

Comparative Analysis Between the Education Systems of the Netherlands and Thailand

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Education is a process that involves the transfer of knowledge, habits and skills from one generation to another through teaching, research and training. The knowledge gained through education enables individual's potential to optimally utilize training of the human mind. Education is one of the most important elements of any culture and has played a paramount role in the modern industrial world. The most effective way of boosting economic growth, reducing poverty and improving people's health is by investing in education. Countries invest huge amounts of time and money to ensure that children get the best possible learning experience. Though, education is not the same around the world, there are bound of differences in quality, access and outcomes, as a result of which the education systems in some countries are better than in others.

This essay will address the educational systems in the Netherlands and Thailand. Having studied for a semester in Thailand a significant difference and some similarities can be seen in the education systems of the two above named countries. In the first part the organization of the education systems will be compared between the two countries. Primary, secondary and tertiary organization will be analysed. The second part of the essay is built upon the first part and will address the relation of education to GDP in each country and to the human development index which reflects a countries competitiveness.

The Dutch education system consists of 8 years of primary education from the age of 5. Secondary education depends on the type of school and can last 4, 5 or 6 years. Higher education also depends on the type of education and can take 2 till 6 years. Both public and private institutions exist at all levels of the system; the private institutions are in most cases based on religious or ideological principles. Informal education in the Netherlands is rarely used; most children play after school with their friends, perform sports, music or go home to make homework (Expact Focus 2016). The higher education is distinguished between research oriented education (university) and higher professional education (HBO). A research oriented bachelor requires three years of studying followed by one or two years of masters.

The education system in Thailand on the other hand consists of three levels. Level 1 is a nursery school for 3 to 5 years old, level 2 is the primary school for 6 to 11 years old ranging from P1 to P6 and level 3 is secondary school for 12 to 18 years' old which is M1 to M6. Level 1 is optional, but Thai children are required to complete levels P1 to M3. The higher education is 6 years and does not depend on the type of education. The M6 diploma is equivalent to a US-

high school diploma (Just Landed 2015). Thus, compulsory education consists of 6 years of primary schooling and 3 years of secondary schooling which is less than in the Netherlands. Informal education which is conducted in libraries, museums, special radio programs and other forms of outdoor education are generally practiced after school. A tutor is often found more important than the teacher in school in level 2 (Just landed 2015). In Thailand a bachelor degree is a four-year full-time attendance program. Master degree generally requires either one or two years.

In both countries the education is free and compulsory from the age of six, however, in the Netherlands children have to study until the age of 18 compared to the age of 15 in Thailand. The education is provided by government and they are responsible in providing quality education through the ministry of education. In both countries public schools start at 8.30 and end around 15:30. In Thailand the schools usually starts with the National Anthem which is not the case in the Netherlands as there are different kind of public schools differentiated by type of religion.

Furthermore, in the following tables the students by field of study are distributed per country. The population of Thailand is of course larger than the Netherlands so less people are currently enrolled in a study in the last named country. By looking at the table it can be seen that in both countries a large number of students study social sciences, business or law. In Thailand social sciences and humanities are studied more because of their lower unit cost. Remarkable is that in Thailand the second type of study is engineering, manufacturing while in the Netherlands it is health and welfare. The Netherlands and Thailand have aging populations and it can be seen in the economics of the Netherlands that a lot of money is invested in the health and welfare for the elderly, both in introducing new systems and methods. Thailand, on the other hand, is still working on its infrastructure and therefore a high number of students are in the manufacturing and construction field.

Students by field of study	Current enrolment	Annual Graduates (latest year)
Total	793,678	152,049
Agriculture.....	8,430.....	1,752.....
Education.....	89,282.....	18,864.....
Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction.....	62,477.....	12,510.....
Health and Welfare.....	138,372.....	26,312.....
Humanities and Arts.....	63,478.....	14,540.....
Sciences.....	51,518.....	9,413.....
Services.....	52,958.....	7,384.....
Social Sciences, Business, Law.....	308,087.....	60,111.....
Unspecified.....	19,076.....	1,164.....

Figure 1¹: Students by field of study in the Netherlands

Students by field of study	Current enrolment	Annual Graduates (latest year)
Total	2,497,323	443,648
Agriculture.....	59,952.....	—.....
Education.....	243,428.....	—.....
Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction.....	247,883.....	—.....
Health and Welfare.....	144,721.....	—.....
Humanities and Arts.....	185,349.....	—.....
Sciences.....	205,897.....	—.....
Services.....	46,644.....	—.....
Social Sciences, Business, Law.....	1,337,272.....	—.....
Unspecified.....	26,178.....	—.....

Figure 2²: Students by field of study in Thailand

To complement the figures from above, the employment distribution by economic activity is analysed. Studying the economy of the Netherlands it can be seen that the percent of population employed in industry and services is high while in Thailand most people are employed in the agriculture sector. Large parts of EEA workforce are in low skilled labours such as technicians while the percentage of high-skilled computer professional is very small. Furthermore, the enrolment for tertiary education is low in Thailand compared to the Netherlands which is also reflected by the difference in economic activities for both countries.

¹ Source: Schwab 2015

² Source: Schwab 2015

Employment distribution by economic activity and occupation

	Percent of population employed in			Population by employment type	Unemployed population by former occupation	
	Agriculture	Industry	Services			
Total.....	1.2	9.2	45.4	55.7	0.6	
Managers, professionals and technicians	0.1	3.0	23.1	Tertiary education requirements.....	26.2	0.2
Clerical, service and sales workers	0.1	1.4	14.5	Secondary education requirements	23.9	0.2
Skilled agricultural and trades workers.....	0.7	3.2	1.8			0.1
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers.....	0.1	0.7	1.5			0.0
Elementary occupations	0.2	0.7	3.7	Primary education requirements	4.7	0.0
Others.....	0.0	0.1	0.8		0.9	0.0

Figure 3³: Employment distribution by economic activity and occupation in the Netherlands

Employment distribution by economic activity and occupation

	Percent of population employed in			Population by employment type	Unemployed population by former occupation	
	Agriculture	Industry	Services			
Total.....	29.7	14.4	26.7	70.8	—	
Managers, professionals and technicians	0.1	2.2	7.6	Tertiary education requirements.....	9.9	0.0
Clerical, service and sales workers	0.0	0.9	12.9	Secondary education requirements	54.5	0.1
Skilled agricultural and trades workers.....	27.8	5.9	1.6			0.1
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers.....	0.2	3.3	1.9			0.0
Elementary occupations	1.6	2.0	2.6	Primary education requirements	6.2	0.0
Others.....	0.0	0.1	0.1		0.2	—

Figure 4⁴: Employment distribution by economic activity and occupation in Thailand

³ Source: Schwab 2015

⁴ Source: Schwab 2015

The second part of the essay will look at evident figures to compare the performance of the education systems on the GDP and the human capital factor in each country. The inputs for education including spending and the outputs on school competition will be analysed related to each country's economy.

The Netherlands is known as a knowledge based country which can also be seen in the percent of government spending on education (figure 5). The Dutch do not have a big country and from the past it has always been a trade based country. It is noted for stable industrial relations and plays an important role as a European transportation hub. Manufacturing and industry have shifted away from Europe to cheaper locations, however, the Dutch have been realigning their economy to rely less upon moving goods and more upon their know-how. To perform in the fast growing world economy, the Netherlands has to specialize certain fields obtaining new knowledge and expertise. Expertise in everything from water management to flower-growing has become an important export product (2016 Index of Economic Freedom 2016). Figure 5 shows that the Netherlands has a stable trend and prioritizes education more than Thailand. The Netherlands has a prosperous, open economy and largely depends on foreign trade and knowledge. Therefore, it is arguable that the Dutch spend large amounts on education to increase their know-how. Also, the pupil-teacher ratio in the Netherlands is 14.6 in secondary school and 13.4 in tertiary education. In Thailand, the ratio is 19.9 in secondary and 23.5 in tertiary education (Education: Pupil-teacher ratio by level of education 2013). Accordingly, in the Netherlands more teachers are needed as the ratio is smaller and more money is spent on education.

Analysing the case of Thailand, it can be argued that its economy is heavily export-dependent, with exports accounting more than two-thirds of its gross domestic product. Therefore, this country is not knowledge oriented as it has geographical advantage of producing agricultural products for export. The GDP of the Netherlands is 769,930 compared to Thailand with a GDP of 390,592 (International Monetary Fund 2016). Due to regulatory efficiency and a knowledge based country, the Netherlands spends more on education than Thailand. It can be seen from the graph that Thailand spends less on education since their focus is not on education. The government recognized in 2010 to increase its spending on education, since Thailand is one of the fastest growing economies in Asia it should keep up and make sure the population is well educated to perform in a rapid growing electronic world economy.

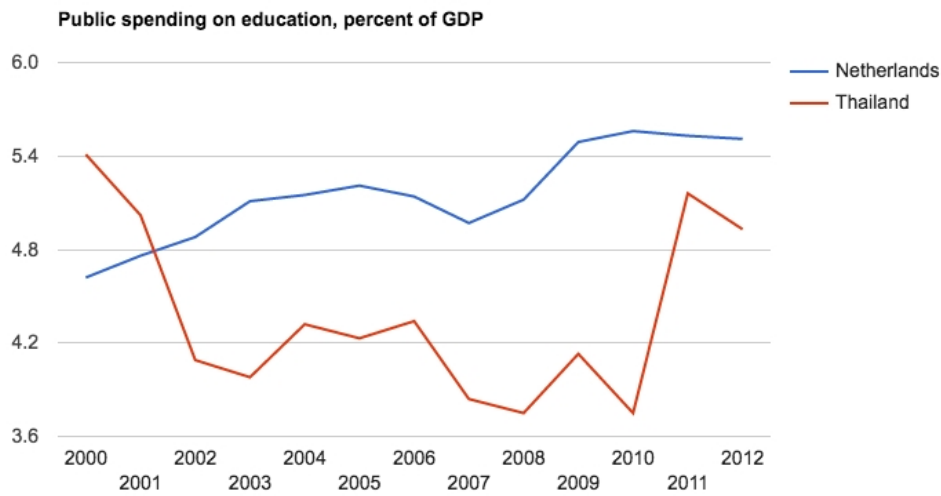


Figure 5⁵: Public spending on education, percent of GDP

Furthermore, the education index for the Netherlands as well as Thailand have been improved over the years. The Netherlands is ranked seventh in the best education systems in the world with an education index of 0.894 as can be seen in the table (Chatin 2016). It can be seen from the table that Thailand made a significant improvement in the early days but have been stable over the past few years. The Netherlands already started out high and slowly increases over the years.

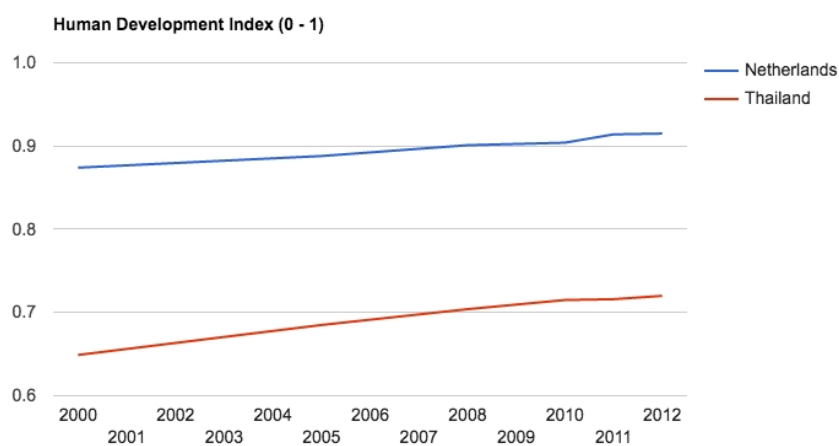
Country	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Netherlands	0.744	0.811	0.824	0.844	0.850	0.860	0.860	0.859	0.866	0.892	0.894	0.894
Thailand	0.386	0.433	0.516	0.569	0.559	0.582	0.589	0.601	0.608	0.608	0.608	0.608

Figure 6⁶: Education Index

⁵ Source: The Global Economy 2012

⁶ Source: IMF Data 2013

The Human Development Index measures three basic dimensions of human development: long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. The Netherlands is ranked 8 in Human Capital Index 2015 with a score of 82.30 compared to Thailand which is ranked 57 with a score of 68.78. From the other indicators explained above, the human development index can be seen as a concluding indicator. The Netherlands spends more money on education and therefore scores higher on the three basic dimensions of human development. Thailand has a lower human development index. Though, the country is increasing its spending on education to keep up with the fast growing economy and therefore the human development index is increasing.



Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, World Bank

Figure 7⁷: Human Development Index

To conclude, both countries have different education systems in most ways with some similarities. In the Netherlands the number of years for mandatory education is higher than in Thailand. The educational systems can be clearly reflected to the economic activities in each country. The Netherlands is a knowledge based country with an open economy and serves as a trade centre for the world. On the other side, Thailand is an export country of agricultural products. The Netherlands invests a significant amount of money into education since knowledge is of great importance. Thailand has a geographic advantage to grow crops and is thus less focused on education. However, since Thailand is a fast growing Asian country, investments in education are increased in the past years.

⁷ Source: The Global Economy 2012

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