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AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THAILAND

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The educational system of Thailand, like that of most nations, serves many purposes and satisfies many needs. The very diversity of its multiple roles gives one an appreciation of both the immense size of its task and the crucial importance of it.

Part of the complexity of its functions springs from the fact that different people have different expectations of the educational system. The farmer in the northeast may send his son to school with the hope he will become the first in the family to learn to read and write. The shop owner in the northern city of Chiangmai (capital from 900 to 1300 A.D.) wants his son to attend school and learn a trade. The rice farmer in central Thailand may send his son to school to improve his chances of getting employment in the nearby capital city of Bangkok during the off season when he is not needed in the fields. The Muslim father in the south sends his son to the Mosque to learn to read the Holy Koran. The Chinese merchant has faith in education and wants his son to progress as far as possible in acquiring a general education while he learns a trade as an apprentice in the father's or friend's business. The civil servant urges his son to get as much education as possible because he knows the boy's future salary as a government employee is based on the highest grade completed. Thus one realizes the many individual expectations posed for the Thai educational system.

Education is an instrument of the state to educate citizens to carry on its values and traditions, to extend its economic development through agriculture, commerce, industry, health and research and, as stated in the 1960 National Act of Education, to develop "moral and cultured citizens, with discipline and responsibility, with good health, mental and physical, and with a democratic outlook Education shall be carried out to serve the needs of the individual as well as those of society, in harmony with the economic and political system of the country."

The educational system is divided into four levels: primary, elementary, secondary and higher education. Elementary education has been divided into two parts—four years lower grades and three years upper grades. With the extension of compulsory education to seven grades, this division is being abandoned. Secondary education is divided into two three-year segments, with the last year regarded as university preparatory. The secondary level is divided also into the academic and vocational streams. Students leave the system in large numbers at selected points, generally based on their ranking on national examinations at those points. In 1961, enrollment was:

Grades	1-4	83.6% of total school population
	5-7	8.4%
	8-10	5.7%
	11-13	1.5%
University		0.8%

Stated differently, of 1,000 students entering the first grade, 696 completed grade 4, but only 149 entered grade 5, and only 31 of this group continued through grade 12. About seventy-five percent of the students are in the academic area, fifteen percent in the vocational, five percent in teacher training and five percent in higher education. Student enrollment in 1962-1963 was:

	Grade Level				Teacher Training
	5-6-7	8-9-10	11-12-13	14-15	
Academic	375,413	236,244	34,512	-	18,201
Vocational					
Agriculture	-	1,537	1,244	60	166
Other	398	16,024	28,389	4,761	1,069

Thailand will need many high quality vocational graduates in the future as it becomes industrialized and moves away from its present agrarian state where eighty-five percent of the people are engaged in agriculture. Vocational education does not appear to attract the best qualified students. Vocational training is chosen only after other avenues have been closed. This condition compounds mediocre programs. Teachers are recruited from their own vocational students, and being poorer students than those in the academic area, tend to teach poorly. The poorly trained students have difficulty getting jobs, which, in turn, gives vocational education a poor reputation among other students and prospective employers.

Fortunately the quality of vocational education in Thailand improves as one progresses to the higher levels. At the lowest level (U.S. grade 8-10) there is a noticeable lack of qualified teachers, instructional equipment and poor facilities. At the post-high school level (grades 14-15) the curricula are more fully developed and richer in content. In agriculture, only five hours per week of instruction are given at the lowest level. The amount increases to ten hours per week at the higher level and seventy-five percent of the time at the post-high school level. However, most of the instruction in technical agriculture was academic rather than practical in nature.

Vocational education is expensive, especially at the lower levels, because of small enrollment and narrow teacher-student ratio. Teacher-student ratio was one to six in the lower level agricultural schools, one to nine in trade schools and teacher training schools, and one to eleven in the higher level agricultural schools and post-high school technical agricultural institutes.

The 1962-1963 costs per pupil were:

Elementary school	\$11.90
Secondary school	65.40
Business school	99.50
Technical school	104.00
Trade school	110.75
Teacher training	139.55
Agriculture	272.50

There were 3,277 students enrolled in twenty-one agricultural schools located throughout the Kingdom. Teacher training at U.S. grades 14-15 level was offered at one center to train replacements for twenty-one schools. An in-service one-year program for teachers from primary schools was started in 1963 at another institute. Two schools presented a two-year technical agriculture program at grades 14-15 to train workers for livestock improvement stations, seed propagation stations, the irrigation department, industry, etc. Twelve schools offered instruction at grades 8-10 level but the instruction at this level was being phased out in all schools as they advanced the level of instruction to grades 11-13. Eight schools already were instructing at this higher level. Two schools offered a unique land resettlement program. Graduates from the 10th grade could enroll in these schools for a three-year period. They would receive twenty acres of land, an adequate house built at government expense and a small monthly grant of money the first year. The amount of money decreased the second year and was eliminated the third year. At the end of three years, providing the youth had made satisfactory progress, he received the deed for his land. At two schools short courses of varying lengths were offered farmers regardless of previous educational achievement. Neither coeducation nor the comprehensive school had been developed extensively although there were several girls enrolled in agriculture. The five universities, all located in Bangkok, were under direct control of the Prime Minister and received the largest increases in the educational budget. Expansion is not planned "across the board" but in the sciences, such as medicine, engineering and agriculture.

The availability of qualified instructors is the biggest single factor retarding the improvement of instruction. In 1963, teachers in the 21 agricultural schools had the following training:

Ph.D. degree (in poultry nutrition)*	1
M.S. degree in agriculture*	2
M.S. degree in guidance*	1
M.S. degree in agricultural education*	12
B.S. degree in agriculture**	41
B.S. degree in other subjects**	22
Secondary certificate in agriculture***	99
Secondary certificate in other ***	44
Elementary certificate in agriculture****	95
Elementary certificate in other ****	30
No certificate	82 429

Two of the holders of master's degrees were headmasters and two were assigned to the Ministry of Education so only 11 were available as instructors in the schools.

For a Kingdom so predominantly agricultural, enrollment in that subject was very low. All agricultural schools were operated in connection with school farms. Students lived in dormitories and ate at the school dining room. Little effort was made to supply the kitchen from food grown on the farm. Students attended classes 35 hours per week and worked on the school farm 1½ hours before breakfast in the morning and 2 hours after classes in the afternoon. There was seldom any correlation between classroom instruction and the field work. The classroom instructor had little contact or control over farm operations for field work. All income from the farms was turned over to the Ministry of Education general fund. Thus, there was slight incentive to show large profits.

Attempts have been made to promote student activities such as the F.F.A. The National Secretary of the FFA and the National Executive Secretary visited Thailand in 1961. However, in line with the governmental policy of no student organizations in the schools, it was difficult to promote the acceptance of the idea. An F.F.T. jacket was developed and the F.F.A. manual translated and adapted to Thailand. However, I knew of only one meeting being held in one school at which time the Apprentice Farmer degree was conferred and the Example Farmer (Chapter Star Farmer) and his parents recognized. No student organization was developed at the Teacher

* U.S. obtained

** 5 years beyond grade 13 in Thailand

*** 2 years beyond grade 13

**** 2 years beyond grade 10 (now discontinued)

Training Institute although the headmaster (Ph.D. from Illinois), assistant headmaster (M.S. in guidance from Michigan State) and director of teacher training (M.S. in agricultural education from Oklahoma State) had observed and were familiar with F.F.A. activities in the United States and the Philippine Islands.

Technical assistance has been given to Thailand since 1952. Those people who have been involved are:

A.C. Hale	Arkansas	1953-57	53 months
William Schumate	-	1954-58	53 months
W.A. Bloodworth	Oklahoma	1957-59	24 months
George Reisner	Pennsylvania	1958-61	31 months
Harold Kugler*	Kansas	1959-present	
Everett Cree	Iowa	1959-63	50 months
Chris White	Oklahoma	1959-61	20 months
George Miller	Indiana	1960-present	
Harry Kitts	Minnesota	1961-64	31 months
Ralph Gill*	Montana	1962-present	
Alex Johnson	Florida	1963-4	6 months
James Woodhull	Colorado	1964-present	

* Shared time serving agricultural schools, technical and industrial schools and Maintenance and Supply Organization of Ministry of Education, Division of Vocational Education (MSO).