THAI EDUCATION AND THE 21st CENTURY SKILLS:
A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW WORLD OF WORK

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Abstract

In the 21st century, a high technology, information and communication industry, and a complicated service industry make up a substantial part of the economy and development of the world. Science and technology create various alterations in producing goods and services. Digital device has taken the place of analog equipment. Travelling has been made faster by technology. Almost all business transactions can be completed electronically. Communication can also be done through various devices conveniently. Machines in most manufacturing companies are computerized making manual work easier. Modern trading is the norm in business overshadowing conventions of traditional businesses. The future world of work will be beyond the present norms. It means that Thai society needs a labor force equipped with more up-to-date knowledge and skills in information and communication technology. Change is inevitable but Thai can see this as an opportunity for change. Thai academic and vocational education can take the opportunity to make a proper change accordingly. Though academic education and vocational education are different in terms of their objectives, curriculum structures, and practice, they both need to be adjusted to such change so that the Thai graduates would fit the 21st century labor force and the needs of the country.

Keywords: Thai education, academic education, vocational education, 21st century skills, future world of work

Introduction

In the early days of Thai history, education was primarily provided mainly for boys by the religious and royal institutions. During the reign of King Rama V (1863-1910) there was increased recognition of the need for educated people for the country development. As a result, the Thai education system was modernized and made more accessible to the general public. With 1898 Education Proclamation, strongly influenced by the British system, 2 educational tracks were specified: the academic and the vocational (National Identity Board Office of the Prime Minister, 2000). Afterwards, public and private schools, for both boys and girls, were established in Bangkok and