



## **The Vocational Education System in Thailand and Singapore: A Sociological Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

This article focuses on studying vocational situations in Thailand and comparing vocational education systems between Thailand and Singapore. This study consisted of interviews with personnel in organizations related to vocational education in Thailand and Singapore. In total 29 people were interviewed. From the study, it was found that the Thai vocational education system was created to be an educational choice for students. However, in this system of education, there are still many issues that arise from the planning and policies in vocational education management; such as the gap in university education, shortage of personnel and budget issues. These problems affect the development of teaching styles and production of personnel that meet the needs of the changing labor market as technological advances. Also, a major drawback to the system is that it is based on the negative attitude of society towards vocational education. These negative attitudes have an effect on school decisions and social opportunities. When comparing the vocational system with Singapore 4 issues emerged 1) The vocational education management system, 2) Guidelines for vocational education development, 3) Vocational education curriculum and 4) Vocational education and teaching styles. These results reflect the success cases of the management and cooperation of schools and industry which can produce skilled personnel and also meets the needs of the labor market. This success has led to a change in society's attitude towards vocational education and resulted in an educational system that has gained popularity in Singapore.

### **Keywords**

Vocational Education, Thailand, Singapore

## **Introduction**

Social changes in technology affect not only countries all around the world but the lives of people. These changes result in countries trying to adapt in order to compete in the global market effectively. Thailand 4.0 policy aims to make developing countries become developed countries. In this regard, the government changed Thailand into an industrial country which is driven by technology and innovation to improve the quality of life of people in society (Secretariat of the Prime Minister and Government House, 2017). Moreover, the government has created the EEC project or the Eastern Seaboard Development Project, which is a special economic zone created to increase new industrial capacity driven by advanced innovation. These lead to stimulating investment and the country's economy, such as the automotive industry of the future, the aviation and logistics industry, the tourism industry, and the agriculture and biotechnology industry (Jaroonpipitkun, 2019). These national development plans affect the economy, society and the lives of people.

The national development plan to become an advanced industrial country requires human resources (i.e., workers) with knowledge and skills. Those who are in line with changes in industry, technology and innovation in order to be able to control and work with modern and rapidly changing technology and innovation. On the other hand, the employment situation in Thailand is still facing a shortage of skilled labor that meets the needs of the industrial sector (Jaroonpipitkun, 2019). Therefore, educational institutions need to adjust their curriculum and teaching resources to be able to create potential personnel with skills and expertise to make changes in business and industry and become a force in driving the economy and increasing employment rates. The vocational education system is one of the educational options which may play an important role in the process of creating professional human resources. They are skilled in the workplace through practical implementation and being an important middle level labor in the industrial sector. For this reason, it is a challenge for vocational schools to adjust to the changing social situation.

Sociology of education explains that educational institutions are one of the social institutions that play an important role in transforming humans into a part of society by transferring values. Social norms and expectations are passed down to students through education. In addition, educational institutions are responsible for creating knowledge, skills, and capabilities to enable them to be part of society and may lead to social mobility (Persell, 2005; Sadovnik, 2004 & 2011). On the other side, the function of the school resulting in the creation of various forms of costs, both economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital to individuals that affect social opportunities. Creating social spaces, occupations, and different economic returns leads to the reproduction of social classes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). For this reason, many families value education and are willing to invest in education for their children. Although education plays an important role in refining

and creating members of a knowledgeable society, each type of education system is not given the same social value.

Vocational education is one of the educational institutions that play an important role in creating and producing skilled and professional workforce that are needed by various industries. It is an option for students with specific interests. On the other hand, considering the proportion of vocational students, it is found that the decisions of students after completing secondary education are more likely to continue their studies in secondary education than vocational education. (The Secretariat of the Council of Education Ministry of Education, 2017). Wanting a college degree seems like the most important factor that leads to the decision not to choose to study in vocational education which may affect social opportunities and economic formation. These are reflected in the qualifications of job applicants must have a bachelor's degree in order to receive a higher compensation. In addition, there is a negative image of vocational education and vocational students that has been embedded in the ideas of people in society for a long time. For example, there is a belief that students who have bad grades, are unruly, or are involved in gangs are more like to choose to be in vocational education. For these reasons, students are more likely to choose to study in secondary education than in the vocational education system (Chupradit & Baron-Gutty, 2009; Pimpa, 2007).

Social and industrial changes require a large number of skilled workers to keep up with technological advances. Vocational students will play an important role as middle-level laborers to help drive the economy and various industries. The government sector needs to try to attract more students to become interested in vocational education and have the same or greater proportion of the general education and reform Thai vocational education to develop personnel that meet the needs of the industrial sector. For these reasons, in this article, we present the situation of vocational education in Thailand including a comparison of vocational education in Thailand and Singapore. For Singapore, vocational education is considered as a model for the success of vocational education in Asia. This includes a quality education system reflected by the proportion of learners in vocational and ordinary fields is 70 percent (The Secretariat of the Council of Education Ministry of Education, 2017). So, the increasing number of vocational students in Singapore may reflect the good guidelines for the development of vocational education systems in countries which can produce skills to be a manpower in national development (Office of Vocational Education Commission, 2017).

## **Research methodology**

This study focuses on the situation of vocational education in Thailand and compares vocational education between Thailand and Singapore by using reliable and relevant documents and research. Documentary research as well as twenty-six interviews were conducted in order to obtain information about development, goals, policies, educational systems, curriculum and teaching in Thailand and Singapore including social perspectives on vocational education in Thailand and Singapore. The group of interviews can be divided into 2 groups: the first group included vocational education-related agencies in Thailand; 1. The government sector related to vocational education in Thailand is the Vocational Education Commission. 2. Vocational institutions under the supervision of the Vocational Education Commission Ministry of Education, such as Min Buri Technical College Pongsawat Technology College Sattahip Technical College and Northeastern Technology College, Udon Thani. 3. Establishments in industrial sectors such as the Federation of Thai Industries PTT Company Limited Charoen Pokphand Group and Thai Cement Company Limited and 4. Students and parents in vocational education. The second group included vocational-related agencies in Singapore, namely the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) and Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NAP). Data from documentary research and interviews with relevant agencies in Thailand and Singapore using analysis and comparison of situations and guidelines for vocational education in Thailand through the framework of educational sociology indicate a relationship between the educational management system and pupil. The article focuses on the current vocational situation in Thailand and also compares the vocational education systems in Thailand and Singapore. It focused on 4 points: 1) Vocational education management system, 2) Guidelines for vocational education development, 3) Vocational education curriculum and 4) Vocational education and teaching styles of the vocational education system in Thailand and Singapore and the effect of vocational education on job opportunities and social status.

## **The current Vocational Situation in Thailand**

If considering education as a social institution, it is associated and linked to public and private policy, economy and culture. Educational processes affect the way of thinking of living in a social space and the opportunities in people's life Education is believed to be an important condition that leads to social equality (Sadovnik, 2011). Therefore, the vocational education management system is not independent. On the other hand, it will be in line with the educational policy of the government, planning, management structure, rules, budgets, personnel recruitment, and others. The vocational education design guidelines are also related to the economic conditions or the labor market needs.

The development plan of Thailand to enter advanced industrial countries is driven by technology and innovation in order to plan education systems that are in line with national development guidelines. According to the "Vocational Education Development Plan 2017-2036," there is a target of the vocational education system that focuses on the production and development of professional manpower, both at the skill level (vocational level), the technical level (vocational certificate) and technology level (Bachelor of Technology) that is consistent with the needs of the labor market. The core values of vocational education instill professionalism in which students must have professional knowledge and skills. They should not only be able to expert in their careers, but also focus on morality for their good behavior. Moreover, they should consider and act for their own benefit and society. In terms of quality, students in the vocational education system must have skills and abilities as per the national vocational education standards. Also, they should be able to manage and work with others.

To help achieve their stated goals, the Vocational Education Commission has established a vocational education strategy. For example, the establish and development of vocational workforce lead to the country's competitiveness. There is also an operational plan to create a database for the demand for vocational education in the labor market and national development. Promoting the image and values of vocational learners is another strategy being employed to increase the number of learners in proportion to the needs of the labor market. Moreover, the commission has pledged to promote interdisciplinary integrated learning for the development of thinking processes and innovation. It also includes the level of English skills, in order to provide vocational workforce with excellent expertise in a specialization. Therefore, the commission is promoting a qualification system that is a professional standard according to Office of Vocational Education Commission. Development of professional curriculum standards in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is also important. This includes adjusting the vocational education system to be flexible and allowing it to be linked to other education systems. These are some good ways to improve the vocational education system. In addition, there is the professional promotion and development of teachers and personnel in vocational education. Another strategy is using technology and innovation in the development of teachers and personnel. This includes the provision of modern media, equipment and learning resources for personnel to develop and expand their knowledge to keep up with technological and social changes (Office of Vocational Education Commission, 2017). The education strategy is a vital key to achieve the goals that enable vocational students to be developed into a "nation-building skill person" (Office of Vocational Education Commission, 2017).

The Vocational Education Commission establishes vocational education strategies to meet their goals. The production and development of a vocational workforce to create the country's competitiveness is one of these strategies. Also, operational planning is made

by creating a database for vocational manpower needs of the labor market and national development. Promoting the image and values of vocational students to increase the number of learners to be in line with the needs of the labor market is also a good way. And promoting interdisciplinary integrated learning for the development of thinking processes and innovation is a good strategy as well. Moreover, upgrading English skills can provide vocational manpower with excellent expertise. Therefore, promoting a qualification of a professional standard system could develop the standard of vocational curriculum according to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). This includes adjusting the vocational education system to make it flexible and linking other educational systems. In addition, there is promotion and development of teachers and vocational education personnel to have the potential through the use of teachers for training in the workplace. The use of technology and innovation would help to develop teachers and personnel. Including the provision of modern media, equipment and learning resources for personnel will develop and expand knowledge to keep up with technological and social changes (Office of Vocational Education Commission, 2017) as well.

The vocational education policy plan seeks to focus on creating and promoting vocational human resources for being able to meet the labor market and national development. It has been brought to the concrete operation of each vocational school in Thailand, both public and private. However, from interviews with executives and personnel of vocational institutions, both public and private, it has been reflected the problems and obstacles of the vocational policy. There are both internal management issues within each organization as well as social, and cultural issues.

#### 1. Problems in vocational education policy

The structural issues of vocational education relate to the vocational policy. In this study, I would like to reflect on only some issues. The first issue is the boundary of the vocational education in accordance with the vocational development plan 2017-2036, resulting in a change in the structure of vocational education management. Education Reform in the year 2008, from the original education administration, is separated to be 1 basic education, 1 vocational unit, 1 higher education, 1 education council and 1 permanent office. The management of education that is separated makes a gap between schools. It becomes a problem of enrollment in higher education of vocational students. There is no policy to support or amend the transfer of students between educational institutions or education systems. Some institutions do not accept vocational students to further their technological knowledge at higher education levels. This is one of the reasons that affect enrollment decisions and the decreasing number of vocational students.

The second issue is the problem of recruitment criteria for teacher positions. Due to the qualifications of teachers in vocational education in accordance with the requirements of the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) and the Office of Higher Education Commission (OCSC) teachers must have a professional certificate. The certificate is a limitation for people with expertise and various specializations from the establishment even they have knowledge, skills and potential, they cannot be placed as teachers in educational institutions because they don't have the certificate. While teachers who have the certificate have less working experience in industrial sector that causes they do not develop their skills and knowledges for technological change. Because most teachers have textbook knowledge but have never practiced or worked in that area. Their textbook knowledge may not be up-to-date. For this reason, many vocational schools face a shortage of personnel and under-structure personnel. In addition, it also affects the quality of teaching and curriculum. Although the institute knows the needs of the labor market, there is no personnel that can transfer knowledge or arrange a course that meets student needs. Many vocational institutions have to solve such problems by collaborating with both domestic and international establishments in order for students to go to study and practice in workplaces with specialized expertise and modern knowledge and technology.

Although the government recognizes the importance of vocational education and tries to promote and push this education system by issuing various policies and strategies, some of these educational policies cause problems and affect the internal management of each school. The school must solve these problems themselves if they are to survive. In addition, education management under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission of the Ministry of Education makes vocational education both public and private without independence. Therefore, the vocational education is powerless to manage their education system by themselves in dealing with social change situations.

## **2. Problems of internal school management**

The management problems within the organization of each vocational school may be different. We will discuss the issues facing many vocational schools. Some of the problems found in this study were a consequence of the vocational education policy of the Office of Vocational Education. The first problem was the budget which can be divided into 2 issues. The first issue is the disbursement of the budget for the purchase of teaching and learning media. Moreover, a government-run system is one of the problems which takes a large amount of time to request the budget approval which is not related to technological advances. For example, a school may make a budget request for technology. Because the request may take several months or years to be approved, it is possible that when it is approved the technology proposed in the budget is out of date. These delayed budget approvals mean that the school must constantly struggle to stay up to date with their

technology. The limited and delayed budget causes some institutions still use educational tools as a system that users have to manually control (manual system). While, the industrial sector uses computer systems as computer system commands. Because of the differences in technology, vocational students will not be able to apply the knowledge they gained in school to work in the industrial sector. Thus, vocational institutions need to ask for cooperation with both domestic and international enterprises and institutions in order for students to learn and practice using high-tech tools which the industry actually uses in the production process.

The second issue is the competition for budget to support the number of students between the high school education system and vocational education, as well as between public and private vocational education institutions. Attempting to maintain the number of students in the high school education system of some schools causes blocking the vocational education institutions to guide the study and curriculum for students in junior high school. In fact, many vocational schools recommend providing vocational education guidance to high school students they are best suited for that path. It is also important that learners become aware of their interests and potential in order for schools to match them with their interests. With a large number of students, the school will receive a large amount of budget to support, causing competition between schools in public and private vocational education. In addition, for public vocational education, students do not have to pay tuition fees, while private vocational students do have to pay some fees. For this reason, the number of students who decide to go to the public vocational school are more than the teacher rate that affects the quality of teaching. On the other hand, a small number of students in private vocational education also affect the institution's survival.

From the above, it can be seen that an important role of every school is to teach critical thinking. For the vocational education system, it is their role is to teach students to apply theoretical knowledge to practice through real work. But there are some obstacles arising from the policy and regulations of the Vocational Education Commission which affect the management within the school. For example, inadequate budgets for modern equipment purchases and delayed budget approvals. Specifying qualifications for recruiting and hiring teachers is another factor that leads to insufficient human resources. For these reasons, many vocational schools need to solve these problems by changing. Modify the teaching and learning style by using foreign establishments and educational institutions to help with bilateral curriculum development is one solution. Vocational schools could seek cooperation from foreign enterprises and institutions in Germany, China and Austria. Students should also not only learn from textbooks but also learn and practice skills through real work under the supervision of experts. Creating professional opportunities with the help from more advanced countries would also help to improve the quality of vocational education.



In addition to carrying out educational duties, vocational institutions should not abandon or neglect the social role in refining and instilling values, norms, social expectations and roles of citizens to students. Students are expected to grow up to be good citizens who live together in society and volunteer using their knowledge and ability to help others. Students should learn to share with others, help society, and benefit the public. However, such positive images may not appear much or be widely perceived by people in society. Instead, vocational students often have the misfortune of having a variety of negative stereotypes thrown at them.

### 3. Social and Cultural Issues

Social and cultural issues create some meanings and values that affect the provision of negative values and negative overall images to the vocational education system. These images affect the decision of students and parents to choose to be in the vocational education system. From the interviews of the vocational institutions and related agencies, from the point of view of the school administrators and related agencies, there are 2 main problems in society and culture: The first issue is the value placed on receiving a bachelor's degree. In Thai society, parents' expect their children to finish high school and enroll in a university. This value is not only fixed in the minds of parents, but also specifies the personnel qualifications of various establishments. Also, people in society expect that graduating with a bachelor's degree will provide better career opportunities than a vocational degree. This is one of the main factors that pushes people to decide not to attend vocational education.

In addition, there is a negative image of vocational students portrayed through various media channels that stereotypes them as violent, poor, and unsuccessful. While this may be true for some students, news reports that center on violence and vocational students further perpetuate these stereotypes. This picture is reproduced and embedded throughout society. This makes it harder for this group of students to receive social acceptance compared to other groups of students. Data from interviews with executives, personnel of vocational schools, and related departments support that these stereotypes still exist. This is despite many students at vocational schools behaving appropriately and only a minority causing trouble. In fact, many vocational students are awarded for their innovative ideas and volunteerism. This is, however, not frequently reported by the media.

From the above, we can see that many problems and obstacles of the vocational education system relate to government and economic policies. These policies directly impact organization management of vocational schools, whether through the budget or curriculum. Also, social and cultural perspectives are affected. All of these have an impact on enrollment decisions and perspectives on the vocational system. It reflects both directly and indirectly to society, including the social structure level and relates to the lives of people in society.

In addition, social and cultural conditions are all factors that play a role in the social performance of vocational education.

In Thai society the type of educational system one pursues impacts their social opportunities. Due to the unequal value and importance of the education system between the high school education system and vocational education, the negative imagery that affects children in the professional system (such as being unruly, violent, not intending to study) is implanted in people's thoughts and perceptions about vocational education. It makes them less likely to be accepted socially compared to students studying in another r system. There are many conditions for students who enter the vocational education system such as the family's economic status, the desire to study in their area of interest, and to escape from the secondary education system.

However, what the vocational students must face is similar to the impact of social values. Society values academic success and a degree which is used as a passport for employment. In addition, some vocational students are denied jobs because they do not have a college degree. Although some talented students are hired after finishing vocational school, they may not be as likely to receive a promotion because they don't have a diploma. In addition, the income of students who have completed some vocational education around the same amount as minimum wage. Therefore, solving the problems of vocational education in Thailand may need to include adjusting the social structure of management and social values towards the education system.

### **Comparison of vocational education systems in Thailand and Singapore**

Thailand and Singapore have a similar educational goal: to create an equal education system for everyone. Vocational education is an educational option that focuses on learners, and allows them to acquire professional knowledge and skills to be used in their careers and to earn income during their studies. But Thailand and Singapore have different ways of creating equality in education and management. For Thailand, the size of the area is large when compared to Singapore, so the method of creating equality of education uses the distribution of education to different areas. While Singapore provides a method of controlling the curriculum and standards of educational content throughout the country. Moreover, vocational education in Singapore has collapsed all vocational schools around the country into only 3 schools. From the interviews conducted in this study, we divided the comparison of vocational education systems into 4 issues: 1) Vocational education management system, 2) Guidelines for vocational education development, 3) Vocational education curriculum, and 4) Vocational education and teaching styles. This was done in order to indicate the differentiation of the vocational education system in Thailand and Singapore.

1. The vocational education management system in Thailand and Singapore

Research shows that both countries have different educational planning systems. The first difference is the way students enter the vocational education system in both countries. In Thailand, students are required to have completed secondary education in order to be enrolled in vocational education. The students will still not receive knowledge about vocational education from their school because the secondary education and vocational education systems have a separate management system. Both systems are under different administrative offices under the Ministry of Education. The education system in secondary education is under the supervision of the Office of Basic Education. Vocational education is under the supervision of the Office of Vocational Education Commission which has the power to manage educational policy plans and design teaching and learning courses. This separation of management creates boundaries in the decisions of students who do not have enough knowledge to decide which educational system would meet their needs and interests.

In Singapore, vocational education is also under the supervision of the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) which is also under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Because of this structure, students will get to know and learn about vocational education from the secondary level. During secondary education, students are able to change from the secondary system to the vocational system. Students learn a variety of subjects in order to find their interests and aptitudes before deciding to study in different courses. In addition, the management system is flexible and allows students to modify their curriculum to suit their needs and abilities. Considering that, it can be seen that vocational education in Singapore is an option for students who find their interests after pursuing specialized learning programs as a part of their study, along with general foundation courses that focus on developing their own specialization (Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board, 2018).

The second interesting issue is enrollment to higher education in Thai society. After the educational reform in 2008, a separated educational management lead to gaps between schools and university. It caused problems of enrollment in vocational schools and being unable to expand on specific knowledge in university education. When students begin working they do not want to quit their jobs and return to school because they don't want to lose their income. Thus, the rate of return to study for higher education is relatively low. Things are different in Singapore. Due to Singapore's education system, courses are open for vocational students to study at the university level. The system allows students to have the opportunity to study and apply what they learn to their careers. In addition, the government also encourages learners and those who already working to enter short-term courses to advance their careers. The government provides financial support and through doing so, encourages lifelong learning. For this reason, the rate of return to higher education in

Singapore is approximately 40 percent of all citizens. Even if a student has graduated and become employed, they can still return to school for short-term courses in order to develop themselves and further their knowledge in a specific field.

The third issue is the social perspective on vocational education. This is an issue that needs to be addressed because the attitudes of people in society influence the decisions people make to study in vocational education and affect employment opportunities. Looking at this point, the differences in vocational education in Thailand and Singapore are very significant. Going back about 20 years ago, the image of vocational education in Thailand and Singapore was not very different. Vocational education was the choice of people with economic and social limitations. A group of students who were not very good at school would be sent to vocational school. The students, however, were valued as second-class citizens and not accepted by society. But now the overall picture of vocational students in Thailand and Singapore is clearly different. Thai society gives importance to a degree. A degree is like a passport to careers and announces academic success. Whoever cannot continue their study in high school, they will go to vocational school (Chu et al, 2018). Society judges this group of students as unruly and radical. These images affect how vocational students view themselves. They are not accepted by both society and themselves. In Singapore things are different because vocational schools have now become accepted within society. This change required a lot of time and educational reform. The government spent a lot of money to develop the curriculum, increase the expertise of instructors, and purchase educational equipment. This reform relied on 3 sectors: universities, domestic and foreign companies, and industrial sectors. All sectors worked together to develop vocational education and make it both academic and practical. It aimed to make people in society change their negative attitude towards vocational education into a positive image. Vocational recognition is currently part of the success of graduates who have knowledge, skills, careers, high incomes, and are needed in the labor market. Being a force in national development are evident in order to develop optimistic perspective on vocational education. Then, parents and people in the society, who have grown through the successful process of vocational system, see through the future and their own success. This results in a new attitude and a change in the overall view towards vocational education as an educational option.

From the above, it can be seen that the social contexts of Thailand and Singapore have different vocational management systems. However, both aim to produce a knowledgeable, skillful, and competent workforce that can work in the industrial sectors and assist with national development. However, different management and social perspectives value different learning styles affect the opportunities for people to gain knowledge and develop people's skills. This is especially true in Thailand where there is a limited access to higher education. This results in further class division between high school students and

vocational students that have an effect on the opportunity to expand knowledge, gain income, and get career progression. Although under a decentralized management system each department manages education in each academic system whether in vocational school or university. In the end, each part must act in a coherent manner in order for educational institutions to fulfill their specific duties in creating a knowledgeable, capable, and moral society.

## 2. Guidelines for vocational education development between Thailand and Singapore.

The government plan for educational policy does not only affect the educational management system, but also leads to the development and promotion of vocational students to have skills, qualifications, and abilities which meet the needs of the labor market. In Thailand and Singapore, there are different directions for developing students. This is partly due to the way vocational education is accepted differently in each country. Thailand has established various projects through cooperation with the establishment and the private sector to create vocational education students with the knowledge, ability and skills which are needed by the labor market. There is a project called “3-having” which consists of having a job, having an income, and having qualifications. The Department of Employment encourages vocational students and other people to have a job alongside their education

In summary, learning is not just about studying in schools, but also spending some time studying in the workplace in order to learn through practical actions. Students will receive an allowance not less than half of the minimum wage while working in the school. Including the project to establish a vocational education development center (TVET Hub), this project focuses on developing professional personnel to meet the needs of businesses and various industries. This center is made up of many collaborations, such as the Office of the National Science Technology and Innovation Policy Office (STI), the Office of Vocational Education Commission (OECD), Department of Skill Development (OPC) and the private sector. They create a collaborative network that creates activities to promote and develop people. However, the employment of vocational students in Thailand is still experiencing problems. The labor law in the country states that only people 18-years-old and over can work while vocational students are aged 15 or older. In addition, recruitment applicants must pass military service or have exempt documents.

On the other hand, the ways Singapore develops learners are encouraging and motivate students to learn and develop their potential. The government provides financial support to businesses and schools. Moreover, the government provides a budget to the private business sector to organize training and skills training activities for workers in order for them to upgrade their ability. For educational institutions, the government provides a budget and requests cooperation with the business sector in arranging training courses to create knowledge, experience, and develop skills among students. For example, the Skills

Future project focuses on lifelong learning. This project creates helps to reduce unemployment. The key principles of the Skills Future project include; 1) the integration of education and training for career advancement, 2) industrial promotion and support for individuals with advancement based on skills, 3) promoting awareness of employers and career development based on skills and expertise, and 4) promoting a lifelong learning culture. In addition, Singapore also places an importance on life skills. The government provides relevant and necessary skills in work and life such as problem-solving skills, creative skills in innovation, and cross-cultural flexibility. These skills are also included in the Skills Future. Considering the guidelines for student development, it can be seen that the projects or activities created in the development of learners are related to different parts of the social institution and the social context of each country. These make the student development guidelines in Thailand and Singapore different.

In Thailand, the student development guidelines are designed to meet the goals of the vocational institute. The vocational institute wants the learner to gain knowledge with professional skills, be able to earn income while studying, and have a job after finishing school. However, vocational education in Thailand may still face problems in creating networks and cooperation with companies to guarantee income and careers for their vocational students. Also, the development of learner with the technological advancements are ready to be part of the economic institutions. Vocational education in Singapore has passed the unemployment and wage problems of vocational students. This makes vocational students focus on the development of knowledge and skills of technological advancement. Moreover, Singapore's vocational educations attend to be changed the learners from the status of technology followers to create new technology. However, vocational education in Thailand and Singapore aims to create and produce knowledgeable and capable people. In addition, the educational institution is a place to develop skills as cultural capital, which students will accumulate in the school for use in their lives and work in the industrial sector. The institute allows the student to occupy a social position and to be a helpful member of society. In addition, the accumulation of cultural capital may allow students to improve their economic and social capital and advance their social class.

### 3. Vocational education curriculum in Thailand and Singapore

The courses offered at vocational institutions in Thailand and Singapore are different in both the number of programs and contents. These differences are partly due to the conditions of the topography and resources. For example, Thailand is a lowland area suitable for agriculture and Singapore has a coastal area. These conditions impact curriculum development. National development in Singapore lead to strategically placing the country's advanced industrial leaders in science and technology. The social context affects the design of curriculums in different ways.

There are 9 curriculums or teaching programs in Thailand. Divided into 68 subject areas, they are as follows: 1. Industrial courses consisting of mechanical and maintenance tools housed within the Department of Printing, Department of Glasses and Lenses Shipbuilding 2. Commercial/Business Administration Programs consisting of Commerce Service Business Programs 3. Fine Arts Programs consisting of Design, Crafts, Leather Industry, Porcelain Imaging technology Jewelry 4. Home Economics courses consists of the Department of Fabric and Apparel, Food and Nutrition Program Home Economics program 5. Agriculture consists of Agricultural Sciences Program, Department of Plant Science, Animal Science, Argo-Industry 6. Fishery course consists of Aquaculture Program Fish Processing Department of Marine Fisher 7. Tourism Industry Program consists of the Hotel and Tourism Program 8. The Textile Industry Program consists of the Textile Technology Program 2) The Textile Chemical Program 3) The Ready-to-Wear Clothing Industry Program and the 9. Program Information and Communication Technology Program consisting of Information Technology Program 2) Department of System Technology Voice. For the curriculum in Singapore, there are 14 programs as follows: 1. Law, 2. Personal Care and Exercise, 3. Education, 4. Tourism, 5. Business and Management, 6. Humanities, 7. Computer Science and IT Science Program, 8. Applied and Pure Sciences/ Applied Sciences, 9. Engineering, 10. Art and Design, 11. Architecture and Construction, 12. Social Sciences and Media, 13. Health and Medicine, and 14. Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine (Education, Institute of Technical, 2017; Institute of Technical Education, 2018).

The programs and branches of vocational education in Singapore, there are more diverse than those in Thailand. The nature of the curriculum in Singapore is similar to the subjects offered at the university level in Thailand. This may be because of vocational education reform in Singapore. The university has a role in designing and planning education. Therefore, the subjects offered in vocational education are consistent with the subjects in the university to make choices and provide opportunities for vocational students. After graduation, students whether may decide to go out to pursue a career or study at an undergraduate level in a university. This helps to reduce the boundaries between vocational and university education. The diversity of course choices may be due to the flexibility in educational management and strong collaboration with the university and entrepreneur. This causes vocational institutions in Singapore to change and launch programs that meet the needs of various industries. This results in students having more opportunities when they graduate.

In addition, the curriculum may be designed to create personnel that contribute to the development of the country. For Thailand, there are less courses to choose than Singapore, but there are quite a variety of vocational skills development for students.

However, what should be considered is whether these disciplines meet the needs of the industrial sector or not. As the production of skilled personnel does not meet the labor market demand, even if they have knowledge and skills, it is still not to create employment in the business sector. The next thing to look at is whether students' knowledge and skills are the most up-to-date. If they are not up-to-date, then the current courses being offered do not meet the needs of the labor market. In order to solve this problem, educational institutions need to organize bilateral courses to work in collaboration with various entrepreneurs. These establishments would bring many benefits, such as exposing students to new curriculum. Moreover, working with these establishments would help schools to become more aware of the needs of the labor market. Through modifying their curriculum, students can learn through practical actions with modern tools to be in line with changes and technological advancements in the industry.

Therefore, the importance of vocational education courses is the synergy between educational institutions and economic institutions. This synergy will allow vocational institutes to produce students who have the skills needed for the industrial sector. Moreover, through giving hands on experience to students, institutes will allow them to be familiar with the tools and machines which are actually used in the business sector. The government may need to have a budget to support necessary and modern tools for students to practice and develop expertise in various fields. In addition, many vocational institutions may need to collaborate to share educational personnel or resources. This is to enable vocational institutions to achieve their goals.

#### 4. Vocational education and teaching styles between Thailand and Singapore

The teaching styles of vocational education in Thailand and Singapore are both similar and different. Thailand and Singapore focus on teaching by allowing students to practice, to develop skills, and to create learning experiences. The teaching and learning styles which are used both in Thailand and Singapore are the learning styles through Project-Based Learning. Students are learning through various projects that focus on allowing them to learn through experience. By teaching and learning through projects, students study, explore, research, experiment and invent with their team. The teacher acts as the designer of the learning process, advises and encourages learners to be able to complete the project. In this learning process, students will gain knowledge, develop skills, and also learn skills in working with others as a team and life skills to solve various problems during operations. In addition, Thailand and Singapore do not only giving importance to teaching, but also knowledge and expertise in professional skills, namely cultivating social responsibility. That is inserted into the teaching and learning activities. In Thailand, there will be awareness raising for students to assist the general public through social activities. For example, in Thailand, students went to repair equipment after a disaster. Singapore activities organized by



vocational schools will be organized for students to bring knowledge to help people with issues related to the lesson. For example, students may check the eyesight of the poor and provide them with glasses. The teaching styles between Thailand and Singapore are not much different. The teaching and learning styles in Thailand focus on bilateral education. That relies on cooperation between entrepreneurs and vocational schools. Students will study, basic subjects and basic training from the institution. Students will practice with the tools and technologies which are actually used in the workplace. In this type of teaching and learning, students are given two statuses, namely students in the school and apprentices in the workplace. To provide opportunities for students, they will receive vocational training which matches their field of study. Students also have the opportunity to access careers and receive compensation or allowances while studying. This form of teaching and learning that Singapore has operated for many years is still being used in vocational education today.

In addition, Singapore has developed different types of teaching and learning in order to develop learners. They have helped students to experience the real working environment. Students learn through work assignments both inside and outside the country. The teacher brings technology to play a role in teaching and learning (e.g., E-Learning). Through this form of teaching students do not need to carry their books to classroom and they can access lessons via their mobile phones. Moreover, students can learn through various media which are related to their lessons (e.g., video games). There is a simulation of virtual mannequins which have symptoms or can simulate different types of illnesses for students in the health sciences to analyze and learn treatment procedures. In addition to their main subject areas, students can learn new things through their involvement with clubs. Teachers have an important role in driving learning and creating knowledge for students.

When considering the resources, it was found that the teachers in Thailand and Singapore are different. Thailand lacks teachers with specialized expertise and there is still a shortage of personnel. Also, there is no support for teachers to develop knowledge to be up to date with technological changes. This impacts the quality of learners. On the other hand, teachers in vocational institutions in Singapore are ready in all disciplines. This is because there is a highly efficient selection and support process for teachers. Those that become teachers will be a group of people who have been selected since the beginning of university with high scores. This selection system is the same throughout the country. Moreover, academic knowledge is not the only thing that is important for teachers, communication skills and motivation are important as well. Teachers who are selected, will receive wages or salaries for the duration of their university education from the Ministry of Education. After graduation, new teachers will take over the role of retired teachers. This shows that Singapore values the transfer of knowledge within the teaching profession.

As mentioned above, it can be seen that the teaching styles in Thailand and Singapore are different. From the personnel selection process to the role of teaching and learning. The laying of instruction draws various techniques to transfer knowledge and practice to develop skills for learners. This is to achieve the same goal, which is to create talented and potential personnel to be a part of working in various organizations or departments in society. The job and social opportunities which learners gain result from the accumulation of social capital or social networks within the business sector. It is a significant capital, not less than cultural capital or professional knowledge to enable employment and skills development through real-world practice.

## **Conclusion**

The vocational education in Thailand and Singapore have similar objectives. However, the vocational education management system is dissimilar. This article divided these dissimilarities into four topics:

1) The differentiation of the vocational education management system in Thailand and Singapore. In Thailand, vocational education is separated from high school. Students can be admitted to vocational education after graduating junior high school. During high school students lack vocational education information. Meanwhile, vocational education in Singapore is part of the high school curricular. That means that vocational education is an educational option for pupils. Moreover, vocational pupils in Singapore can be admitted to a university that is different from Thailand.

2) Guidelines for vocational education development in Thailand and Singapore are dissimilar refer to programs and activities for vocational pupils' development in Thailand and Singapore focus on both theoretical learning in school and project-based learning. However, we found that public and private sector collaboration is a significant key toward skill development for vocational pupils which consistent with labor market needs. In Singapore, vocational pupils' skills correspond to the market needs. Furthermore, the pupils are motivated to recognize that lifelong learning that can transform technology users into technology creators.

3) Vocational education curriculum is different in Thailand and Singapore. Both countries offer different programs and the contents of these problems are dissimilar as well. The differences in programs and curriculum are partly due to the conditions of the topography, resources, and national development. In Singapore, are more programs and curriculums than Thailand, moreover, vocational education curriculums correspond to university curriculums. Vocational education curriculums in Singapore are increasingly adapted to economic, social, and technological change by cooperation between the public and private sector.

and 4) Vocational education and teaching styles in Thailand and Singapore are similar. Both countries prefer to focus on learning by doing and training. Nevertheless, in Singapore, technology is applied through instructional media, for example, e-learning, application for learning, etc.

The dissimilarities of structure of the vocational education system Thailand and Singapore affect vocational knowledge, skill, and capability of Thailand and Singapore vocational pupils. The knowledge, skill, and capability relate to job opportunity and wage. Moreover, the differentiation of social context and cultural value in Thailand and Singapore are significant conditions that have an effect on socioeconomic status of vocational pupils.

Considering the sociology of education, education and school are one of the social institutions working in connection with other social institutions. The educational institution is expected to have a social responsibility to develop skills, knowledge, and various abilities for children to apply knowledge in work and their social life.

Educational institutions are not just responsible for creating, promoting and developing skills for students, but also necessary for the students to discover their abilities, interests, and needs. Additionally, it classifies children into sub-groups based on their interests and specific talents. They take responsibility for socialization along with the family. Children should grow up to be members of society, know their duties, and live together with others in harmony (Sadovnik, 2011). For this reason, education is necessity in modern society. The goal of vocational education is to produce and develop professional manpower to have skills which are consistent with the needs of the labor market, while instilling values, morality and benefiting the public. Social conditions in terms of policy and cultural aspects are factors which has passed on the duty of vocational education institutions and will lead to the achievement of the goal of vocational education (Office of Vocational Education Commission, 2017).

However, education is given importance and is essential in the development of modern society. While education does not create social equality, it does reproduce inequality in society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). When considering the education system in the context of Thai society, it should be pointed out that choosing to study in each educational system affects social opportunities. Society does not value vocational education the same way it values high school education. High school education has been recognized as the role model of good and talented children with the potential for good career prospects and having a better social status. On the other hand, vocational students are judged negatively and viewed as being unruly and violent. When these negative images are embedded in people's thoughts and perceptions about vocational education it causes vocational education students to not be accepted as socially as high school students. In addition, parents do not want to

send their children to vocational schools (Chupradit & Baron-Gutty, 2009; Pimpa, 2007). This may affect the social opportunities of vocational students.

However, changing or reforming the vocational education system in order to upgrade vocational education requires a holistic solution toward the policies on supporting and directing vocational education. For example, changing vocational education, developing curricular which consistent with needs of labor market, cooperating between public and private sectors, etc. Society creates unequal social values and a social space for a diverse educational system in line with social change. It may require collaboration from many parties and a time period for adjusting social ideas. For example, promoting potentiality of vocational pupils, promoting vocational education as a valued educational choice, etc.

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