>In million</b>	<b>% change</b>
Lower than primary education	6.27	-18.79
Primary education	8.64	2.77
Lower secondary education	6.21	1.68
Higher secondary education	5.11	7.54
Vocational education	1.65	4.38
Diploma	0.07	-27.1
Bachelor's degree	5.52	6.96
Higher than bachelor's degree	0.94	11.56

Source: NSO (2017)

**Table A14** Top 10 Occupations with Highest Labour Demand between 2017 and 2021

Unit: Million

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Average</b>
	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017P–2021P</b>
Agricultural merchant	8.11	7.51
Retail vendor	2.67	2.51
Street and market vendor	1.32	1.39
Driver (car, van, motorcycle)	1.2	1.3
Other vendors	1.11	1.1
Herdsmen	0.92	0.99
Agricultural and fishery worker	1.04	0.99
Livelihood practitioner	1.26	0.85
Chef/cook	0.74	0.77
Construction and mining worker	0.59	0.65

Source: NSO (2017)

**Table A15** Top 10 Occupations with Highest Increasing Rate in Labour Demand between 2017 and 2021

Occupation	Averagely Increasing Rate (%)
	2017P–2021P
Server and bartender	68.34
Mathematician, Actuary, Statistician	48.73
Sales representative	47.86
Physical, earth scientist	42.09
Managing director and executive	31.81
Database and network professional	29.35
Traditional and applied medicine	25.67
Hotel and restaurant manager	25.47
Nurse and midwife	25.03
Wholesale manager	14.56

Source: NSO (2017)

**Table A16** Average Weekly Working Hours of Private Employees by Age Group between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Hour/Week

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
15	45	41	41	44	43	41	43	39	40	42	30
16	46	47	47	46	44	44	44	44	42	42	36
17	46	46	47	49	47	46	45	43	44	44	39
18	48	49	48	50	48	46	47	46	45	46	44
19	49	50	48	48	48	48	48	47	46	47	47
20	50	49	49	49	49	47	47	47	48	47	47
21	48	49	49	50	49	48	49	47	48	48	47
22	50	49	48	49	49	48	49	47	48	48	47
23	50	48	49	50	50	49	49	48	48	47	48
24	50	49	49	49	49	48	48	47	48	48	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

Percentage Differences from average Weekly Working Hours of Private Employees  
by Age Group between 2008 and 2018

Unit: in Per cent

Age	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
15	-8.16	-16.33	-14.58	-10.20	-12.24	-14.58	-10.42	-17.02	-14.89	-10.64	-36.17
16	-6.12	-4.08	-2.08	-6.12	-10.20	-8.33	-8.33	-6.38	-10.64	-10.64	-23.40
17	-6.12	-6.12	-2.08	0.00	-4.08	-4.17	-6.25	-8.51	-6.38	-6.38	-17.02
18	-2.04	0.00	0.00	2.04	-2.04	-4.17	-2.08	-2.13	-4.26	-2.13	-6.38
19	0.00	2.04	0.00	-2.04	-2.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	-2.13	0.00	0.00
20	2.04	0.00	2.08	0.00	0.00	-2.08	-2.08	0.00	2.13	0.00	0.00
21	-2.04	0.00	2.08	2.04	0.00	0.00	2.08	0.00	2.13	2.13	0.00
22	2.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.08	0.00	2.13	2.13	0.00
23	2.04	-2.04	2.08	2.04	2.04	2.08	2.08	2.13	2.13	0.00	2.13
24	2.04	0.00	2.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	2.13	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>

**Table A17** Average Monthly Wage of Private Employees Aged 15–24 by Education Level  
between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Baht/month

Level of Education	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Lower than primary education	4,103	4,296	5,757	7,241	7,512	8,059
Primary education	4,205	4,589	5,638	7,269	7,110	7,258
Lower secondary education	4,749	4,952	6,135	8,015	7,980	8,105
Higher secondary education	5,062	5,357	6,868	8,646	8,650	8,813
Vocational education	5,807	5,642	7,415	9,010	9,673	9,637
Diploma	6,609	6,277	7,782	9,937	10,312	10,794
Bachelor's degree	9,876	9,499	12,705	14,771	14,491	14,984
Master's degree	17,817	28,000	20,588	46,832	25,316	
Others	3,345	2,911	6,404	7,644	7,807	8,059
Unknown	5,689	6,193	7,296	7,607	8,248	8,272
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,138</b>	<b>5,272</b>	<b>6,684</b>	<b>8,726</b>	<b>8,677</b>	<b>8,952</b>

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

Percentage Difference from the Average Monthly Wage of Private Employees  
by Education Level between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Per cent

Level of Education	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Lower than primary education	-20.14	-18.51	-13.87	-17.02	-13.43	-9.98
Primary education	-18.16	-12.96	-15.65	-16.70	-18.06	-18.92
Lower secondary education	-7.57	-6.07	-8.21	-8.15	-8.03	-9.46
Higher secondary education	-1.48	1.61	2.75	-0.92	-0.31	-1.55
Vocational education	13.02	7.02	10.94	3.25	11.48	7.65
Diploma	28.63	19.06	16.43	13.88	18.84	20.58
Bachelor's degree	92.21	80.18	90.08	69.28	67.00	67.38
Master's degree	246.77	431.11	208.02	436.69	191.76	-100.00
Others	-34.90	-44.78	-4.19	-12.40	-10.03	-9.98
Unknown	10.72	17.47	9.16	-12.82	-4.94	-7.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,138</b>	<b>5,272</b>	<b>6,684</b>	<b>8,726</b>	<b>8,677</b>	<b>8,952</b>

**Table A18** Strategies of the National Scheme of Education (NSE)

Strategies	Guidelines
Strategy 1: Educational management for the strength of the nation and society	<p>1.1 People of all ages love the important national institutions and cherish the values of democracy with the King as Head of State.</p> <p>1.2 People of all ages in the Special Development Zone in Southern border provinces and other special areas are provided with quality education.</p> <p>1.3 People of all ages are provided with education, care, and protection against non-traditional security threats.</p>
Strategy 2: Development of research and innovation labour force to enhance the national competitiveness	<p>2.1 The national labour force possesses essential skills and capabilities which meet the requirements of the job market and needs of the national economic and social development.</p> <p>2.2 Educational institutions and organizations produce graduates with excellence and specialization in specific fields.</p> <p>2.3 There is research and development to construct knowledge and innovation which will add economic value.</p>
Strategy 3: The proficiency development for people of all ages and the promotion of a lifelong learning society.	<p>3.1 Learners possess skills and characteristics of Thai citizens and other necessary skills and qualifications for living in the twenty-first century.</p> <p>3.2 People of all ages have essential knowledge and skills as indicated in the educational and professional standards, and can use their potential to improve their lives.</p>

Strategies	Guidelines
	<p>3.3 Educational institutions at all levels can organize activities as required by the curriculum.</p> <p>3.4 Learning centres, textbooks, educational innovations, and learning media are of high quality and standards, and people should be able to access these resources without limitation.</p> <p>3.5 Student testing, monitoring, and assessment systems and mechanisms are effective.</p> <p>3.6 The training and recruitment of teachers and educational personnel must meet international standards.</p> <p>3.7 Teachers and educational personnel have received standard competency training.</p>
<p>Strategy 4: Creating opportunities and equality in education</p>	<p>4.1 All students receive opportunity and equal access to education of high quality.</p> <p>4.2 People of all ages receive more opportunities in education through digital technology for education.</p> <p>4.3 An individual student record keeping system and information technology for the educational administration, evaluations, and reports are extensive, precise, and up-to-date.</p>
<p>Strategy 5: Educational administration to enhance the quality of an eco-friendly life</p>	<p>5.1 People of all ages are environmentally aware, have morals and ethics, and are capable of putting the philosophy of sufficiency economy into practice.</p> <p>5.2 Curriculum, learning centres and learning materials enhance the quality of an eco-friendly life, morals, ethics, and the application of the philosophy of sufficiency economy.</p> <p>5.3 Research for a body of knowledge and innovations are developed to enhance the quality of an eco-friendly life.</p>
<p>Strategy 6: The competency development for educational administrations</p>	<p>6.1 The structures, roles, and systems of the educational management are clear, flexible, and verifiable.</p> <p>6.2 The educational administration is efficient and effective and yields good results in quality and standards of education.</p> <p>6.3 Every social group is involved in the educational administration to serve the needs of people in the regions.</p> <p>6.4 Acts and styles of human resource management in education can serve students with different characteristics and backgrounds, educational institutions, and the labour force needs of the country.</p> <p>6.5 The administrative system of the educational personnel must be justifiable, morale-boosting, and supportive so that the educational personnel can work with their full potential.</p>

Source: Ministry of Education, Office of the Education Council (2017)

**Table A19** Sample of Training Providers

<b>Public agencies</b>	<b>Private agencies</b>
Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour <sup>43</sup> ; Department of Industrial Promotion, Ministry of Industry; Department of Community Development, Ministry of Interior; Bangkok Metropolis; Department of Non-formal Education, Ministry of Education; The Vocational Commission, Ministry of Education; Sport Schools, Physical Education, Ministry of Tourism and Sports; College of Dramatic Arts, Buditpatanasilpa Institute, Ministry of Culture.	Internal training for firms' employees; Vocational trainings for the public by NGOs; and Vocational training by private schools or institutes.

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<sup>43</sup> Skill training by the Department of Skill Development consists of trainings by the department and trainings by the private sector with the promotion of the department. In 2017, trainings by the private sector accounted for 3.9 million trainees and training by the department accounted for only 200,000 trainees.



**Table A20** Number of Graduate Youth in College Classified by Branches and Gender in 2018

Subject Completed	Occupation									Total
	Managers and Legislator	Practitioner	Technician and Practitioner	Clerks	Services and Vendors	Agriculture Forestry and Fishery	Craftsman and Related workers	Machinist Assembly work	Basic careers	
Trainee teachers and Education	0 0.00%	22201 2.59%	1995 0.23%	1463 0.17%	8368 0.98%	5552 0.65%	613 0.07%	290 0.03%	1032 0.12%	41514 4.85%
Liberal arts	0 0.00%	3640 0.43%	2264 0.26%	3348 0.39%	1057 0.12%	796 0.09%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	255 0.03%	11360 1.33%
Humanities	829 0.10%	5257 0.61%	463 0.05%	3392 0.40%	3756 0.44%	0 0.00%	489 0.06%	468 0.05%	0 0.00%	14654 1.71%
Social Sciences and Behavioral Sciences	221 0.03%	593 0.07%	4344 0.51%	4066 0.48%	3861 0.45%	2835 0.33%	503 0.06%	682 0.08%	194 0.02%	18726 2.19%
Journal of Science and Information	691 0.08%	2808 0.33%	1091 0.13%	5289 0.62%	5816 0.68%	650 0.08%	836 0.10%	675 0.08%	518 0.06%	18374 2.15%
Business and Services	3147 0.37%	14825 1.73%	38366 4.48%	67398 7.88%	68896 8.05%	12346 1.44%	15053 1.76%	13158 1.54%	11785 1.38%	244974 28.62%
Engineering	1909 0.22%	8985 1.05%	12797 1.50%	7779 0.91%	33231 3.88%	40139 4.69%	95901 11.21%	33287 3.89%	7725 0.90%	241753 28.25%
Biological science	0 0.00%	1107 0.13%	0 0.00%	127 0.01%	1381 0.16%	954 0.11%	451 0.05%	0 0.00%	147 0.02%	4167 0.49%
Computer	491 0.06%	5715 0.67%	11817 1.38%	18051 2.11%	27210 3.18%	7653 0.89%	7690 0.90%	11372 1.33%	1656 0.19%	91655 10.71%
Mathematics and Statistics	0 0.00%	849 0.10%	122 0.01%	80 0.01%	455 0.05%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	44 0.01%	1550 0.18%
Chi-square = 691825.116      Prob = 0.000										

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table A21** Youth Population by Subject of Highest Education Completed

Unit: Per cent

Work code	Subject for Highest Education Completed		Total
	Academic	Vocational	
<b>Total labour force</b>	<b>27.86</b>	<b>37.49</b>	<b>65.35</b>
1. Currently labour force	27.79	37.42	
1.1 Employed labour force	23.15	35.48	
1.2 Unemployed labour force	4.64	1.94	
2. Seasonal labour force	0.07	0.07	
<b>Non-labour</b>	<b>8.35</b>	<b>26.28</b>	<b>34.65</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>36.23</b>	<b>63.77</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)**Table A22** Job Seeking Duration for Academic and Vocational Education Tracks in 2018

Unit: Person

Subject for highest education completed	How long has been looking for work							Total
	LT 1 MONTH	1-2.9 MONTH	3-5.9 MONTH	6-8.9 MONTH	9-11.9 MONTH	GE 12 MONTH	UNKNOWN	
Academic	13,049	24,350	19,417	3,064	1,900	2,325	70	65,421
%	14.06	26.25	20.92	3.3	2.05	2.5	0.08	70.51
Vocational	1,380	8,693	6,892	4,059	397	4,003	846	27,353
%	1.49	9.37	7.43	4.38	0.43	4.31	0.91	29.48
Total	14,429	33,043	26,309	7,123	2,297	6,328	916	92,774
%	15.55	35.62	28.36	7.68	2.48	6.82	0.99	100.00
Chi-square = 14781.937    Prob = 0.000								

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table A23** Share of NEET Population between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Per cent

Types	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Household Workers	60.52	64.17	63.04	56.91	54.50	53.58
Resting	6.00	6.31	9.83	13.54	17.24	17.73
Too young/Unable to work	13.01	13.56	14.45	12.53	11.99	13.31
Unemployed	20.47	15.96	12.68	17.02	16.28	15.38
<b>Total NEET</b>	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
<b>% of NEET in Non-Labour Force</b>	22.36	20.29	19.24	20.17	23.18	23.73
<b>% of NEET in Total Youth</b>	11.41	10.33	10.10	11.35	13.23	13.40

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)**Table A24** Male Youth Aged 15–19 Years in the NEET Group between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Person

Male, 15–19	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	Annually Average Growth Rate (%)
Household Worker	20,058	32,486	19,254	23,648	27,909	32,173	4.84
Too young/Unable to work	39,039	52,507	40,738	40,936	46,681	51,127	2.73
Resting	21,600	18,473	28,607	45,913	63,907	61,977	11.12
Unemployed	50,869	28,347	24,863	31,647	22,921	27,449	-5.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>131,566</b>	<b>131,813</b>	<b>113,462</b>	<b>142,144</b>	<b>161,418</b>	<b>172,725</b>	<b>2.76</b>
<b>In %</b>							
Household Worker	15.25	24.65	16.97	16.64	17.29	18.63	2.02
Too young/Unable to work	29.67	39.83	35.90	28.80	28.92	29.60	-0.02
Resting	16.42	14.01	25.21	32.30	39.59	35.88	8.13
Unemployed	38.66	21.51	21.91	22.26	14.20	15.89	-8.51
<b>Total</b>	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table A25** Male Youth Aged 20–24 Years in the NEET Group between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Person

Male, 20–24	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	Annually Average Growth Rate (%)
Household Worker	16,642	18,060	16,190	13,562	27,055	37,412	8.44
Too young/Unable to work	66,779	55,226	56,178	40,979	53,512	57,795	-1.43
Resting	21,895	18,706	40,281	58,703	82,467	84,329	14.44
Unemployed	97,326	62,081	45,696	63,303	70,753	68,117	-3.51
<b>Total</b>	<b>202,642</b>	<b>154,072</b>	<b>158,345</b>	<b>176,546</b>	<b>233,788</b>	<b>247,653</b>	<b>2.03</b>
<b>In %</b>							
Household Worker	8.21	11.72	10.22	7.68	11.57	15.11	6.28
Too young/Unable to work	32.95	35.84	35.48	23.21	22.89	23.34	-3.39
Resting	10.80	12.14	25.44	33.25	35.27	34.05	12.16
Unemployed	48.03	40.29	28.86	35.86	30.26	27.50	-5.42
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table A26** Female Youth Aged 15–19 Years in the NEET Group between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Person

<b>Female, 15–19</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Annually Average Growth Rate (%)</b>
Household Worker	186,070	190,574	190,731	167,597	175,538	161,428	-1.41
Too young/Unable to work	14,086	18,087	18,137	20,590	25,431	19,702	3.41
Resting	11,839	14,753	15,665	19,869	26,370	23,151	6.94
Unemployed	32,389	17,288	15,891	14,024	16,296	19,527	-4.93
<b>Total</b>	<b>244,384</b>	<b>240,702</b>	<b>240,423</b>	<b>222,080</b>	<b>243,635</b>	<b>223,807</b>	<b>-0.88</b>
<b>In %</b>							
Household Worker	76.14	79.17	79.33	75.47	72.05	72.13	-0.54
Too young/Unable to work	5.76	7.51	7.51	9.27	10.44	8.80	4.32
Resting	4.84	6.13	6.52	8.95	10.82	10.34	7.88
Unemployed	13.25	7.18	6.61	6.31	6.69	8.73	-4.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Table A27** Female Youth Aged 20–24 Years in the NEET Group between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Person

Female, 20–24	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	Annually Average Growth Rate (%)
Household Worker	503,639	451,602	429,260	417,896	461,341	447,527	-1.17
Too young/Unable to work	36,238	20,540	35,174	34,549	26,568	39,941	0.98
Resting	16,664	16,219	17,669	23,687	46,082	55,051	12.70
Unemployed	65,135	64,538	45,418	77,209	96,679	79,693	2.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>621,677</b>	<b>552,899</b>	<b>527,521</b>	<b>553,340</b>	<b>630,670</b>	<b>622,211</b>	<b>0.01</b>
<b>In %</b>							
Household Worker	81.01	81.68	81.37	75.52	73.15	71.93	-1.18
Too young/Unable to work	5.83	3.72	6.67	6.24	4.21	6.42	0.97
Resting	2.68	2.93	3.35	4.28	7.31	8.85	12.68
Unemployed	10.48	11.67	8.61	13.95	15.33	12.81	2.03
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)**Table A28** Number and Percentage of Population Aged 15–24 Years by Skill Development Demand and Gender in 2019

Unit: Thousand

Age Group	Population aged more than 15 years old			Population demanded skill development			Skill Development Demand (%)		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
15–24 Years	9397.8	4756.0	4641.8	1123.9	551.3	572.6	12.0	11.6	12.3
Total Population	56,465.2	27,252.9	29,212.2	4,728.4	2,166.5	2,561.9	8.4	7.9	8.8

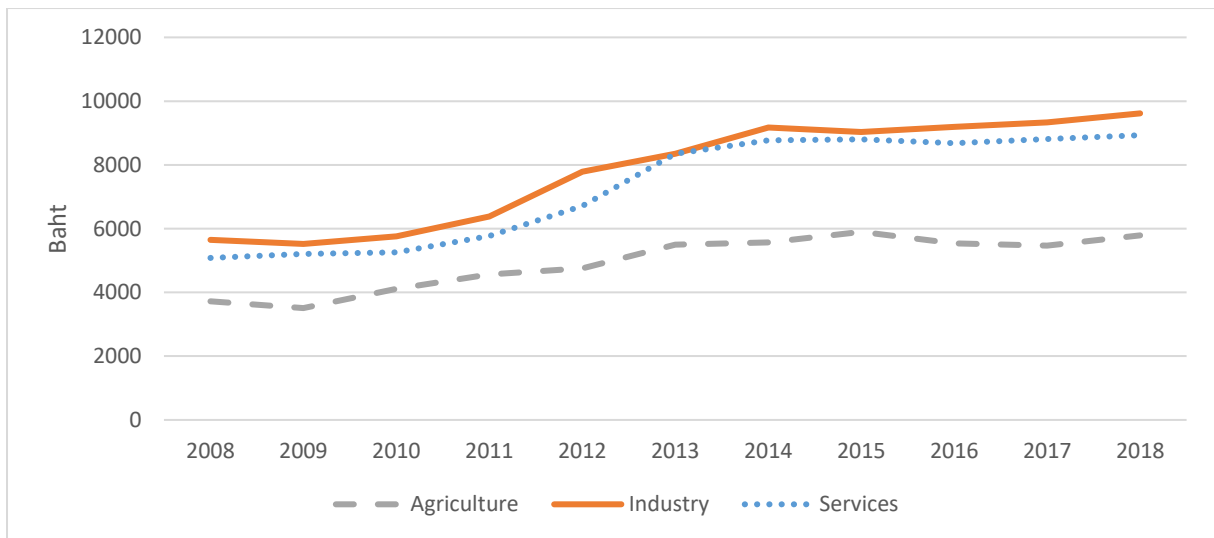
Skill Development Demand Percentage =  $\frac{\text{Number of population demanded skill development in each age group} \times 100}{\text{Total population aged more than 15 years old in each age group}}$

Source: NSO (2019)



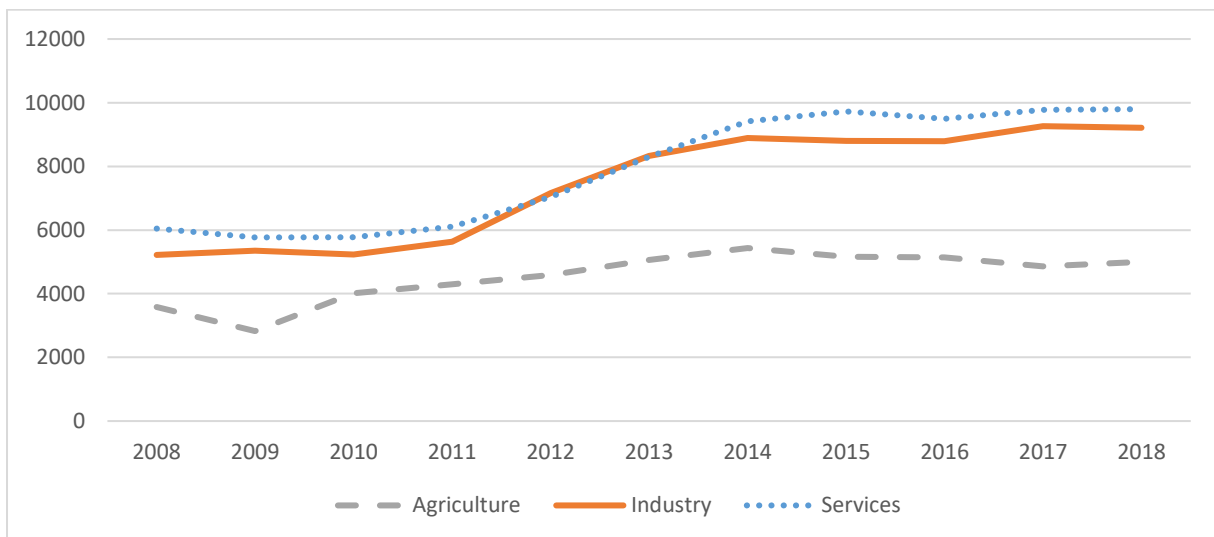
## Figures

**Figure A1** Male Youth Wage per Month by Industry



Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

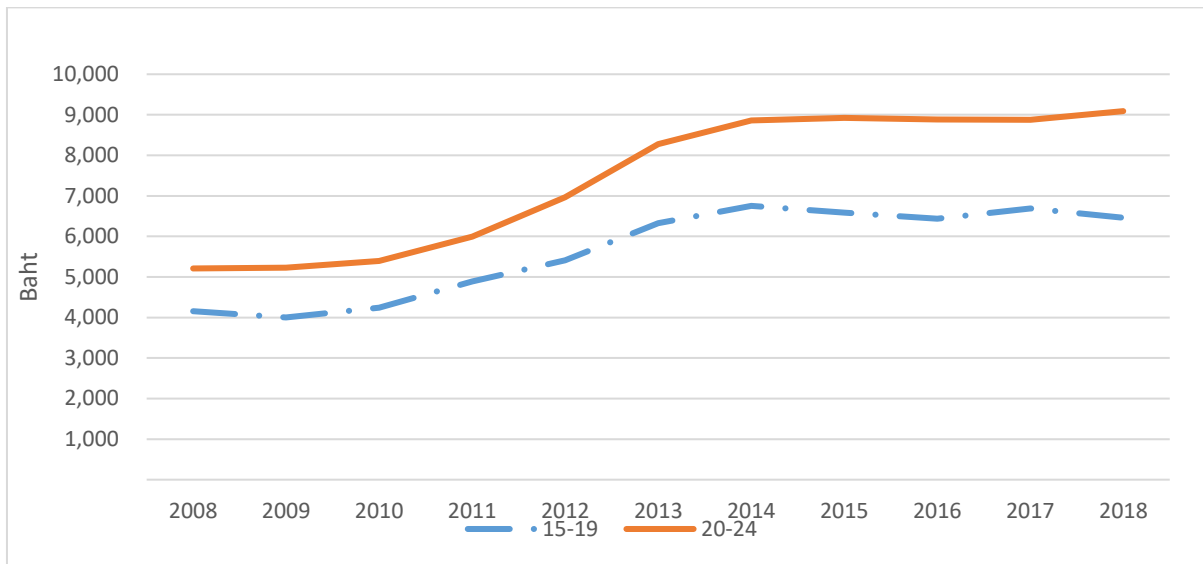
**Figure A2** Female Youth Wage per Month by Industry



Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

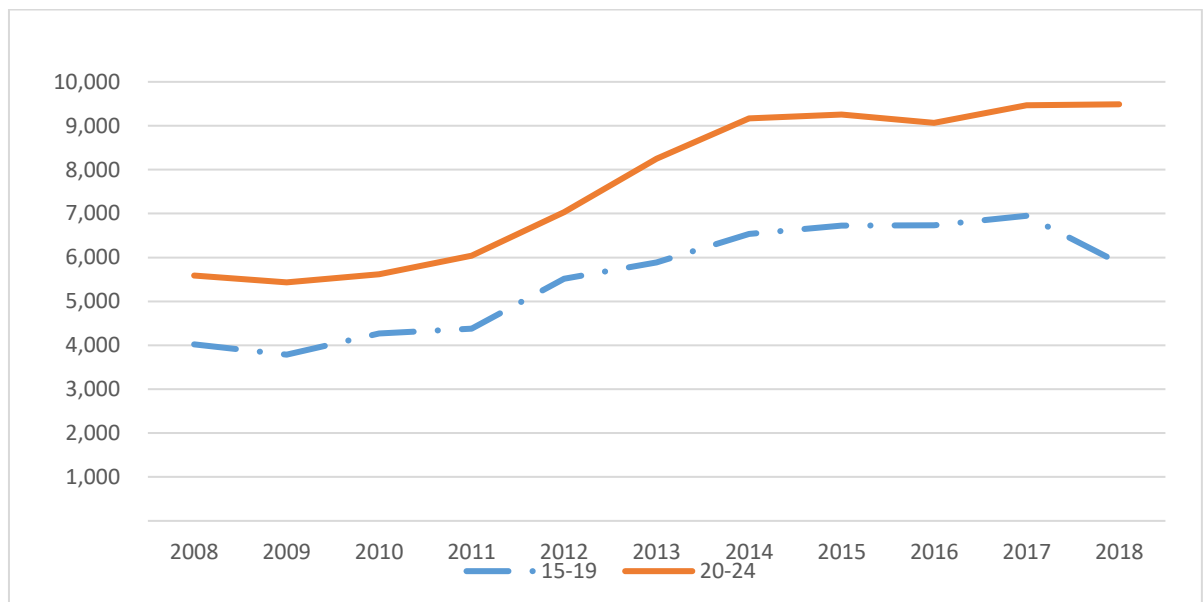


**Figure A3** Average Wage per Month of Male Private Employees by Age



Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

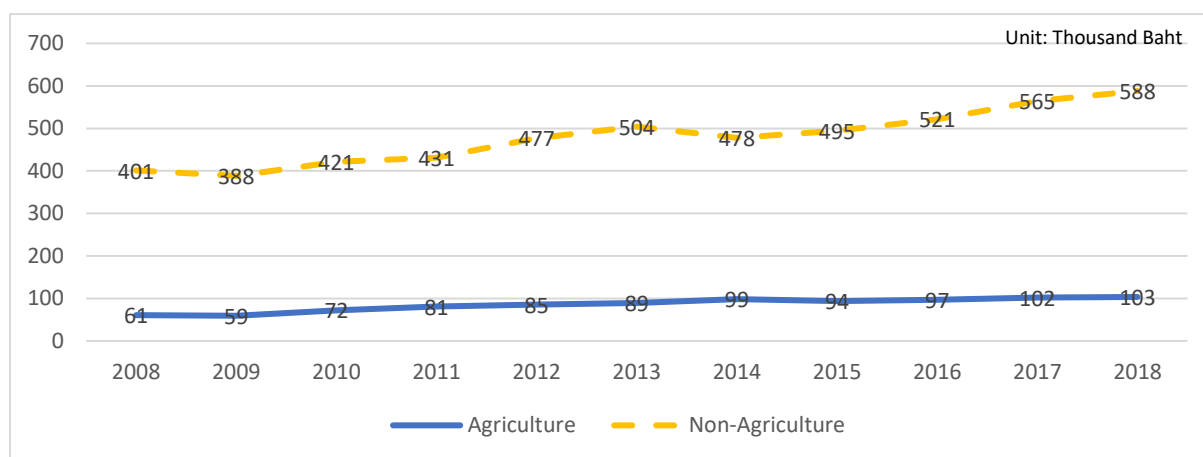
**Figure A4** Average Wage per Month of Female Private Employees by Age



Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

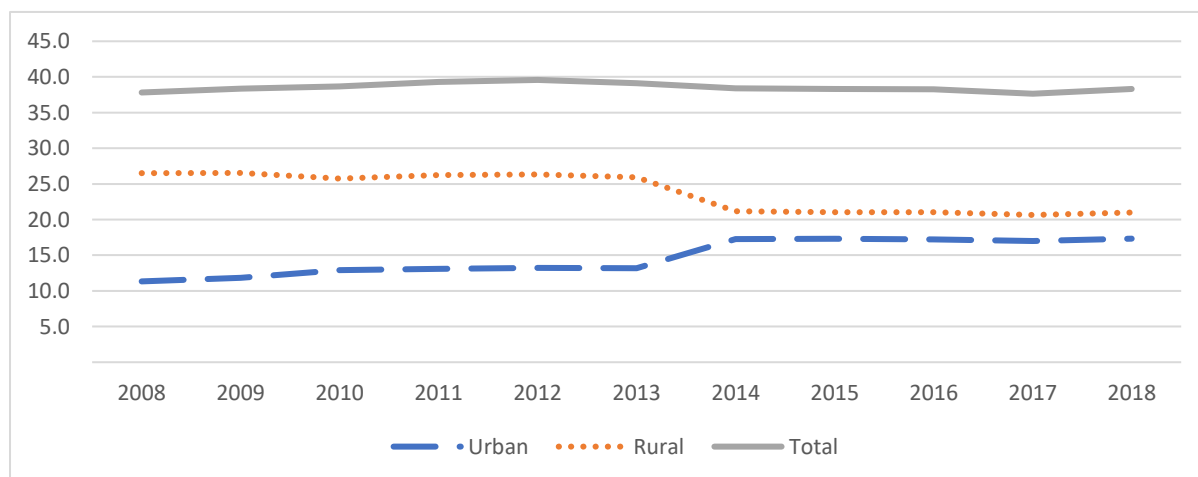
**Figure A5** Labour Productivity per Person in Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Sectors, 2008–2018

(at current market price)



Source: Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council

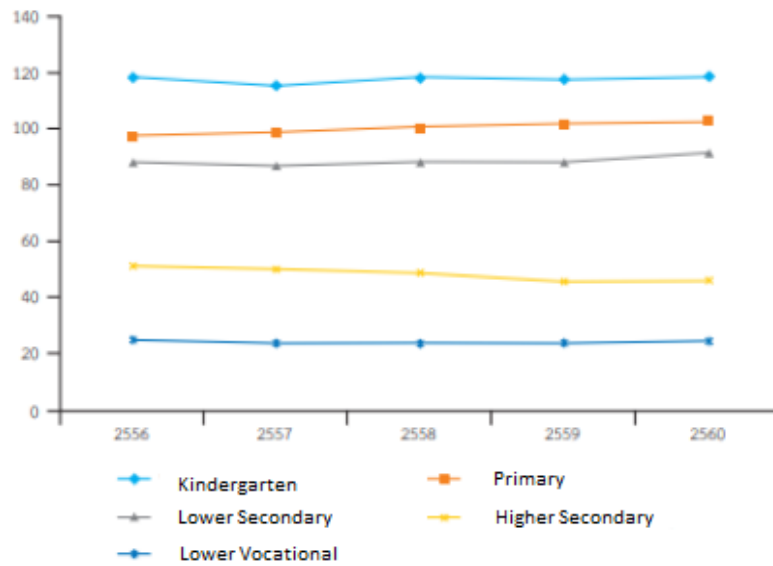
**Figure A6** Employment in Urban and Rural Areas in Thailand, 2008–2018



Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

\*Note: In 2014, the NSO changed the population weight, causing the break in most of the trend data derived from the LFS due to a change in forecasted population by the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council.

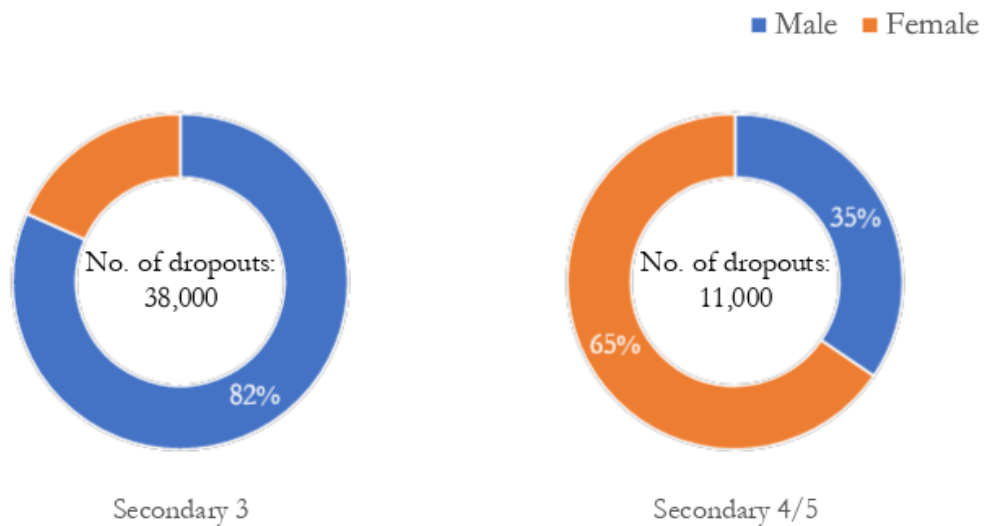
**Figure A7** Studying Youth Ratio (2013–2017)



Source: Office of the Education Council

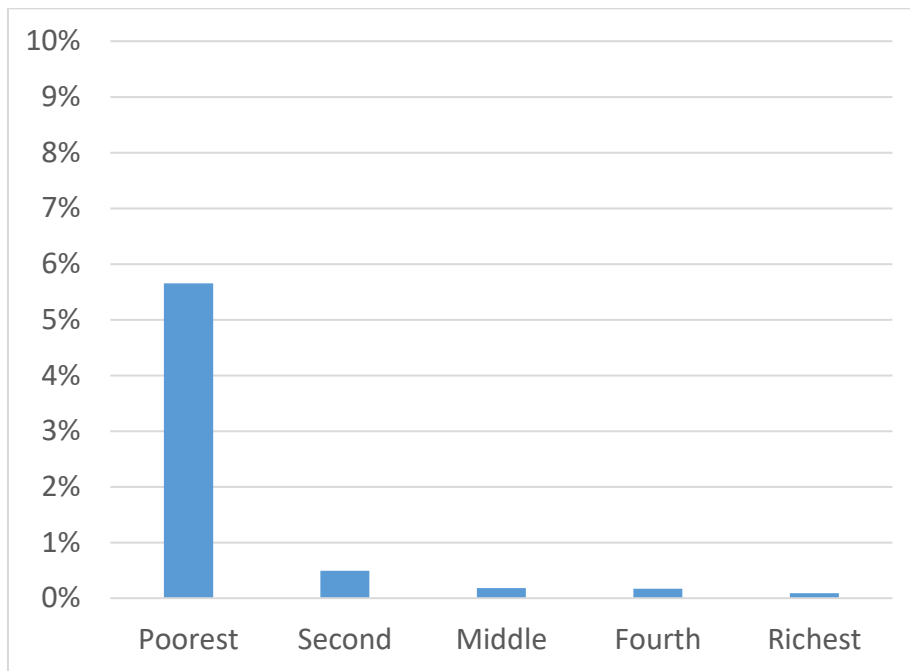
Note: Ratio exceed 100% because the education level includes all ages. The age ranges of total population used are: 3-5 years old (Kindergarten), 6-11 years old (Primary), 12-14 years old (lower secondary), and 15-17 years old (higher secondary/lower vocational education).

**Figure A8** Dropout comparison between Pre and Post S3 (Grade 9)



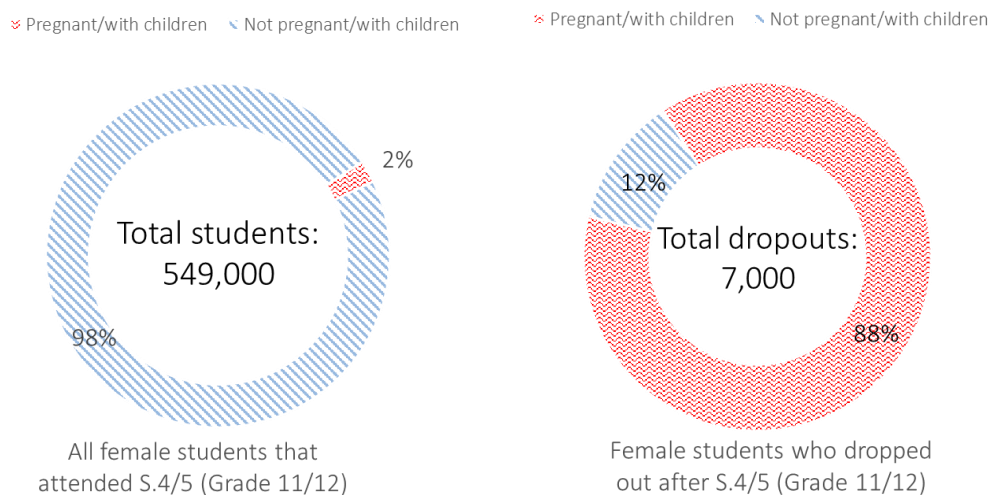
Source: Lappathana, ‘Thailand MICS 5 Secondary Analysis: School dropout at the upper-secondary level and teenage pregnancy’ (2019).

**Figure A9** Grade 11/12 Dropout Rate by Wealth Quintile



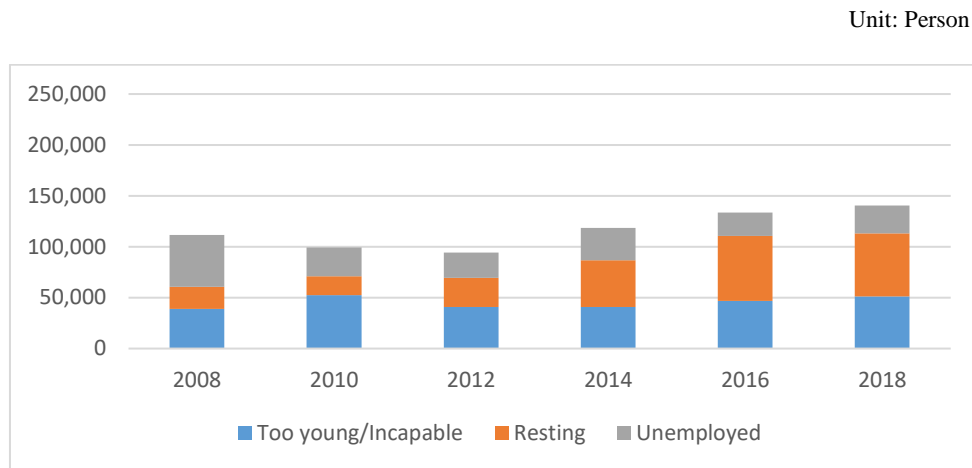
Source: Lapprathana, ‘Thailand MICS 5 Secondary Analysis: School dropout at the upper-secondary level and teenage pregnancy’ (2019).

**Figure A10** Female Dropout Post S3 (Grade 9) – Pregnancy



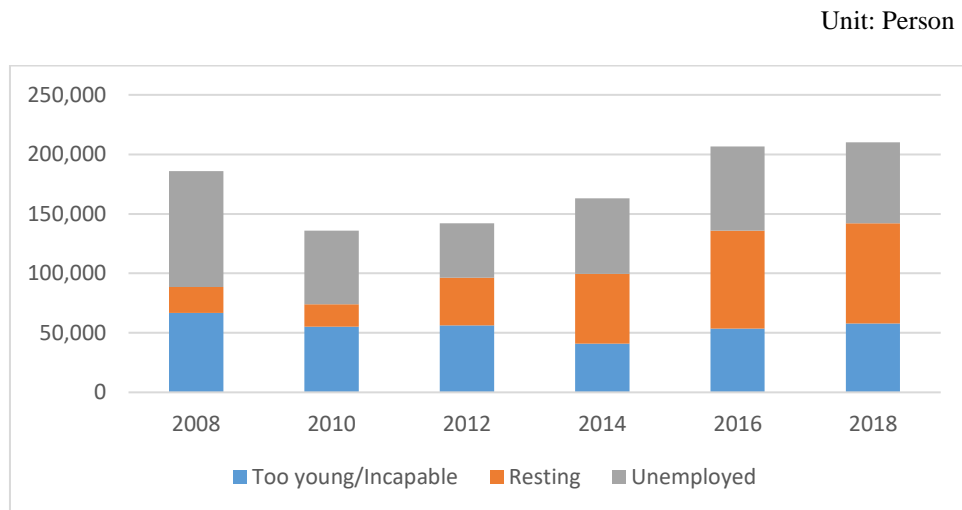
Source: Lapprathana, ‘Thailand MICS 5 Secondary Analysis: School dropout at the upper-secondary level and teenage pregnancy’ (2019).

**Figure A11** Population of Male NEETs Aged 15–19 Years Excluding Household Workers between 2008 and 2018



Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

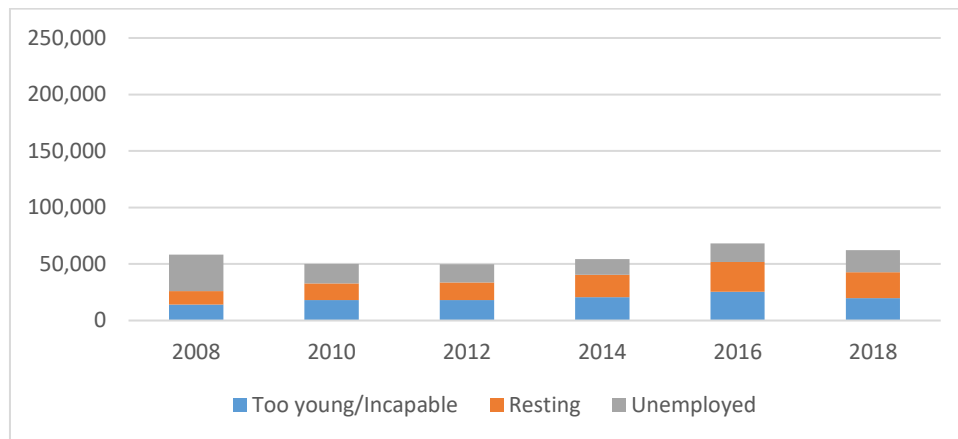
**Figure A12** Population of Male NEET Aged 20–24 Years Excluding Household Workers between 2008 and 2018



Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Figure A13** Population of Female NEETs Aged 15–19 Years Excluding Household Workers between 2008 and 2018

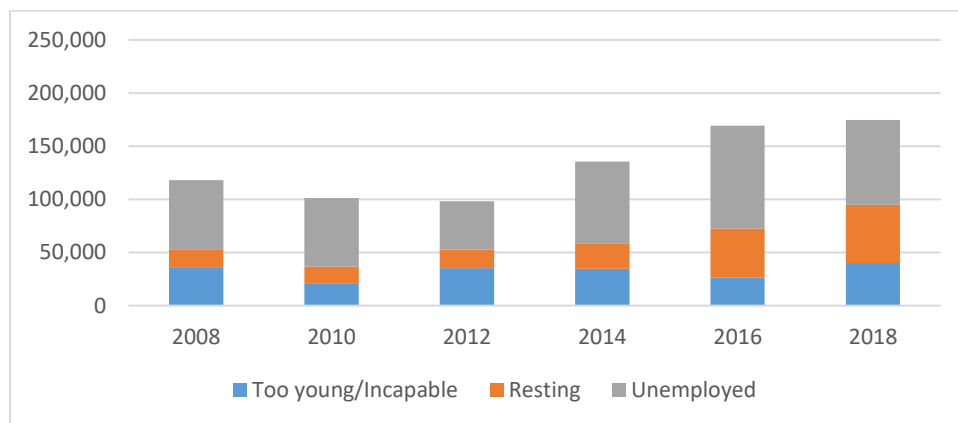
Unit: Person



Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

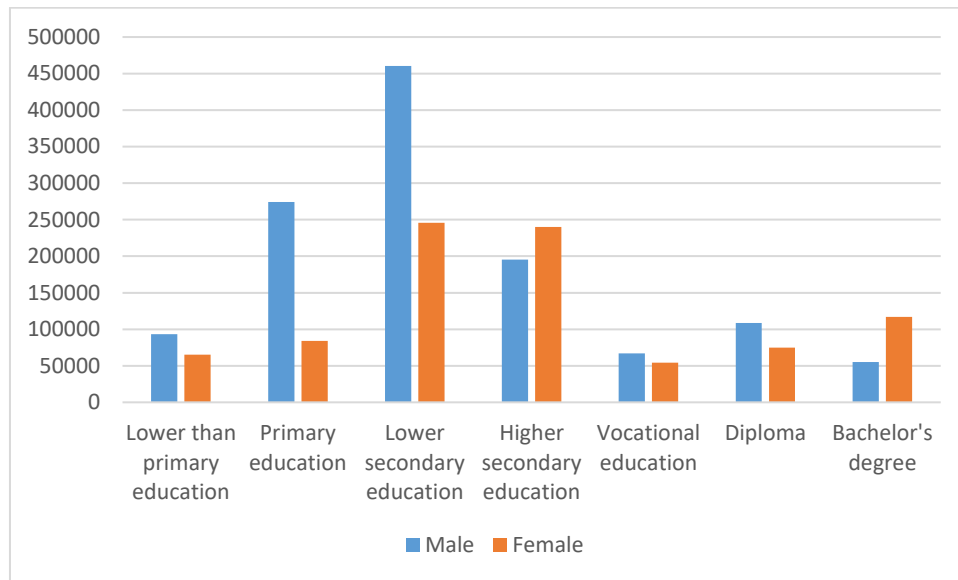
**Figure A14** Population of Female NEETs Aged 20–24 Years Excluding Household Workers between 2008 and 2018

Unit: Person



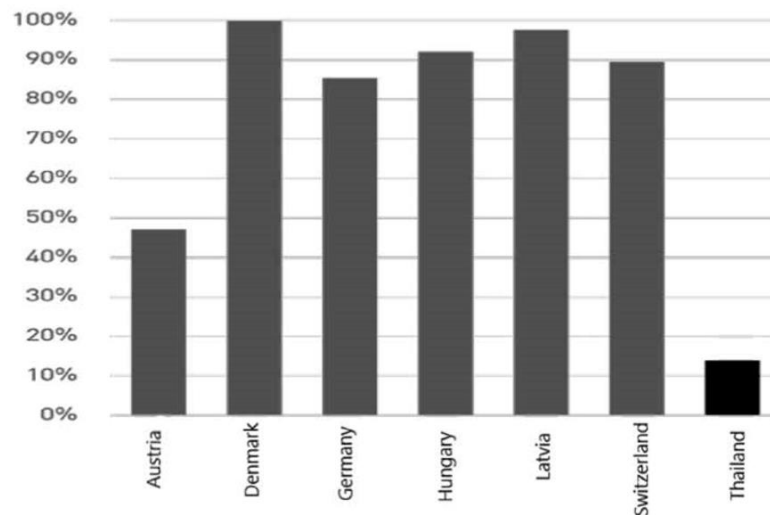
Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Figure A15** Number of Private Employees Aged 15–24 Years by Education Attainment and Gender in 2018



Source: Author calculated from the NSO *Labour Force Survey* (2018)

**Figure A16** Ratio of Vocational Students who Joined the Dual Vocational Programme to Total Vocational Students in Countries other than Thailand



Source: OECD (2016); Office of the Vocational Education Commission (2015)

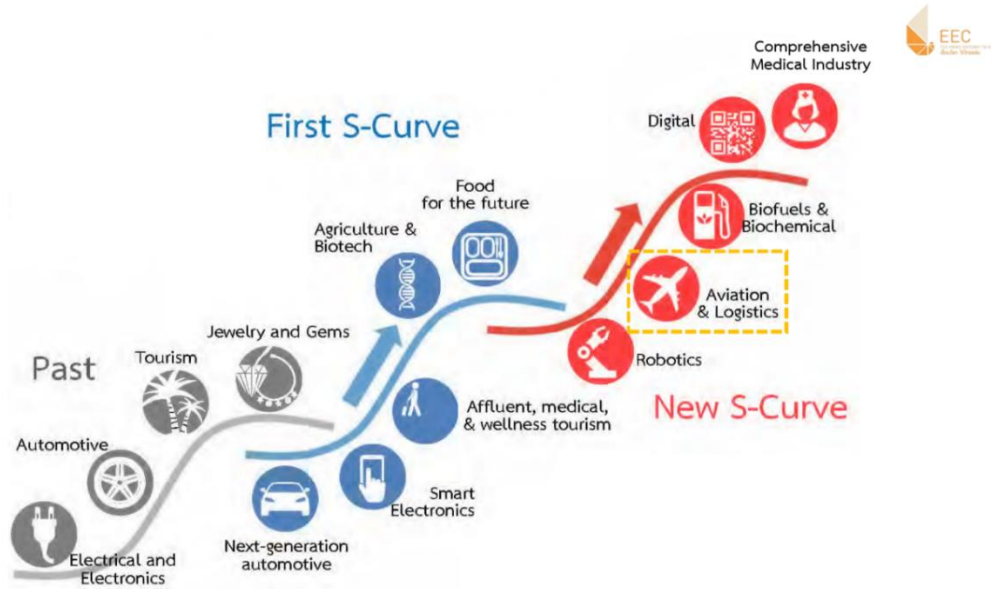
Note: The term “students participating in dual vocational programme” refers to vocational students who receive training in workplaces for no less than 25 per cent of their school time.





## Annex II – The S-Curve

The figure below illustrates the industrial shift in Thailand towards the First S-Curve and the New S-Curve in 10 targeted industries.

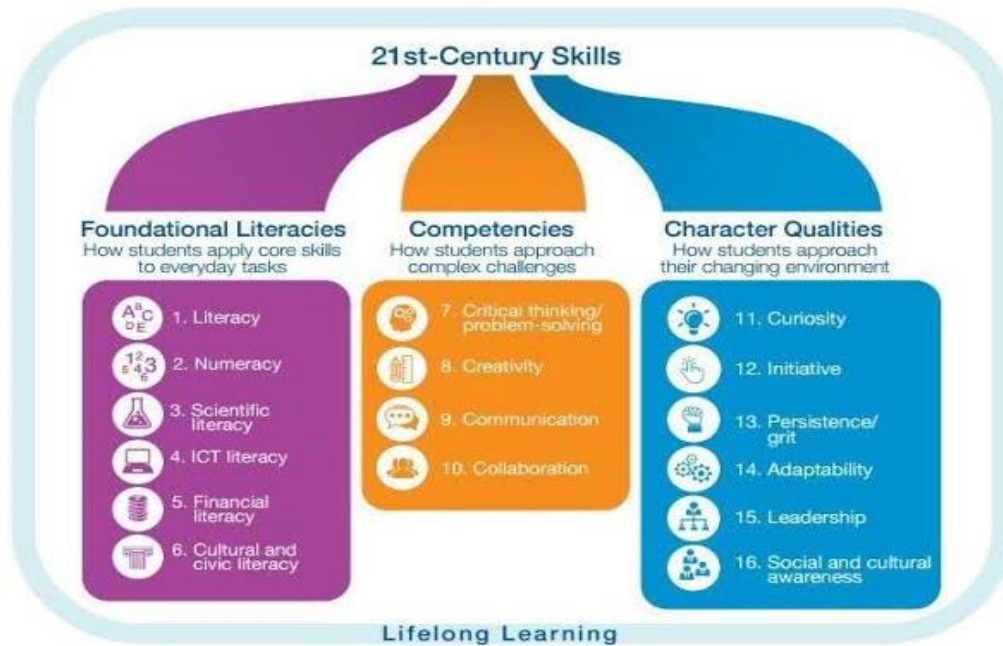


Source: Krungsri Exclusive Economic and Investment Outlook (2018), as cited in Sibunruang, (n.d.)



# Annex III – Twenty-first Century Skills

The infographic below portrays and categorises twenty-first century skills



Note: ICT stands for information and communications technology.

Source: World Economic Forum (2015)

## Annex IV – EEF Projects

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The Equitable Education Fund (EEF) has launched seven key projects in response to its objectives (EEF, 2018), four of which are ongoing. The projects include the following:

**1. The conditional cash transfer to disadvantaged students under OBEC 2018 (duration: November 2019 to April 2019)**

Before the conditional subsidy project launch, OBEC used equality-based funding to support every student. However, the equal funding was ineffective to solve educational inequality as the policy did not target each individual and funding was insufficient for those who required support for travelling, meals and skill training programmes. The conditional cash transfer was therefore introduced to ensure that the funding reached those in need. With the iSEE database, EEF is able to distinguish between students at the individual level. In the academic year 2018, EEF successfully transferred conditional cash subsidies in the amount of 1,600 baht per person per year to 510,040 special poor students in 26,557 institutions under OBEC. With the collaboration between EEF and OBEC, over 1.7 million disadvantaged students are registered in the EEF's database for further precise assistance.

**2. The Early Childhood Development Demonstration Institute Project for Educational Equality Promotion (duration: March 2018 to February 2022)**

The benefit-to-cost ratio of human capital development is significantly higher during the 0–5 years age bracket. Therefore, more resources should be allocated during the early childhood phase, which would also align with the target of reducing social and economic inequality in the long-run. The EEF has therefore developed a database system related to pre-school children to promote the study, research and development of knowledge to develop human resources and reduce inequality in education. It has also created on-site training centres in ten provinces (initially) with the aim of raising the quality of poorer childhood development centres, as well as conducting research to develop future policies for early childhood institutes and teacher development.

**3. The Educational Opportunities for Students in Remote Areas to be the New Generation of Teachers to improve the Quality of the Community School (duration: October 2018 to September 2019)**

Currently, over 2,000 remote-schools in rural areas lack a sufficient number of teachers, especially at primary education level. This is mainly because of the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the distribution, production and development of teachers. Addressing this problem, the EEF has offered 300 scholarships annually for the top twenty-percentile of poorest students who have a good educational record and show enthusiasm for teaching to study a bachelor's degree in education, with the goal of providing teachers in 2,000 remote schools within ten years.

**4. The School Quality Improvement Project (duration: March 2019 to September 2020)**

According to Hattie's Visible Learning,<sup>44</sup> the top six factors that affect the quality of learning are as follows: 1) Teacher acknowledgement of each student's potential; 2) Collaboration of teachers and school personnel (whole school approach); 3) Student participation in their own evaluation; 4) Learning according to developmental level, rather than age; 5) Teaching that aims to change the thinking process; and 6) Supervision of each individual student. The EEF focuses on factor number two

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<sup>44</sup> Hattie, J. (2009) 'Visible Learning: a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement' (as cited in the EEF *Annual Report 2018*).

and five and has conducted research and prepared tools that are important for the development of teachers and schools, such as creating a quality mentors guide and selecting 280 schools to participate in a demonstration project. Currently, the project is progressing on monitoring and evaluation, which will then produce a framework for further action on equality education improvement through the whole-school approach when the project is finalised.

#### **5. Vocational Innovation Scholarship Programme (duration: October 2018 to present)**

One of the EEF's core mission is to support poor youth to be able to continue their education. The EEF has, therefore, invented a learning method that also aligns with the Thai economic situation, which is to support high potential students to continue studying in vocational education. In 2019, the EEF provided 2,500 free vocational scholarships to disadvantaged students with either a special skill or strong education background in ten targeted industries known as the S-curve (see Annex II).

#### **6. The Pilot Skills Development System Project for Underprivileged Labour (duration: April 2018 to March 2019)**

Thailand relies heavily on unskilled labours, while the employment of skilled labours accounts for 14 per cent of the total labour force. This situation will be worsened when technological disruption leads to the replacement of most physical and unskilled labours by automation. In response, the EEF has developed skill development centres initially in 50 areas, focusing on young people above 15 years old in the labour force who have attained secondary education or lower and receive an income of less than 6,500 baht per month. The project centres on strengthening skills that will be beneficial to a specific community and serve local demand by using evidence from studies of the particular community's potential and its current supply chain. Besides skill development, the project also aims to develop entrepreneurs to serve the community in the long-term.

#### **7. The Area-based Education Management Programme (duration: March 2019 to December 2020)**

Education inequality is one of the key challenges facing Thailand's education reform efforts. Even though a huge amount of budget is allocated for 40,000 Child Development Centres, this is not effective. Therefore, the EEF has introduced the Area-based Education Management Programme to tackle the inequality problem in sustainable ways. For example, dealing with inequality by area instead of countrywide has proven to be less complicated and problematic (area-based education has therefore been founded in many provinces in order to solve education inequality). This decentralisation has also allowed each department and unit to have the flexibility to manage the issue according to the context of each unique area. The EEF plans to expand this project into 10 to 15 provinces, with a specific focus on the participation of every key member in each province in the development of the information system database, its application, and the establishment of measures to improve the quality of education.



## Appendix A – Research Structure

Chapter	Objectives	Research Questions
Chapter 1: Introduction	Objective 1: To develop an understanding of the situation of employment, including an overview of current market trends and skills in demand by employers in the public and private sector both currently and in the future.	Q1: What do future job opportunities for young people in Thailand look like?  Q9: What are the main challenges for Thailand regarding paths to employability for young people today and in the future?
Chapter 2: The Situation of Youth Employment	Objective 1: To develop an understanding of the situation of youth employment, including an overview of current market trends and skills in demand by employers in the public and private sector both currently and in the future.	Q1: What do future job opportunities for young people in Thailand look like?  Q3: What skills are needed for young people to become successful entrepreneurs?
Chapter 3: An Overview of Thailand Institutional Framework in Youth Employability	Objective 1: To develop an understanding of the situation of youth employment, including an overview of current market trends and skills in demand by employers in the public and private sector both currently and in the future.  Objective 4: To identify opportunities for partnerships between the private and public sectors that could foster twenty-first century skill development among young people and create paths to employability.	Q4: What education and training programmes, including internships and on-the-job training, mentorships and scholarships are currently offered in Thailand by the public and private sector? What are the gaps?  Q7: What are the policies and programmes (public and private) that support re-skilling and on the job training, as well as and re-training for those who lose their jobs?  Q10: What career guidance system is in place at secondary education and to what extent is it effectively guided by an understanding of labour market demands?
Chapter 4: Key Challenges for Youth Employability	Objective 2: To understand the main challenges that young people face when looking for employment and the opportunities that are on offer to them in terms of skills-building.	Q1: What do future job opportunities for young people in Thailand look like?  Q2: What mismatch is there between the skills that young people have to offer when finishing their education/training (academic and technical/vocational) and the skills needed by employers?  Q5: What are young people’s needs for additional training/skills-building?

Chapter	Objectives	Research Questions
		<p>Q9: What are the main challenges for Thailand regarding paths to employability for young people today and in the future?</p> <p>Q11: Are there factors other than curricula (teacher capacity and pedagogy approaches, assessment systems, practical learning activities) which contribute to the competency/skills deficits identified by the research?</p>
Chapter 5: The NEET Group (Not in Employment, Education, and Training)	Objective 3: To understand who are young people that are not in employment, education or training (NEET group) and why?	<p>Q5: What are young people’s needs for additional training/skills-building?</p> <p>Q6: Who are the young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) and why are they not in employment, education or training? Why are they not actively looking for a job?</p>
Chapter 6: Key Players in Youth Skill Development	Objective 4: To identify opportunities for partnerships between the private and public sectors that could foster twenty-first century skill development among young people and create paths to employability.	<p>Q4: What education and training programmes, including internships and on-the-job training, mentorships and scholarships are currently offered in Thailand by the public and private sector? What are the gaps?</p> <p>Q7: What are the policies and programmes (public and private) that support re-skilling and on the job training, as well as and re-training for those who lose their jobs?</p> <p>Q8: Who are the key players - both government and private sector - involved in leveraging youth employability in Thailand?</p> <p>Q10: What career guidance system is in place at secondary education and to what extent is it effectively guided by an understanding of labour market demands?</p> <p>Q11: Are there factors other than curricula (teacher capacity and pedagogy approaches, assessment systems, practical learning activities) which contribute to the competency/skills deficits identified by the research?</p>



<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
Chapter 7: The Importance of Statistical Data	Objective 5: To identify gaps in current data and information on youth employment and employability that hinder decision making.	Q6: Who are the young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and why are they not in employment, education or training? Why are they not actively looking for a job? (covering that the NEET data is hard to collect and analyse)
Chapter 8: Conclusion and Recommendations	Objective 4: To identify opportunities for partnerships between the private and public sectors that could foster twenty-first century skill development among youth and create paths to employability.  Objective 5: To identify gaps in current data and information on youth employment and employability that hinder decision making.	Q12: What role could UNICEF play to support young people to become the labour force that Thailand needs over the coming decades? How can young people become skilled employees and innovative entrepreneurs that drive the economy of the country within Thailand's vision of becoming a high-income country by 2037 despite a shrinking labour force and an increasing ageing population?



## **Appendix B – List of related entities who participated in the focus group discussion on the topic of “Youth Pathways to Employability” held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

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The focus group gathered 31 persons from 13 related fields who are identified as key players and are keen to develop youth employability. This is the list of participating entities:

- A-Chieve
- Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, Ministry of Justice
- Department of Children and Youth, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
- Equitable Education Fund
- Friends International Thailand
- International Institute for Trade and Development
- National Council for Child and Youth Development under Royal Patronage of HRH Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn
- Office of Vocational Education Commission, Ministry of Education
- Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education
- Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education, Ministry of Education
- The Federation of Thai Industries
- Thailand Development Research Institute
- UNICEF Thailand



## **Appendix C – List of related entities who participated in the Youth Employability Development Forum held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

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The forum gathered 68 persons from 33 related fields who are identified as key players and are keen to develop youth employability. This is the list of participating entities:

- AIESEC
- CareerVisa
- Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, Ministry of Justice
- Department of Children and Youth, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
- Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour
- Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour
- Equitable Education Fund
- Edvisory Co.Ltd.
- EdWING Education
- Friends International Thailand
- International Institute for Trade and Development
- Kasetsart University
- Kenan Foundation Asia
- Klongtoei Bangkok Vocational Training School
- Mechai Pattana School
- National Council for Child and Youth Development under Royal Patronage of HRH Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn
- National Innovation Agency, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation
- National Science and Technology Development Agency, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation
- National Statistical Office, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society
- National Human Rights Commission of Thailand
- Office of Vocational Education Commission, Ministry of Education
- Office of the Private Education Commission, Ministry of Education
- Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education
- Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education
- Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education, Ministry of Education
- Office of Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education
- Pranda Group PLC
- Raks Thai Foundation
- Social Development Association
- Thailand Professional Qualification Institute
- Thailand Development Research Institute
- The Asia Foundation
- UNICEF Thailand and UNICEF East Asia Pacific Regional office
- ILO Country office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR



## The Research Team

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- |   |                            |
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