



MAPPING OF CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH IN THAILAND



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Executive Summary

Young people in Thailand are facing critical issues that increase their vulnerability, decrease their resilience, and limit the realization of their rights. In Thailand, youth transition to decent work remains problematic, with nearly 15 per cent of Thai adolescents and youth aged 15-24 not in education, employment, or training (NEET).¹ NEETs are at higher risk of being socially and economically excluded and are more likely to become vulnerable in the long term.

Career development support can play a fundamental role in enhancing individuals' skills in managing learning, work, leisure, as well as transitions over a lifetime (ILO and ETF, 2021).

Specifically, career guidance, counselling and information can help achieve:

1. Lifelong learning goals: Combating early school leaving and ensuring an adequate knowledge and skills base to meet the challenges in creating knowledge-based societies in the context of economic globalization, and promoting adequate linkages between education, training and the world of work.
2. Labour market outcomes: Reducing mismatches between supply and demand for labour, dealing with unemployment and improving labour mobility.
3. Social equity and social inclusion goals: Promoting reintegration of marginalized and at-risk groups into education, training and employment and mainstreaming of excluded groups into general training programmes and labour market services (Hansen, 2006).

Given Thailand's human capital development ambitions, career development support is key to the implementation of lifelong learning, active labour market policies and instrumental to successfully achieve social and economic targets.

In Thailand, career guidance for adolescents and youth is considered a key element for future labour force preparation and the country's economic growth, as stated in the draft 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) and the Thai Labour Action Plan (2020-2022). It is associated with the promotion of employment, and the preparation and development of workers to be productive and equipped with skills, competencies and characteristics aligned with labour market demands. The provision of career guidance is meant to address labour shortages caused by: 1) a shortage of skills and knowledge that match the needs of the labour market; 2) an ageing society; and 3) a lack of labour force preparation at all ages and education levels (Department of Employment, 2016b).

To ensure the development of evidence-based career guidance support interventions in the country, it is critical to understand what existing career guidance services are available to adolescents and youth in Thailand, as well as identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities, to gain insights into how career guidance can be delivered more effectively in the country.

The study Mapping of Career Guidance Services and Interventions for Adolescents and Youth in Thailand aims to provide a landscape analysis of career guidance services and interventions currently operating in Thailand and recommendations for UNICEF and its partners to support the improvement and promotion of career guidance services in the country.

¹ Over 1.4 million young people aged 15-24 in Thailand are NEET (ILO, 2020), 70 per cent of whom are females (TDRI, 2020).

Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the key existing career guidance services and interventions available for adolescents and youth in Thailand?
2. What are the key gaps, challenges and opportunities?
3. How can career guidance be delivered more effectively in Thailand? Particularly:
 - a. How can we ensure greater diversity in the types of services that are available and in the ways that they are delivered?
 - b. How should career guidance be resourced?
 - c. How can leadership be improved?
 - d. What partnerships should be developed to enhance career guidance?
 - e. How can the most marginalised youth be reached by career guidance services?

The research employed a framework consisting of five key elements which serve as reference points for the development of career development support systems, as per the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Training Foundation (ETF)'s publication *Developing National Career Development Support Systems: Pathways to Enhance Lifelong Career Guidance, Career Education and Career Development Support for Workers* (2021). The five key elements are: 1) coordination; 2) funding; 3) quality; 4) access; and 5) technology.

Data were collected via comprehensive desk review, 23 key informant interviews with service providers and students, and two focus group discussions with students. The key findings are detailed below.

Key findings

What are the key existing career guidance services and interventions available for adolescents and youth in Thailand?

Career guidance services in Thailand are provided by three main actors: 1) government; 2) social enterprises; and 3) civil society organisations (CSOs). The main organisations responsible for the provision of career guidance services are the Department of Employment and Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour, and the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), Ministry of Education.

Career guidance services for adolescents and youth operated by the public sector can be classified into two categories based on the status of adolescents and youth. Those in the education system mainly access career guidance services through their educational institutions, where the Ministry of Education is mainly responsible for developing career guidance curricula from primary to high school levels or in vocational education. Meanwhile, adolescents and youth who have dropped out of school can access the Ministry of Labour's career guidance services through Provincial Labour Offices, as well as other activities occasionally provided by government organisations. This reflects efforts in the government sector to provide services that reach out to all groups of youth, especially those at high risk of poverty and exclusion.

Public programmes in school include career guidance classes and career guidance activities such as career talks and workplace visits. Programmes under the Ministry of Labour include career information, skill and career

training, job fairs and career and employment counselling. These activities are conducted both online and offline. In addition, for the last eight years, Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI) has been playing an important role in offering career guidance programmes for adolescents and youth including: 1) skill assessment and online career information and education; 2) onsite and online training; and 3) certification of occupational standards and competency standards.

Recently, social enterprises have played an increasingly crucial role in providing and organising career guidance activities given their innovative and knowledge on current and future labour market trends. Programmes generally include skill assessment, career information and education, career talks, job shadowing, preparation for job application, short course training and capacity building for student counsellors. However, some programmes require participation fees, hindering access for the most marginalised groups of young people.

CSOs also play a crucial role in the provision of career guidance programmes, particularly in rural, remote, and conflict-affected areas where public programmes are inaccessible. CSOs' career guidance programmes are mainly conducted through income-generating and capacity building programmes which emphasize career skill training and marketing.

What are the key gaps, challenges and opportunities?

Several challenges continue to limit the provision of career guidance services and interventions in Thailand, including:

Coordination

Although coordination between the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education, and between public and private sectors, has increased over the years, systematic and concrete collaboration to develop, mobilize and promote the use of career guidance resources is still lacking. Collaboration tends to be short term, while career guidance implementation in Thailand is fragmented, especially on research and information sharing, as each organisation mainly works in silo, resulting in a lack of labour market data that can be used to meaningfully improve provision.

Funding

Funding continues to be a challenge for government organisations, the private sector, and CSOs. As government budget proposals have to be submitted three years in advance, plans can quickly become outdated due to rapid labour market changes and other factors (as seen recently with the COVID-19 pandemic). At the same time, social enterprises and CSOs lack long-term funding options, as funding agencies typically allocate budget to social enterprises and CSOs to conduct activities for a period of 1-3 years or less. This makes it difficult to sustain programmes and build on successes.

Quality

Content: Government schools under the Ministry of Education are required to meet indicators related to increased enrolment in vocational education (as stated in the 2017-2036 National Education Plan), and place an emphasis on the 10 major employment sectors as stated in the Ministry of Labour's Master Plan (2017-2021). This results in a lack of career and education options, limiting students' knowledge, choices and outlook. Although social enterprises tend to be more in touch with the latest labour market developments, public sector career guidance may lag behind current labour market trends, and does not take into account each individual's ambitions or preferences. As a result, adolescents and youth in Thailand lack effective guidance to know their own capabilities, discover their passions and envision their own future (TDRI, 2020), and on a practical level also lack information and knowledge on workers' rights and welfare.

Parental involvement: The quality of parental involvement in career guidance can vary. Furthermore, parental perceptions can influence students' choices about their future careers which may not reflect their own personal interests, skills or ambitions.

Human resources: Most student counsellors in schools provide career guidance as an additional task on top of primary responsibilities, and the limited availability of student counsellors means that the counsellor-student ratio is low. Although the government and private sector offer training and workshops for staff development, student counsellors may be unable to stay up-to-date with the latest information on labour market trends.

Information management mechanisms: There has been little progress made in utilizing data for evidence-based programming. Teachers lack the knowledge and resources on how to use data to benefit students and adapt services offered accordingly. There is also a lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for career guidance provision.

Labour market information: Labour market information is mostly published as academic papers and is written in a formal style. There is a need for the information to be disseminated in a more user-friendly and youth-friendly format.

Access

Methods of delivery: Methods of delivery vary according to the type of service model, the objectives of the service, and the needs of the clients, for example some training courses are in person because participants are required to use tools and equipment and complete practical tasks. Skill training programmes tend to take place in urban areas, while CSOs conduct activities in rural and harder to reach areas.

Many career guidance services are available online. However, as some clients have limited ICT literacy and/or access to the internet, Provincial Labour Offices also offer career counselling in-person and over the phone. Adolescents and youth in urban areas have more access to ICT than those living in rural areas (National Statistical Office, 2021), reflecting a digital divide which can limit the capacity of youth to access career information. Moreover, adolescents and youth with disabilities are unable to access career guidance services outside of their schools or institutes due to language and communication barriers, or travel difficulties.

Cost: Services provided by government organisations are generally free of charge, with some costs to cover materials and application or certificate fees. Social enterprises can also provide free basic services such as skill assessment, career information, and education. However, more advanced activities incur a cost. Furthermore, other costs associated with attending career guidance activities may be prohibitive, especially for marginalised or at-risk groups.

Language: By and large, career guidance services, both online and offline, are delivered in the Thai language. TPQI will provide interpreters if migrant workers or people speaking only a local dialect are participating in their programmes, but language barriers inevitably remain a barrier to non-native speakers. Communication barriers are also of particular concern among students with disabilities, who are often unable to access services due to lack of provision of alternative communication methods to facilitate access to information.

Gender and cultural sensitivity: In general, service providers, particularly those in the government sector, lack a framework for gender equality and cultural sensitivity. Gender stereotyping is also prevalent in occupational training and career counselling.

Awareness: The background and status of adolescents and youth, including family economic status, school, location, internet access and devices, all influence their ability to use social media to find out about available services. As such, social enterprises generally conduct outreach activities to raise awareness among adolescents and youth about available services. By comparison, adolescents and youth are generally unaware of the programmes offered by the Departments of Employment and Skill Development, and the existence of government employment websites.

Technology

Increasing access to electronic devices and the internet have allowed adolescents and youth both in and out of the education system to gain more opportunities to access career guidance services and online career information. However, EdTech social enterprises are concerned about children and youth media literacy and their ability to discern appropriate information and content.

While Thailand does not currently have a platform that serves as a centralized information resource both for job-related information and connecting job seekers with potential employers, the E-Workforce Ecosystem (EWE) platform currently being developed by TPQI can serve as a pilot for the possibility of developing a more comprehensive platform in the future (TPQI, 2021b).

Recommendations

A set of key recommendations were developed to address how career guidance can be delivered more effectively in Thailand:

Recommendation #1: Ensure greater diversity in a) the types of available services and b) the ways they are delivered

a) To improve types of services offered:

- Enhance range and suitability of government-led career guidance provision by conducting target assessments prior to designing career programmes to ensure that programmes offered match with students' aspirations, interests and labour market trends.
- Improve the use of data obtained from self-assessment programmes to develop career guidance services that meet the needs of adolescents and youth.
- Increase adolescent and youth participation in the design of career guidance services to help ensure the services meet their actual needs.
- Provide adolescents and youth with more opportunities to sample work simulations or learning tasters.
- Support parental involvement, developing the capacity of parents to effectively support their children's career choices.
- Introduce provision of safe spaces to career guidance provision so that in-school and out-of-school adolescents and youth can freely express their concerns, needs and aspirations. Confidence-building workshops could also be provided to enhance adolescent and youth self-efficacy and ability to make informed decisions.
- Incorporate a future studies approach into career guidance services to assist adolescents and youth in making educational and career choices that connect with their ambitions.
- Incorporate information on labour rights and welfare into career guidance services to ensure that adolescents and youth are knowledgeable about workers' rights and welfare.

b) To improve service delivery:

- Collect data on student counsellor challenges and limitations, including the ratio of students to counsellors.
- Increase number of qualified student counsellors in schools and reduce additional duties. This will have two desirable effects: 1) Reduce the current workload of student counsellors, and 2) Improve the quality of career provision.
- Enhance student counsellor competencies, e.g. introduce international best practices for student counsellors through a capacity building programme.
- Update staff manuals, e.g. the Ministry of Labour may consider revising the guideline *Building the Career Guidance Network* by addressing the issue of long-term cooperation and assessing the network's limitations and challenges.
- Enhance the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of career guidance programmes.
- Integrate a gender and cultural sensitivity approach into career guidance services.
- Reduce gender stereotyping in occupational training and career counselling, to ensure male and female adolescents and youth are provided equal opportunities to explore different career paths.
- Consider the establishment of a pilot labour intelligence system, with the aim to evaluate and assess the possibility of developing a larger and more comprehensive labour information management platform.

Recommendation #2: Improve how career guidance is resourced

- Increase flexibility in government budget planning to ensure career guidance programmes are both relevant and resilient to the labour market's rapid changes.
- Increase collaboration between public and private sectors through public-private partnerships to promote innovative and sustainable provision of career guidance and skills development.
- Establish more long-term funding options for social enterprises and CSOs, e.g. establishment of a national skills fund to support programmes considered as national priorities.

Recommendation #3: Improve leadership

- Conduct a series of practitioner consultations using SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to gain insights into the type of leadership and support required at different levels for effective career guidance provision.
- Gain commitments from organisations for further leadership improvement.
- Establish an organisation or committee which provides strategic leadership on quality assurance of career services at the national level, including a competency framework to ensure career guidance services across Thailand meet established standards.

Recommendation #4: Foster partnerships for enhancing career guidance

- Establish a multi-stakeholder platform to facilitate dialogue between stakeholders with the aim of improving collaboration, resource mobilization and knowledge sharing to ensure the long-term improvement of career guidance services.
- Establish a national career guidance working group/committee connecting key stakeholders including educators, employers, youth, local government, private sector, trade unions, and civil society to work together to improve career service provision.
- Increase co-research and co-assessment. Joint data collection and research on career service provision will help to build a better picture of the situation in Thailand and identify areas for improvement.

Recommendation #5: Ensure the most marginalised youth can be reached by career guidance services

- Enhance outreach strategies to promote government websites via social media platforms and use youth-friendly formats/language to reach and connect with adolescents and youth online.
- Improve access to Department of Employment and Department of Skill Development career/skills training programmes for marginalised youth by supporting their needs, e.g. providing subsidies to cover travel costs or offering flexible hours.
- Conduct research on youth who are NEET in order to gain more insights on how to reach and engage with this group.
- Design and implement programmes which adolescents and youth can participate in independently.
- Publish latest information on labour markets and career information in youth-friendly format to increase accessibility of information and reach more users.
- Conduct further research on the needs, skills, competencies, and preferences of adolescent and youth with disabilities.
- Improve access to career information and services for adolescents and youth with disabilities to help them participate as fully as possible.



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Acronyms

CASCAiD	United Kingdom, Careers Advisory Service Computer Aid
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	Code of Ethics, Entry-Level Qualifications, Continuing Professional Development
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CV	Curriculum Vitae
EdTech	Education Technology
EEC	Eastern Economic Corridor
EEF	Equitable Education Fund
EWE	E-Workforce Ecosystem
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPSR	Institute for Population and Social Research
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NICE	Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSF	National Skills Fund
OBEC	Office of the Basic Education Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
TCAST	Thai University Centre Admission System
TDRI	Thailand Development Research Institute
TED Fund	Technology and Innovative-Based Enterprise Development Fund
TPQI	Thailand Professional Qualification Institute
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



Definitions

Career guidance: Services intended to support individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers (career management skills). Career guidance and counselling can include a wide range of activities, such as skills assessments, advice, information, development of job search skills, mentoring, counselling, networking, job placement among others and be delivered face-to-face, at a distance or in a blended setting. Delivery contexts include public and private employment services, career guidance in schools, TVET providers, municipalities, youth centres, social security centres, NGOs, as well as career development support in apprenticeships and work-based environments. Career guidance services may acquire particular importance for vulnerable individuals or groups adopting specialised approaches, methodologies and tools to address their specific needs.²

NEET: Not in Education, Employment or Training.³

² International Labour Organization and European Training Foundation. (2021). *Developing national career development support systems*. Geneva: International Labour Organization and European Training Foundation.

³ Sara Elder, "What does NEETs means and why is the concept so easily misinterpreted?," International Labour Organization, January 2015, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_343153.pdf

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction



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1.1 Rationale

Young people in Thailand are facing critical issues that increase their vulnerability, decrease their resilience, and limit the realization of their rights. In Thailand, youth transition to decent work remains problematic, with high numbers of youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET).⁴ NEETs are at higher risk of being socially and economically excluded and are more likely to become vulnerable in the long term.

Given Thailand's ambitious human capital development plans, career development support is key to the implementation of lifelong learning, active labour market policies and instrumental to successfully achieve social and economic targets. Career development support can play a fundamental role in enhancing individuals' skills in managing learning, work, leisure, as well as learning and work transitions over a lifetime (ILO and ETF, 2021).

In this context, it is critical to understand what existing career guidance services are available to adolescents and youth in Thailand, as well as identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities, to gain insights into how career guidance can be delivered more effectively in the country.

The report Mapping of Career Guidance Services and Interventions for Adolescents and Youth in Thailand aims to provide a landscape analysis of career guidance services and interventions currently operating in Thailand and recommendations for UNICEF Thailand and other relevant stakeholders to support the improvement and promotion of career guidance services for adolescents and youth, especially NEETs, in the country.

⁴ Over 1.4 million (or nearly 15 percent) young people aged 15-24 in Thailand are NEET (ILO, 2020), 70 per cent of whom are females (TDRI, 2020). The number of youth NEET declined by 1 per cent between 2019-Q4 and 2021-Q1 as an increased number of youths joined the workforce and others entered the education system. In this period, young women entered the job market more than men (ILO, 2021).

The findings will contribute to the implementation of results of UNICEF Thailand's Country Programme 2022–2026, particularly, Output 2 of the Young People's Resilience, Connectedness and Empowerment Outcome: "By 2026, national and local capacities are strengthened to provide alternative pathways and second-chance opportunities for youth not in education, employment or training (NEET) and other vulnerable groups," and Output 2 of the Education Outcome: "By 2026, system-wide improvements in quality of instruction and curriculum and assessment are progressively implemented across the learning continuum of basic education."

1.2 Study Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To map career guidance services and interventions available for adolescents and youth in Thailand (looking at geographical location, models of service, stakeholders involved, population of focus, methods of delivery).
2. To identify gaps, challenges and opportunities that need to be tackled so that the services and interventions can be improved to meet the needs of the most vulnerable young people, in particular those who are NEETs.
3. To provide recommendations for UNICEF Thailand and relevant stakeholders to support the improvement and promotion of career guidance services, including a strategic roll-out strategy and mechanism for UNICEF, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education as well as other service providers to deliver career guidance services to the most vulnerable young people, in particular those who are in NEET situation.

To this end, the research findings are organised around the following research questions:

1. What are the key existing career guidance services and interventions available for adolescents and youth in Thailand?
2. What are the key gaps, challenges and opportunities?
3. How can career guidance be delivered more effectively in Thailand? Particularly,
 - a. How can we ensure greater diversity in the types of services that are available and in the ways that they are delivered?
 - b. How should career guidance be resourced?
 - c. How can leadership be improved?
 - d. What partnerships should be developed to enhance career guidance?
 - e. How can the most marginalised youth be reached by career guidance services?

1.3 Thematic Scope

The scope of this study focuses on career guidance and interventions promoted and implemented by the government, private sector, civil society organisations (CSOs), and other relevant stakeholders for children, adolescents and youth enrolled in schools (from elementary to undergraduate levels) in Thailand as well as those outside of the education system. Specifically, this study:

1. Reviews national policies, curricula and other relevant literature that provide the basis for establishing or strengthening career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth in Thailand;
2. Maps out existing career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth in Thailand. The mapping considers geographical locations, models of services, focus/mandate, stakeholders involved (government, private sector, CSOs, social enterprises, etc.), populations of focus, methods of delivery, current operating curricula, funding sources, and human resource capacities;
3. Identifies gaps, challenges and opportunities for these services and interventions; and
4. Provides recommendations for UNICEF Thailand, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, CSOs, social enterprises, and other relevant organisations on how to 1) improve career guidance services; and 2) deliver career guidance services to the most vulnerable young people, particularly the NEET group.

1.4 Geographic Scope

The study collects data from career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth implemented throughout Thailand. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with key informants took place with stakeholders located in Bangkok and selected locations as case studies, including Pattani, Chonburi, Samut Prakarn and Chiang Mai. In addition, interviews were conducted with CEOs of social enterprises and founders of CSOs whose career guidance programmes serve adolescents and youth and student counsellors across the country.

1.5 Research Methodology

The study adopted two methods: desk review (secondary research) and in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (primary research) as follows:

1.5.1 Desk review of relevant documents. The desk review included an examination of policies and relevant documents from organisations providing career guidance services and interventions to gain information on existing services, challenges and achievements. Specifically, the desk review included existing documentation on:

- Career development support systems and models of career guidance from global, regional and national literature.
- Secondary data review of career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth in Thailand, covering geographical locations, models of services, focus/mandate, stakeholders involved (government, private sector, CSOs and others), populations of focus, methods of delivery, current operating curricula (at elementary, high school and non-formal education), funding sources, human resource capacity, and monitoring and evaluation programmes. Key challenges, barriers and opportunities for improvement in terms of outreach and service delivery were also identified.

1.5.2 In-depth interviews with key informants. Interviews with 23 key informants from government, private sector, CSOs, and other relevant stakeholders were conducted to capture the full spectrum of career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth in Thailand. The list of key informants is included in Annex 2.

1.5.3 Focus group discussions with two youth groups. The first focus group was conducted with five students studying at high school and university levels (aged 15-22) and the second was conducted with three youth with disabilities (aged 19-20).

1.6 Key informant selection criteria

The key informants for this study included:

1. Senior officers with knowledge of policies concerning career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth, to understand how the policies were created and who was involved in the process.
2. Senior officers and field officers responsible for career guidance services and interventions who have worked closely with adolescents and youth, including, for instance, training institute directors and field officers, school directors and student counsellors or private sector, CSOs' directors and staff.
3. Experts on youth employment and labour issues to obtain their viewpoints and suggestions on effective methods for providing career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth.

1.7 Limitations and mitigating measures

Data collection limitations and mitigating measures are provided below:

Methods	Limitations	Mitigating measures
Desk review	Previous studies on career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth are limited and most were conducted more than five years ago.	To cover the limitations of the desk review, the study reviewed career guidance service reports published by service providers to understand challenges, barriers, achievements and the needs of adolescents and youth.
In-depth Interviews	In general, most organisations were busy during December (the original scheduled time for the interviews), as they had to complete several tasks before the long holiday season. While attempts were made to schedule meetings with key informants in advance (prior to sending official letters), most government officials were not available before the new year break.	The consultant made appointments with key informants to gain initial dates and times in the first and second weeks of December 2021. Three organisations – WeSpace- EdVISORY, A-Chieve Social Enterprise and Thailand Professional Qualification Institute agreed to be interviewed in December 2021 before the New Year break. Follow up interviews were conducted with remaining key informants between January-April 2022.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

This research employed a framework consisting of five key elements which serve as reference points for the development of career development support systems, as per ILO's and ETF's publication, *Developing National Career Development Support Systems: Pathways to Enhance Lifelong Career Guidance, Career Education and Career Development Support for Workers* (2021). The five key elements are: 1) coordination; 2) funding; 3) quality; 4) access; and 5) technology. The framework was used to develop system reviews and create a conceptual framework for career guidance services, particularly in low and middle-income countries, and as a reference when interviewing key informants about their programmes, challenges, opportunities, and suggestions for improving career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth in Thailand. The details of each element are elaborated below:

Coordination: In general, career guidance is a shared policy responsibility of several ministries. Coordination entails strategic leadership⁵ and well-functioning and harmonised cooperation on the mechanisms that support communication, service delivery and knowledge sharing between various stakeholders in a career development support system at different levels of administration and across local, regional and national dimensions (ILO and ETF, 2021).

Funding: Appropriate funding arrangements can ensure the quality and sustainability of career guidance services and interventions. This refers to the availability of public budget for career development activities in education, training and employment support and enterprise-based activities as well as staff and other expenses, including monitoring and evaluation (ILO and ETF, 2021).

Quality: The quality of services and interventions can be considered from (a) national standards⁶ (b) labour market intelligence⁷ and careers information (c) monitoring and evaluation of services and (d) continuous improvement of the system.

Access: refers to all aspects related to enabling access to career guidance services, especially for the most vulnerable groups, responsiveness to individual needs/preferences and context, and the employment of tools and language to respond to those needs and preferences. This also includes accessibility, cultural sensitivity and user-friendly delivery of service (ILO and ETF, 2021).

Technology: refers to all aspects related to the appropriate use of technology in the delivery of services, design and implementation of digital and distance services, in learning environments and careers centres, in communication platform, in the implementation of individual digital portfolios, and the use of innovative solutions such as AI (ILO and ETF, 2021).

5 Strategic leadership refers to how policy and systems development for career guidance are managed in a country, region, and locality.

6 National standards include competence frameworks for practitioners, legally defined qualifications or licenses, national register of professionals, accreditation of service providers, programme recognition frameworks, quality standards for services and ethical guidelines for example (ILO and ETF, 2021).

7 According to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, labour market intelligence refers to labour market information that has been analysed and interpreted before presenting it to the public.

Table 1: Research Tool Criteria⁸

No	Framework	Details (based on international best practices of career guidance services)
1	Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and coordination among relevant organisations • Networking among service providers
2	Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of funding sources/ financial resources (or lack thereof)
3	Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Career information - Career education - Career counselling - Employment counselling • Preparation for the job market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Career conversations - Career talks or job fairs - Workplace visits or job shadowing - Application and interview skills development activities - Occupationally focused short programmes - Preparation for a variety of jobs - Part-time work - Volunteering • Parental involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents are informed about educational and career choices • Human resources • Technical capacity (training availability; understanding of local and national education officials about different occupations, job search processes, labour market opportunities, needs and trends) • Staff development • Information management mechanism • Labour market information system • Support system
4	Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods of delivery • Language capacity • Cost • Gender and cultural sensitivity • Awareness – an outreach service, creating awareness amongst adolescents and youth about the services and interventions
5	Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of technology in the delivery of services, design and implementation of digital and distance services

In addition, this study explored information on the disruptions during the COVID-19 crisis and responses (key challenges and barriers to outreach and service delivery, how the services and interventions response to the labour market situation due to COVID-19), achievements and future plans.

⁸ The criteria was developed based on international best practices of career guidance services derived from the following publications: Developing National Career Development Support Systems: Pathways to Enhance Lifelong Career Guidance, Career Education and Career Development Support for Workers (2021); Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners (2019); Investing in Career Guidance (2019); Guidance: supporting youth to manage their careers (2021); Career Guidance: A resource handbook for low- and middle-income countries (2006); and Preparing Youth to Succeed: The Importance of Career Guidance (2006).

1.9 Ethical Guidelines

The study adhered to international best practices for conducting research using the guidelines from UNICEF's procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis.

The following standards were ensured by the researcher:

- Steps were taken to ensure that all respondents understood the purpose of the research and how the findings will be used.
- Informed consent from respondents was obtained and respondents were notified of their rights to confidentiality.
- Participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of their participation. The decision whether to participate, including dissent or unwillingness to participate, was respected. Participants were appropriately informed that consent was negotiable and that they could withdraw at any point without any negative consequences.
- Confidential participant information or data that was collected was securely stored, protected and disposed of. This included limiting access to raw identifying data through password protection of electronic data, physical locks and restricting staff who can access the identified data.
- Participants were given a clear indication of who will have access to their private data and in what form.

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CHAPTER 2

Literature Review



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This literature review presents key findings from international best practices of career guidance provision and secondary resources on policies influencing the design and implementation of career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth in Thailand. It details emerging global trends and identifies key components of effective career guidance services, and highlights current challenges and gaps in terms of access to services and the needs of students in relation to career guidance in Thailand.

While only a few studies were previously conducted on career guidance services in Thailand, available research provides sufficient information on the limitations of services and the needs of students for career guidance.

2.1 Key components of effective career guidance services: Emerging global trends and examples of best practice

The provision of career guidance services for young people has become a major concern among international organisations, governments and CSOs, and other organisations primarily based in Europe. The literature review indicates that the majority of research or guidelines on career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth have been conducted and published in Europe and North America; whereas there are limited studies and guidelines in low and middle-income countries, including Thailand.

According to the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), ILO, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), most career guidance services in highly developed countries provide four basic categories of services:

1. **Career information and advice about education, training and work opportunities** which include the provision of information on occupations; employment opportunities (CEDEFOP, 2021); labour market trends and employment scenarios; educational programmes and opportunities; career services; and career conversations, for example (OECD, 2021). Job placements and internships can also be part of job search services provision aimed to connect youth and employer (Cruze-Mante, 2007).
2. **Teaching activities** that include provision of career planning and decision-making, course on self-efficacy, CV and cover letter writing, school-based career reflection activities, career questionnaires and career classes, workplace visits or job shadowing, and engagement with professionals through career talks or job fairs (OECD, 2021).
3. **Career counselling delivered by counsellors or practitioners with psychological training** such as provision of one-on-one or small group help on role clarifications, career decision-making, self-assessment and self-definition, aspirations and dreams. The counsellors or practitioners may assist in setting career goals, writing resumes, interviewing skills and the like, and organise activities that enable youth to define the characteristics of the career or job they are looking for, assess their own suitability for the profession, and identify skills gaps that can be addressed by personal development efforts (Cruze-Mante, 2007).
4. **Sampling** such as providing work simulations or learning tasters so youth can experiment their career choices (CEDEFOP, 2021), application and interview skills development activities, and occupationally focused short programmes (OECD, 2021).

The conceptual framework by the ILO and ETF (2021), provides a broad framework for measuring career guidance services, particularly in low and middle-income countries. It suggests career guidance needs to be well-coordinated; sufficiently funded; high quality; accessible; and utilises technology to provide quality career development support. Examples of good practices for each element of the framework are provided below.

- **Coordination.** A good example of coordination can be seen from the CEDEFOP, which emphasizes coordination between service providers, especially among education and employment sectors, to work together, avoid duplication and ensure they are aware of the needs of the labour market and learning opportunities (CEDEFOP, 2021). Likewise, most European Union member states have established national career guidance working groups or forums, such as the Council for the National Qualifications Framework in Serbia, where members include educators, employers, youth, local governments, healthcare providers, private sector, trade unions, secondary schools, higher education institutions and civil society (ILO and ETF, 2021).
- **Funding.** South Africa offers a good example of career guidance funding. The country established a National Skills Fund (NSF) in 1999 which aims to provide funds to support programmes considered as national priorities in the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). The budget of the NSF comes from various sources, such as skills development levies over enterprises, interest earned on investments, uncommitted surpluses from the education sector and skills authorities, funds from the Parliament and from donations (ILO and ETF, 2021).

Another example, from the United Kingdom, is an assessment of benchmarks of good practice in school career guidance, which was commissioned by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation in 2013 to calculate the cost of running a career guidance service in medium-sized schools across England. Each benchmark was broken down into a set of tasks, including how long each task would take and who would carry it out. Through the assessment, the foundation was able to determine the costs of implementing the benchmarks in each school along with the benefits of better career guidance services (Sultana, 2018).

- **Quality.** In the United Kingdom, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is an example of a government organisation offering strategic leadership and quality assurance of career services on a national level. The organisation serves as the key resource centre for service delivery for government, employers, career service providers and the general public. SDS provides career services for people of all ages, including up-to-date information on careers and options for work-based learning through workshop materials and online digital content, and research and studies to provide evidence-based information for the improvement or revision of national policies in career development (ILO and ETF, 2021).

In Australia, Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners⁹ have been established by the Career Industry Council of Australia. The standards outline the systems and procedures defining the career industry, its membership and services. The main elements of the standards include a Code of Ethics, entry-level qualifications, continuing professional development and competency framework that ensure the quality of career guidance services (Career Industry Council of Australia, 2019). Similarly, the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe (NICE) developed the European Competence Standards in 2016, emphasising categories of competence, including career counselling, career education, career assessment and information, career service management, and social systems intervention (Sultana, 2018).

- **Access.** In the Caribbean Island of Saint Lucia, the Caribbean Youth Empowerment Programme (CYEP) has established the Career Guidance Center as an accessible, safe and comfortable space for youth to access training, coaching and counselling sessions. This centre also provides computers and phones to ensure that youth have tools to research information on educational and career opportunities (International Youth Foundation, 2014).
- **Technology.** In Kazakhstan, an Electronic Labour Exchange (E-Exchange) platform was set up in 2018 as a centralised information resource for job-related information in the country by using modern Information Communication Technology (ICT) to ensure accessibility. This platform provides information on employment, job vacancies, a CV database, diagnostic tests and analytical data on the labour market to the public. It helps connect job seekers and job providers by providing information on vacancies and individual applicants (ILO and ETF, 2021).

In the United Kingdom, the Careers Advisory Service Computer Aid (CASCAiD)'s career guidance software offers career database, information on education and training which helps users explore their interests, skills, occupational levels and health factors as well as career planning and management. The software is well known among various stakeholders, including career companies, commercial HR consultancies, councils, schools, universities, colleges of further education, training organisations, and organisations dealing with ex-offenders among others (Pellegrini et al., 2013).

In India, the Central Board of Secondary Education provides an online career guidance and counselling portal for students of Class 9-12 where they can access over 560 careers, 25,000 colleges and vocational institutes, 1,200 scholarships, and 1,150 entrance examinations (Sharma, 2021).

⁹ "Career development" was adopted in 2006 as the overarching term in the Australian career industry. Internationally, the terms "career development" and "career guidance" have been used synonymously.

2.2 Policies related to career guidance for adolescents and youth in Thailand

In Thailand, career guidance is a component of labour force readiness. The two key ministries involved in the provision of career guidance are the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour. The main objective of career guidance is for students to be able to decide their further studies or choose suitable careers that will lead to employment, reduce unemployment, and job changes in the long run (Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour, 2016a).

Career guidance services for adolescents and youth operated by the public sector can be classified into two categories based on the status of adolescents and youth. Adolescents and youth who are in the education system mainly access career guidance services through their educational institutions where the Ministry of Education is mainly responsible for developing career guidance curricula from primary to high school levels or in vocational education. Meanwhile, adolescents and youth who have dropped out of school can access the Ministry of Labour's career guidance services.

Although the National Education Strategy Plan and the Labour Master Plan emphasize that career guidance services should be tailored to youth and their needs, in practice, public services and interventions tend to encourage them to study or pursue careers in the country's dominant industries. This can be seen, for example, from the Ministry of Education's policy to increase the ratio of students in vocational education and the Thai Labour Development Masterplan, which emphasizes career guidance activities in special economic zones influencing the design and implementation of education and career guidance in secondary schools in the region.

The Cabinet Resolution on Labour Force Readiness for the Labour Market, issued on 29 December 2015, is the key policy for career guidance primarily aimed at high school students. This Cabinet Resolution stemmed from a Ministry of Labour's study that highlighted more than half of grade 9 students did not receive systematic career and education guidance, limiting their ability to make decisions about further education (Ministry of Labour, 2015). This Cabinet Resolution requires: 1) collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education, as well as other relevant organisations¹⁰ that run schools to provide career and education guidance prior to graduation, with the Ministry of Labour providing support for students' capacity assessment and analysis, career information, and labour market trends for school counsellors and other staff; and 2) education and career guidance for grades 9-12 students are set as a goal and indicator of the annual performance of education institutions (Cabinet Resolution on the issue of Labour Force Readiness for the Labour Market on December 29, 2015, 2015).

The Thai Labour Development Masterplan 2017-2021 emphasizes the importance of career guidance and career readiness evaluation beginning at primary school to prepare and develop the labour force to be productive manpower for the 10 major sectors: 1) next-generation automotive; 2) smart electronic; 3) affluent, medical and wellness tourism; 4) agriculture and biotechnology; 5) food for the future; 6) automation and robotics; 7) aviation and logistics; 8) biofuel and biochemical; 9) digital; and 10) medical and comprehensive healthcare. The Ministry of Labour's Department of Employment is primarily in charge of career guidance services and implementation (Ministry of Labour, 2016).

¹⁰ Schools in Thailand are divided into three types, 1) schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education 2) schools under the local government organisations such as Provincial Administration Organisation or Municipality and 3) private schools.

According to the **Ministry of Labour Action Plan 2021** in response to this Masterplan, career guidance extends from primary school students to children and youth in detention centres, long-term unemployed youth, young people with special needs, youth workers, youth who are out of the education system, and military conscripts who are about to complete their service term. The career guidance programme also includes capacity building for career counsellors and career guidance practitioners, career guidance networking, and the establishment of the Trithep Centre¹¹ to provide career guidance services to undergraduate students and those who have recently graduated from college. As part of the 2021 plan to promote employment in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), career guidance services and interventions are emphasized in this special economic zone. The Department of Employment is primarily in charge of services and interventions of career guidance (Ministry of Labour, 2020).

Strategy Plan 2 (*Manpower Production and Development, Research and Innovation to Strengthen Country Competence*) of the **National Education Plan 2017-2036** aims to achieve manpower with necessary skills and competencies based on labour market needs and the country’s economic and social development. The strategy’s indicators include a database, the demand for manpower according to industrial sectors, a higher proportion of students in vocational education compared to general education, and a higher proportion of students in health science, science, and technology compared to students in social studies.

This strategy emphasizes increasing the number of students enrolled in vocational education every five years from 2017 to 2036 at 45:55, 50:50, 60:40, and 70:30, respectively, to address the need for manpower from vocational courses in all regions’ economic development (see Table 2). It suggests guidance in educational institutions as one of the primary methods for students to make decisions about their studies and careers. The plan requires the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), the Ministry of Education, and other relevant organisations responsible for basic education to employ effective guidance to help students develop an attitude toward vocational education and enable them to develop a study plan for employment (Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education, 2017).

Table 2: Expected ratio of students enrolled in vocational education (2017-2036)

No	Year	Proportion	
		Academic education	Vocational education
1	Current situation	40	60
2	1-5	45	55
3	6-10	50	50
4	11-15	60	40
5	16-20	70	30

Source: 2017-2036 National Education Plan, Ministry of Education

¹¹ In 2020, the Ministry of Labour established the Trithep Centre, with the goal of enabling workers to access employment with better-paying jobs. The centre serves as a one-stop service for comprehensive employment, employment promotion, and the development of the employment system. One of their primary services is career guidance, which helps employees learn about themselves and find jobs that match their qualifications, skills, and preferences.

The Ministry of Education's 2020-2022 Strategy Plan states that the Ministry of Education should improve education guidance programmes tailored to students and raise awareness among students and parents about the importance of lifelong learning and self-training for employment. The plan also stipulates that the Ministry should create a digital learning platform and assist students to use technology as a tool for learning and career development. Furthermore, the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) is charged with developing career knowledge and skills that meet the needs of the local, provincial, and regional labour markets (Ministry of Education, 2020).

2.3 Studies on career guidance and related issues in Thailand

There has been limited research on career guidance and related issues in Thailand. Studies found from 2014-2021 provide information about the quality of current career guidance services and interventions and limitations of accessibility. However, studies on the factors that cause service limitations are still lacking. In addition, there are limited studies on the needs of adolescents and youth, their attitudes towards career paths, their lifestyles, preferred career guidance services and interventions and the support they need, especially from the NEETs' viewpoints.

Below is an outline of available key findings which reveal limitations in terms of accessibility and quality of career guidance services in educational and training institutions, and the unmet needs of students and youth entering the labour force in terms of education and career guidance to help them achieve their career aspirations, and the demands for such guidance to come from professional practitioners.

Students, particularly those in high school and college, lack the self-knowledge and capacity to make career-related decisions. This limitation is caused by students' lack of confidence and access to appropriate guidance and labour market information, such as the nature of different professions and income (Rojsutee and Yongyuan, 2014). High school students who did not receive career guidance but made good decisions for their further education and career tended to be students with high academic performance, whereas students with low academic performance had difficulty making decisions (Kormanee, 2016).

A study conducted by the Division of Labour Market Research, Department of Labour, Ministry of Labour, in 2019 revealed that students in grades 9 and 12 shared a common characteristic in that they preferred to choose further education or careers based on personal preference, indicating that they were not well prepared for higher education and lacked adequate information to inform their decisions (Division of Labour Market Research, 2019). Similarly, Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) discovered that due to lack of proper guidance, young people may be unable to discover their passion, know their capabilities, and understand what roles they could play, causing some, particularly those in the NEET group, to face difficulty in finding a career that excites them (TDRI, 2020).

Career guidance services at the lower and upper secondary school levels are limited and do not help students identify their own skills and aspirations. In a study on the needs of grade 12 students at a Demonstration School, Silpakorn University, a high level of need for career guidance services was discovered. Students expressed a need for career guidance to assist them in accessing career information, especially on careers that are in high demand in the labour market, and career advancement. They also stated the importance of speaking with someone who is knowledgeable or an expert in a specific profession (Vatthanophas, Nirut and Wongsakdirin, 2018). Similarly, a focus group discussion with students at Wat Udom Rangsri School revealed that career guidance is very helpful in guiding students on what they could pursue in the future; however, students pointed out that the career guidance offered in their school does not match their future career preferences. Students prefer career guidance that provides them with a good foundation for the future and is beneficial to them (TDRI, 2020). In addition, more than 52 per cent of students in grade 9 did not receive a capacity and skill

test, nor educational and career guidance (Division of Labour Market Research, Department of Employment, 2014). The main factors influencing grade 9 students' decisions were their own GPAs, and their parents' occupations, income and debt levels (Division of Labour Market Research, 2014). The study, which focused on case studies of ten grade 9 students, also revealed that the majority of the students interviewed had no idea what they wanted to do with their lives or what they wanted to do with their careers. Most of them chose their further education based on their parents' needs or friends' advice without considering labour market trends or their own skills (Ladloy, 2021).

Unemployed youth lack adequate access to career counselling or employment services. According to the Study and Analysis of Youth Workers' Entry into the Labour Market and Employment in Thailand, more than half of unemployed youth did not receive career guidance or job search assistance. The study found the main reason youth became unemployed was due to family obligations such as caring for their children, parents, or elderly relatives. However, even though they were willing to work or attempted to find work, most of them were not invited to job interviews due to their limited education and skills (Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University, 2019).

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CHAPTER 3

Main Findings

This section highlights the main findings from the literature review, in-depth interviews with key informants and focus group discussions. It aims to answer the study's first two research questions:

1. What are the key existing career guidance services and interventions available for adolescents and youth in Thailand?
2. What are the key gaps, challenges and opportunities in providing career guidance?

The third research question on how career guidance can be delivered more effectively in Thailand will be discussed in the recommendations section.

3.1 What are the key existing career guidance services and interventions available for adolescents and youth in Thailand?

In general, adolescents and youth in Thailand access career guidance programmes provided by three main service providers:

1. The government sector, which includes schools or institutes such as the Provincial Institutes for Skill Development, Provincial Labour Offices and Bangkok Employment Offices.
2. The private sector, such as social enterprises or businesses.
3. Civil society organisations (CSOs), primarily as part of income-generating and adolescent and youth capacity building programmes.

Adolescents' and youth's opportunities and access to the programmes are primarily determined by their affiliations, location, access to the internet and electronic devices, and access to information or guidance. The quality and diversity of services adolescents and youth access are generally influenced by their background and economic status.

Target population

According to the Labour Masterplan 2017-2021 and the National Education Plan 2017-2036, all adolescents and youth are eligible to receive career guidance services. The Ministry of Labour targets children and youth in education, out of school, those with disabilities, juveniles, and so on, whereas the Ministry of Education covers children and youth in formal, non-formal, and in-formal education from kindergarten to grade 12 in OBEC schools and other schools using the OBEC curriculum. International and alternative schools each have their own curriculum. Students in grades 10-12 are the main target group for activities organised by social enterprises given that there are high demands among these groups of students for career information as they will soon enter college.

Meanwhile, NEETs, youth in the labour force and youth in vocational schools are among the target groups for TPQI's career guidance programmes. However, training and workshops offered by the Departments of Employment and Skill Development, TPQI and social enterprises are not generally intended for children and youth to individually access the materials. **Instead, participants in these organisations' programmes are normally recruited through a partnership or existing network.** Similarly, UPBEAN, A-Chieve and WeSpace-EdVISORY reach out to students and teachers through their partners and funding agencies. For example, A-Chieve worked with Yuvabadhana Foundation¹² to access schools in different provinces (A-Chieve, 27 December 2021).

¹² Yuvabadhana Foundation is a non-profit organisation established in 1993 with a focus on creating opportunities and improving education for underprivileged youth in Thailand.

Participants in provincial training programmes for children and youth who have dropped out of school are recruited through school or the Provincial Social Development and Social Security Office. Participants for career training for youth with disabilities in Rayong, Bangkok, Ayutthaya, and Nakorn Ratchasima are also recruited through the same channels. TPQI also reaches out to their participants via vocational colleges and networking.

Geographic coverage

Through the 30,405 OBEC schools across Thailand and the 76 Provincial Labour Offices, the **government career guidance services cover all provinces across Thailand. Free online programmes** developed by the Department of Employment and social enterprises also reach children and youth in both urban and rural areas, if they can access the internet.

However, **skill and career training programmes delivered by the Department of Employment and the Department of Skill Development have primarily taken place in urban areas**, such as at the Provincial Institute for Skills Development, and organised in more rural areas only occasionally. CSOs conduct career guidance activities in rural areas, particularly in remote areas, such as ethnic villages in the north or conflict-affected zones in the Deep South of Thailand.

Operating hours and days

The operating hours and days of career guidance services for children and youth in Thailand depend on the policy and procedure of the service providers. For example, **career and employment counselling at the Provincial Labour Offices operate according to government working hours, while the skills and career training conducted by the Department of Skill Development are mainly organised during weekends.** Students can access career guidance in classes which also provide other skills and knowledge such as communication, life skills and emotional management. According to the career guidance guideline, students in primary, middle and high school levels can attend career guidance classes for 40 hours per year (OBEC, 2008b). However, in general, **school students only receive career guidance sessions for around 10-15 hours per year.** Occasionally, students can also attend career guidance activities organised by schools, Provincial Labour Offices, vocational colleges or by other groups.

3.1.1 Government sector

The Royal Thai government is the primary provider of career guidance services. While the Ministry of Education focuses on adolescents and youth in formal and non-formal education, the Ministry of Labour offers services to adolescents and youth both in and out of school. Under the Labour Masterplan and National Education Plan, the Provincial Labour Offices, Provincial Institutes for Skill Development, and schools are able to tailor career guidance services to each province's context and the needs of adolescents and youth, while remaining consistent with career guidance's primary objectives of:

1. Preparing and developing the labour force to be productive manpower for Thailand's ten major employment sectors.
2. Increasing the proportion of students enrolled in vocational education compared with students enrolled in academic courses every five years from 2017 to 2036 (please see Table 2), to meet the demands for vocational courses in the country's regional economic development manpower needs.
3. Customising educational guidance programmes to emphasize the value of lifelong learning and self-training for employment for students and parents.

Ministry of Education

The Thai government deems children should start to obtain career guidance in elementary school (Ministry of Labour, 2016). As of 2021, there were 12,482,444 children and youth from kindergarten to undergraduate level in Thailand (National Statistical Office, 2021), all of whom are the target of career guidance services. Thai children and youth outside of the education system, as well as migrant and stateless children living in Thailand, are targeted via informal education services. OBEC developed guidelines for student counsellors, teachers, and educators to organise career guidance classes or activities in school. The career activities introduced in the guidelines include: 1) skill assessment; 2) skill development; 3) career information and education; 4) short course programmes;¹³ 5) workplace visits; and 6) job shadowing. This guideline also applies to special education, such as schools for students with disabilities.

Thailand has a variety of school types, including 1) public schools administered by OBEC, municipal and provincial government organisations, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, and schools for students with disabilities; 2) private schools, such as general private schools, religious schools, non-traditional schools, and international schools; and 3) demonstration schools located adjacent to universities. Thus, career guidance activities provided in schools vary according to the school's approach, capacity, and resources, while private schools may design programmes independently without being required to align their programmes with the Ministry of Labour or Ministry of Education's primary objectives.

Ministry of Labour

The Ministry of Labour oversees the provision of career guidance services for adolescents and youth in school as well as those who are out of school. According to the Equitable Education Fund (EEF), as of 2018, there were approximately 1,276,473 out-of-school children and youth between the ages of 12 and 21 or around 16.2 per cent of all children and youth in these age groups (Equitable Education Fund, 2018).

The Ministry of Labour's career guidance programmes for adolescents and youth include: 1) skills and career training for disadvantaged adolescents and youth, including those who have dropped out of school, live in poverty, and those with a disability; 2) counselling for career and employment opportunities; and 3) school job fairs and career and employment discussions in collaboration with educational institutions and the network of student counsellors.

To support the provision of career guidance services to adolescents and youth, the Department of Employment created manuals to assist labour officers and student counsellors in educational institutions when organising career guidance activities and programmes. The Department of Employment's *Manual on Preparation for the Labour Market: Career Guidance Services*¹⁴ stipulates 13 key principles in the provision of career guidance services for adolescents and youth as follows:

1. Career guidance is a continuing process extending before, during and after education;
2. All children, adolescents and youth are covered under the government services;
3. Services must adopt a user-centred approach, tailored to the users' preferences, skills, characters, competencies etc.;
4. The rights, dignity and choices of children and youth must be respected;

¹³ Schools may collaborate with the vocational college in the area to develop an accredited short course programme for students at high school level. After the course, students gain the certificate which they can use for applying the job or continue study in the vocation school (Student counsellor, 9 February 2022).

¹⁴ (คู่มือการเตรียมความพร้อมก่อนเข้าสู่ตลาดแรงงาน: การบริการแนะแนวอาชีพของกรมจัดหางาน) Please see the publication at https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/vgnew_th/b5dc9e4b64db8d73895ffd0ffaee2e1a.pdf

5. Services shall cover: a) personal survey; b) labour market information; c) career counselling; d) placement services; e) monitoring and evaluation; and ensure f) career guidance services and interventions are aligned with adolescents' and youth's education plan;
7. Officer(s) in charge of career guidance must be available in schools;
8. Coordination and collaboration with different organisations must be fostered;
9. The age of children, adolescents and youth must be taken into account;
10. Career counsellors or facilitators are required to have broader knowledge on the current and future labour market trends and updated information on careers;
11. Materials and tools on career guidance, such as surveys, skill and preferences assessments must be easily available;
12. Information on labour market must be available; and
13. Parental involvement and community resources mobilization must be encouraged (Department of Employment, 2016a).

In 2018, the Department of Employment published the *Manual on Preparation for the Labour Market: Facilitating Guidance Users to Understand Labour Market Trends*,¹⁵ serving as a guideline for the work of student counsellors. This manual consists of an introduction to labour market trends, labour market information from the Department of Employment, and labour market information from other sources.

Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (Public Organisation) - TPQI

TPQI is a government agency under the supervision of the Prime Minister. TPQI's main objective is to promote, support and develop the professional qualifications system, support various professional groups to establish occupational standards, and certify competency according to occupational standards (TPQI, 2021a).

TPQI's programmes target workers of various ages, with NEETs, youth workers, and youth in vocational schools being among their primary target groups. Their career guidance programmes for adolescents and youth include the following: 1) skill assessment and online career information and education; 2) onsite and online training; and 3) certification of occupational standards and competency standards. Youth are also included in other programmes, such as the E-Workforce Ecosystem (EWE) platform and the E-Portfolio.¹⁶ It is important to note that, as part of the process of developing the EWE and E-Portfolio, TPQI, in collaboration with UNICEF Thailand, organised a youth consultation with the aim to gather feedbacks and inputs from youth on the design and development of the system based on their needs and demands (TPQI, 2021b).

3.1.2 Social Enterprises

Social enterprises are increasingly playing a role in Thailand's provision of career guidance services for adolescents and youth. Their programmes are available both online and offline. Their online programmes primarily focus on self-assessment of abilities and skills, preferences, and competencies, as well as career information and career discussions. Through partnerships, some social enterprises can reach a larger number of adolescents and youth enrolled in the country's education system. For example, UPBEAN and A-Chieve provide training for student counsellors throughout the country in collaboration with the Thai Guidance Association and OBEC. According to UPBEAN, approximately 5,000 teachers were reached through their workshops (UPBEAN, 5 January 2022),

¹⁵ (คู่มือการเตรียมความพร้อมก่อนเข้าสู่ตลาดแรงงาน: กระบวนการช่วยให้ผู้รับบริการแนะแนววิถีทิศทางตลาดแรงงาน) Please see the publication at https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/vgnew_th/d2e296d698b128e6251255de20b3c11c.pdf

¹⁶ EWE is a smart platform that connects data from various organisations. This platform serves as a portfolio for applicants, storing their education, training and work experiences. It also includes a job matching mechanism connecting employers and applicants (TPQI, 2021b).

while A-Chieve's programmes for student counsellors during 2018-2021 accommodated 105 teachers from 61 schools in 25 provinces (A-Chieve, 2021). WeSpace-EdVISORY's self-assessment programme funded by the Technology and Innovative-Based Enterprise Development Fund (TED Fund) has also been used in OBEC schools throughout Thailand.

In addition to the basic services offered online and through other social media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, LINE, YouTube, and TikTok, social enterprises also organise career guidance programmes for adolescents and youth who are interested in exploring specific careers in greater detail, such as a session with a professional, job shadowing, training programmes, and career camps for which participants must pay a fee. Although these opportunities are rewarding, the cost is likely to hinder the participation of adolescents and youth living in poverty.

3.1.3 Civil society organisations (CSOs)

CSOs play a crucial role in the provision of career guidance programmes, particularly in rural, remote, and conflict-affected areas where public programmes are inaccessible. Mainly, CSOs' career guidance programmes are conducted through income generating and capacity building programmes which emphasize career skill training and marketing. For example, the Youth Connection Foundation provides career and employment counselling and job matching services to ethnic youth and youth along the Thai-Myanmar border (Youth Connection Foundation, 2022). Save the Children provides career skills training to female youth who have dropped out of school in the Deep South. Along with training, the organisation also provides marketing assistance and funding to start businesses (Women development consultant, Pattani province, 31 January 2022).

3.2 What are the key gaps, challenges and opportunities for career guidance services in Thailand?

This section describes the implementation of career guidance services and interventions in Thailand and analyses their effectiveness according to the conceptual framework suggested by the ILO and ETF (2021): 1) coordination; 2) funding; 3) quality; 4) access and 5) technology.

3.2.1 Coordination

As career guidance is often provided by several ministries and other non-governmental actors, it requires strategic leadership and well-functioning coordination within sectors, but also across sectors. Cooperation among government, international organisations, the private sector, CSOs, and relevant stakeholders is needed to facilitate the development of a long-term career guidance policy as well as citizen access to services and products.

In Thailand, the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education collaborate at the national, regional, and provincial levels and share policy responsibilities and service delivery. Additionally, these two ministries have been collaborating with a variety of stakeholders, including government agencies, international organisations, private sector, and CSOs.

In 2018, the Department of Employment launched the guideline *Building Career Guidance Networks*, which emphasizes cooperation with individuals, groups, academic institutions and organisations working on career guidance (Department of Employment, 2018). The Employment Promotion Division, Department of Employment, signed a MoU with OBEC in 2017 to organise seminars and develop a career guidance system in schools. By working closely with OBEC and the Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office, the Department of Employment and Department of Skill Development are reaching out to children and youth both in and out of school, especially disadvantaged groups.

TPQI adopts a long-term organisational coordination strategy. It collaborates closely with the private sector and various professional associations, as well as the Industrial Competency Board, to provide a support system for professional qualification certificates that is aligned with the current labour market trends and industry demand.

In the last five years, given the emergence of Education Technology (EdTech) start-ups in Thailand, collaboration between social enterprises and government agencies has been increasing steadily. EdTech social enterprises play an important role in the provision of materials and tools for student counsellors nationwide. These solutions fill the gaps where teachers do not have access to user-friendly tools, current knowledge, or insights about future labour market trends. Examples include cooperation between organisations under the Ministry of Education and social enterprises such as UPBEAN, WeSpace-EdVISORY and A-Chieve, with the aim to provide solutions for career guidance services for adolescents and youth through online skills assessment models and data management, applications, and capacity building activities for teachers, while OBEC and other relevant stakeholders facilitate their reach to students and teachers nationwide. However, because collaboration between the Ministry of Education and EdTech social enterprises is limited to each programme's duration, coordination tends to be short-term and suspended following the completion of the project.

At the practitioners' level, regional networks among student counsellors within provinces and across provinces were established during and after student counsellor training or workshops organised by the Thai Guidance Association, Department of Employment and social enterprises such as UPBEAN and A-Chieve. Facebook or LINE are the main channels of communication among networks. These networks aim to share resources, experiences and information among the members on education, skill training and other knowledge which student counsellors can pass on to their students. The number of student counsellors in each network is relatively high, for example, the student counsellor network established by the participants of A-Chieve workshop consists of 59,000 members, while the Si Sa Ket Province student counsellor network consists of 26,000 members.

Despite existing positive initiatives and coordination efforts, **several challenges remain**. Stakeholders interviewed for this study recognised that **coordination is still short-lived** and focuses primarily on training, workshops or seminars. There is also **a lack of co-research** or co-assessment in order to make the most of each organisation's expertise.

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The studies related to labour in Thailand are fragmented. Each organisation works on their own, such as the Ministry of Labour or the National Statistical Office, thus, we don't have the labour data that can portray the relevant contexts.

CEO, special enterprise, 10 December 2021

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The limited number of programmes for students who dropped out of the formal education system during the COVID-19 pandemic is also a sign of weak coordination between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour. According to data from five non-formal and informal education centres in Bangkok and Kanchanaburi Province as of 2 December 2021, 1,793 students had dropped out of secondary school, all of whom were under the age of 15. While the majority of students in the non-formal and informal systems are adults, this group of students requires career guidance activities that are appropriate for their age, situation and background. Similarly, **there is a lack of information on the number of dropped out students** who have subsequently gained employment or are looking for a job and require guidance for making decisions or in need of information about labour rights, benefits, and welfare.

3.2.2 Funding

Funding for career guidance services and interventions for adolescents and youth in Thailand comes mainly from three sources: 1) government; 2) private sector, and 3) funding agencies. The public budget for career guidance services is allocated annually based on the fiscal year to government agencies, namely OBEC under the Ministry of Education and the Departments of Employment and Skill Development under the Ministry of Labour. In general, the public does not have access to the detailed budget breakdown for projects or activities of a department, division or office. As a result, it was not possible to determine the public budget spent for career guidance services and interventions. However, according to the manual on the implementation of projects/activities for the fiscal years 2021 and 2022 published by the Division of Employment Promotion, Department of Employment, the budget for career guidance services has been significantly reduced from the previous year. Budget information on career guidance for the Department of Employment states that for the project on *Preparation of Labour Force: Career Guidance and Career Promotion*, the Department received 27,021,250 Baht for 2021 (Department of Employment, 2020) and 18,267,200 Baht for fiscal year 2022 (Department of Employment, 2021).

CSOs and the private sector, such as social enterprises, typically receive public funds through government organisations that act as funding agencies, such as the Thai Health Promotion Foundation and the Technology and Innovation-Based Enterprise Development (TED) Fund. Some social enterprises also receive university funding for projects involving the development of career guidance tools for students. For example, Sripatum and Huachiew Chalermprakiet Universities provided funding for UPBEAN to develop a career guidance application for their students. WeSpace-EdVISORY collaborates with universities such as Mahidol, Chulalongkorn, and Kasetsart to develop career guidance programmes for undergraduate students, including skill assessment and career education. Currently, financial support from universities is the primary source of income for WeSpace-EdVISORY (WeSpace-EdVISORY, 10 December 2021).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding is also a major source of funds for social enterprises, particularly from companies interested in education and child and youth development. CSR funding has been provided to UPBEAN, A-Chieve and WeSpace-EdVISORY for capacity building programmes, such as teacher training, student camps, and workshops.

Another source of income for social enterprises comes from financial contributions made by youth clients who participate in their programmes. For example, A-Chieve implements a session with a career model and a job shadow/training programme that costs between 400 and 5,000 Baht (A-Chieve, 2022), while Know Are's education and career guidance camp for children aged 7-12 years costs around 9,900 Baht (Know Are, 2022).

Nevertheless, **funding continues to be a challenge for both the government and the private sector. One key issue is the timeframe required for government budget proposals.** According to the Employment Promotion Division, Department of Employment, **most government organisations are required to draft and submit proposals three years in advance of the target fiscal year** to obtain funding. For example, in 2022, organisations would have to develop a project proposal and budget for 2025. The officers of the Employment Promotion Division, Department of Employment, discovered that the concepts and activities that were drafted three years ago are now out-of-date due to the rapid development of technology and disruptions from COVID-19.

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Our main challenge is the requirement of advanced forecasting and planning. The government system requires us to plan the programme and budget three years in advance, and when the time comes, we found that what we have planned is already out of date and irrelevant to the current context.

*Senior officer, Employment Promotion Division,
Department of Employment, 3 February 2022*

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Furthermore, the budget funding agencies allocate to social enterprises and CSOs typically cover activities for a period of 1-3 years or less. **Due to this lack of long-term funding, some social enterprises reported having to suspend some of their activities.** Without additional funding, they are unable to continue operating, and inevitably some career guidance services cannot be sustained.

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Due to a lack of funds, we are unable to continue organising workshops for student counsellors on how to implement career guidance activities.

CEO, Social enterprise, 5 January 2022

I believe that, in addition to career guidance services, working with schools to help teachers understand the concept of safe spaces in school is critical. This is the foundation for career guidance and other guidance activities, as it allows students to express their feelings and raise questions. We would like to work with schools to encourage teachers to understand and apply this concept, but we are unable to do so due to a lack of funds.

CEO, Social enterprise, 27 December 2021

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3.2.3 Quality

The quality of career guidance services can be assessed according to the following sub-categories: content; parental involvement; human resources, including technical capacity and staff development; information management mechanisms; and labour market information systems. Further details are provided for each sub-category below:

Content

Government career guidance services offer limited, policy-led options, while social enterprises are more client-led.

In Thailand, career guidance services tend to be decentralized. Both the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education support and facilitate their respective regional, provincial and local organisations in designing programmes for students. However, although **Provincial Labour Offices, Provincial Institutes for Skill Development and schools** are permitted to design programmes based on the location and circumstances of adolescents and youth in their region, they **are required to follow the Ministry of Labour’s policy emphasizing careers in the 10 major employment sectors, and the Ministry of Education’s policy (laid out in the 2017-2036 National Education Plan) to increase student enrolment in vocational education** and meet the indicators stated in the Department of Employment’s Manual on Preparation for the Labour Market: Career Guidance Services. Such measures impact and shape career guidance activities in schools, affecting the provincial offices and schools’ ability to design programmes that go beyond these policies, thus **limiting students’ options**.



Schools can design and implement career guidance programmes based on their location and the context of their students, but they must adhere to OBEC’s policies, criteria, and indicators.

Senior government officer, 24 January 2022



Despite such limitations, the Employment Promotion Division, Department of Employment, also collaborated with OBEC in organising annual seminars for teachers and students, including information on job market trends. However, the seminars were temporarily suspended during COVID-19. They also created a separate website providing career information for youth and other workers.

Meanwhile, the focus of programmes by the Department of Skill Development is primarily skill enhancement, career training, and job matching, due to the fact that the main target groups are disadvantaged adolescents and youth, such as children and youth living in poverty or with disabilities, and students who plan to enter the labour market after high school. In 2022, the Department of Skill Development is providing training for adolescents and youth with disabilities, particularly female youth, in Bangkok, Ayutthaya, Rayong, and Nakhon Ratchasima provinces in collaboration with the ILO as part of the Young Futuremakers Programme. The project aims to recruit 240 youth with disabilities along with additional 300 youth. As of March 2022, the project provided training for 100 youth including 18 youth with disabilities. Among these, 49 youth and 18 youth with disabilities completed the training.

By comparison, the strategy used by NGOs and social enterprises tends to be more client focused.

According to interviews with UPBEAN, A-Chieve, and WeSpace-EdVISORY, the starting point of services provided by social enterprises and CSOs begins with **targeted assessments to research the needs and conditions of their clients**, including students, parents and teachers, prior to implementation. UPBEAN, for example, collects information on these needs from their website – Admission Premium – and identifies what their clients want to know more about, including the possibility of entering university, career information and labour market trends. UPBEAN then designs career guidance activities to address these inquiries. This design feature enables social enterprises to **align their programme content with the needs of adolescents and youth** as well as current or future market trends.

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We began our programme by gathering information on the needs of students and what they are interested in, what they want to know, and then we developed our programme based on that.

CEO, social enterprise, 27 December 2021

Before organising a workshop or a talk, we need to know our participants, so we talk with schools or sometimes send questionnaires to students to find out what they want to know about careers or the job market.

CEO, social enterprise, 5 January 2022

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Activities implemented by social enterprises also appear to be more comprehensive as they cover basic as well as advanced services for job market preparation. For example, UPBEAN, A-Chieve and WeSpace-EdVISORY provide online skill assessment and career information free of charge. They also collaborated with OBEC to organise career education workshops for students, teachers, and regional educators. However, all of these workshops and collaborations discontinued in 2020, at the end of the project duration.

The range and availability of service models is influenced by schools’ capacity and resources.

In general, most service providers tend to offer basic services such as skill assessment, career information, career education, career counselling, and employment counselling. Advanced services such as career talks, job fairs, workplace visits, job shadowing, application and interview skills development activities, occupationally focused short programmes, part-time work, volunteering opportunities and internships are still limited in the country. Only a few service providers, such as social enterprises, implement these activities.

Career guidance activities in schools under OBEC or which use the OBEC system are mainly organised through guidance class once a week, in which skill assessment and career information are the most common activities. Occasionally, public schools invite parents, alumni, or others to give talks about their occupations, while private schools might set up workplace visits or job shadowing.

Due to resource constraints such as limited capacity of student counsellors and limited budget, government schools can only provide basic services, such as career information and career education, although OBEC’s manual for career guidance includes several activities that encourage students to explore different careers.

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I wanted to do job shadowing at the hospital because I'm interested in psychology, but I didn't have the opportunity, my school didn't help, and I didn't know who I should contact.

Female student in grade 12, Chiangmai province, focus group discussion 27 January 2022

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In contrast, students from private schools, such as demonstration or alternative schools, can participate in a variety of activities.

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At our school, students form groups and discuss their areas of interest as well as where they want to go for job shadowing. Every year, students aspiring to be doctors visit Ramathibodi Hospital to observe medical procedures. We write the letter, and the school approves it before sending it to the hospital. Some of us also work there as volunteers. I don't think it'll be difficult; some of the students' parents work as doctors at Rama Hospital.

Female student in grade 12 from a Bangkok demonstration school, 14 February 2022

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The content of career guidance activities lacks a future studies approach.

An expert working on the NEET issue and youth employment argues that the current career guidance services in Thailand do not consider the dynamic nature of careers. It is also noted that students have not been taught to consider the goal of education and they tend not to see the connections between education and careers. Furthermore, youth are not encouraged to develop self-knowledge and build a vision of their life in the future, which is a key element of career guidance.

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The dynamics of careers have changed recently. Multi skills are the most important requirements. The problem is youth don't know enough about themselves, they don't know their preferences and skills.

Lecturer, 19 February 2022

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The content of career guidance activities lacks workers' rights and welfare.

One of the most important aspects of career guidance services is preparing adolescents and youth for the job market. Knowledge of workers' rights and welfare is important alongside knowledge of career information or soft skills such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills. However, it is noticeable that schools and colleges, particularly vocational colleges, have not integrated this knowledge into their career guidance activities (Senior officer, Vocational Education Commission, Ministry of Education, 22 February 2022), despite some of their students entering the job market at a young age.

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There are many children and youth who have to work, some earn income for themselves, and some even earn income to take care of their family. Many of my friends in the vocational school also work and study at the same time. They earn less than adult workers even when they do the same job. They don't know about workers' rights and welfare. And they are not eligible for Social Security as they are younger than 18 years old.

Female student from vocational school, 21 January 2021

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Parental involvement

Recently, parents have become more informed about education and career information, as demonstrated by the establishment of parental clubs in some schools, where parents are required to evaluate career guidance activities in OBEC schools. According to UPBEAN and A-Chieve, parent clubs invited them into a few schools to give talks on current and future labour market trends and careers, as well as to organise activities related to skill assessment.

The Teacher Manual on enhancing skills and careers experiences for students developed by OBEC has one section that involves parents to evaluate career guidance activities. However, this is the only part of the manual that allows parental involvement (OBEC, 2018).

Some schools invite parents to participate in career guidance activities, for example, schools located in fishing and seafood communities arranged for students to visit fish and shrimp farms and invited parents to demonstrate how to make fish balls and fish cakes as part of their career guidance activities. In addition, some schools invited parents who are medical doctors, military and police officers and engineers to give talks about their careers to students.

The quality of parental involvement is determined by student counsellors' and parents' attitudes, values, and perceptions of different occupations and labour market trends. In some cases, parental involvement in career guidance services leads to better understanding and more support for their children's educational and career choices. But, in many cases, how parents perceive or value careers, incomes, and welfare plays a significant role in school-based career guidance services. A concern is that students who have limited career knowledge and lack decision-making skills may base their education and career decisions on their parents' preferences or values rather than their own choices.

Human resources

When it comes to service providers, student counsellors and other teachers in schools, career counsellors based in Provincial Labour Offices, and staff responsible for career guidance in the private sector and CSOs, all play an important role in providing career guidance services. However, while some have a specific role in career guidance, **most student counsellors, teachers and educators provide career guidance services as an additional task on top of their primary responsibilities** (Yupparach and Sudrung, 2017). Meanwhile, each Provincial Labour Office has only one or two professional career counsellors; many of them have a background in Psychology or Social Administration.

According to the president of the Thai Guidance Association, the student guidance system is not regulated by the National Education Act of B.E. 2542. (1999). As a result, **student guidance is frequently excluded from educational policies**. At the school level, the practice of student guidance lacks recognition and is viewed as an additional role and responsibility that may be assigned to any teacher, regardless of their educational background (Thai Guidance Association, 24 February 2022). The president of the Thai Guidance Association raised concerns that **student guidance is considered unimportant among some practitioners**, with a common belief that any teacher can perform as a student counsellor. Consequently, **there is no systematic recruitment for student counsellors**. Student counsellors are typically hired as contract teachers (President of the Thai Guidance Association, February 24, 2022), and many student counsellors in government schools lack the requisite academic background to deliver career guidance. For example, a study in Bangkok found that many student counsellors lacked a background in psychology counselling. Student counsellors also have limitations in terms of evaluation and providing guidance activities (Yupparach and Sudrung, 2017).

A study on student counsellors in northern Thailand also highlights the challenges associated with student guidance, such as the **lack of a support system** for both student guidance and student counsellors. For instance, the capacity to keep up-to-date with the latest information is vital for effective career guidance counselling. However, **many student counsellors have a heavy workload**, including teaching, grading, administrative work, and career development. This limits them from exploring new career information and keeping informed on labour market trends. At the same time, there are too few student counsellors, meaning they are unable to provide proper services to all their students (Tantrakul, 2014). Due to the large number of students in each class, student counselling cannot be tailored to each individual.



There are around 45-50 students in the class, and we have limited time to discuss our career preferences, so many of my friends and I could not participate in the discussions.

Grade 12 female student, Bangkok, 14 February 2022



Concerns around the capacity of student counsellors and provincial labour officers were raised by student focus group participants, who stated that career information provided by schools and Provincial Labour Offices is outdated, does not reflect current labour market trends, and **does not reflect students' preferences**. It was reported that student counsellors and other teachers tend to recommend careers such as doctors, dentists, pharmacists, engineers, and government officers, claiming that these jobs are secure, well-known and well-paid, without exploring other emerging careers.

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I don't understand why the student counsellors recommend only medicine or engineer. They don't seem to know about other careers that also provide good income and that we can work anywhere, at any age.

Grade 11 male student from Samutprakarn province, 15 January 2022

Teachers and other friends did not understand about social work, they are happy I study at Thammasat University, but they don't know what Social Administration is.

Second year female student from Ranong province, 22 January 2022

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Former students attending schools for children with disabilities indicated that within the school environment, they are not encouraged to dream and aspire to pursue careers other than those provided by the school or recommended by teachers. Some of them also stated that the career guidance model or curriculum is outdated. And even if schools introduce new careers, these careers are a long way from becoming a reality for the students.

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The career counsellors at our school introduced us to gardening, farming, cooking, Thai massage and handicrafts. For students who were good at sports, they are pushed to practice harder so they can attend international competitions and gain better income. But not all students are good at sport.

Focus group discussion with student with disabilities, 9 February 2022

I was told to live with the reality and accept that with my physical condition, I cannot do much. But this is not true. I am now studying at a university. I did not believe them, and many teachers were angry at me when I told them I wanted to go to university. If teachers and schools change perceptions towards children and youth with disabilities, I think the students will get more opportunities and discover their capacities.

Focus group discussion with student with disabilities, 9 February 2022

These days, school still teach us how to make the snacks they taught several years ago. The students don't know and are not introduced to new recipes. And these days, schools introduce us to smart farming. It is a good concept, but how many students can invest depends on the size of land owned by their family.

Focus group discussion with student with disabilities, 9 February 2022

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Therefore, the limitations of student counsellors must be considered, alongside the student counsellors' position and status within the education system, including a need to revise the available support system.

Conversely, social enterprise staff who are mostly young, living and working in the city and able to access the internet and foreign languages, are better equipped to provide information on current and future market trends and the possible means to achieve those careers.

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There are new issues, new skills emerging every day. If the kids are living in the city, they might be able to follow the latest trends. I just attended a workshop with teachers from the three southern border provinces, and they did not understand emerging careers. They had heard about digital or virtual currency or Metaverse, but they did not know how these things could lead to a career and income.

CEO, social enterprise, 5 January 2022

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Technical capacity and staff development

Staff development is important to both the government and the private sector. Training and workshops are the primary programmes for student counsellors in the provision of effective career guidance service.

The Department of Employment and OBEC, in collaboration with the Thai Guidance Association, regularly organises workshops and training on career guidance for their staff, teachers, and educators. They have also collaborated to create a manual for teaching and organising career guidance activities and classes. Moreover, they previously collaborated with social enterprises, such as A-Chieve and UPBEAN, in organising workshops, but for the last few years, the collaboration terminated as the project ended and there were limited funds to continue. Nevertheless, different private organisations have been providing student counselling training and workshops on a regular basis. For example, TruePlookpanya organises workshops for student counsellors a few times a year, both online and onsite. This company also offers tools for student counsellors to use in their career counselling activities.

Under the support of CSR funding and the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, social enterprises such as UPBEAN and A-Chieve also conducted capacity building programmes for student counsellors, particularly on skills assessment and new labour market trends, on a regular basis prior to COVID-19.

Currently, there are three manuals for career guidance services providers:

1. Manual on Preparation for the Labour Market: Career Guidance Services, Department of Employment
2. Teacher Manual on Enhancing Skills and Careers Experiences for Students, OBEC;
3. Training Curriculum for Student Counsellors and Counselling Personnel: Career Guidance for Employment, Thai Guidance Association.¹⁷

In addition, career guidance is included in the following student guidance manuals:

1. Guideline on the Provision of Student Guidance Activities in accordance with the OBEC Core Curriculum, OBEC (for grades 1 to 12)
2. Guidance Activities based on the 20 Years National Strategy, OBEC (for grades 8-9).

These manuals introduce principles for the provision of career guidance activities and guidelines on the roles of counsellors and how to implement effective career guidance activities in schools. Although these manuals are important tools for student counsellors, **they lack information on the relationship between career and quality of life**, such as students' ability to shift their economic and social status through employment. **They also lack suggestions on how to integrate career guidance with other subjects, how to address the needs of individual students, and how to organise activities that are tailored to students' skills and areas of interest.**

Information management mechanisms

Most service providers interviewed for this study considered data collection and management, particularly data obtained from skill assessment activities, as important. In general, the data provides the age of the young person, level of education, occupational information, areas of interest, skills and needs for career guidance, information about career decision-making process and information about ways to obtain information. For example, the skill assessment programme developed by WeSpace-EdVISORY has been used in most OBEC schools nationwide, allowing schools to see the entire data set in a short period of time. However, although the data reflects youth situations, hopes, expectations, and demands for career development across the country, **there has been little progress in utilizing the data set for evidence-based programming.** WeSpace-EdVISORY discovered that many schools and teachers still did not consider this data as important, and that **there was a lack of information, ideas, and resources on how to make better use of this data for student counsellors.**

Furthermore, although the implementation of career guidance programmes is evaluated primarily through participant count and feedback, **no systematic evaluation study has yet been conducted.** The current completion rate for training offered by the Department of Skill Development demonstrates the need for better monitoring and evaluation. Despite the Department of Skill Development's efforts to improve the skills of adolescents and youth (particularly girls) who dropped out of school since grade 9, so that they can access paid career training at the workplace and be employed, less than 60 per cent of the youth participants in each batch (20 youth participants per batch) completed the training programme.¹⁸ While this training programme is still in progress, no systematic evaluation of the programme has been conducted to improve the programme's suitability for the conditions and needs of adolescents and youth.

17 1) คู่มือการเตรียมความพร้อมก่อนเข้าสู่ตลาดแรงงาน การบริการแนะแนวอาชีพของกรมการจัดหางาน; 2) แนวทางการเสริมทักษะและสร้างเสริมประสบการณ์อาชีพให้กับนักเรียน; 3) หลักสูตรการอบรมครูแนะแนวและบุคลากรทางการแนะแนว: การแนะแนวอาชีพเพื่อการมีงานทำ See the links to the publications 1) The Manual on Preparation for the Labour Market: Career Guidance Services, Department of Employment (https://www.doe.go.th/prd/assets/upload/files/vgnew_th/b5dc9e4b64db8d73895ffc-0ffa2e1a.pdf) 2) The Teacher Manual on Enhancing Skills and Careers Experiences for Students, OBEC (<http://www.sec40.go.th/career/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/%E0%B8%AB%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%87%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B7%E0%B8%AD%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%B0%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%A7.pdf>) and 3) The Training Curriculum for Student Counsellors and Counselling Personnel, Thai Guidance Association ([https://www.phitsanulok1.go.th/admin/FCkeditor/upload/File/001\(3\).pdf](https://www.phitsanulok1.go.th/admin/FCkeditor/upload/File/001(3).pdf))

18 Some left because they preferred to work rather than be trained, while others left because they disliked the programme (Senior officer, Department of Skill Development).

Labour market information systems

The two main organisations that provide general labour information are the Ministry of Labour and the National Statistical Office. The Department of Employment also conducts research on labour market trends, while professional associations provide insightful information on current labour market demands and trends, as well as future trends predicted by businesses. Research institutes, such as TDRI or the Institute of Population and Social Research, also conduct labour market research. However, **labour market information is primarily published as research reports or academic papers intended for policymakers and academics**, meaning that student counsellors, educators, and provincial career counsellors have limited access to this information. In addition, **Thailand does not have an organisation that disseminates information on labour market trends in a user-friendly format.**

3.2.4 Access

Access to career guidance can be influenced by the following: methods of delivery; cost; language; gender and culture sensitivity; and awareness. Accordingly, the following analysis of the key gaps, challenges and opportunities for access is grouped according to these sub-headings.

Methods of delivery

As part of the Labour Masterplan and Education Strategy, children and youth in OBEC schools or schools using the OBEC curriculum have access to at least a basic model of career guidance services through classes or school activities. Career guidance services are primarily provided on-site, such as in educational institutions or Provincial Labour Offices, although children and youth can also access career guidance activities through online channels provided by the Department of Employment, TPQI and social enterprises. Most free online activities include skill assessment and career information. However, there are still access challenges for some students based on their economic situation, disability status and location, as well as lack of awareness.

Factors that determine the method of delivery include the type of service models and the objectives of the services. For example, the Department of Skill Development and some of the training courses provided by TPQI only use offline channels to deliver skill and career training and professional qualification examinations because the programmes require participants to use actual tools and equipment to practice and perform tasks in real settings. **Before COVID-19, most of the capacity building activities for student counsellor were conducted face-to-face.** The Thai Guidance Association, UPBEAN, and A-Chieve also prefer to organise training and workshops for both students and teachers on-site so that they can have more time to listen and exchange information.

The method of delivery is also determined by the clients or participants of the services. Because some clients may have limited ICT literacy and access to the internet, nor own a smartphone, the **career counsellors working at the Provincial Labour Offices mostly provide career and employment counselling over the phone and in person** because participants can come directly to the Labour Office.

Meanwhile, some basic services such as career information and education are available online so that adolescents and youth can gain access to information and knowledge on their own. **Most websites created by social enterprises are accessible, attractive, up to date, and resourceful.** WeSpace-EdVISORY and UPBEAN, for example, provide information on over 300 careers. In contrast, the online career information provided by the Department of Employment is neither well known nor recognized by adolescents and youth.

OBEC schools provided career guidance classes and activities online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, the Department of Skill Development organises an online training programme for adolescents and youth with hearing impairment. Because the training programme focuses on data analysis, online activities are possible.

According to the National Statistical Office's survey on the use of ICT by children and youth in 2020, 95.8 per cent of those aged 6-24 years old owned a mobile phone, 94.8 per cent had access to the internet, and 57.3 per cent had access to a computer. **Those in urban areas had more access to ICT than those in rural areas** (National Statistical Office, 2021), reflecting **a digital divide** that still exists with youth in urban areas having greater access to seek out and learn new information independently, as well as interact with people from different backgrounds online.

Career and education websites, Facebook and LINE have also served as platforms for children and youth to ask questions and have conversations that perhaps their classes or teachers are unable to cover. However, **most career information online lacks language facilities for youth with disabilities**. Furthermore, **some schools for children and youth with disabilities do not allow their students to own smartphones or other electronic devices** perceiving that these students lack media literacy and thus face risks from cybercriminals. This restriction limits the opportunities and undermines the capacities of children and youth with disabilities in accessing online knowledge and information on career guidance.

“

We were not allowed to use smartphones and other devices; schools were worried the kids would be deceived by the people they met online.

First year male student with a disability, Chiang Mai province, 29 January 2022

I was in school [a school for those with disabilities] for three years, we were not allowed to know new things that happened in the world. We were not allowed to use smartphones and meet new people online. I started using a smart phone when I entered university.

*First year female student with a disability, Chiang Mai province,
Focus group discussion with student with disabilities, 9 February 2022*

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There are limited career guidance services for out-of-school adolescents and youth. The recent project “Skill Building for Dropped Out Students after Compulsory Education” conducted by the Department of Skill Development targeted only 1,520 adolescents and youth in 2022, a small figure compared to those who have dropped out. **The department indicated that they have a limited budget and lack human resources to cater for more dropped out students.** Moreover, project officers indicated that age of the youth also affected their capacity to participate in the training as those around 15-16 years old were more likely to drop out from the training compared to older youth (Senior officer, 30 March 2022 and project officer, 31 March 2022). According to the EEF, as of 2018, before COVID-19, there were approximately 1,276,473 out of school children and youth. The provinces that have a high number of out of school youth are Bangkok (127,122), Nakhon Ratchasima (52,901), Ubon Ratchathani (43,397), Chiang Mai (34,373), and Buriram (31,978), respectively (EEF, 2018).

Cost

In general, **the services provided by government organisations are free of charge.** Most of the costs of participation are to cover materials and application or certificate fees. In the case of TPQI, participants are required to pay for the application and certificate fees, but educational institutions or professional organisations tend to support these costs.

Social enterprises provide free basic services such as skill assessment, career information, and education. **However, more advanced activities that children and youth can participate in, such as talking with professionals or visiting the workplace as part of a job shadowing activity, incur a cost.** A-Chieve, for example, implements a session with a career model and a job shadow/training programme that costs between 400 and 5,000 Baht, while Know Are’s education and career guidance camp for children aged 7 to 12 costs around 9,900 Baht.

The cost of attending career guidance activities is clearly a barrier for some students. According to focus group discussions, **most students agreed that the activities organised by social enterprises are interesting but unaffordable.**



The ticket fee for the career camp is around 500 Baht, it is not expensive for some people, but for me and for many children and youth, we cannot afford this.

*Grade 10 female student from Bangkok,
Focus Group Discussion, 27 January 2022*



Furthermore, **for children and youth in the provinces, there are other costs associated with attending career guidance activities, including transportation, food, and lodging,** which are unaffordable. In the case of a school in Chiang Mai province, for example, the school could only support one student to attend a career guidance camp. This student was then required to share the knowledge and experience she had gained with classmates (Grade 12 female student from Chiang Mai province).

Even online career guidance provision can incur hidden costs. WeSpace, EdVISORY discovered that some children and youth are unable to access their online skill assessment properly due to internet packages and device capacity limitations. Children and youth may need to pay an additional mobile credit fee to gain access to and download the programme, which may be beyond their means.



Our online programme consists of many graphics which take time to download, and children have to spend more money. Therefore, some children with limited internet packages cannot access our programme.

CEO, social enterprise, 10 December 2022



Language capacity

In general, **career guidance services, both online and offline, are delivered in the Thai language.** TPQI will provide interpreters if migrant workers or people speaking only a local dialect are participating in their programmes. The skill training for youth with hearing impairment conducted by the Department of Skill Development and ILO also provides a sign language interpreter for participants.

Despite this, **communication barriers remain a concern among students with disabilities.** While many of them perceive that the career information obtained from their schools is outdated, do not address their capacities, skills and preferences, they have limited access to information from other sources, for example, they often are **not able to access online career information and education due to language barriers.**

“

I know there are plenty of resources and information out there on the internet, but many of my friends do not know how to or cannot access. There are no sign language or other facilities to facilitate us to access this information.

Grade 11 male student from Samutprakarn province, 15 January 2022

I think if my friends can access online information like I do, they can see more opportunities and possibilities.

Grade 10 male student from Bangkok, 15 January 2022

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Gender and cultural sensitivity

Key informant interviews revealed that in general, **service providers, particularly those in the government sector, lack a framework for gender equality and cultural sensitivity. Gender stereotyping is also prevalent in occupational training and career counselling.** For example, male youth training programmes commonly include carpentry, welding, and motor vehicle mechanics, whereas female youth are encouraged to take cooking, flower arrangement, sewing, and handicrafts classes.

However, **TPQI and all social enterprises** interviewed indicated that their organisations **encourage participants of all genders to learn and explore new skills and career knowledge equally.** WeSpace-EdVISORY has good practices in terms of embedding gender equality concepts in their programme design and data management because they adhere to the approach of **no gender identity segregation in databases and a unisex concept in their platform design.**

Awareness

One of the main priorities of social enterprises is outreach activities to raise awareness among children and youth about available services, given that outreach to a larger target population results in more funding and recognition from stakeholders. As adolescents and youth tend to use social media platforms the most, **social enterprises primarily use Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, and LINE to raise awareness and promote their programmes.** However, the challenge in using online media is that children and youth constantly shift and change platforms, so organisations must keep up with the trend and plan outreach activities ahead of time. Moreover, the background and status of adolescents and youth, including family economic status, school, location, internet access and devices, all influence their ability to use social media and find out about available services.

By comparison, the government sector has not conducted systematic outreach activities, particularly among children and youth, although the Department of Employment recognizes that their career information website receives few visitors and is planning to create videos to promote their website. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions revealed that **students were generally unaware of the programmes offered by the Departments of Employment and Skill Development.**

Adolescents and youth are generally unaware of the existence of government employment websites, although government websites provide a range of information on careers and education. For instance, the Employment Promotion Division has an independent user-friendly website¹⁹ that aims to provide career information to all (Senior officer, Employment Promotion Division, Department of Employment). TPQI also runs an E-Training website²⁰ that offers virtual classrooms for upskilling and reskilling, and developing skills demanded by the labour market. On the other hand, OBEC's online career information mainly targets teachers, as it is recognized that students prefer to search for career and education information on the TCAS²¹ website or other websites developed by the private sector.

3.2.5 Technology

Overall, **adolescents and youth both in and out of the education system have gained more opportunities to access career guidance services and online career information due to increasing access to electronic devices and the internet.** However, the quality and accessibility of career guidance services remain a challenge which needs to be considered further in terms of developing an effective career guidance system and structure.

Technology is used in the delivery of services by the Department of Employment, the Department of Skill Development, TPQI, schools, and social enterprises. Technology is used by the Departments of Employment and Skill Development and schools to provide basic services such as career and employment information and online classrooms. However, TPQI and social enterprises have an advantage over other government organisations and schools in that they use technology to implement individual digital portfolios and use AI to communicate with youth through their platforms. For example, WeSpace-EdVISORY has recently developed an AI Chatbot to communicate with adolescents and youth about careers.

19 <https://employmentguide.doe.go.th/>

20 <https://e-training.tpgi.go.th/>

21 TCAS refers to the Thai University Centre Admission System. The Council of University Presidents of Thailand designed this system, which was first used in 2018 to recruit individuals to study at the undergraduate level. TCAS system divides the recruitment process into five rounds: 1) recruitment by considering student portfolio 2) recruitment through university quota 3) recruitment by considering the result of the central examination 4) recruitment through the admission process (considering the central examination result) and 5) universities/ colleges recruit students directly. Many students complain that TCAS is complicated and expensive, that the system is unreliable, and that important information, such as the examination schedule, is delayed.

As mentioned above, in collaboration with many stakeholders, including UNICEF, **TPQI is developing the EWE platform and an E-Portfolio accessible to the whole population, including NEETs, to improve employment opportunities.** While Thailand does not currently have a platform that serves as a centralized information resource for job-related information (such as information on employment, job vacancies, CV database, diagnostic tests, and analytical labour market data) that also helps connect job seekers and job providers, **the EWE platform serves as a pilot for the possibility of developing a larger and more comprehensive platform in the future** (TPQI, 2021b).

Thai adolescents and youth now have more access to electronic devices and the internet than in previous years given the switch to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This opportunity has allowed many adolescents and youth to gain new knowledge, interact with people outside their community, and even create their own platforms to communicate and share experiences. However, **EdTech social enterprises are concerned about children and youth media literacy and appropriate content on channels and platforms popular among adolescents and youth.**

“

Thanks to a Korean series about careers, viewers of the show may be able to better understand the careers mentioned. Sadly, we don't see much of this in Thailand. However, I still worry the most about children and youth who are from the working class and disadvantaged groups. I want to know what kind of channels or platforms they use and what they are interested in. We don't know much about them. If we know about their preferences, we could create content that attracts them and is useful for them.

CEO, social enterprise, 5 January 2022

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CHAPTER 4

Recommendations

This chapter outlines a set of key recommendations from the findings of the study. These recommendations were developed through an analysis of the results and findings derived from literature review and directly from services providers from the public and private sectors and CSOs, as well as from teachers and students as service users. It aims to address how career guidance can be delivered more effectively in Thailand, by offering suggestions to address the following research questions:

- a) How can we ensure greater diversity in the types of services that are available and in the ways that they are delivered?
- b) How should career guidance be resourced?
- c) How can leadership be improved?
- d) What partnerships should be developed to enhance career guidance?
- e) How can the most marginalised youth be reached by career guidance services

Recommendation #1: Ensure greater diversity in a) the types of available services and b) the ways they are delivered

To improve types of services offered:

- **Enhance range and suitability of government-led career guidance provision** by conducting target assessments prior to designing career programmes. Career guidance services should involve an understanding of the conditions, opinions, needs, skills and experiences of users. Target assessments prior to programme implementation will ensure that the career programmes offered match with students' aspirations, interests and labour market trends, and ensure that career guidance provision is not just limited to and geared towards careers in the 10 major employment sectors. This is something that social enterprises are already implementing.
- **Improve the use of data obtained from self-assessment programmes.** Many schools in Thailand currently use WeSpace-EdVISORY's self-assessment programme, which provides information on students' preferences, skills, and expectations and perceptions of their future that can be analysed to create a better understanding about the situation and perspectives of Thai adolescents and youth. By utilising the data obtained from the assessment more effectively, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with relevant organisations, can develop career guidance services that meet the needs of adolescents and youth. Pilot schools may also be selected to implement the improved programmes so that any further changes/additions can be made before roll-out.
- **Increase adolescent and youth participation in the design of career guidance services.** The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with relevant organisations, may consider involving adolescents and youth in the process of redesigning and developing the career guidance curriculum, as well as associated manuals and programmes for adolescents and youth. Their comments, feedback, and suggestions will help ensure the services meet the actual needs of young people.
- **Provide youth with more opportunities to sample work simulations or learning tasters.** In line with the need for youth to learn more about what careers they may be interested in pursuing, more should be done to embed taster opportunities (e.g. job shadowing, interview simulations, short occupational taster programmes) into school career provision and opportunities for out-of-school adolescents and youth. This may involve more collaboration with the private sector, e.g. local businesses.

- **Support parental involvement and develop the capacity of parents to effectively support their children's career choices.** As the opinions of parents and family income/debt are key drivers of youth decisions around career choices, there is a need to guide parents to enhance their perspectives and keep them informed so that they have a) up-to-date knowledge of labour market trends, b) understand the importance of their child's well-being, and c) understand that careers can be flexible, including the importance of lifelong learning. This may have a beneficial effect not only on adolescents and youth, but on the adults in their life too.
- **Introduce provision of safe spaces to career guidance provision** so that in-school and out-of-school adolescents and youth can freely express their concerns, needs, expectations and dreams. A key foundation of career guidance is to support every adolescent and youth to discover their passion, know their capabilities and understand the options available to them. Alongside the provision of career guidance services, service providers such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour should consider developing and implementing safe spaces for youth who are out of the education system so they can express their opinions and thoughts without fear. Additionally, CSOs and social enterprises may consider collaborating with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour, student counsellors' networks and schools to create understanding and develop safe space measures in schools along with the provision of career guidance activities. The Ministry of Education should also work with schools to help teachers understand the concept of safe spaces in school, allowing students to express their feelings and ask questions in an open and supportive environment. **Workshops to encourage youth self-efficacy and improve confidence levels** may also be introduced to improve students' confidence regarding their own skills, capabilities and aspirations and to help them make more informed decisions.
- **Incorporate a future studies approach into career guidance services.** The main purpose of career guidance services is to assist adolescents and youth in envisioning their future. Therefore, supporting them to consider what they expect their lives to be like at different life stages will assist them in linking their educational choices and expected careers. Such support will encourage them to perform well in academic and extracurricular activities to pursue their dreams and fulfil their potentials. Future studies could also include a module on financial literacy as this will assist adolescents and youth in the selection of their career paths and aid financial planning throughout their lives.
- **Incorporate information on labour rights and welfare into career guidance services.** Many adolescents and youth in Thailand enter the labour force at a young age, particularly those who pursue vocational education and those who are out of school. These youth groups should be knowledgeable about workers' rights and welfare, as well as job skills and career information. This knowledge will enable them to demand the protections to which they are entitled.

To improve service delivery:

- UNICEF Thailand, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour **to systematically collect data on student counsellor's challenges and limitations**, including the ratio of students to student counsellors. UNICEF Thailand may consider working with the student counsellor networks in the five regions across Thailand on research and evidence generation on the challenges of career guidance services in schools and present the findings at policy level. The Ministry of Education may also consider organising a forum or platform for systematic listening of student counsellors' challenges and limitations across Thailand, using the existing networks of student counsellors.
- **Increase number of qualified student counsellors in schools and reduce additional duties.** The Ministry of Education may consider conducting comparative research on the student counsellor to student ratio in various countries, particularly those with best practices in career guidance services. These findings can be used to propose revisions to the policies related to student counsellors, such as qualification requirements and the need to increase the number of student counsellors. Student counsellors should be employed based on their suitability for the role (e.g. qualifications in psychology

or other appropriate field) and ability to inspire and guide students to make choices. Rather than see career guidance as an additional task for teachers, student counsellors should also be given the time to perform their duties as counsellors; therefore, additional responsibilities should be limited. This will have two desirable effects: 1) Reduce the current workload of student counsellors, and 2) Improve the quality of career provision.

- **Enhance student counsellor competencies.** UNICEF Thailand, with cooperation from partners, should aim to introduce international best practices for student counsellors through a capacity building programme.
- **Update staff manuals.** The Ministry of Labour may consider revising the guideline Building the Career Guidance Network by addressing the issue of long-term cooperation and assessing the network's limitations and challenges. This will assist officials to better understand the challenges student counsellors, schools, and other stakeholders face and enable them to design career guidance programmes and activities that not only address the labour market but are also aligned with the officers' and counsellors' capacities and availability.
- **Enhance the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of career guidance programmes.** A rigorous and systematic M&E process of career guidance programmes will help ensure services meet the needs of adolescents and youth and labour market demands. The Department of Skill Development may improve the monitoring and evaluation of their ongoing project on skill building for disadvantaged children and youth. This will assist the department to better understand the needs, readiness, and preferences of their target beneficiaries and to design a programme that is appropriate for them. Additionally, the Ministry of Education may consider integrating an alternative evaluation process to career guidance activities in schools besides their existing evaluation mechanism. Student counsellors and students could jointly design the evaluation plan to ensure the activities address the needs, readiness, and preferences of students and the dynamics of the labour market trends. However, it must be ensured that additional activities do not burden both counsellors and students.
- **Integrate a gender and cultural sensitivity approach into career guidance services.** The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, private sector and CSOs should factor in gender sensitivity in the design and implementation of career guidance programmes. For instance, youth who have children or family to take care of might need more time than others to complete training, while some may need babysitting services during their participation in the career guidance programme. Female youth may also feel unsafe if they have to travel outside the community in the evening. Knowing the background and experiences of youth participants prior to career guidance training will aid in designing a programme that is appropriate for all youth. In addition, perceptions around the capabilities of young people with disabilities need to be addressed, and career provision adapted accordingly.
- **Reduce gender stereotyping in occupational training and career counselling.** Male and female adolescents and youth should be provided equal opportunities to explore different career paths. Using the approaches of TPQI and social enterprises as a model, government sector organisations should reconsider the design of their programmes to increase the options available to adolescents and youth regardless of gender.
- **Consider the establishment of a labour intelligence system.** Although TPQI is currently developing the EWE platform, Thailand has no centralised resource platform for job-related information that helps connect job seekers and job providers. The Ministry of Labour may consider developing a pilot labour intelligence system with job information resources, emphasising privacy and confidentiality of data, with the aim to evaluate and assess the possibility of developing a larger and more comprehensive labour information management platform.

Recommendation #2: Improve how career guidance is resourced

To ensure career guidance is adequately resourced, relevant ministries should consider more budget flexibility, more collaboration with the private sector, and long-term partnerships with various stakeholders:

- **Increase flexibility in budget planning.** Because of technological advancements and disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, the labour market has changed, and will continue to change, rapidly. Career guidance programmes need to be more flexible in budget planning and implementation. The Ministry of Labour may consider allowing for more flexibility in their budget planning, such as on a yearly basis. This will ensure career guidance programmes are both relevant to the current and future labour market trends and resilient to the labour market's rapid changes.
- **Increase collaboration between public and private sector through public-private partnerships.** Public sector, social enterprises and CSOs should collaborate with the private sector to facilitate sharing of resources, particularly on knowledge, innovation, and technology, as well as in the provision of financial support (e.g. loans or grants) to ensure the most marginalised can gain access to career guidance services.
- **Establish more long-term funding options,** e.g. establishment of a national skills fund to support programmes considered as national priorities. Relevant organisations may also raise the issue of funding constraints jointly through both government and political channels. This can be accomplished by comparing the budgets allocated to various ministries, departments, divisions, and organisations with the budgets allocated to career guidance services.

Recommendation #3: Improve leadership

Leadership improvement in career guidance service provision needs to be tailored to each type of service providers as each has different target groups, locations and approaches, with their own challenges and opportunities, understandings, perceptions and information on the services they provide. As such, leadership improvement will be different from one organisation to another and can be considered at both individual and organisational levels.

- UNICEF Thailand may consider **conducting a series of practitioner consultations** using SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to gain insights into the type of leadership and support required at both individual and organisational levels for effective career guidance provision. Given that practitioners, namely student counsellors, career counsellors, social enterprise and CSO staff, work closely with adolescents and youth, leadership development can begin with a series of practitioner consultations. The results of the consultation should then be incorporated into policy documents for further collaboration with the organisations' executives.
- **Gain commitments from organisations for further leadership improvement.** To do this, UNICEF Thailand may consider organising a series of workshops with executives from various sectors related to career guidance services to present policy documents and solicit their commitment for leadership development at both individual and organisational levels.
- **A long-term goal would be to establish a national organisation and/or committee which provides strategic leadership on quality assurance of career services** at the national level, including a competency framework to ensure career guidance services across Thailand meet established standards.

Recommendation #4: Foster partnerships for enhancing career guidance

- **Facilitate dialogue between stakeholders** with the aim of improving collaboration and resource mobilization and sharing on career guidance services. An initial dialogue can serve as a starting point for various stakeholders to meet and exchange their experiences, identify challenges and highlight opportunities for networking and collaboration.
- UNICEF Thailand may lead the coordination with relevant organisations to establish a platform to increase resource mobilisation and sharing and enhance expertise to ensure long-term improvement of career guidance services in the country. This platform can serve as a resource centre for career guidance that provides training and individual instructions to service providers throughout the entire system and systematizes and disseminates professional and job market information (printed or digital) for schools and community organisations.
- **Establish a national career guidance working group/forum.** This will enable educators, employers, youth, local government, private sector, trade unions, and civil society to connect and work together more effectively to improve career service provision.
- **Increase co-research and co-assessment.** There is a need to improve joint data collection and make research on career service provision less fragmented in order to build a better picture of the situation in Thailand and identify areas for improvement.

Recommendation #5: Ensure the most marginalised youth can be reached by career guidance services

- **Enhance outreach strategies to promote government websites via social media platforms** to reach and connect with adolescents and youth online. Information should be provided in more formats (e.g. videos, easy-to-read infographics) and language should be youth-friendly.
- **Improve access to Department of Employment and Department of Skill Development career/skills training programmes for marginalised youth.** This could be done by a) increasing geographical coverage of such training programmes, or b) providing subsidies/ funding to cover expenses such as transportation, food, lodgings so that more adolescents and youth from different areas can attend. There is also a need to address the basic needs of NEET youth , e.g. family obligations such as care duties, in order for them to participate in work or training. This may require training opportunities to offer more flexible hours or the ability for trainees to complete their training over a longer period of time.
- **Provide translation services for adolescents and youth** who are non-native Thai speakers and/or migrant workers to attend career guidance services or training programmes.
- **Conduct research on youth NEET in order to gain more insights on how to reach and engage this youth group.** Studies on NEETs in Thailand are still limited. To reach and engage this youth group, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education and other relevant organisations should consider conducting a study that explores factors/drivers behind their status, lifestyles, needs, inspirations and dreams; what career they are interested in; what type of education system they prefer; what they envision for their lives and society as well as other aspects of their daily lives, such as social media they use, places they hang out and sources of income. This information will bring about a better understanding of the NEET group which can be further used to design programmes and approaches to reach them and encourage them to participate in career guidance services on their own.

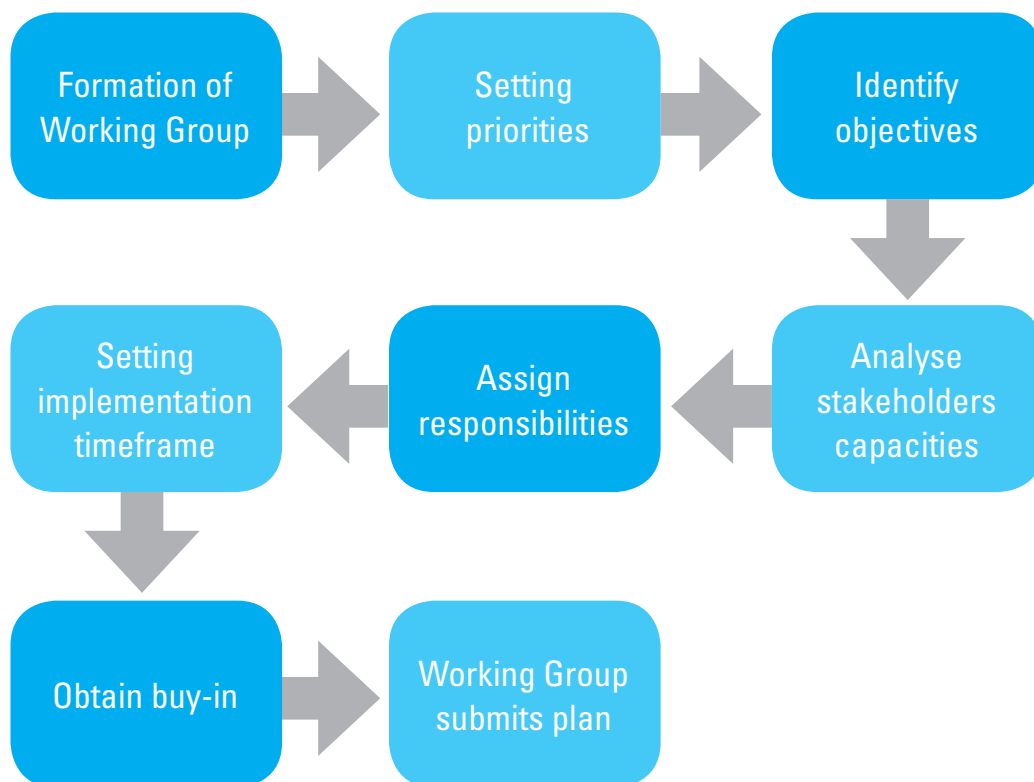
- **Design and implement programmes which enable adolescents and youth to participate independently.** Current career guidance services for adolescents and youth are not designed for them to participate independently. This prevents them from accessing opportunities to develop their skills and prepare for the job market. Future programmes should be designed to make it easier for adolescents and youth to attend and access career guidance services independently, with or without disability. The Ministry of Labour should revisit and redesign its programmes to make them more youth-friendly and accessible, including adding sign language or audio for youth with disabilities.
- **Publish latest information on labour markets and career information in youth-friendly format.** The Department of Employment should consider designing and publishing its research on the labour market information in a user-friendly and accessible format, such as infographics or video clips and distribute them via social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, and LINE to increase accessibility and reach more users.
- **Conduct further research on the needs, skills, competencies, and preferences of adolescent and youth with disabilities.** The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour may consider conducting research in this area to gain insights for designing appropriate career guidance services for this specific group of youth.
- **Improve access to career information and services for adolescents and youth with disabilities.** The Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education and other relevant organisations should improve access to career information and services for adolescents and youth with disabilities by mobilising resources and establishing strategies to help them participate as fully as possible. For instance, this could include incorporating sign language, audio description, Braille materials and other methods to help them learn, or by creating specific career training materials to help them reach their full potential. In addition, schools for students with disabilities may need to reconsider their policies surrounding smartphone/device use in school, as students with disabilities may require access to technology in schools in order to access online career information. To reduce the potential for risk, some steps could be taken such as conducting media literacy training or introducing filters/safety measures to ensure only verified, relevant content can be accessed.

Strategic roll-out plan

To translate the above recommendations into actions, the following strategic roll-out strategy and mechanism is proposed for UNICEF, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, and other service providers to provide career guidance services to the most vulnerable youth, particularly those who are NEET:

1. To begin, UNICEF Thailand may consider engaging stakeholders from various sectors and establish a working group as a mechanism to: a) prioritize the recommendations; b) identify the overall objective for the roll-out; c) analyse stakeholders' strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats; d) assign responsibilities to working group members; e) determine the timeframe for their implementation and determine what milestones are needed to archive each phase (UNICEF Thailand may serve as a focal point during the first phase); and f) obtain an official buy-in and commitment from the working group members, for instance through MOU signing.
2. Working group members should submit a plan according to the programmes and activities stated in the recommendations. The plan should entail a policy dialogue between relevant stakeholders leading to:
 - a. A draft policy document including baseline and recommendations from multi-stakeholders;
 - b. Policy briefs or policy advocacy with policy makers/decision makers who have the authority to develop or approve a policy; and
 - c. The implementation of the plan by the working group and practitioners based on the policy document.

Figure 1: Strategic roll-out plan



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CHAPTER 4: Recommendations

- กองพัฒนาศักยภาพแรงงานและผู้ประกอบกิจการ กลุ่มงานพัฒนาศักยภาพแรงงานสตรีและเด็ก. (2564c). จดหมายขออนุมัติโครงการเพิ่มทักษะด้านอาชีพแก่นักเรียนที่ไม่ได้เรียนต่อหลังจบการศึกษาภาคบังคับ ประจำปีงบประมาณ พ.ศ. 2565. กรุงเทพฯ: กรมพัฒนาฝีมือแรงงาน กระทรวงแรงงาน. (Division of labour and Employers Development, Unit of Women and Child Worker Development. (2021c). Letter on requesting approval for a capacity building project for students who have dropped out of school after completing compulsory education. Bangkok: Department of Skill Development, Ministry of Labour.)
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