The Development of the Corporate School Programme in Thailand

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctoral of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2014

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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEC</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations Economic Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMBF</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Education and Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMWi</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBI</td>
<td>Confederation of British Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cert.Voc</td>
<td>Certificate in Vocational Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cert.Voc.-DVT</td>
<td>Certificate in Dual Vocational Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dip.Voc.</td>
<td>Diploma in Vocational Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNA</td>
<td>Deoxyribonucleic Acid</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education For All</td>
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<td>ESA</td>
<td>Educational Service Areas</td>
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<td>Eurostat</td>
<td>Statistical Office of the European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>IDB</td>
<td>Inter-American Development Bank</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>KMUTNB</td>
<td>King Mongkut’s University of Technology North Bangkok</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEST</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Science and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Office of the Higher Education Commission</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>NVTCC</td>
<td>National Vocational Training Co-ordination Committee</td>
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<td>OBEC</td>
<td>Office of the Basic Education Commission</td>
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<td>OEC</td>
<td>Office of the Education Council</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>OVEC</td>
<td>Office of the Vocational Education Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>P21</td>
<td>Partnership for 21st Century Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>PPPs</td>
<td>Public–Private Partnerships</td>
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<td>STEMNET</td>
<td>National Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Centre</td>
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<td>TDRI</td>
<td>Thailand Development Research Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>TESDA</td>
<td>Technical Education and Skills Development Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>UKCES</td>
<td>UK Commission for Employment and Skills</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<td>UNEVOC</td>
<td>International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>V-ChEPC</td>
<td>Vocational Chemical Engineering Practice College</td>
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<td>VET</td>
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The University of Manchester
Jomhadhyasnidh Bhongsatiern
Doctor of Philosophy
The Development of the Corporate School Programme in Thailand

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the Corporate Schools’ programme in Thailand. It aims to examine its implementation and progress from inception, evaluate its current status, and propose ways to enhance its future effectiveness. The programme was initiated through collaboration between the Government and the private sector in the belief that business can play an important role in developing public sector ability to improve educational accessibility and learning quality. The programme is expected to provide young people – particularly school-leavers - with opportunities for education and training. It is also intended to equip them with the knowledge and skills to match labour market requirements.

A qualitative approach was employed throughout - governing research design, data collection and data analysis. Three participating companies: CP All Public Company Limited, S&P Syndicate Public Company Limited and the V-ChEPC programme, were selected as case studies. Data were collected through documentary research, semi-structured interviews and observation. The findings, which are based on thematic analysis, show two of the three case study companies were satisfied with the programme’s outcomes. These two cases have been focused on their needs and they were aware of the importance of basic skills which young people required. This tends to confirm that the recruitment process has been conducted with due attention. This process, which is aimed at recruiting prospective candidates who hold basic knowledge and skills, could be further developed into one where technical and transferable skills best fit companies’ needs.

This thesis identifies the current challenges and suggests potential opportunities for three cases. Its outcome should provide a systematic insight to help increase understanding of the Corporate Schools’ programme in Thailand with a view to assessing whether or not it has sufficient impact to merit its continuation.
DECLARATION

I, Jomhadhyasnidh Bhongsatiern, hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree of qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Jomhadhyasnidh Bhongsatiern
Date: 7th November 2014
Degree: PhD, the Faculty of Humanities, the University of Manchester
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With all my heart, I owe my deepest gratitude to my beloved parents; Mr. Satirarat and Mrs. Jiraporn Bhongsatiern, whose unfailing belief in my abilities continually inspires me to succeed. Mom and dad, I know you are with me in every step of the way. Your unconditional love, inspiration, motivation and dedication to support and witness my success continue to give me the strength to overcome whatever lies ahead.
1. CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

This research examines the implementation of the Corporate School programme in Thailand. The introductory chapter presents the background to this programme and explains why the research is needed. Objectives, research focus and significance of the study are also addressed, and following this, a summary of the methods employed in this research is presented. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, the structure of the thesis is outlined.

1.1 Background to the Study

Human capital is the most important resource for a country’s development. It is considered the most valuable asset of the 21st century, determining the capacity to compete successfully in the global market (Becker, 1992, 1994; Boutin, Chinien, Moratis, & Baalen, 2009; Sweetland, 1996). Thus, human knowledge and skills play a key role in shaping futures for economic growth, shared prosperity and poverty reduction (Sapir, 2005). Recognising the need to develop human skills, it has been more than twenty years since participant nations in the World Conference of Education for All assembled in Jomtien, Thailand, where they committed through the six goals of the Jomtien Declaration to provide education, as a fundamental right, for all people (World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, 1990). The Education For All (EFA) goal 3 focuses on developing the skills and learning opportunities of all young people. Basic education alone cannot successfully provide efficiency programmes to meet the provision because it generally strives to give students a broad range of cross-disciplinary knowledge not work-related skills. Therefore, in order to strengthen the transition from school to work, to offer ‘second chances’ and to combat the marginalization of disadvantaged groups of young people, most are often provided through technical and vocational education programmes (UNESCO, 2010). However, as the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
(UNESCO) (2010) report highlights youth unemployment and underemployment is one of the most serious challenges facing countries across the world. There were approximately 200 million unemployed in 2012 and a 5.9 per cent increase in the size of the working population from 2011. Unfortunately, emerging global economic growth has failed to reduce the unemployment rate (ILO, 2007b, 2013a, 2013b).

At the same time, globalisation, especially the rates of technological change and lowering of trade barriers, has had a great impact on the labour market, which is moving from the Industrial Age to the Information Age (Fien & Wilson, 2005; ILO, 1999; R. Maclean & Ordonez, 2007). This has involved considerable change in traditional patterns of production and employment (Bridges, 1995; Fien & Wilson, 2005), which dislocates the local job markets and requires more skilled and flexible workers. Workers are expected to perform more complex tasks that require higher knowledge and skills levels, such as using new technologies, decision-making, problem-solving and team-working (Adams, 2007; Boutin et al., 2009; OECD, 2010a; UNESCO, 2011; World Bank, 2012a). Individuals will have to be prepared to upgrade their skills on an ongoing basis and to switch jobs perhaps several times in their careers (R. Maclean & Ordonez, 2007). Systematic skills development is therefore an important element of upgrading, to keep abreast of changing skill requirements.

Thailand is aware of how important such skills development is. It is apparent that for individuals, such skills will have a major influence on job opportunities and wage rates. For business, such skills development can boost the quality of workers and raise productivity. For society as a whole, it will raise the overall level of skills, ensure that young people are not left behind and help to balance the supply of skilled labour with the demands of industry (UNESCO, 2012a, 2012d, 2013b). However, in developing countries the government alone cannot achieve this without collaboration from the private sector and also social organisations. To ensure that the private sector leads the way on skills development and to encourage training to be more demand-driven, the Thai government has promoted greater involvement from private sector organisations. This is intended to make education and training more relevant to labour market needs and improve the access of poor and vulnerable people to skills development opportunities.
(OEC, 2008b, 2010a, 2010b). As part of this agenda, in 2004 the Corporate School programme was announced. To date, the programme has been operating for almost a decade, but the scale of operation seems to be disappointing. Not only have some sponsoring companies pulled out, reducing the number of Corporate School now operating from 7 to 2, but there also seems to be little sign of the initiative spreading to new sponsors. If this issue is not addressed and, in the worst case, the current participating companies discontinue this programme, then skills development in Thailand will regress and may not be able to achieve the government’s goal of providing work skills development opportunities to some of the most disadvantaged young people. Consequently research is needed, not least to document what has happened so far under this programme, for the benefit of others who might be interested in participating.

The purpose of this research is therefore to investigate the Corporate School programme in Thailand by examining its goals, tracing its implementation and progress from the outset, evaluating the current situation and identifying its achievements. In this enquiry, policy documents and secondary data sources will be examined, simultaneously with the collection of empirical data from the field. Finally, prospects for future developments will also be addressed.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to evaluate the implementation of the Corporate School programme in Thailand. It will particularly focus attention on the following objectives:

1. To describe the goals set for and development of the Corporate School programme.
2. To identify the impact of the Corporate School programme in Thailand and the extent to which it is meeting its stated goals.
3. To consider ways of improving the Corporate School programme.

1.3 Research Questions

To reach the objectives stated, several research questions must be addressed:
1. How has the Corporate School programme in Thailand been developed and implemented?

2. What impact has the programme had? – For example, on the attitudes and skill levels of the participants, on the companies involved in the initiative, and on the local labour market/economy?

3. How might the programme be made more effective?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Skills development has been perceived as one tool for improving human capacity in order to strengthen national development. Studies show that most countries globally are facing a common challenge: high unemployment (UNESCO, 2012d). It is believed that one way of improving the situation is to level up skills development to be compatible with the needs of the labour market. In Thailand, there have been several attempts by the Royal Thai government to develop the Vocational and Education Training (VET) system responding to enterprise demands. Many projects have been proposed and implemented as well as the Corporate School initiatives. However, one main point that distinguishes the Corporate Schools from other initiatives is that it is fully administrated by the private sector.

One might ask why is a study of this initiative required? Because, since it is an enterprise-led programme, it seems to have been abandoned by the government. Preliminary research shows clear evidence that the scale of operation is declining and there is little and outdated available evidence regarding the evaluation of the pilot programme or even the ongoing programme. The researcher believes that for most countries, human resources are very important for development, and one critical element in producing high quality human resources is education and training. With regard to the concept of the Corporate School the researcher believes, based on the literature and on other similar programmes globally, that success of the programme would bring great benefits to all stakeholders. A study of the Corporate School in Thailand is therefore needed in order to increase understanding about this programme and to provide insights and systematic information about its strengths and weaknesses. Importantly, it is expected to offer some
judgement on what the programme has achieved, and, by implication, an assessment of whether the programme has sufficient impact to consider its continuation.

1.5 Methodology

This study comprises two main stages of data gathering: preliminary and main fieldwork activities were conducted. The preliminary research utilised documentary sources to gather information related to the broad concept of skills development and international trends, its theoretical underpinning, and research findings. The main sources of data were UNESCO, International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC), International Labour Organisation (ILO), World Bank and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Data-related skills development programmes from several countries was scrutinised in order to understand the history of skills development and its current trends and look more closely at Asia by focusing on the countries with outstanding economic performance in the region, such as China, Japan and South Korea and to review skills development schemes in South-East Asian countries, including Thailand, to see how their VET systems were organised and whether these empowered their countries’ development. The information derived from this phase was drawn on to prepare the framework for this study; establishing the hypothesis and research questions, developing a research design, including appropriate research methodology to be used in collecting data, the analytical framework and expected timeframe. However, the lines of investigation were expected to be constantly developed and revised throughout the process of this study. Stage two involved the main research activities, which were designed to produce qualitative case studies that specifically examine the Corporate School in Thailand.

Based on the literature reviewed, it seems that there is a lack of systematic information about the development of the programme in Thailand which is disappointing, given the scale of operation. This study examining the implementation of the Corporate School programme in Thailand was, thus, intended to produce rich accounts on the programme through the case studies that might describe local development and contribute to the international picture. It was expected that concrete information on how the programme
has progressed, the challenges participating enterprises faced, and suggested ways to make better use of the initiative would emerge from the cases and would increase understanding of the programme.

Empirical data were collected through fieldwork at three research sites: Panyapiwat Technical School and Learning Centre of CP All Company Limited (Thailand), the Learning Centre of S&P Syndicate Public Company Limited, and the Vocational Chemical Engineering Practice College (V-ChEPC), Maptaphut Technical College. A case study strategy was related as it was understood to be the most appropriate methodology. Yin (1989, 2003) defines the case study approach as a methodology that facilitates in-depth understanding of particular situations through collecting data in natural settings, rather than relying on derived data in order to describe what happened and explain how and why it happened. The case study comprises sub-methods such as documentary research, observation and interviews to gain substantial in-depth information which not only leads to clear understandings of the case, but also confirms the trustworthiness of the study, enabling triangulation of a variety of sources of data. In this study, documentary sources were accessed at the Office of Education Council (OEC) archive based in Bangkok, Thailand. Vocational Education plans, regulations and other issues related to the Corporate School were investigated in detail. Primary data from research sites, such as organisation structure, curriculum, numbers of students and dropouts and learning centre published leaflets and multimedia, were also collected. Simultaneously, academic journals or published articles relating to approaches to skills development were investigated. Furthermore, observation was made throughout the field visits. Information from observations gave broad views that were used in developing the outline questions for the interviews, and also provided supporting evidence for the cases. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three groups of key informants. The first group comprised the head-teachers and company executive committees of the organisation that were selected by the researcher. These selected key informants were invited to share their insights on the performance of the programme from the outset and to extend views regarding future plans. Issues regarding the current situation, the curriculum, learning and training activities, assessment frameworks and challenges were investigated through interviews with teachers, trainers and the company
managers. The final group was made up of volunteer ‘graduates’, who had direct experience of training in the programme, in order to gain insight into their real experiences and the benefits they obtained from studying at the Corporate School.

Since the research is essentially qualitative in nature, both primary and secondary data were analysed and discussed using an analytical framework which is presented in the methodology chapter. In terms of trustworthiness, the researcher tried to be aware of the different perspectives and interpretations of the various participants. The interview transcripts were sent back to key informants to check, in order to improve accuracy, credibility, validity and generalisability of the study. Additionally, triangulation was used throughout the data analysis. Secondary data such as statistics were imported as supporting evidence for the findings. All information collected from empirical research was cross-referenced with government documents and analysed in light of literature relating to the key issues in skills development that emerged from the literature review.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The research is presented in nine chapters. Chapter One covers the background, knowledge gap and motivation for the study. It presents a brief summary of methods used and addresses the significance of the research. Chapter Two presents the literature review. Chapter Three outlines the philosophical stance and research methodology. It will describe how the research was conducted. Also, an introduction to the Thai Corporate School programme, including background and rationale from the outset will be explained.

The contexts of the three Corporate Schools in Thailand and their current implementation will be drawn responding to the first research question in the following three chapters. Chapter Four presents the case of Panyapiwat Learning Centre under the responsibility of CP ALL Public Company Limited. The stories of S&P Learning Centre of S&P Syndicate Public Company Limited and V-ChEPC programme of Maptaput Technical College are presented in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, respectively.
Then, *Chapter Seven* addresses the second research question, presenting the findings on the impact of the programme on individuals, enterprises and the labour economy. The following chapter, *Chapter Eight*, considers the suggested ways to improve and sustain the programme. Finally, *Chapter Nine* puts forward the conclusions from this research, and also the research contributions are presented.

### 1.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has introduced the overall research to the reader. It started by laying out the background and rationale of the study and proposing three research questions. To reaffirm, the experience of the Corporate School in Thailand needs to be explored as it is believed to be one effective tool to address the problems of access/opportunity for education for disadvantaged young people that can help combat the unemployment and underemployment rates, and also promote the country’s economic competitiveness. A concise outline of the research methods used in this study was then offered, demonstrating that case studies are employed in order to investigate the current implementation of the programme to see how far it meets its goals. In addition, the impact of the programme on individuals, companies and the labour economy are studied. Lastly, suggestions for future development are recommended.
2. CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to review existing literature in the field of skills development, especially those studies relating to young people. The research aims to examine the development of the Corporate Schools, a skills development programme in Thailand and to consider whether or not it is meeting its goals. Therefore, the literature review deals principally with the skills development spectrum, looking at the importance of skills development, lessons learned from skills development programmes worldwide, and other important areas essential to the study. Articles, journals and published books, derived mainly from the international agencies such as UNESCO, World Bank, ILO and OECD, and official government documents, were all drawn on to review this particular topic.

The first part of this chapter focuses on identifying the factors that have turned global attention to skills development and explains the general ideas of skills development in terms of its definitions, types and roles. The following section investigates the global trends in skills development programmes and highlights the German Dual system from which Thailand adopted its ideas to develop the Corporate Schools. Before exploring the Corporate Schools, Thailand’s education context is explained in detail to obtain an overview of the structure of Thailand’s education system and to gain more understanding regarding the current state of Thailand’s education and training. The final section of this chapter examines ways to sustain partnerships and improve skills development.
2.1 Global Attention to Skills Development

Whereas a general education strives to give students a broad range of cross-disciplinary knowledge, formal skills development such as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), operates on the premise that in addition to a sound basic education specific, work-related skills are required for a person to enter smoothly into the workforce. Basic training in other essential skills required by young people and adults was highlighted at the World Conference in Jomtien, as one of the six dimensions of EFA’s aspiration. However, a decade later in 2000, the Dakar World Forum on EFA reported that during the 1990s, the EFA process had not significantly advanced any facet of skills development. While EFA goal 3 focuses on access to appropriate learning opportunities skills development has been relatively neglected whereas countries are facing a series of factors having profound effects on skills development, such as the rapid
change of the global economic environment and the high rate of youth unemployment, due to the difficulty of school to work transition or the imbalance between labour supply and demand. UNESCO reports that there was an increase of 4.3 million unemployed over 2011, and the rate of unemployment rose to 197.3 million globally, in 2012 (UNESCO, 2012a). This unemployment problem demands serious attention worldwide.

2.1.1 Importance of Jobs and Skills Development

Skills development is an issue receiving attention in most countries. It is believed to be an important factor to develop skills which are crucial in the structural adjustment of the economy system (Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2009) and in empowering the human resource in order to be responsive to the changing labour economy and to market demand. The following section affirms the importance of skills development by identifying the global factors that mandate the quality and systematic skills development programmes needed. However, before moving onto how skills development plays its role in the changing economic environment, it is important to understand how skills are crucial for jobs and how jobs contribute to economic development.

2.1.1.1 Contribution of Jobs to Economic Development

According to the World Development Report 2013: Jobs (2012c), it is clearly stated that jobs are a key determinant for development, and that development itself is a vital mechanism for improving living standards, productivity, and social cohesion. Mental and physical well-being is an important human goal, and jobs play a crucial part in providing opportunities through experience and earnings to reach that goal. In fact, large numbers of people need jobs with earnings which can lift up their quality of life and take them out of poverty, let alone guarantee well-being.
Figure 2-2 Relationship between Jobs and Development

Many studies show that factors such as unemployment and underemployment, can make people feel insecure in their lives because having a job has much influence on how people view themselves and interact with others (Laudau, 2012; The British Psychological Society, 2011). Collectively, high-productivity jobs boost economic growth (ILO, 2008c; Roubini & Backus, n.d.). Large firms tend to have more capacity to help people acquire new skills, through developing and innovating new product lines and services and because they are able to invest more in new technology, new industrial plants or even outsourcing and joint ventures with new partners (World Bank, 2012c). However, the rapid globalisation of the job market presents increased complexity and challenges associated with demands for skills. It is understood that we are rapidly moving forward into a situation where all nations operate in a global market environment, but the global economy is a dynamic system and it is changing constantly over time. As the economies in developing countries have been moving from agriculture to manufacturing and service industries, workers and enterprises have needed to adapt themselves to new environments and find people with technical, entrepreneurial and social skills (ADB, 2009). Moreover, these days, many economies are in transition, moving from the Industrial Age to the Information Age (Fien & Wilson, 2005; R. Maclean & Ordonez, 2007). This transition
involves considerable changes in traditional patterns of production and employment (Bridges, 1995; Fien & Wilson, 2005), which dislocate local job markets and require more flexible workers. A more productive economy needs a more skilled workforce, with the skills that meet the demands of international companies. Some argue that such changes in the world of work have caused the focus of training for employability to shift to generic, rather than job-specific skills (R. Maclean & Ordonez, 2007; Singh, 2005). Meanwhile, the failure to learn new skills slows the labour market activities (ADB, 2009).

John Cridland, director general of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), once stated while qualifications are important, businesses also want people with self-discipline who serve customers well (BBC, 2012). The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) echoes this, saying that a ‘learning as acquisition’ model, which uses qualifications to measure skills focuses predominantly on getting more individuals qualified, rather than on their abilities to organise themselves in the workplace. (Felstead, Fuller, Jewson, & Unwin, 2011). In addition, companies begin to look for talented employees who can be trained for many roles, rather than seek workers to fill specific vacant positions. Also, companies often pay more attention to increasing the value of their existing human resources to meet new skills requirements, rather than recruiting and training new workers which is an expensive process for the companies. Learning to learn, for example, is thus an essential skill for all employees, who need to constantly develop their knowledge and skills in order to keep up with new technology or new machines used in the industry, and be able to operate them. Generic skills have the potential to secure their jobs in the rapid changing labour market. Furthermore, the extension of the free trade system which allows trade across national boundaries has had a strong impact on resource allocation patterns, including the movement of labour between and within counties. Ultimately, when people have good living standards, companies tend to be more efficient and economic growth increases, it also enhances the coherence of the society.

All in all, job-creation is an essential ingredient for a county’s development, and one way to prolong employment and secure jobs is to have the skilled labour force that contemporary employers need. Skills development, therefore, plays a vital role in
providing such a mechanism for current employees, new job seekers and people who need a second chance to be able to cope with the current requirements of the world of work.

### 2.1.1.2 Importance of Skills Development

The main sources of literature in this review are derived from the publications from UNESCO, ILO, OECD and the World Bank. Throughout my literature search, several issues recurred, with common concerns around the global economy, the international labour market situation and programmes related to skills development. The relationships between socio-economic issues and skills development have been addressed particularly in several research studies since the financial crisis in 2007. Many studies assert that youth unemployment, as well as poverty alleviation, can be tackled by providing opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills that are responsive to current business needs for our young people. Experts believe that skills development is a more reliable process for equipping young people as employees in a changing world than the traditional, knowledge based education (ILO, 2011, 2012, 2013a; Kennet King & Palmer, 2006, 2008; OECD, 2010a, 2012b, 2012c; UNESCO, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a; World Bank, 2004b, 2005, 2012a, 2012c). Moreover, ADB’s study (2009) showed that even during an economic downturn, effective skills training can reduce staff turnover, improve motivation and increase productivity.

Global factors, including demographic changes, the advent of the ‘smart’ era and changes to the established economic structure, have been consistently identified because they are viewed as the reasons for skills development being crucial for today’s world. It is worth noting that these factors are inter-related; each factor has consequences for the others. The following contexts highlight the global problems that have inevitably affected the labour market and the extent to which skills development plays a role as a mechanism to improve the situation.

The first factor to consider is demographic shifts. The demographic changes, such as population growth, urbanisation and globalisation, have a strong impact on the unemployment situation. The growth in population alters the working-age population and
the structure of labour markets. The World Development Report 2013 (2012c) points out that before 2020 more than half the population in developing countries will need to leave the land and move to live in cities, and the number of jobs needed in 2020 to accommodate this movement alone is estimated to be approximately 600 million additional jobs compared with 2005. Collaboration between nations - like ‘free trade’ for the workforce - also makes it easier for workers to relocate to different areas or counties. This changes the social structure and the nature of jobs, which may have both positive and negative effects in a particular country; it can bring improvements in efficiency and plug ‘gaps’ in workforce availability, but it can also add huge numbers of ‘unskilled’ workers to the number of job seekers.

Furthermore, demographic issues like globalisation, the process of worldwide exchanges of national and cultural resources through information and communication technology (ICT), have had significant impact on the problem of unemployment. Technological advance not only lowers barriers to the labour mobility, but also widens gaps between the skills available and the ones employers need. Addressing the skills mismatch issue here would be appropriate, as it is a consequence of the demographic change and is itself a factor in the rise of youth unemployment. Although skills mismatches and skills shortages are not new in Thailand, they have increased along with – perhaps despite - the region’s robust economic growth in recent years (ILO, 2008a). Ernst and Young (2011) showed that globally, there are approximately 31 per cent of employers who find difficulty in filling all positions available in their companies. Two major explanations for this figure were posited. Firstly, the global economy needs higher skill levels. Accelerating technological innovation has a great influence not only on everyone’s life but also on the configuration of the industrial sector. As stated earlier, enterprises may invest in new machines or even change the organisational working patterns, such as conference meetings among employees or with business partners via communication technology, or meeting and distance-working using virtual media in cyberspace. Obviously, to be able to work in this new environment, it is crucial that employees are able to develop the skills needed for such unstructured work arrangements. Another thing to consider, also cited by Ernst & Young, is the performance of the education systems. While education and training are the key determinants in human development, they
suggest that many studies showed that curricula have become outdated and are not related to the real world of work. Of course, curriculum is an important factor affecting educational quality (Delors, 1996). It seems to be impossible to produce adequately skilled workers if the education system does not adapt itself to the changing world of work. This can be seen as a major obstacle to improving the skills levels of young people.

Moreover, the changing structure of the global economy has been affecting all stakeholders in the world of work, especially young people whose working lives are about to begin. Findings drawn from many studies showed that job seekers will be affected more severely and for longer than those who are currently employed owing to this change (CBI, 2012a; ILO, 2003; UNESCO, 2013a; World Bank, 2005, 2012a). Many of these job seekers seek employment in order to secure their quality of life. In the developing countries, escaping from poverty is an important goal for most people. Many experts agree that to be in employment is the best way for poverty reduction, because jobs create income and income can enhance people’s living standards (World Bank, 2012c). As Palmer (2007, p. 398) claims “employment/self-employment, or rather ‘decent work’ is seen as the main pathway out of poverty for the poor”. However, in the past decade, youth unemployment has dramatically increased and it can thus be deduced that the skills mismatch is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed, as Labour Economist Theo Sparreboom, one of the authors of the ILO’s recently published Global Employment Trends 2013, states:

“These skills mismatches mean that unemployed people need much longer to find a new job, which in turn drives up long-term unemployment” (ILO, 2013b).

In conclusion, skills development is a key to link people to particular livelihoods, occupations and work which is essential to address the opportunities and challenges of meeting the demands of changing economies in order to balance the supply and demand for skills (Kawar, 2011).
2.1.2 Skills Development: Definitions

So far, it is understood that skills development is important for the development of individuals, countries and, of course, the global economy. This section looks further at the definitions of skills development. In studying the literature, it seems not many writers offer specific definitions. Most of them adopt a broad view of skills development, as shown in the examples below:

“Skills development is a crucial element of any strategy which aims to improve competitiveness within a firm” (Lange, Ottens, & Taylor, 2000, p. 6).

“If education and skills training is to promote the socio-economic well-being for the poor, it must improve the prospects for ‘decent’ work and higher earnings” (Palmer, 2007, p. 398).

Only a few sources, such as ADB’s Practice in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (2009), gave definitions of skills development:

“The acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work that are necessary to perform a trade or occupation in the labour market” (ADB, 2009).

Even though TVET Glossary of the International Handbook of Education of the Changing World of Work does not give a direct definition of skills development, it does offer a definition of ‘skills’ as “an ability to perform a particular mental or physical activity which may be developed by training or practice” (MacKenzie & Polvere, 2009, p. 72). Other definitions include:

“Skills are essential to improve productivity, incomes and access to employment opportunities” (ILO, 2003, p.8).

“Skills are an important means to increase incomes and sustainable livelihoods for the poor” (World Bank, 2004a, p.17).

Thus, developing these required skills to meet labour market demands requires a systematic skills development programme. Analysis of the literature revealed that skills development is believed to be a mechanism that transforms lives and drives economic growth. It is apparent that skills development is necessary to equip the workforce with skills that are relevant to the work environments. Kawar (2011) argues in the background paper for Doha Forum on Decent Work and Poverty Reduction that skills development is
a key in stimulating the country’s development, and that it is linked to the essential needs of the changing economies. Likewise, experts assert that it is a tool that accelerates the economy as it aims to serve the goals of the country’s socio-economic development strategy which emphasises the quality of human resources while balancing the demands of the labour market and the workforce (Kasipar et al., 2009). The World Bank also referred to skills development as an outcome of learning, and describes them as the productive capacities that are engaged in livelihoods in order to meet the new demands and opportunities of the changing labour economy process (World Bank, 2004 after King and Palmer, 2007: 7) Similarly, Billett (2009) pointed out that the inevitability of change, including technological advances, free movement of workforce and more integrated markets, all these come together to emphasise the skills and competences of the workforce. Individuals, therefore, need to actively maintain their skills because work will become less routine and more specialised and diverse. All in all, the term ‘skills development’ can be explained as the development of skills or competencies, which relate to a rapidly changing world in which there are frequent changes in what skills are needed and how they can be acquired. The following section will, therefore, discuss further what skills are required for the world of work.

2.1.3 Skills Required for the World of Work

Skills development is therefore the important process of developing and improving the quality of skilled labour, with the aim of increasing skill levels to meet the increasingly high demands and requirements of the newly emerging jobs. The CBI survey report showed that 99 per cent of firms that see worker skills as the fundamental element for their business success (CBI, 2011, 2012a, 2012c). The study also indicated that the employers who participated in this survey agreed that they need workers who have solid basic skills, such as the ability to read, write and understand numbers and computer skills in particular, and transferable skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking and good working attitudes, as well as the technical skills needed to fill the position (CBI, 2012a).

This section, therefore, considers the essential categories of skills that workers should acquire in order to maintain their employability in the rapidly changing world of work.
As previously mentioned, the advent of globalisation has resulted in many changes; ‘smart’ technologies have shrunk the world and the speed and high coverage of networks makes communication easier. These changes have taken place in a shorter period of time than ever before, and this directly affects the labour economy market across the world; its demand has also changed.

In this study, published documents from UNESCO, World Bank, ILO and other relevant organisations were investigated in order to gain a clear understanding of skills: what are they? how many types are there? and which skills are necessary for employment in today’s industries? The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21, 2011) proposed four areas of skill which are essential for young people in the 21st century.

The first area is mastery of core subjects, including English, Mathematics, Science, and social study subjects such as Economics, History and Government and Civics, which empower young people by creating global awareness, health literacy and financial management skills. The second area is ‘learning and innovation skills’, in which critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration are highlighted for preparing young people for the increasingly complex life and working environments. Thirdly is the ability to use information, media and technology effectively. This is unavoidable for people in the 21st century. They must be able to gain access to a range of information, keep up with rapid changes in technology devices and manipulate technology there competently. The final category is associated with ‘life and career skills’ and comprises five key elements, including flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability and leadership and responsibility. All these skills are essential for today’s complex and the competitive world of work.

As well as the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) study, National Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Centre (STEMNET) (n.d.) proposed a list of ‘Top 10’ of Employability Skills, which they believe will prepare the employee to perform their role to the best of their ability. The ten employability skills are communication and interpersonal skills, problem solving skills, using your initiative and
being self-motivated, working under pressure and to deadlines, organisational skills, team working, ability to learn and adapt, numeracy, valuing diversity and difference and negotiation skills. These skills were defined by companies in order to clarify exactly what skills are required for a job. Similarly, six distinct sections of ‘skills you need for life’ were suggested ("Skills You Need," n.d.). They are personal skills, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, leadership skills, writing skills and numeracy skills.

All in all, much literature has been produced regarding the need for increasing the skills of today’s workforce, most of which can be categorised into the various domains as described above. This research, therefore, primarily adopted the three types of skills proposed by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2012d, 2012f) as essential for a workforce: basic skills, transferable skills, and technical and vocational skills. The following sections will describe each of these in turn.

2.1.3.1 Basic Skills

Basic skills (in some literatures referred to as core, foundation or essential skills) are the fundamental skills embracing basic literacy and numeracy. Owing to the advent of globalisation and the necessity of computers and the internet in daily life, ICT skills are sometimes included in this category. As we are now living in the Information age, the power of ICT can enable easy access to information, and can be viewed as a tool for reading, writing, meeting and acquiring knowledge. ICT skills are, therefore, counted as essential skills that young people should acquire.

These skills, such as reading, writing, calculating, emailing and texting, can often be picked up initially at the primary education level. However, over 42 per cent of firms are not satisfied with the basic skills of school leavers (CBI, 2012a). The inadequate literacy and numeracy skills of young people may be a prime factor that limits their opportunities for employment and will handicap their working lives. Basic skills are essential in order to function in both social and working lives, and they are also necessary for enabling learners to make an effective transition to the world of work; moreover, many experts are concerned that it seems to be difficult to develop higher skills without basic skills (L. Berg, 1995; CBI, 2012a). Basic skills are crucial to young people for smoothly entering
the world of work, as David Cameron, the United Kingdom’s Prime Minister, expressed in his speech on Apprenticeships:

“Whether you take an academic path or a vocational path, the basic skills are essential...it doesn’t matter whether you are studying vital skills like carpentry or studying at university to be research scientist. There isn’t a job in the world that doesn’t need these skills” (Cameron, 2012).

2.1.3.2 Transferable Skills

The second domain is transferable skills, sometimes also called ‘employability skills’ (STEMNET, n.d.). The transferable skills are non-job-specific skills, necessary for adaptability to different working environments and improving the prospects for employment. These skills refer not only to important abilities such as working as part of a team, decision making, problem-solving, leadership and communication, but also include attitudinal skills such as discipline, tolerance and self-confidence. In addition to this, Myers (2009) suggested that transferable skills can be divided into five areas: communication, interpersonal skills, research and planning, organisational skills and management skills. The following section portrays the synthesis domains of transferable skills derived from the literature following Myers’ five transferable skills areas.

As regards communication skills, writing, listening and speaking are the three main components. People will have greater employment opportunities if they are able to express ideas concisely and effectively through their writing and speaking, which also include providing feedback and negotiation. Furthermore, when it comes to conferences or meetings, listening attentively, gathering information appropriately, leading group discussion, problem-solving and public-speaking with confidence are also essential ingredients of success (Myers, 2009).

Secondly, interpersonal skills, such as sensitivity, supportiveness, motivating others, sharing, counselling, cooperation, understanding feelings, self-confidence and accepting responsibility, are necessary when working with others, regardless of differences in age, gender and socio-economic background. People with strong interpersonal skills are usually more successful in both their professional and personal lives because these skills are qualities that enhance good relationships and make them endearing to others. Some
sources group interpersonal and communication skills together, as they are both skills for dealing with other people. However, the meaning of interpersonal skills in this research is likely to be the implicit skills that support the development and use of the communication skills.

The next elements are research and planning skills. In addition to the above skills that focus on people’s interactions, research and planning skills are critical to most workers in any project or career. Most enterprises want to improve the quality of their products and services in order to increase the company’s revenue. Employees with research and planning skills are key to creating new product ideas, identifying and analysing problems or issues that need to be improved in the company’s current products and services, planning effective strategy which is responsive to the market demands and assessing situations or project implementation efficiently.

Another domain to consider relates to organising skills. Myers (2009) believes that the skills element employers most look for in their workers is the organisational skills. People capable of organising things tend to be able to manage projects or whatever they are doing efficiently and effectively. They are able to keep control over plans to meet deadlines, coordinate tasks and cope with multi-task activities successfully.

Related to the organisational skills, management skills are also critical components of many jobs. As mentioned earlier, the transferable skills promote labour mobility and are necessary for workers to adapt themselves smoothly to new careers. Management skills are not only crucial for new jobseekers, but also important to workers who get promoted to higher positions. The management skills enable individuals to be able to manage conflict, take charge, lead groups and make decisions. Furthermore, these skills empower employees with the ability to teach, coach or provide counselling to colleagues and those in lower positions.

Even though the transferable skills are difficult to test, such skills are important to both professional and personal lives. These skills are what employers look for in graduates or employees, because enterprises know that these skills will benefit their companies in various ways, such as increased productivity and decreased employee turnover rate. They
can be developed through many forms of training, such as courses, volunteering, internships and work experience. Transferable skills have become more critical for employees nowadays, owing to the rapid changes in the global economic structure. The type of career is becoming increasingly irrelevant; both white and blue collar workers need these skills to keep up with the changes and to secure their jobs.

2.1.3.3 Technical and Vocational Skills

Since technological advancement and economic growth has changed the level and pattern of demand for skilled workers, specific technical know-how has become the key requirement of many employers. Acquiring technical and vocational skills or job skills is crucial in empowering the workforce to meet the demands of employers that are looking for labour markets where there is a strong supply of skilled workers. Employer organisations like ILO and CBI agree that technical and vocational skills are essential elements of school education, as they are necessary for maintaining a supply of workers that sustain productivity and profitability, as well as for enhancing national productivity and wealth creation of the country (CBI, 2012a; ILO, 2009). In other words, equipping future employees with appropriate technical and vocational skills can result in high productivity for the company, which in turn leads to positive customer satisfaction and improved profitability for the company as a whole. For a wider impact, it can be concluded that in the end the collective performance of industry determines the growth of a country’s economy.

However, it should be recognised that all three types of skills mentioned above are inter-related. Basic skills are the fundamental skills that every person must acquire, beginning from the primary school age. Several sources agree that if the employees have solid foundational skills such as reading and writing, it tends to be much easier for them to gain higher level skills, as those who can read and write well will struggle less with learning, which promotes lifelong learning; comparable to building a house, in which the basic skills are the foundations. A solid foundation under the house is very important to the structure. So basic skills help people develop themselves, acquiring new skills with confidence and developing transferable skills, which will enable these people to cope
with more difficult and complex tasks. Transferable skills are often described as employability skills; as STEMNET suggested, they are needed by an individual to make them ‘employable’ (STEMNET, n.d.). Transferable skills, such as self-discipline, problem-solving and teamwork, can be developed not only through formal training but also through real life experiences. Indeed, real life experience can be viewed as a good teacher that implants good habits. ‘Learning to Learn’, for instance, is very important for people to survive in this increasingly dynamic world. No matter how the world responds to the industry or information age, or what knowledge and skills are required, the ‘learning to learn’ skill will enable those who have it to keep up-to-date acquiring new knowledge and skills that are responsive to the current work demands. While transferable skills help employees to survive through changes and promote labour mobility, the major skills that respond directly to work practices are the technical and vocational skills. These are specific skills, and are most often acquired through employer training programmes. As mentioned, developing these skills will empower individual employees, giving them the capacity to ‘grow’ with the company, which is the key determinant to boosting the performance and profitability of the company and also the wage levels and life quality of the workers themselves.

2.2 Skills Development Programmes

Several problems can limit the ability of an industry or economy to make the most effective use of the people available in the workforce (Department of Labour, 2011). One is a ‘skills shortage’. This refers to the imbalance between demand and supply, when demand for skilled workers is higher than the number of job seekers, with the result that the industry cannot operate at their optimum level. A ‘skills gap’ is slightly different. Skills gaps are associated with current employees who have some but not all of the skills required for their jobs. In other words, their current job requires higher skill levels than they possess, so they need to improve their skills or acquire new skills to meet the needs of the business. Lastly, ‘skills underemployment’ relates to those who are in employment but are over-qualified in relation to the requirement of the position in which they were employed. This is in contrast to skills gaps: while skills gaps are concerned with under-qualified workers and urgently need a mechanism to enhance the skills of workforce,
underemployment requires the creation of more jobs for workers who have higher skill levels. The skills development system also needs to improve its quality in order to produce qualified skilled workers for the labour market. In addition to this, it is worth noting that skills gaps and underemployment are likely to receive less attention from governments than unemployment. These problems are less visible and more difficult to measure. Managers and supervisors are the key persons to address and to seek plausible mechanisms to solve such problems.

The next section explores the trends in skills development activities worldwide and shows the examples of such programmes, emphasising the German ‘dual system’ which is the system that Thailand follows most closely. It then probes down into skills development in Thailand’s context; its systems and the initiative that have been launched by government in recent years.

2.2.1 Forms of Skills Development

Skills development programmes are established to serve the country’s economy, particularly its competitiveness. Globally, there are several approaches to developing skills, according to the country and its needs. This study categorises these into three main approaches: school-based training, work-based training and the dual training system. The following table summarises the strengths and weaknesses of the three approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills Development Models</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-based Training</td>
<td>• Broader theoretical education and a wider set of generic skills are provided</td>
<td>• Limited budgets lead to outdated equipment, infrequent repairs, and lack of consumable supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum quickly becomes obsolete and is often not well linked to the employment market</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff often poorly motivated and poorly paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-based Training</td>
<td>• Tends to be practical and closely linked to work requirements</td>
<td>• Wider range of quality than in public provision – at lower end many unregistered and unregulated providers are of dubious quality, wasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Content is practical – rooted in the world of work; well</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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39
adapted to conditions in the real world
- A two-way flow of information between employers and employees making later recruitment much more effective and less costly. Often results in employment in the same organisation
- Trainees can make a specific contribution to the firm and the economy

money
- Tends to concentrate too narrowly on company specific needs
- Lack of standards and competency based assessment procedures
- Lack of recognised certification, which limits portability of skills
- Lack of information and choice – range of choices not well known to public

The Dual Training System
- Expands access to skills development to people without opportunity to attend formal training courses
- Allows for continuous learning and adaptation to new technologies
- Firms invest in both general and firm-specific skills, and can extract benefits from general skills training when labour markets are imperfect

Small and medium-sized enterprises cannot afford the time or money for organised training
- The system has gradually become less responsive to the needs of the economy, and the ageing of the workforce creates greater need for lifelong learning to supplement initial training

Adapted from ADB (2009); OECD (2010a); UKCES (2012)

While school-based training should prepare trainees for the labour market’s needs with a broad educational background and focus on generic skills, work-based training provides the specific occupational skills that particular employers needed in life and work (UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), 2012). A country like the Netherlands is a good example of how a school-based learning approach can be developed. The intermediate-level skills training that is offered in vocational schools is rooted solidly in the Netherlands’ TVET system, while apprenticeship schemes have a less important role (UKCES, 2012). The intermediate TVET system is constructed according to a list of basic competencies which can be merged into a wide variety of settings. This leads to a highly flexible validation system and also helps in improving the comparability of training pathways. The drawback of this approach, however, is that sometimes there is a weak link between training and actual employer demands. Graduates from vocational schools can experience problems finding a job, since companies need to provide them with additional training. The idea of workplace training is not new. Dewey (1938 cited in Grubb, 1995) points out that often the best training takes place on the job. Work-based
training is much more likely to address the needs of a particular employer than a broader school-based approach, which then has to be adapted to fit the workplace (ADB, 1991; Agrawal, 2013; ILO, 2011; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012). In this regard, Professor Alison Fuller and Professor Lorna Unwin have developed a concept of the ‘expansive-restrictive’ framework of workplace learning (Lucas & Unwin, 2009; Unwin, Felstead, & Fuller, 2007). They believe an appropriate learning environment is very important for optimising a trainee’s learning experience (Fuller & Unwin, 2008). Professor Unwin states “The more support and opportunities to learn and develop, the more expansive the workplace” (Thomson, 2012, p. 8). Employers should, therefore, develop workforce development plans and embed them into their business strategies (Felstead et al., 2011, p. 5) in order to ensure quality training that meets their strategic requirements.

Moreover, enterprises are tending to invest more heavily in skills training. Studies indicate that when markets are shrinking, the companies’ commitment, productivity and ability to keep competitive are particularly important. Investing in human resources will, thus, put the company in the strongest position as the economy recovers (Blinkhorn, 2008). In addition, ADB’s study affirms that in many industrialised countries, on-the-job training leads to positive effects, while classroom training tended to have less impact on employment and earnings (ADB, 2009). However, a trade-off between company-based and school-based training was studied by UKCES. The findings of this research show that no matter what the approach, there are both advantages and disadvantages. Company-based training appears to be very much focused on the current needs of the workplace, and some experts say that it provides training for youths that is too specific, because the companies tend to give training in fractions specialised to the company’s current demands to selected groups of people who are best qualified to take advantage of that training. By contrast, school-based training tries to meet the wider needs of the labour market. It provides a broader contextual framework and a wider set of generic skills, but may have more difficulty linking training to specific workplace demands (UKCES, 2012). The dual training system is therefore a mixed method approach combining these two approaches, and seeks to strengthen the link between school and employment. The German Dual System, for example, provides general and vocational
knowledge within the framework of compulsory education at school and training within the framework of a training contract at the workplace (BMBF, 2003).

2.2.2 Global Trends in Education and Training System Development

The advent of global markets and rapid technological advance has triggered fundamental changes to the global economic structure. Many countries have experienced a sizable mismatch between industry requirements and the range of skills the workforce has. The demand for higher quality vocational and professional qualifications is increasing in an increasingly competitive global labour market. Upgrading the quality of the workforce and providing individuals with opportunities to optimise their potential to meet the changing demands of the economy are clearly needed. In such rapidly changing times, the private sector is the main engine of jobs creation. China is the most outstanding example of the expansion of employment opportunity though private sector growth. Previously, the private sector in China had only 2.3 million workers, while state-owned enterprises accounted for 80 million workers. However, twenty years later, the numbers have changed. It increased to 74.7 million private sector workers, surpassing the 74.6 million in state-owned enterprises (World Bank, 2012c). In addition to this, collaboration between public and private sectors in the form of partnerships has become an important focus in many countries. Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) are seen as a link between public and the private sectors that can stimulate investment and job creation.

The concern over current economic and technological changes in a context of increased global competition is a main factor in the development of public – private partnerships in most countries (Kasipar et al., 2009). Training highly qualified and skilled workers to meet employment demands is a major priority. The close collaboration among all stakeholders is, therefore, regarded as a pertinent approach to meet all the demands (Kasipar et al., 2009). Several OECD studies show that to make skills development more effective, the world of learning and the world of work should be more closely linked. OECD (2012b) affirmed that learning in the workplace offers many advantages to both young people and to companies: it is a “win-win” relationship, and young people receive direct benefit from this cooperation. Berg (1995) points out that there are many benefits
that students can directly obtain from such partnerships. The partnerships allow young people to develop skills for work, with the advantage of practical experience. Students are able to connect what they are asked to learn in school with real-life applications. Business can provide a ‘sneak preview’ of the world of work. Collaboration in education between the business sector and schools also has the benefit of smoothing the transition from school to work. It can also facilitate the recruitment process, by allowing employers and employees to get to know each other while training. Moreover, it helps to motivate school leavers to stay in or re-engage with the education system. Students understand that they must continue to learn. Finishing secondary school or college is no longer enough, they have to take responsibility for their own learning. This includes being proficient in ICT, especially computers. Berg (1995) quotes an example of how important technology has become that these days, even waste management trucks now have on-board computers, and thus students can no longer say to themselves that ‘Well, I can always be a garbage truck driver if I drop out of school’. Furthermore, students are able to explore what they have a natural aptitude for, what they enjoy doing and which could develop into a career if they have opportunities to sample to real-life experiences. All these can help them set higher personal goals.

There are of course many approaches to skills development across the world. The models of skills development programmes are different according to the particular country’s social and economic context. As noted, nowadays the global trends is to pay significant attention to company-based learning, with the aim to make a closer link between the skills that workers develop and what the company needs. However, the aforementioned disadvantages of this model, such as the need for basic numeracy and literacy skills, which companies cannot easily develop in their employees, turn many countries’ attention to the dual system, which combines school– and enterprise–based training. Several countries in Europe, such as Austria, Switzerland and France, have adopted the German Dual System approach, and they have adapted this to their own contexts according to their individual needs. The neighbour of Germany, Austria, utilises the dual system, with well-structured apprenticeships integrating learning in schools and workplace training. Social organisations at all levels are involved in strengthening Austrian’s technical vocational and training, with effective co-operation between
stakeholders. This appears successful in reducing the youth unemployment rate and improving links between education and the world of work. However, there are some challenges that still need to be addressed and urgently need improvement, such as quality assurance and career guidance. Quality assurance in the Austrian system does not seem to guarantee minimum standards, and the basic literacy and numeracy skills of many school leavers are limited (OECD, 2010a). Likewise, in Switzerland, the dual system is embedded in its TVET system. The system is well-resourced and able to include up-to-date equipment. Employers and the market drive the system strongly, but the curriculum of the workplace training is not especially company-specific, which leads to a more flexible career path and allows for labour mobility, with systematic and professional career guidance.

While Switzerland’s highly developed TVET system has substantial strength, nevertheless global issues such as financial recession and demographic changes have had negative effects on the system. The economic downturn affects the provision of apprenticeship places in particular. Furthermore, the shrinking population tends to sharpen competition between academic tertiary education and vocational education. More recently, international companies without a training tradition entering the country have threatened the Swiss dual training arrangements (Fazekas & Field, 2013b; OECD, 2010a).

The skills training scheme in Latin America is very interesting. An Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (2012) survey shows that Chile has had a skills training programme called Joven (Young) since 1991, which targets disadvantaged young people. It provides both classroom and on-the-job training in a block course system in which students have classroom learning for three months and then switch to training in a company for one to three months (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2013). Studies show the programme not only improves employability for these young people, but also reduces the cost of recruitment for both individuals and enterprises (Kennet King & Palmer, 2010; UNESCO, 2012d). Furthermore, other countries in the region who have faced similar challenges, such as Argentina and Brazil, have adopted similar programmes in their countries (IDB, 2012; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2013). Evaluation of Chile’s Joven
programme illustrates that as well as increasing the employability of trainees of a variety of ages, genders and regions, the programme has had substantial impact on job prospects of the young people who graduate from this programme (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2013).

To turn the focus to Asia; Asian countries are adopting diverse approaches to skills development. Some are concerned with strengthening TVET, some are focusing on workplace training, but all strategies are targeting similar purposes: balancing skills demand and supply, upgrading outdated training systems, increasing industry participation and boosting the local economy. As previously mentioned, China introduced the dual system in the 1980s in a form of factory school (Kasipar et al., 2009). Workplace training has seen great expansion in the last two decades, as indicated by the World Bank’s finding that the number of private sector trainees has increased from 2.3 million in the 1980s to 74.7 million in 2012 (World Bank, 2012c). Likewise, in 1994 the German dual system was introduced to the Philippines by the German Development Corporation, with the goal of reducing poverty and strengthening the economy by increasing productivity, and supporting and developing training institutions nationwide to produce better qualified ‘graduates’. The evaluation of this programme shows that the employability of graduates improved, and the companies are generally satisfied with the progress made. However, in terms of sustainability, the picture was less optimistic. There was poor continuity of the programme because of a high turnover rate of key officials, and the organisation in charge, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), did deliver the expected commitment to dual training. As a result, while dual training has brought substantial benefits to selected enterprises, it has made only small difference to the economy as a whole (UNESCO, 2012b).

In addition, taking a look at South Korea, one of the Asian ‘tiger’ nations with a history of exceptional economic success (Leea, LaPlacab, & Rassekh, 2008), it is interesting that according to Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, 15-year-old Korean students perform very well in numeracy, literacy and science (Lee, n.d.; OECD, 2010c; The Economist, 2013b). Studies show that education is highly valued in Korean society, and the level of educational attainment among young people is very high - 97 per cent of 25-to-34 years old have completed upper secondary education and 53 per
cent have tertiary education (OECD, 2010a). Although the Korean government is committed to increasing employer involvement in TVET policy development and implementation by creating sector councils and Meister schools (Lee, n.d.; OECD, 2010a), focusing on public–private partnerships, these are seen as serving the needs of local firms, instead of providing broader occupation-specific or transferable skills. Moreover, co-ordination among the ministries responsible for TVET policy is weak, leading to less systematic quality standards (OECD, 2010a). The broad guidelines for developing curriculum and qualifications for meeting labour market needs provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and individual TVET institutions also seems to lead to duplicated efforts which means scarce resources are wasted (OECD, 2010a).

Furthermore, it is essential to examine the TVET system in Japan when highlighting Asia. Japan, by nominal gross domestic product (GDP), is the third largest economy in the world (World Bank, 2013). Japan has been running public and private training centres for some years, established to meet needs in two main areas. One provides initial training to young people in order to equip them with entry-level work skills, and it also upgrades the skills of employed workers. The other is the company-owned ‘technical school’. The Nissan Technical School, for example, is a private training school where students are trained for between two and four years, which awards a national skills qualification in motor mechanics (ILO, 2007a).

We can observe that the models of skills development programmes while similar in some respects are different according to a particular country’s own educational, social and economic objectives (Euler, 2013). It is impossible to use exactly the same approach in every country. Japan is a good example of this. There were notable and particular challenges for the labour market in Japan; whereas many countries are having problems with the growth of the working population, in the labour market structure in Japan the reverse is true. Furthermore, in Japan the skills training emphasises in-company training. Trainees are trained on a periodically rotating basis, which means that they will be trained for several positions. As a result, employee turnover is low and long-term employment relationships with the same company are common (The Japan Institute of Labour, n.d.).
However, the number of retirees is rising dramatically in Japan. The development of Japan’s skills training therefore hopes to find the best way of transferring urgently needed knowledge from the older to the younger generation (ILO, 2007a).

2.2.3 German Dual System

As the previous section demonstrates, while there are various models of skills development, one of the most influential approaches to skills development is the German Dual System. The German Dual System has been firmly rooted in the German education system since around 1920, when it was introduced for commercial occupations modelled on the training system for crafts (Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), 2003; Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi), 2010; “The German Vocational Training System: An Overview,” n.d.). Approximately five decades later, in 1969 under the unfavourable economic circumstances, the German government introduced the Vocational Training Act, bringing national regulations for a vocational training and examination framework (BMBF, 2003).

However, in order to understand the German dual system, it is necessary to understand the structure of the German education system. Generally, German children, at three years old, start elementary education. This is not compulsory, and they start primary school at the age of six. After completing primary school, children continue their education to Secondary Sector I with a two-year orientation stage in order to help them decide which type of secondary school they will attend (Kirpal, 2011; Tremblay & Le Bot, 2003). These secondary schools have substantial influence on children’s later career paths. Secondary education is divided into four branches. These four branches consist of lower secondary school (Hauptschule), secondary schools (Realschule), grammar schools (Gymnasium) and comprehensive school (Gesamtschule), which are clearly related to their students’ prospects for higher education and occupational careers (BMBF, 2003; Kirpal, 2011; Tremblay & Le Bot, 2003).
Firstly, Hauptschule or lower secondary school provides basic education to students who graduated primary education. Its main objective is to prepare students for their entry to the world of work. After graduation from this school at the age around 15 to 16 years old, students can go into practical vocational training, continue their study at a full-time vocational school or start working in the public service (BMBF, 2003; Cockrill & Scott, 1997). These days there are not many students who choose this route for their further education (Tremblay & Le Bot, 2003). The second branch is Realschule or intermediate secondary school. The Realschule is very popular in Germany. It provides a broad general education and career orientation. It offers a range of options to choose for further education, the graduates of this type of secondary school can continue to become an apprentice, a full-time vocational school student or change to a grammar school
(Gymnasium) to gain the qualifications needed for entering university (Cockrill & Scott, 1997). Third is Gymnasium or grammar school. It is the most academically oriented of the secondary schools, and is viewed as a gateway to higher education. Most students enter this type of school, with two aims: gaining entry qualification for university (Abitur) and entering high profile professions such as banker, business specialist, accountancy, laws and so on (BMBF, 2003; Cockrill & Scott, 1997). Additionally, some states (Länder) in Germany provide a fourth choice for students; comprehensive school (Gesamtschule). At this type of school, students can enter the school straight away which differs from the Gymnasium and the Realschule where they have rather strict entrance requirements. The school provides students with a basic and advanced general education focusing on student’s individual priorities. After grade ten, students have an opportunity to choose their study paths depending on their skills and capabilities, then, when they have graduated, they will either obtain a Hauptschule or a Realschule leaving certificate, or even sit the Abitur in order to gaining entry qualification for university (BMBF, 2003; Cockrill & Scott, 1997; Temblay & Le Bot, 2003).

At the end of Secondary Sector I, students can choose between vocational schools or the dual system. This research focuses only on the German Dual System. Definitions provided of the Dual System include:

“training that takes place both at a company and at a vocational school in tandem” (BMWi, n.d.)

“a partnership of government and private industry to produce workers skilled in both the theory and practice of their trade, learned on the job and in vocational school and supplemented occasionally by course in specialized training centers.” (Nothdurft, 1989, p. 32)

“the combination of training received in a company with education at a vocational school (training in the dual system)... The larger part of the learning takes place not in the school, but in production facilities or service enterprises in industry and commerce” (Vocational training in the dual system in the Federal Republic of Germany : an investment in the future / Federal Minister for Education and Science, 1992, p. 6).

“the combination of theoretical subject-oriented and general education in vocational schools and work practice or company-based training. Varying according to vocational specialization, apprentices spend about 15% of their
training in vocational schools and the remaining time in the company” (Kirpal, 2011).

All in all, the German dual system is a vocational education system which combines practical vocational training at work, with theory-driven lessons in public vocational schools. It not only ensures that the world of work will have skilled workers with real-life training, but also facilitates the school-to-work transition for young people.

The programme was initiated with the aim of improving the quality of vocational education and training in Germany. As previously mentioned, the Vocational Training Act was ratified to govern the whole range of training programmes, which covered the dual system, in order to replace the outdated programmes and strengthen links between training and the world of work. According to BMBF’s statement:

“the dual system does not have any formal admission prerequisites: by law, all school-leavers, regardless of what school-leaving certificates they have, can learn any recognized occupation requiring formal training” (BMBF, 2003, p. 4).

Currently, there are approximately 70 per cent of secondary school graduates, age 16-19 years old, entering the dual system, which had over 1.6 million trainees in 2007 and more than 350 officially-recognised training occupations available through the system (BMWi, n.d.; Cockrill, 1997; Reupold & Tippelt, 2011). The programmes last approximately three years, depending on students’ pre-qualifications.
As regards the dual system curriculum, affiliated companies provide training under the guidance of a ‘Master’ or an approved instructor for 3-4 days a week, while the local state-run vocational school (Berufschule) delivers more academic courses for the other 1-2 days (BMWi, n.d.; Cockrill & Scott, 1997; Nothdurft, 1989). The academic subjects provided by the vocational schools are divided into two major domains: vocational-oriented subjects and general education. About two-thirds of the academic input is vocational-oriented, such as technology, applied mathematics and technical drawing, such subjects giving special attention to the requirements fulfilling a joint training, the remaining one-third is the general education that supports students’ employability, including social studies, economics, German, foreign languages, religion and sports (Allais, 2010; BMBF, 2003; Kirpal, 2011). In terms of the quality assurance, unions, the chambers, including the chamber of industry and commerce and the chambers of crafts, and the private sector, all have influence on the programme of assessment, whether or not the skill competences the students are trained for in the company meet the country’s economic demands. The chambers are responsible not only for advising and monitoring
companies’ training provision and evaluating the aptitude of training instructors at the company level, but also establishing the examination boards for interim and final examinations (BMBF, 2003; Kirpal, 2011). These examinations must be taken by every trainee. The interim examination is delivered during the period of training in order to ascertain the level of skills the trainee has reached and, at the end of the course, the trainee has to sit the final examination to demonstrate whether or not the trainee has acquired the necessary vocational knowledge, skills and competences that are necessary for their professions (Hippach-Schneider, Hensen, & Schober, 2011). A variety of methods are used in the examinations, such as written tasks and oral examinations, regulated by individual occupation training requirements, which are applicable nationwide and also provide a uniform standard (Euler, 2013).

Over the past years, the unemployment rates in countries such as Greece and Spain have increased by over 50 per cent (Euler, 2013). In fact the high unemployment rate caused by the rapid changing global economy has meant that many countries, like Greece and Spain, have suffered the penalty of insufficient higher-skilled workers and the global attention on the German Dual System has increased remarkably. Recent data from Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) (2013) shows that the unemployment rate in Germany remains consistently around 5 per cent, while neighbouring countries like Greece and Spain are facing high rates of unemployment which continue to increase.
One aspect of the German dual training system is similar to enterprise-led training, which offers trainees practical opportunities, so they are better able to cope with the changing demands of the world of work. The German system, with its emphasis on learning by doing and with employers providing the training as a central element, means that the regulations governing it could not be taken from education policy alone. There is also a very extensive labour law component. The learning by doing approach, by tackling concrete tasks under real working conditions, promotes independence and a sense of responsibility, which are indispensable qualities that industries look for in trainees. The trainees can show evidence of the knowledge and skills they have acquired through work experience. Recently, there has been an attempt by the German government to export the system internationally, especially to European countries. Angela Merkel, Germany’s prime minister, has urged other European governments at the European Youth Jobs summit in Berlin during June 27th-28th, 2013 to adapt their academic system to the German ‘Dual’ System in order to tackle joblessness in their own countries. She said:

“We in Germany have learned a lot from successfully reducing unemployment by means of structural reform since reunification and we can now bring that experience to bear” (Connolly, 2013).
However, the dual system of Germany, even though it is a well-established approach and some say that it may be best practice, also has weaknesses. There are strengths and weaknesses as in other approaches. Additionally, whether or not such a programme will work for another country depends on the context of that country and how the system is introduced. Although the German Dual System is recognised worldwide as an approach that has narrowed the gaps between training and company needs, the system needs strong political support to sustain its role in integrating young people into the labour market, so there needs to be clear political action as well to support the programme.

All in all, a strong involvement of social partners, an efficient way of building skilled workforce, and the golden ticket to the employment system are key components that made the German Dual System successful. The close links among partnerships helps to ensure that vocational education and training systems are responsive to the needs of the labour market and teach relevant skills. Also, OECD (2010a) claimed that the dual system is an efficient way of building skills the employer wants, such as working in a disciplined way to execute the plan, being an effective member or leader of a team and the ability to think analytically and creatively. These skills can be acquired at the employer’s expense and help them to find employment. The dual system of Germany is very attractive to young people because it is an opportunity for them to have a decent job and a good career. Even though the employer has no obligation to hire the apprentice at the end of training, the system gives the employer time to decide whether or not they will be suitable. This benefits both the employer and job seekers.

### 2.2.4 Skills Development in the Context of Thailand

The Tenth Thai National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011) advocates a ‘Happiness Society’ by applying the ‘Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy’ as a main guiding principle in enhancing the country’s self-resilience in handling internal and external uncertainties (Ministry of Education (MOE), n.d.). However, several problems affected the country’s economic growth during the Tenth Plan, including political unrest in 2010 (BBC, 2010), environmental and ecological degradation (Huffington Post, 2011), and poor quality of education. The vision of the Eleventh Plan (2012-2016) is focusing on
‘a happy society with equity, fairness and resilience’ by promoting a peaceful society, with quality growth and sustainability in dealing with a fast-changing and complicated international environment, and in which quality of human resources is crucial (MOE, n.d.).

In Thailand, through the 1997 Constitution and the 1999 Education Act, the Government was determined to launch education reforms with the aim of developing Thailand into a knowledge-based economy. The aim of the reforms is to provide Thai citizens with equal access to life-long education and training, enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills to earn a living and to eventually pull the country out of economic and social crisis (National Education Act B.E.2542, 1999 and Amendments (Second National Education Act B.E.2545, 2002; OEC, 2008c). Additionally, in terms of administration, this reform places emphasis on the decentralisation of administrative responsibilities to local level, which led to the establishment of five independent offices, including Office of the Permanent Secretary, Office of the Education Council (OEC), Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), Office of the Higher Education Commission (MUA) and Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC), and the 185 Educational Service Areas (ESA), each responsible for approximately 200 schools (MOE, n.d.; OEC, 2007a).
Figure 2-6 The Administrative Structure of Education in Thailand

Source: Education in Thailand 2007, Office of the Education Council (2007a)
In order to understand the vocational education policy, it is important to understand the basic structure of the education system in Thailand. Figure 2-6 portrays the division of Thailand’s education system into two levels: basic and higher education. Generally, children in Thailand start the early childhood education at the age of 3, though this type of education is optional, until six years old. Basic education comprises 6 years of primary education, 3 years of lower secondary school and 3 years of upper secondary education which is further divided into two parallel tracks: general and vocational streams. This education will be provided free of charge.

![Thailand's Education System](image)

**Figure 2-7 Thailand's Education System**

*Source: Office of Education Council (2004)*
2.2.4.1 Thailand’s Technical and Vocational Education and Training System

According to the Vocational Education Act, it specifies the skilled manpower that serve the labour market demands. TVET in Thailand offers nine occupational courses provided by 415 public colleges under the Office of Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) and about 406 private institutions. These nine courses have been developed in response to Thailand’s leading industries, and include Commerce, Art, Home Economics, Agriculture, Fisheries, Tourism Industry, Textile Industry, Information and Communication Technology and a variety of Industrial Trades.

TVET programmes in Thailand are diversified and offered at five levels: TVET at upper secondary level (grade 10-12) called Por-Wor-Chor; Diploma in Vocational Education (Dip.Voc.); Higher Diploma in Technical Education; Bachelor Degree in Technology/Performance; and Short-Course Vocational Training. This research focuses on TVET at the upper secondary level, where the Corporate school operates. Students who study at Por-Wor-Chor will obtain a Certificate in Vocational Education (Cert.Voc.), which is the main and regular programme at this level. It provides a three-year formal programme of theoretical and practical subjects studied at school, and students have to spend a semester working as a trainee in the workplace. Another programme is the Certificate in Dual Vocational Education (Cert.Voc.-DVT), students of which study at college and train in a company for three years, and are paid by the company during the training. Thirdly, the Evening Class programme is designed specifically for those employees who wish to study after work, providing accredited 3-5 year courses for part-time study and the credit can be transferred within the same or different institution.
### Curriculum for Certificate of Vocational Education

**Source:** Office of Vocational Education Commission (2011)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>No.spec</th>
<th>Specialization/Stream</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Automotive Industrial Machinery Ship Mechanics Agricultural Machinery Auto body repair and repair</td>
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<tr>
<td>2103</td>
<td>Metallurgical Trades</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Metal Welding Bus Body Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2104</td>
<td>Electrical and Electronics Trades</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Electrical Power Electronics Telecommunication Mechatronics Computer Technique</td>
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<tr>
<td>2106</td>
<td>Building Construction Trades</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Building Construction Civil Architectural Furniture and Interior Decoration Surveying</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Although the German Dual System was introduced to Thailand twenty-five years ago in 1988, the first collaboration was established seven years later. The dual system was established in Thailand by cooperation between King Mongkut’s University of Technology North Bangkok (KMUTNB) and the German government. It was a three-year programme in which students study basic vocational skills in the first year, and are trained in practical skills in the workplace for a further two years. At this stage, students have to pass a skills assessment demonstrating that they have adequate knowledge and skills before continuing to practice at the company for the remaining two years. In years 2 and 3, students train in technical and vocational skills for four days at the enterprise and spend a day studying theoretical subjects at college (OEC, 2005, 2010a). At that time, dual vocation training was not particularly popular in Thailand owing to Thai’s negative perceptions of the VET system (OEC, 2010a). However, ten years later, Panyapiwat Techno Business School under CP ALL, the leading enterprise in Thailand, was the first private vocational school to operate the dual system. The details of the implementation of CP ALL schools will be presented in Chapter Four.

2.2.4.2 The Background Corporate School Initiative

Many Asian countries have been suffering from a shortage of qualified workers. This denotes a mismatch between the supply of workers with appropriate education and skills and the demand for those types of workers. (ILO, 2008a, p. 57). Poor quality and inequity of education and training are common issues causing concern in many countries. Although many countries have committed to the provision of ‘basic education for all’ in their education policies, many children still do not have opportunities to access basic education and skills development. One practical reason for this is economy; about one-third of the world population lives below the poverty line. For poor families education seems a less urgent need. Students have to work to help boost family income and do not have time to attend conventional education and training institutions (UNESCO, 2010). The problems are often regional; recent studies of the Philippines illustrate this. Here too,
there is a rising demand for children to help their parents in providing for the family’s day-to-day needs. Therefore, whether or not children are able to stay in school, the limited financial resources of the family are the main concern of the parents, more so than providing their children with the opportunities to have education and skills training. Furthermore, the poor quality of local schools means that many parents have low regard for the value of education. Students and parents do not see the benefit of going to or sending their children to these schools, an attitude exacerbated by the fact that many school or even university graduates cannot get jobs and remains unemployed. This is in part because the curriculum and teaching learning process do not assist transition between education institutions and the world of work, and do little to halt increasing unemployment rates (UNESCO, 2010).

Similarly, Thailand’s education system is failing not only the country’s competitiveness, but also its youth, parents and, in fact, all Thais. Even though education in Thailand receives nearly USD 14.7 billion, about 20 per cent of the national budget, the highest budget of any ministry (Tangkitvanich, 2013), it has not led to any improvement in performance.

“The Thai government ... has spent a huge amount of money to reform schools here. The intention to raise the standard of schools is admirable; however the means of upgrading school quality might need a more meaningful push. Simply throwing money at schools to build new buildings or increase teaching personnel without evaluating the level of education itself may not be money well spent”. (Editorial excerpt from The Nation, 2010)

According to PISA (2009), the average score among OECD countries was around 500 points, but Thailand achieved only 421 in reading, 419 in Mathematics and 425 in Science. The national consensus is that traditional ‘Thai ways’ of teaching students are unlikely to produce the capacity of school graduates to live productive and satisfying lives (Hallinger, 2000). To improve Thailand’s education regarding equity and quality issues, the government has tried several strategies. In 1999, the first National Education Act was legislated, mandating key components which are:
i. Education shall aim at the full development of the Thai people to meet the basic learning needs, upgrading and encouraging their self-development so that they may be able to improve their quality of life and live in harmony with other people.  

ii. Expanding provision of basic education from nine to twelve years, and extending compulsory education from six to nine years. Such education shall be of quality and free of charge;  

iii. Encouraging participation of all stakeholders, such as community organisations, professional bodies and enterprises, in supporting or providing basic education. These participating organisations will be entitled to benefits as appropriate;  

iv. Setting educational standards and implementing an internal and external quality assurance system in schools and education institutions;  


As part of its Decade for Quality and Equity in Education from 2002 – 2011, the government revised the curriculum by focusing on eight core subjects: Mathematics, Science, Thai, social studies, health and physical education, Art, career and technology and foreign languages, connecting local wisdom and knowledge in order to made the curriculum more relevant to local communities and enable them to make adjustments in response to local demands, and strengthening partnerships between communities and the private and business sectors, thereby reducing the gap between education and the world of work.

Despite these measures, skill shortages are becoming an impediment for the country’s sustained growth. With the beliefs that sustainable economic development would require a more knowledgeable and skilled labour workforce (Hallinger & Bryant, 2013), Thailand is seeking to up-skill its labour force, particularly, through workplace training.
In order to fulfil these aspirations, sections 12 and 18(3) of the 1999 National Education Act stipulated that other organisations apart from the State, such as private persons, local administration organisations, enterprises and other social institutions, have the right to provide basic education. Consequently, such bodies were encouraged to join the national effort to improve educational opportunities. This action was intended to encourage the participation of social organisations and mobilise resources from various sources to support education because action in the past had met neither the individual needs of learners nor the needs of private enterprises (OEC, 2008a, 2008b, 2009b, 2010b). Under the provisions of this law, the Thai government has set out a long-term strategy to develop the economy, and the Corporate School scheme was highlighted to strengthen links between learning and working for students during their apprenticeship (Thada-Thamrongvech, 2012). “No youth entering the labour market without proper skills training by 2020” (OECD, 2012c) is the country’s policy goal. The policy of basic education organised by private enterprises has been developed to support the government policy of increasing the average years of schooling to ten and increasing the proportion of the workforce educated to secondary level to fifty percent by 2011 (OEC, 2008a). In response to increased global economic competition, a well-skilled labour force is required to be able to compete. Goods and services for world markets need workers with significant skill-sets. Promoting Thailand’s vocational and technical education which has the main responsibility for skills development, however, it has been confronted by many constrains, such as the poor image of practical education in the society and industrial sectors and the poor quality of the education system (OECD, 2012b). To enhance student motivation and industry recognition, the Ministry of Education and the Vocational Education Commission have tried to implement new approaches that would strengthen the system and raise Thailand’s vocational education image and standards. The Skill Development Promotion Act was launched in 2002 with the aim of encouraging industrial skills investment by introducing incentives, such as tax exemptions for enterprises providing skills training in the workplace (OECD, 2012). Thailand has a
working committee, the National Vocational Training Co-ordination Committee (NVTCC), responsible for issuing policy and planning on Human Resource Development in order to avoid duplication of training and eliminate target group overlaps, as well as for sharing training resources (OECD, 2012). One aspect of this process, the Thai government, with collaboration from private sector organisations, initiated the Corporate School. The programme was created in order to expand opportunities for developing knowledge and skills - both basic and work-related skills - for young Thais in order to prepare them for the fast-forward global labour market environment. Additionally, the direct involvement of private firms was intended to provide a relevant education programme that matched the needs of the community and the local industrial sector. This research focuses on the Corporate School programme in Thailand which, to date, has been in operation for almost a decade.

2.3 Barriers to Skills Development and Ways for Improvement

Creating a competent and knowledge-based workforce who can apply their knowledge to keep up with the rapidly changing labour market is a key challenge for many countries. The quality of skills development matters to all stakeholders, because the quality assurance is not only a major issue to guarantee the quality of skills obtained, but also the quality of the future workforce and the programme’s implementation, which will have a great influence on individuals; of course the education and training curriculum needs to be fit for purpose. The private sector needs to have appropriately qualified recruits that can enhance the enterprise’s productivity. Training quality can be viewed in terms of inputs, processes and outputs. The quality assurance can be carried out through a testing and assessment framework. First is the quality of input essential. The level of skills and knowledge of instructors is a key determinant of the quality of an education and training system. Regarding the process of raising the quality of the system, Australia, for example, has a model called Training Package. A series of standard-based qualifications have been developed there, based on competency standards, achievement assessment, and the
qualifications framework. Under the Australian Training Qualifications Framework, training providers are registered and audited according to set standards. This ensures that the 4,500 training providers throughout Australia meet the minimum standards in the delivery and assessment of training (ADB, 2009; IDB, 2012). All in all, the quality of input and effective assessment framework are central factors in achieving the expected outcomes that fulfil the goals of skills development.

However, this is unusual, as so far, studies show that most skills development and TVET systems fail to monitor or evaluate the quality of training in terms of competencies achieved (ADB, 2009). The following section aims to address the obstacles that hinder the operation of skills training programmes and explore approaches to make the programme sustainable and more effective. Two major parts are presented: the first portrays barriers that obstruct such programmes, and the second deals with ways to consolidate the skills development system.

2.3.1 Barriers to Skills Development

Many studies report similar concerns regarding skills development. Most skills development programmes are associated with a range of stakeholders - from the private sectors in particular, the potential of enterprises is a major concern. Will they be able to organise the programme efficiently and effectively? While the potential of the private sector is crucial for the implementation and performance of skills development, the role of the public sector is very important also. There are several elements that can drive or block the operation and the ‘blockages’ can be grouped into four main barriers (Lange et al., 2000).

Cultural barriers must be addressed in the first place. Small and large firms behave differently; having different approaches and organisation structures, likewise there are also differences in attitudes amongst managers. A second barrier is associated with resources. Financial constrains the potential of the partner business to provide a
comprehensive education and training scheme. Some enterprises may feel reluctant to participate, especially small firms, which may require multi-skilled personnel that cost more to train than training in one specific skill and cannot easily be done on a small scale. In addition, employees in small firms may be more likely to move to a competitor company, owing to the transferable skills they have acquired. A third barrier relates to access and provision issues, such as cost of travel to the training venue, which may dissuade employees from joining schemes. The final barrier is concerned with awareness amongst providers and potential recruits. Sufficient information about training and learning opportunities and knowledge of relevant skills are critical for employers in making the decision to participate. Additionally, employers may not be happy to recruit young inexperienced people and re-train them, as this is more expensive than hiring a ‘job ready’ person. The young people targeted by these initiatives may also be poorly informed about what is available.

Apart from these barriers, another primary point to consider regarding challenges for skills development programme is its image. The skills development is most likely to be part of a TVET programme, which is seen generally as a system suiting young people who are less good at academic subjects; or even as a ‘last chance’ to access training to improve knowledge and skills (UNESCO, 2012d). Participants have often previously failed in mainstream education; have low basic skills and poor self image. These youths are more likely to lack trust in ‘the system’, and are often drawn into anti-social behaviour or even criminality (Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), 2013). This image constrains the TVET systems worldwide; such systems have a lower status than traditional academic education. Many young people and their parents would prefer continuing mainstream education through to university even though it would often be better for them to enter a vocational education that can equip them with skills that will be more appropriate to their working lives. The poor image has undermined the development of vocational education systems.
Although TVET and skills development face many challenges and cannot solve all the global economic problems, well-structured and well-targeted skills development is advantageous, benefitting individuals, industry and the economy as a whole. The following section, therefore, focuses on ways to improve and sustain skills development. It is divided into two parts. Since partnership is very important for skills development, securing bonding between public and private partners is a critical element to consider. The first part of this section, therefore, considers ways to sustain partnerships for skills development. The second part addresses the issue of quality in skills development, which is considered a major factor in enhancing the programme and ensuring its continuity.

### 2.3.2 Ways to Sustain Partnerships

Analysis of the literature shows the extent to which partnerships need to be sustained in order to maintain the participations of all stakeholders. The earlier section shows the strengths and weaknesses of vocational training approaches. Even though work-based learning provides the specific skills companies need in their employees, it often overlooks basic skills needed, such as reading and writing. Companies show less interest in developing these basic skills, and feel that the responsibility of basic education should be provided by schools. In addition to this, it is apparent that the main distinguishing feature of the dual system compared to other forms of skills development is the strong partnerships that link education and skills-oriented training in order to equip learners with basic, transferable and working skills which are essential to their lives, regardless of what careers they have. To consolidate partnerships, it is necessary to promote coordinated approaches rather than leaving each stakeholder to their own devices. Several studies therefore, suggest fundamental elements for consolidating the participation of all stakeholders; these are political commitment, policy coherence and common visions of social partners and key stakeholders in skills development. These elements are explained in further detail below.
2.3.2.1 Strong Political Commitment

A key prerequisite for a successful partnership is strong political commitment. Political commitment at the national level should be seen as a driving force that stimulates participation from all stakeholders. Kasipar et al. (2009) argue that a robust political commitment towards links with industry is a basic necessity. To create the appropriate environment for a partnership to happen, it is a priority for government to encourage stakeholders to share responsibility which requires clear legislation so that companies know exactly what this will involve. Strategic issues relating to provision, accessibility, financing, and qualification frameworks need to be addressed, and partner organisations need to understand these matters.

2.3.2.2 Targeted Policy

In every facet of society, policy acts as a principle or rule intended to guide decisions and is a very important factor to secure appropriate outcomes. In regard to strengthening partnerships among stakeholders in the dual TVET system, specific policies promoting partnerships are essential. They have to take into account the diversity of national contexts and the specific characteristics of the private sector (Kasipar et al., 2009). In addition to this, some studies illustrate that creating a more coherent policy and clear operational framework for providers and consumers of education and training is able not only to reduce duplication of planning, financing, monitoring and evaluation but also increase the efficiency of the policy and its effective implementation.

2.3.2.3 Common Vision

To secure the participation of stakeholders, experts suggest, requires that working partnerships between the TVET system and industry share a certain ‘common vision’ (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001). In addition, ADB (2009) points out that the establishment of effective and sustainable public–private partnerships depends largely on the roles, authority and responsibilities of the state and industrial sectors, all of which
must be formulated from their agreed vision. Equally important, is the extent to which private partners are willing and able to assume delegated authority and accountability. Success depends particularly on the strength and capability of the private sector organisations, of employers’ and workers’ organisations and of other private partners.

2.3.3 Helpful Practices

As well as these three ways of sustaining PPP partnerships, many experts suggest ways to make the PPPs’ programmes more effective (OECD, 2010a; World Bank, 2012b).

2.3.3.1 Make Clear and Careful Use of a Qualification Framework

A qualification framework is a critical tool to support the on-going system. A systematic framework embedded in the system can ensure the quality and coherence of the approach. This is necessary to coordinate stakeholders’ actions and set competency standards which are clearly recognised by all stakeholders.

2.3.3.2 Effective Career Guidance

Reliable and accurate information sources on study options and career choice are crucial to jobseekers and need urgent attention in many countries. Low levels of professionalism, poor job search mechanisms, unsystematic qualification frameworks, and low levels of competency are weaknesses that may limit labour mobility and job matching. Surveys show that the lack of access to reliable information and formal support are common problems in developing countries, as this particularly affects the lower end of the labour market. Young people need career counselling and job search assistance to find career opportunities because it is difficult for them to make considered career choices without effective guidance, and it is such a waste if they choose the wrong career.
2.3.3.3 Appropriate Incentives for Employers and Trainees

OECD (2012b) suggests that it is important to have measures to cushion the dual system and other VET approaches especially in periods of economic recession. Employers should create workplaces that support learning and invest in quality learning in order to enhance employees’ willingness to develop their skills throughout their working life. However, it is very difficult to fund this and it seems unfair to expect this of the private sector alone. To make the system sustainable, governments should also play a leading role in designing financial incentives and favourable tax policies that encourage both workers and employers to invest in skills training approaches, even when times are hard.

2.4 Summary of the Chapter

Literature related to skills development was investigated in order to acquire a broad overview of current developments, highlighting the reasons why skills development has become important to individuals, enterprises and the labour economy. This chapter also explored current trends and efforts to improve skills development systems and sustain skills training partnerships. Skills development has been in the spotlight in recent decades because the economic downturn has made significant changes to the global economic structure and led to the increased numbers of the unemployed worldwide. This has stimulated many developed and developing countries to re-focusing on their VET system. The well-known and long standing system German Dual System remains the most influential and most copied, not only because it has been able to respond to changes in education and the labour market economy, but also because of strong evidence that it has led to a lower unemployment rate. Furthermore, there have been several efforts by Germany itself to export the dual system to other countries, especially to European countries in the wake of the European debt crisis. However, it is impossible to import the entirety of the German Dual System to another country. Each country has a unique social and economic context, and countries are therefore advised to re-design the system to make it compatible with their own situations. The dual system was introduced to the Thai
VET system. Enterprises required a qualified workforce who could work immediately after graduation without retraining in companies, but the VET curriculum at that time was obsolete and unrelated to the needs of industries. Nevertheless, the implementation of the dual system in Thailand was neglected, and impaired also by the unfavourable image of the VET system in Thailand. The launch of the Corporate Schools was a further attempt by the government to provide quality work-related education to young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, which was responsive to the demands of the labour market. Similarly to the dual system, the progress of this development has been undermined by a series of factors, and the initiative is in danger of fading away. In the chapter that follows, I will look closely at the initiative, how it has been implemented, and how it seems to be working. I hope through this analysis to be able to identify more clearly the potential and the impact of Corporate Schools, to evaluate whether it would be both possible and worthwhile to retain this approach to the development of work-related skills among young people in Thailand.
3. CHAPTER THREE:  
PLANNING THE RESEARCH AND AN OVERVIEW OF THAI CORPORATE SCHOOL PROGRAMME

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the research design and discuss the methods adopted in this research. It will first describe the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research, and then explain the research design, research methods and data collection techniques and methods of data analysis. This is followed by a discussion of issues related to the limitations, trustworthiness and ethical issues raised by the research. Lastly, an overview of the Corporate School programme in Thailand will also be presented.

Before moving on to introducing the research methods and the techniques used in data collection and analysis, a conceptual framework is presented here to bring together the proposed research questions in Chapter One and the analysis of literature review in Chapter Two. It will be a systematic structure for analysing empirical data for the case studies triangulated with the data derived from observations and documentary research in order to understand how one influences to another.
3.1 Philosophical Standpoint: Interpretivism

It is important to be aware of the philosophical stance adopted in this research. Philosophical assumptions reflect a researcher’s world view; as Crotty pointed out (1998, p. 3), all research activities start from “...a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know”. Crotty (1998) also identified the four fundamental elements in the construction and process of research: methods, methodologies, theoretical perspective and epistemology. These elements must be compatible with one another and relevant to the investigation because they have causal and reciprocal relationships. Methods are the techniques or procedures for data collection, which depend on the research design and methodology. Methodology is the strategy that frames choices of methods in order to
measure the selected variables. However, in designing the research methodology for any study, a theoretical perspective, or a philosophical stance, plays an important role in providing the context for the research. Above all, epistemology underpins the theoretical perspective and methodology, since it reflects the personal beliefs of the researcher. In social science, three main epistemologies have been identified: Positivism, Interpretivism and Critical Realism (Neuman, 2000). Each one starts from a particular “viewpoint”, which “scopes knowledge, understanding and interpretation of the world” (Neuman, 2000).

Positivism has the longest history in empirical studies, and can be defined thus:

"Positivism has a long and rich historical tradition. It is so embedded in our society that knowledge claims not grounded in positivist thought are simply dismissed as ascientific and therefore invalid" (Hirschheim, 1985, p.33).

Early positivists adopted the natural science approach as a model for social research. Research framed by this approach assumes that facts are facts, that ‘reality’ exists and that it can be identified and described. Typical methods used in this perspective therefore tend to seek quantifications, such as surveys, questionnaires and other ways of collective quantifiable data, which is required to measure and test hypotheses by statistical methods and statistical significance is seen as ‘truth’. However, there has been much debate on the appropriateness of the positivist paradigm for the social sciences. Some difficulties, such as the inconsistency of results outside the laboratory and the problem of measuring or even identifying key variables mean that positivism may not be suitable for the social science study (Galliers, 1991). While positivists perceive the world through empiricism, believing that knowledge is derived from experiment and observation, ‘interpretivism’ believes that social reality is constructed from multiple interpretations and understanding how and why things happen may have a number of interpretations, depending on who is looking and why (Hirschheim and Klein, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Weber (2004)
has pointed out important differences between positivism and interpretivism in seven dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metatheoretical Assumptions About</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Interpretivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Person (researcher) and reality are separated.</td>
<td>Person (researcher) and reality are inseparable (life-world).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Objective reality exists beyond the human mind.</td>
<td>Knowledge of the world is intentionally constituted through a persons’ lived experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Object</td>
<td>Research object has inherent qualities that exist independently of the researcher.</td>
<td>Research objective is interpreted in light of meaning structure of person’s (researcher’s) lived experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Statistics, content analysis.</td>
<td>Hermeneutics, phenomenology, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Truth</td>
<td>Correspondence theory of truth: one-to-one mapping between research statements and reality.</td>
<td>Truth as intentional fulfilment: interpretations of research object match lived experience of object.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>Certainty: data truly measures reality.</td>
<td>Defensible knowledge claims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Replicability: research results can be produced.</td>
<td>Interpretive awareness: researchers recognise and address implications of their subjectivity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-1 The differences between positivism and interpretivism


The first dimension to consider is the ontology. The positivists believe that the researcher is separate from the object of study or the reality, while interpretivists believe that the researcher cannot be separated from the object of research or reality. Secondly, in the epistemological dimension, positivists try to build knowledge of a reality that exist beyond the human mind, on the other hand, interpretivists try to make sense of the world within the framework of their life-worlds as Weber used the terms “intentionally constitute knowledge” (Weber, 2004). Research object is the third dimension, where
positivists consider that the object has qualities that exist independently from the researcher, but an interpretivist researcher believes the objects of the research are socially constructed. Fourth dimension is the method. Laboratory experiments and surveys are positivists preferred methods. They believe that large amounts of empirical data enable them to analyse statistically and detect underlying regularities. On the other hand, interpretivists prefer using case studies and ethnographic studies as their methods. Fifth, in the theory of truth dimension, positivists consider that the statement made by a researcher is true when it corresponds to a theory of truth, but interpretivists believe that truth is conformed by the researcher’s interpretation through their lived experience. Sixth, in the validity dimension, positivists supposedly strive to collect data that truly measures reality, while interpretivists are concerned that the knowledge they acquired are defensible. Lastly, in the reliability dimension, positivists consider that the research results can be reproduced but interpretivists believe that research is reliable if the researcher can address the subjective implication of their research object.

In addition to the above differences, it can be implied that interpretivism then, arose from dissatisfaction with some assumptions associated with the positivist stance. It is concerned with “how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted” (Mason, 2002, p. 3). Thus, interpretive approaches do not start from specific assumption:

“Interpretive studies explicitly adopt a nondeterministic perspective, attempting to explore the phenomena of interest in its natural setting, deliberately not imposing any a priori understanding on it” (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991, p. 6).

Nor do they assume that unique findings and explanations exist:

“Interpretive methods of research start from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors. Our theories concerning reality are ways of making sense of the world, and
shared meanings are a form of intersubjectivity rather than objectivity” (Walsham, 2006, p. 320).

Interpretive researchers start then from the belief that meanings are socially constructed. Understandings we reached through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings (Avison and Myers, 2002). Therefore, even the meaning of ‘study’ may vary according to different interpreters and the meaning of ‘interpretation’ may change, or be modified and developed through social interaction (Schwandt, 1994). Methods used in this perspective have traditionally been based on observations, interviews, documents and artifacts which allow the researcher to explore in detail particular contexts as events.

A third approach, identified by Neuman (2000), is critical theory. The critical approach aims to address the weaknesses of both positivist and interpretivist epistemologies, arguing that positivism disregards the understandings of real people and social context, while interpretivism is too subjective. The critical epistemology, therefore, tries to understand individuals and social contexts with the support of empirical evidence (Neuman, 2000), which could be characterised as mixed method - a combination of the previous two approaches. Such inquiries involve:

“...a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies” (J. Creswell & Plana Clark, 2007, p. 5).

or,

“...a type of research design in which QUAL [qualitative] and QUAN [quantitative] approaches are used in types of questions, research methods, data collection and analysis procedures, and/or inferences” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 711)
Furthermore, this research investigates the development of the Corporate School initiative in Thailand and the context of Thailand in terms of education, society and economy is unique. The best way to perceive and understand the Corporate School programme cannot be “measured” through numbers or hypotheses, but must consider the specific participants’ attitudes and experiences and the social context in which the school is set. The philosophical stance underlying this study, consequently, draws on the interpretive paradigm. Neuman (2000, p. 71) described this approach as:

“the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds”.

For these reasons, interpretivism seems the most suitable stance from which to carry out this research.

3.2 Research Methods

As discussed above, the basic thinking surrounding this research was framed by the philosophical stance of the interpretive approach. Research methodology is designed to provide guidelines about how research is undertaken in order to reflect the meaning of the particular phenomenon of the case under scrutiny with regard to the research questions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Silverman, 1997). A qualitative approach, therefore, was chosen to collect the data and carry out the analysis of those data.

3.2.1 Case Study Approach

In this research a case study approach is utilised because it is seen to be the most appropriate method to explore and explain the Corporate School programme as Berg pointed out, case study is:
“... a method involving systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions” (L. Berg, 2007, p. 283).

The case study aims at achieving an in-depth understanding of a particular situation through collecting data in natural settings, rather than relying on derived data in order to describe what happened and explain how and why it happened (Yin, 2003). This particular study conducts and reports on three case studies. Some scholars have raised concerns regarding trustworthiness in case study research, believing that the study of a small number of cases cannot be generalised to any broader level and have criticised case study research as being useful only in an exploratory phase of research (Cohen et al., 2007; Yin, 2003). Other researchers have argued that the number of cases studied is relatively unimportant; one case study can be an instructive example of other cases. The key thing is that there is a systematic plan and procedures for the study; and that it is carefully conducted to ensure trustworthiness of the research (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Case selection criteria were set on the basis of the information each case would be able to supply. The framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 34) was drawn on and the six criteria for case selection were as follows:

1) Relevance to the conceptual framework and the research questions
2) Potential to generate rich information on the type of phenomena which need to be studied
3) Potential to enhance the generalisability of the findings
4) Likelihood of producing believable descriptions/explanation
5) Ethical consideration
6) Feasibility of assess and sampling
In this research, the Thailand vocational education system is the ultimate focus of study, and three organisations participating in the Corporate School programme were selected as the sub-units of analysis to gain insights into and understanding of the Corporate School programme, the collaboration between public and private sectors in Thailand in providing education and skills development for young people, and to then consider ways of improving the programme. The following section explains why Thailand and the three selected case studies were chosen.

To begin with, Thailand was selected because I am Thai. The uniqueness of Thailand’s vocational education context is best investigated by those familiar with Thai language and culture in order to gain rich information on the specific social phenomena addressed in this research, and remain aware of the cultural and ethical issues. Additionally, Thailand is joining Association of Southeast Asian Nations Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 (Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), n.d.), and preparation for this regional economic integration is seen as a catalyst for the country’s development. Furthermore, Thailand will definitely need to bring about changes in social and economic conditions and enhance the quality of workforce to meet the demands of the labour economy with ASEAN. However, studies regarding education performance in Thailand have shown that Thailand has been struggling with education reforms for fifteen years since its first attempt at reform in 1999. Educational achievement has declined consistently between 2000 and 2009 (OECD, 2010c). Regarding Thailand’s economic status, owing to many dismal events such as the political turmoil in 2010 and the devastating floods in 2011, Thailand’s GDP contracted by 8.9 per cent in quarter four of 2011 and shrank by a further 2.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2013 (GrantThornton, 2012; Taborda, 2013), thus it is interesting to investigate how the Thai vocational education system has coped with this matter. Are there any strategies to improve the quality of the labour force, despite continuing economic difficulties?
Moreover, the three cases were chosen because when I narrowed my interest down to skills development and the Corporate School programme in Thailand, the three cases have direct experience of implementing the Corporate School. Their experiences make them ideal case studies, as they can provide insights into the key questions driving the research, such as how these programmes were organised, their curricula and the challenges they faced.

3.3 Data Collection

This research uses a case study design, with data collected from both primary and secondary sources. This section provides information regarding the techniques of data collection employed in this study, namely documentary analysis, direct observations and in-depth interviews. The following sub-sections outline the data collection procedures in detail.

3.3.1 Documentary Research

Self-evidently the documentary research method involves the analysis of documents, most commonly written documents in the private or public domain, to investigate and categorise data sources (Bailey, 1994; Payne & Payne, 2004). Yin (2003, p. 87) also asserted that “For case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources”. The documents used in this study came from two main sources: (i) international sources such as UNESCO, World Bank publications and international journals related to skills development for young people in the global context and in developing countries, particularly Thailand; and (ii) Thailand’s vocational education plans and policies, and other related issues concerning the Corporate School programme. The companies’ annual reports were also drawn on. These documents were utilised in the three main stages of this study. The first phase was to get a broad overview and background knowledge of Technical Vocational Education and Training, for which documents from international organisations such as UNESCO and the World Bank were
used. The researcher read about global trends related to TVET, developed a general understanding of projects focusing on Thailand and developing countries, and learned about best practice of public and private participation in extending opportunities for the vocational education of young people. Secondly, Thailand’s legislative and government records were necessary in the preparation for field study, helping the researcher to gain background knowledge of the cases being studied and to be able to formulate a systematic research plan, including a particular set of actions to be performed, what to observe and a list of key informants. Moreover, when it came to data analysis, these documents were consulted as sources to support the viewpoints and arguments of this study, being cross-referenced with the interviews and official documents in order to confirm the credibility, validity and reliability of the research.

3.3.2 Direct Observation

A great deal of what researchers do in the field is to pay attention, watch, and listen carefully to gain a rich picture of a setting (Neuman, 2000; Schuh & Upcraft, 2001). Direct observation is used to observe a phenomenon without disturbing the research setting (Yin, 2003). When conducting this research, observation was made throughout the field visits in order to gain a broad understanding of contexts which could be used to develop the case study framework, as well as additional information that may provide more concrete evidence about the cases (Cohen et al., 2007; Yin, 2003). Observation sheets and camera were both used as observation tools. The researcher recorded the observed objects, such as school settings, relationships between school director–teachers and teachers–students, and interviewees’ behaviour, by capturing them through the camera and by immediately describing them in plain text on the observation sheets. The researcher spent the first week at each case on observation in order to get a broad perspective and gain knowledge about the field sites, simultaneously building rapport with key informants in order to become familiar with them in the field setting. The key informants then felt more comfortable giving insights and information. Furthermore, the
researcher later carried out interviews to clarify the results of the observations as supporting data, to increase the trustworthiness of the analysis and in order to avoid misinterpretation of some of the collected data (Cohen et al., 2007).

### 3.3.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were also utilised in this research to collect empirical data. These interviews were employed to investigate the phenomenon being studied, to clarify understandings of the collected data, and to conduct additional inquiries (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). McCracken (1988) stated that interviews provide the opportunity to step into the minds and lives of other people, to see and experience the world as they do themselves. Additionally, Taylor and Bogdan (1998, p. 88) contended that:

> “a face-to-face encounter between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants’ perspectives in their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 88).

Flexibility, while remaining systematic, is the strength of the semi-structured interview. The outline questions increase the comprehensiveness of the data and the naturalness and relevance of questions and answers are not limited (Cohen et al., 2007; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Thus said, this technique does have its limitations, as Taylor and Bogdan (1998) assert. For example, people say and do different things in different situations, so the researcher cannot assume that what the interviewees say during the interview will be the same as what they might say in other situations, there is also a possibility that the interviewer might misunderstand the informants’ language. The informants may also be unwilling or unable to express critical issues.

Being aware of such potential deficiencies, the researcher applied several techniques in order to reduce the negative effects during the interview process. Firstly, the interview questions were generated in such a way that the respondents would easily understand them, such as by avoiding long and leading questions. At the beginning of the interviews, the researcher gained participants’ consent and explained the purposes of the study. In
addition, audio recordings were employed to collect the full account of the interview, permission for which was sought through a consent form. Last but not least, the interviews were carried out rigorously. The researcher was aware of responses she made to informants’ answers in both verbal and non-verbal forms, since these might affect informants’ responses. Sensitive questions were kept to the end of the interview so informants would have time to build up some degree of confidence in the interviewer (Healey & Rawlinson, 2004; Neuman, 2000).

3.3.3.1 Informant Selection

The purposive, snowball and random sampling techniques were applied in order to select informants for the interviews. In this study, the informants needed to be purposefully selected according to their position and role in the Corporate School programme because of its importance when seeking accuracy in case study research (Creswell, 2007). The concept of purposive sampling is used in qualitative research in order to acquire in-depth understanding without needing to conduct exhaustive inquiries (Patton, 1980). It was necessary to interview several key informants; including the company and school directors. There were, therefore two key informants from each of the three schools, six people in total. The interviews with these directors required more open-ended questions in order to probe into their opinions of the effectiveness of the Corporate School programme and their prospective plans for development (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997; Yin, 2003). Additionally, snowball sampling was applied to search for information-rich informants on site. This technique allows the researcher to get to know key informants who may then introduce the researcher to other potential informants (Patton, 2002). In terms of obtaining the information regarding the implementation and current situation of the Corporate Schools, teachers, facilitators and other key informants, such as marketing personnel were introduced by the directors.

Furthermore, the researcher was allowed to advertise on the companies’ notice-boards in order to recruit volunteers from the programme. The experiences and benefits participants
have gained during the Corporate School programme were discovered through the interviews with the respondents.

3.3.3.2 Lessons Learned

During the data collection process, inevitably issues arose that the researcher had to be prepared to deal with. These included:

1. Issues regarding access to informants
   1.1. Difficulties in making appointments and accessing those interviewees in senior positions within the case-study organisations.
   1.2. Cancellation at the last minute of interview appointments, owing to circumstances arising which meant the interviewees had other priorities.

2. Issues arising during the interviews
   2.1. Negotiations regarding how the researcher could report data gathered from the interviews in such a way that interviewees were protected when they have commented on negatively or revealed confidential information about the organisation.

In terms of handling these issues, back-up strategies were planned in order to reduce their impact. Confirmation of arrangements with the interviewees took place prior to the interviews and, in the case of no-show, a back-up participant was scheduled for that timeslot, which was helpful sometimes. Additionally, the researcher deleted any data that the informants felt uncomfortable with, and also sent the interview report to them to confirm that they were happy with the data that had been recorded before using this.

Nonetheless, even though the research was designed carefully, anticipating and preparing for such expected disruptions, there were two major unexpected circumstances that influenced the data collection: the continuing political instability in Thailand and, in 2011, the devastating floods which affected fieldwork activities greatly. Regarding the political situation in Thailand, it is approximately ten years since Thailand’s politics have
been in crisis. In 2006, the military took in power and a kind of stability was expected. However, after an initial period of calm the protests and civil disorder in Bangkok and other major cities around the nation grew ever stronger, preventing attempts to establish ‘business as usual’ and bringing many government functions to a standstill. Even now it is hard to say that the situation is settled down completely, but government business was very disrupted during the main period when this research was carried out. Following is a brief timeline of major political unrest.

**Table 3-1 Timeline of Thailand's Political Unrest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006 April-May</td>
<td>Snap election called by the PM amid mass rallies against him is boycotted by the opposition and is subsequently annulled, leaving a political vacuum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 September</td>
<td>Military leaders stage a bloodless coup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 September-December</td>
<td>Opposition protesters occupy Bangkok’s main government complex and begin mass anti-government protests calling for the resignation of PM. His replacement is also forced out of office within months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 March – April</td>
<td>Supporters of former PM hold mass rallies against the government's economic policies. Continuing unrest forces the cancellation of an ASEAN summit after anti-government protesters storm the summit venue in the resort of Pattaya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 March-May</td>
<td>Protesters occupy the centre of Bangkok-troops eventually storm the protesters’ barricades and ended the demonstrations amid significant burning and looting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 November-December</td>
<td>Further protests and counter protests paralyse the city and bring effective government to a halt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 February</td>
<td>General elections go ahead but the Constitutional Court declares them invalid because of disruption by the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
opposition.

2014 May

Army again seizes power in coup

Sources: BBC (2014), World Bank (2014)

As early as 2008, the World Bank (2008a) pointed out that ‘political instability’ was ranked second among the constraints to doing business in Thailand, and the uncertain political situation was negatively affecting government functions and the Thai economy. Since then many large protests have been staged disrupting work in major business districts in Bangkok. In addition to the direct affects of this civil commotion, tourism, consumer confidence, and investor confidence have all been negatively affected by this circumstance (World Bank, 2014). In fact, the chaos continued until 2014, when the army staged a second coup. During this period, the normal activities of government have been severely restricted, and many ministries have been unable to carry out even routine tasks (World Bank 2014).

Another difficulty was the 2011 flooding which affected directly and substantially people’s lives and the economy of the country. Thailand endured enormous damage from the worst flooding in more than half a century (AON, 2012; World Bank, 2012d). Because of excessive and continuous rainfall from seasonal storms, following by numerous dam breaches, 66 of the country’s 77 provinces were under water. More than 884 people were killed, millions of residents were either left homeless or displaced from July through to December 2011 (World Bank, 2012d; 2014). Moreover, business and industry- including those I was trying to conduct case-studies of at that time—suffered substantial damage and losses due to the flooding (World Bank, 2012d). These devastating floods were designated a natural disaster by the Thai government. Therefore, at that time I had to take myself to a safe place during this period and spent time transcribing data already collected while waiting for the situation to improve. When the situation had settled down, new contacts were made to re-schedule the research observations and interviews, especially those with the third case study company/school.
Unfortunately, this proved to be quite difficult and not all original objectives could be met.

3.4 Data Analysis

The transcription of the recorded interviews and the examination of field notes took place in the first stage of analysis. Then, transcripts were sent to the informants to verify the accuracy of the information; all interviewees requested a summarised transcript. In order to analyse the large amount of qualitative data collected from documentary sources, field notes and transcribed interviews, an analytical framework was employed, specifically thematic analysis. The raw data was categorised and interpreted into coded themes (Creswell, 2003), the purpose of which was to group similar comments/issues under similar headings or classification (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). However, the data needed to be triangulated to different sources in order to build a coherent justification for the selected themes (Creswell, 2003). The consistency of information from documentary research, observation notes and interviews was compared, in order to ensure coherent explanation written and justification for the analysis.

The analysis was conducted manually, and the researcher drew up an initial theme-pattern which was guided by the set of questions used in the interviews. Moreover, as the interviews were semi-structured, often issues arose during the interview process that were specific to companies or respondents but which were clearly important. Hence it was possible for new themes to emerge and necessary for the initial themes to be adjusted. After the transcription process, they were revised based on the research questions, objectives of the study and analytical framework. After the final theme-pattern was done, all elements of data were categorised to the relevant themes. This enabled the researcher to triangulate the data sources and enhance the validity of the study.
3.5 Limitations of the Research

Due to limitation of time and resources, the selection of theoretical approaches to the research was restricted. The researcher therefore focused on the most relevant literature to the study. Furthermore, during fieldwork in November 2011–January 2012, as mentioned there was unexpected, devastating flooding in Bangkok, the main research location. This resulted in limitations regarding accessibility of respondents. Since most of Bangkok was under water, the selected case study companies were affected and consequently closed. This had an effect on the data collection timetable as the interviews frequently had to be postponed and re-scheduled. In addition, in 2009-2010, just before the floods, Thailand experienced severe political instability. This affected the administration of the Corporate Schools; whereby some training places had to be closed and schools needed to develop strategies in order to cope with this unexpected event. Consequently, when the situation returned to normal, some important data such as the number of recruited students and economic performance of companies were not stable, may have had some effect on the analysis and discussion.

Additionally, this research was carried out in the Thai language. Most documents regarding the Corporate School are in Thai and the interviews were conducted in Thai, each session of which lasted between two and three hours. The amount of time consumed in transcription and translation of data from Thai to English was very considerable and took longer than I had estimated. All in all, the fieldwork and the writing up of the data were difficult periods in the process.

3.6 Quality of Research

3.6.1 Trustworthiness

Any qualitative research study must deal with the issue of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness comprises four elements: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. Trustworthiness in this research was addressed through the use of
multiple modes of data collection and analysis, such as documentary research, field notes from observation, and interviews, plus extensive checking with respondents to ensure their views had been properly represented.

Of course, credibility cannot be absolutely guaranteed, even if the research is based on the most reliable information. Credibility, or internal validity, means the claim being made is accurate (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Construct validity is only guaranteed when the researcher develops a “sufficiently operational set of measures” and the data is collected without any researcher bias (Yin, 2003). Yin advised that it should be possible to apply multiple sources of evidence during the data collection process. Consequently, data collected from various sources and multiple informants can be triangulated in order to enhance credibility (Patton, 2002). External validity, or transferability, refers to the capacity to generalise from the findings. In case study research, it is difficult to ensure validity, as cases are selected because of their uniqueness. Flyvbjerg (2006) highlighted that case studies allow “nearness to reality”, which would encourage preconditions for advancing understanding. One case can therefore be presented as an example of other cases. This is important, as research shows that it is systematic and improves information available about the Corporate Schools programme which may encourage other organisations to participate in the programme.

Dependability is defined by Kirk & Miller (1986, p. 19) as “the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out”. Therefore, in the interviewing stage, the interviewees were asked various questions on the same topic to test whether they would provide consistent answers. All questions were asked in Thai in order that interviewees would feel more relaxed answering them. Simultaneously, some themes of this study might touch on sensitive issues, especially regarding the finance and marketing strategies of the participating firms. Here, it was the job of the researcher to determine the truth through alternative methods, such as observing interviewees’ gestures when they spoke and investigating relevant documents,
such as company reports and newspapers, and not relying totally on the interviewees’ words. Furthermore, in order to confirm dependability, data from multiple informants was cross-checked. At the outset, documentary research from official documents and websites was conducted in order to identify the appropriate organisations and people who had been involved in the Corporate School. Later, appointments with prospective informants were made, and during the interviews informants were asked to suggest names of others directly involved, experienced persons in the programme, for further interviews. These informants were asked the same set of questions, based on the theoretical framework, to ascertain whether they responded with the same answers, or at least ones similar in nature. In addition, documentary data were used to verify, complete and cross-check information derived from the interviewees. The triangulation process was facilitated by the use of various sources of information. Finally, confirmability is recognised as the difficulty of ensuring neutrality, as the research is designed and collected by one human being, some researcher bias is inevitable. Triangulation was again invoked to promote confirmability by reducing researcher bias.

3.6.2 Ethical Considerations

In addition to the trustworthiness issue, ethical concerns were also addressed to ensure the quality of the research. It is the researcher’s responsibility to consider what is good for the research and also, importantly, for the informants. Moreover, if there is any unintended harm, it is essential that proper mechanisms are constructed to address this.

Since this research is qualitative, the following ethical issues were addressed. Possible risks to respondents include endangering privacy, questions being intellectually and emotionally demanding, and the interview being too time-consuming (McCracken, 1988). The researcher handled these concerns by addressing confidentiality and privacy issues at the outset. All informants invited for interviews supplied signed informed consent forms and were made aware of the objectives and processes of the study beforehand. Permission to record the interview was also sought at the beginning. The participants were allowed to
stop the process or refuse to answer any questions if they felt uncomfortable, or if they felt that questions violated their privacy. The researcher deleted statements that participants did not feel comfortable with. Regarding data presentation, interviewees’ anonymity was maintained by identifying only the organisation they represented. Each individual informant was numbered according to the order of the interviews in order to preserve anonymity. For example, CP1 refers to the first interviewee from CP ALL Corporation.

3.7 An Overview of the Corporate School Programme in Thailand

The development of the Corporate School programme in Thailand can be traced back to the legislation of Thailand’s first Education Act in 1999. In Thailand, through the 1997 Constitution and the 1999 Education Act, the Government was determined to launch education reforms with the aim of developing Thailand’s education system to provide equal access to lifelong education and training, enabling Thais to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to generate income and to eventually pull the country out of economic and social crisis (National Education Act B.E.2542 (1999) and Amendments (Second National Education Act B.E.2545(2002)), n.d.; OEC, 2008b). Previously, responsibility for providing education was only in the hands of the Royal Thai Government, but the enactment of the 1999 Thailand Education Act gave other organisations, such as private persons and enterprises, the right to provide basic education (OEC, 2008b).

In accordance with the country’s economic competitiveness, one major problem for Thailand’s development is the shortage of quality members of the workforce. A study in 2010 indicated that approximately 300,000 factories employed 35 million workers nationwide, but about 25 million of these had less than a secondary education. To address this problem, the Thai government set the goal of increasing the average schooling years of Thais from 7.8 to 9.5 and aimed to encourage at least 50 per cent of workers to enrol in secondary education (OEC, 2008a, 2010b). Under the provisions of the law, Thailand, as
part of its Decade for Quality and Equity in Education (2002 – 2011), revised a strategy to strengthen partnerships between communities and the private and business sectors, thereby minimising the gap between education and the world of work. As one aspect of this process, the government realised that they could not achieve this aspiration alone, and so the idea of strengthening collaboration in providing education was initiated. With collaboration among the Office of the Education Council, Federation of Thai Industries and the Ministry of Labour, in 2005, the pilot project of the Corporate School was established. The term ‘Corporate School’ can be defined as a learning centre operated by an enterprise. The learners at this centre have the opportunity to work in real situations, and their work experience can be translated into credit units.

As stated earlier, the government without collaboration from the private sector could not achieve this; however, it is not easy to receive cooperation from enterprises. Many firms had little experience providing education and training, so few companies volunteered to participate in the pilot project. Seven leading companies were, however, introduced and invited to participate in the pilot project. These seven enterprises and their industry specialism are as follows:

1. Somboon Advance Technology Public Company Limited (SAT): specialising in the automotive industry
2. CP ALL Public Company Limited administrates 7-Eleven convenience stores: specialising in retail
3. Train Time Test company, a training company under the SAHA Group
4. S&P Syndicate Public Company Limited: specialising in bakery and beverage
5. Royal Cliff Beach Resort: specialising in the hotel and tourism industry
7. Saraviriya Steel Industries Public Company Limited: specialising in steel products
Table 3-2 Number of Students and Learning Centres of Seven Pilot Companies (as of December, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Centre</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of centres</td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>Number of centres</td>
<td>Number of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Somboon Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CP ALL</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Train Time Test</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. S&amp;P Syndicate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Royal Cliff Beach Resort</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Distars Electronics</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sahaviriya Steel Industries PLC</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>243*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No Information

Table 3-1 displays the number of students and centres of the seven companies in the Corporate School programme pilot project. One of the Corporate School programme’s regulations stated clearly that the companies have full authority in organising the programme. They can stop participating at any time if they want to. In addition to this, the above table shows the instability of the programme. For example, the Somboon group discontinued the programme in the second year while the Royal Cliff Beach Resort did not participate continuously. Up-to-date information from fieldwork indicates that there are only two participating enterprises in operation: CP ALL and S&P Company. In addition to this, attempts were made to contact the discontinued companies; their experience regarding the reason why they decided to leave the programme could perhaps be used as supporting data. However, only Royal Cliff Beach Resort agreed to meet, and the interview could not be recorded, nor could evidence related to the implementation of the programme be obtained. In accordance with Table 3-1, the V-ChEPC programme came last, with a slightly different form of partnership. Instead of one company bearing the whole burden, the group of petrochemical companies takes part in the programme and collaborates with the education sector.
All in all, the Corporate School programme was initiated with the aim of improving upon the government’s limitations in providing education for Thai people, with fewer opportunities for those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. In collaboration with the private sector the government hoped to:

1. offer an opportunity to young people to gain education and skills training in order to develop their working potential, and
2. equip the workforce with skills responsive to labour market demands (OEC, 2008b, 2010a).

The following chapters will descriptively explain the current situation through empirical data generated from the three case studies.

3.8 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has presented the research methodology, provided justification of the researcher’s philosophical standpoint, and addressed issues regarding research quality. An interpretivist standpoint was adopted and qualitative methods were utilised to address the research questions and objectives. As regards trustworthiness, the researcher used triangulation and member-checking to enhance research quality. In the following section, the case-studies themselves will be presented.
4. CHAPTER FOUR:
PANYAPIWAT LEARNING CENTRE,
CP ALL PUBLIC COMPANY LIMITED

This chapter presents the first case of this study, Panyapiwat Learning Centre, under the CP ALL Public Company Limited. The methods used in this research are documentary research, observations and semi-structured interviews with eight key informants. These key informants were invited to participate in the programme to provide insight and information from their direct experience. Some informants were selected to provide specific data regarding the beginning of the initiative and the future of the programme, and some volunteered to take part in the interviews.

The chapter is divided into four parts. Section 4.1 depicts the development of Panyapiwat Learning Centre from the outset and explains the general settings of fieldwork sites. Section 4.2 is the action phase; it describes the implementation of the programme and its teaching and learning activities, curriculum and assessment. It also narrows the scope to the challenges the company faced during the implementation of the programme. Section 4.3 then discusses the future plan of the Learning Centre. Finally, suggestions for other companies, based on direct experience, are drawn in Section 4.4.

As described in the research methodology chapter, this research utilised three sampling techniques; purposive, snowball and random sampling, in recruiting the key informants. Eight participants were involved in this study. Table below introduces a short description of the key respondents of the CP ALL case.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Main responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CP01</td>
<td>Assistant Vice President – Operation, Marketing and Human Resource</td>
<td>Formulating policies and business strategies of 7-Eleven company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP02</td>
<td>Marketing Director (Panyapiwat School)</td>
<td>Developing the marketing strategy for 7-Eleven Academies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP03</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Providing academic lessons for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP04</td>
<td>Field Manager</td>
<td>A manager of five branches of 7-Eleven store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP05</td>
<td>Assistant Store Manager (Graduate)</td>
<td>Assisting a 7-Eleven store manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP06</td>
<td>Assistant Store Manager (Graduate)</td>
<td>Assisting a 7-Eleven store manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP07</td>
<td>Assistant Store Manager (Graduate)</td>
<td>Assisting a 7-Eleven store manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP08</td>
<td>Assistant Store Manager (Graduate)</td>
<td>Assisting a 7-Eleven store manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two, CP01 and CP02, were specifically chosen because of their experience. CP01 is an assistant vice president - operation, marketing and human resource of the company and CP02 is a marketing director of 7-Eleven Educational Sector. Additionally, CP03 and CP04 were introduced by CP02 in order to provide rich information regarding particular research inquiry. CP03 is a teacher at Panyapiwat Techno Business School and CP04 is a field manager of 7-Eleven convenient stores. The last group of respondents (CP05-08) was volunteer graduates. They agreed to give interviews regarding their direct experiences of studying at the learning centre and working at the company after graduation.
4.1 Introduction to CP ALL and Its Education Establishments

The background of the company and the company’s educational establishments were introduced from the outset by CP01, confirming the background knowledge that I gained from reviewing the company’s annual reports. CP ALL PLC. (CP ALL) was established in 1988. The company is a leading firm of the Charoen Pokphand Group’s marketing and distribution business. The Charoen Pokphand Group was founded in 1921 and consists of three core businesses operating in the agribusiness and food sectors, telecommunications industries and retail and distribution (CP ALL Public Company Limited, 2011). CP ALL’s retail business operates in convenience stores under the 7-Eleven trademarks in Thailand, with 6,276 stores throughout Thailand in December 2011 (CP ALL Public Company Limited, 2012a). CP02 added in a later interview that:

“7-Eleven is a bridge linking the three businesses of CP ALL that bring goods from agribusiness and food sectors and telecommunications industries to the customers”. (CP02)

In addition, CP ALL has invested in nine businesses supporting the convenience stores. Two of these are related to education and skills development: these are Suksapiwat Company Limited (SPW), which provides educational services through Panyapiwat Techno Business School (PTB) and Panyapiwat Institute of Technology (PIT), and
Panyatara Company Limited (PTR), which provides training and seminar services (CP ALL Public Company Limited, 2011). As CP01 stated:

“There are nine companies under the retail and distribution sector, such as Counter Service and Thai Smart Card, which you may have heard of. Among these nine businesses, two provide human resource development services: Suksapiwat Company Limited and Panyatara Company Limited. The first one provides education services through the company’s school and university, and the latter gives training and seminar services”. (CP01)

Figure 4-2 Group Structure of 7-Eleven
Source: CP ALL Public Company Limited (2012a)

The First Touch to Education Business

CP ALL decided to become involved in providing education for school-leavers because of its high employee turnover rate. Both CP01 and CP02 addressed this issue similarly:

“The major reason that pushed CP ALL to become involved in the education of school-leavers was the turnover rate of employees; it is a classic problem that happens to many retail companies. The turnover rate of the company was very high; many employees resigned after working for a short period”. (CP01)

“After CP ALL had been running the business for a while, we found that the main obstacle we faced every time we expanded the business was manpower. One 7-Eleven store normally needs around 10-15 staff, depending on size. The turnover rate of the retail business is very high, therefore Human Resources (HR) must have a recruiting strategy to allocate enough workforce to each store”. (CP02)
The high employee turnover rate was highlighted as an urgent issue that the company needed to overcome as soon as possible in order to strengthen not only its business growth but also its stability. CP ALL considered alternative ways to cope with this problem, such as improving the company’s facilities and filling vacant positions with part-time employees, but these alternatives did not seem to work:

“Thus, we had to find out why this happened. First and foremost, we thought about facilities. We improved our facilities to the level where I can say that we are a lot better than other firms in the same sort of business. However, it did not seem the right solution for our problem; it did not decrease turnover rate at all”. (CP01)

“At that time, the company employed part-time employees to solve the problem. All staff, including part-time, have to be trained before going to work at the store; most of the part-time staff, however, were students and could not come for training during their school time”. (CP02)

As mentioned above, regardless of what the company does to attract its employees, they will not stay if they are unhappy with or unable to perform the work. The company eventually realised that the high turnover rate reflected the instability of the company’s human resources. They had to look at the core problem, not only on the surface issue. Hence, the company determined that education might present a solution to the problem. As CP01 pointed out:

“Around 1993, we thought that education might be a cause of our problem. The reason why we linked turnover rate problem to education for employees is that the company hired secondary and vocational graduates, but they were unable to work and the company had to retrain them for a few days at a training department prior to going to work. Many of them, however, gave up during training or within a couple of days of working. If anyone stayed longer than six months, they were the best. This made us think that it might be because school never teaches students about the real life of working. Every school uses the main curriculum from the Ministry of Education but, to my mind, this curriculum teaches just what it is nice to know but not what it is necessary to know. Some subjects, such as Trigonometry, are not quite necessary for some jobs. Indeed, it is important to understand the basics of them and it would be useful in some ways to some people in some careers, but not to our business. At that time, there was no subject related to the retailing business, such as how to service a customer or how to display
items in store. Hence, we thought that education might be a problem because it was not actually responding to our demands”. (CP01)

Because there was no retail business curriculum, and the vocational education curriculum at that time was not related or could not accommodate the needs of the retail and distribution industry:

“The company sought cooperation from the Office of Vocational Education Commission (VEC) in order to arrange a practical course for vocational schools. But there was no retail business curriculum at that time”. (CP02)

In accordance with the demands of CP ALL and other companies, in 1994, VEC invited CP ALL to cooperate in developing a Dual Vocational Training system (DVT), which CP01 describes thus:

“Fortunately, the German DVT was introduced to the Ministry of Education. The two governments worked together to develop a system and when everything was settled, in 1994, they invited us, CP ALL, Robinson and Central Group to join the system. The concept of DVT, to me, is really good. It benefits both the public and the private sector. Two organisations are in collaboration to develop Thailand’s vocational education to meet the needs of the labour market. You can imagine how excited we were. We developed a retail business curriculum accredited by VEC for the whole industry, not just for the company. This curriculum is used nationwide. Any school where there is an interest in operating a retail business course can use this curriculum”. (CP01)

Additionally, CP01 further outlined the use of the retail business curriculum CP ALL had developed, noting that it was used by public vocational schools that had a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) arranged by VEC with CP ALL:

“The company made an agreement with the interested vocational schools. This, actually, was a win-win project, because we needed a certain amount of skilled manpower and the vocational school needed training places for students because it is a compulsory requirement of the vocational education curriculum”. (CP01)

Likewise, CP02 gave the following supporting details about the use of this stated curriculum:
“There were approximately 25 public colleges cooperating with 7-Eleven, such as Samutprakran Technical School and Chetupol College using the curriculum we developed. The teaching-learning process was different from other schools. With this curriculum, students study in class for two days and receive four days of training on site each week. But in normal schools, the teacher teaches in class and may have some role play activities or students go to a short training session in their final semester”. (CP02)

After nearly 20 years of being part of the DVT system, which the company carries out with public vocational schools, the company’s turnover rate has decreased. The company, however, thought that the decrease was not enough, and there were some obstacles preventing them from fully producing true “7-Eleven” employees. One of the obstacles was the quality of students. 7-Eleven (or CP ALL) did not have control over the selection of students to the programme. Schools selected students for the company, and this was seen as a problem within the scheme:

“There was an obstacle for us again. 7-Eleven had no authority and was rarely involved in the student selection process. As you know in Thailand we can divide students into two main groups: top-class students who are likely to continue their studies from a lower secondary to a mainstream higher secondary school and those who go to the alternative schools such as vocational schools. This group of students also has top students but there are not so many, and these students did not choose to study with us. The teachers of these schools chose the remaining group of students for us because they thought that it might be a good chance for them with a high possibility of graduation. To be frank, when we saw the list of students, we thought that it was going to be super tough and that we would definitely be exhausted. Furthermore, there was under-recruitment because the programme was very new to students and they did not want to study in the programme. To illustrate, there were 40 seats available but only 30 students in there. Moreover, during the first semester, some students dropped out of the programme. There were, eventually, only eight to ten students that remained in the programme”. (CP01)

The student selection problem led to a high dropout rate, which replicated the problem that CP ALL had with its employees – no matter the solution, it will not work if students are not ready to study. But there was a brighter side to this:
“It was unexpected that the remaining students would be what we were looking for. These students might not be the best in academics but they had a good working attitude, they were very devoted and they are honest and hard-working”. (CP01)

The unexpected result, coupled with 20 years of experience participating in the education sector, furnished CP ALL with the confidence it needed to establish its own school. In addition, the key informants asserted that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), with a clear vision, was the key person who propelled the company towards the education business:

“Then, the CEO of 7-Eleven, Korsak Chairasmisak, thought that it was possible for the company to establish its own school because the company has been gathering experience of the education business for almost two decades, and these twenty collaborating colleges did not provide enough manpower to meet 7-Eleven needs. Presently, there are approximately 6,500 7-Eleven outlets nationwide and each one needs about ten to fifteen employees. 7-Eleven, now, has 80-90 thousand employees in the system. The graduates of these colleges have not yet responded to the company’s demands”. (CP01)

“The vision of the CEO is very important. From his point of view, he thought that in the future the company would grow substantially, and a shortage of skilled employees would be a major problem for its growth. With the experience of a dual system, the company should establish its own school to produce a quality workforce responding to the needs of the company. From this, I was assigned to research the possibility of setting up this school project”. (CP02)

The Beginning of Panyapiwat Techno Business

“We would like to be one mechanism in developing Thai youth’s business ability in order to be able to compete in global business”. (CP02)

From the above aspiration, it is apparent that CP ALL is determined to create alternatives for education and youth development by developing a system that provides opportunities for students to learn about the world of work from practical experience. CP01 stated that:

“Panyapiwat Techno Business School was established and run by Suksapiwat Co., Ltd., a company under CP ALL PLC. Its vision is to be a leading education sector that provides concrete theoretical and practical knowledge in order to enhance
employees’ potential and develop acquired skills responding to the labour market demands especially to AEC”. (CP01)

Panyapiwat Techno Business was created in accordance with the vision of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who wished to fix the company’s human resource problem in order to safeguard the stable and sustainable growth of the company. The key informants stated that 7-Eleven invested 350 million baht (approx. UK£7 million) on the school project. This amount of money was spent taking over an old school business from a previous owner, renovating it and making it as it is today:

“Previously, this school was a Bangkok Technic Nontaburi school. 7-Eleven invested 350 million baht in taking over an old school and renovating it. It was a huge investment indeed. There was a great amount of money spent on this school, greater than buying a new machine in our main business”. (CP01)

“Fortunately, the previous owner of this school (where we are) wanted to discontinue his business so the company took it over and has run the school since then”. (CP02)

There are two major factors arising from CP02’s view regarding the establishment of the 7-Eleven School and the company’s other education academies. First, CP02 thought that the School was settled at the right time, because later the company was listed on the stock exchange and it would have been difficult to make the school project happen:

“In my current view, one reason that it happened was that CP ALL had not become a listed company, so we did not have to cast votes or gain agreement from committees and shareholders. It was unlikely to happen when one business wanted to invest in another business which is completely different from the main company business line. For example, there was controversy when CP decided to invest in True Corp, a telecommunication company. Many people had question-marks about the wisdom of this. CP’s main business is agriculture, so why sell cell phones? But as time goes by, we can prove to everyone that we can be the leading telecommunication company in Thailand. Likewise, education was not our business. We have to make it ours. 7-Eleven specialises in the retail business. It is our core competency. Therefore, we do a “retail” business school. This is the first retail business school in Thailand”. (CP02)
Secondly, the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was also cited to support the idea of the company establishing a school and other educational academies (CP ALL Public Company Limited, 2012b):

“CSR was also an important issue which supports the idea of establishing a school. 7-Eleven has many projects, such as the Love Reading project and 7-Eleven Book Awards which make positive contributions to society. Then, when we decided to run the 7-Eleven school, everyone agreed. These mentioned projects and the school showed a clear CSR role for the company. A listed company must have corporate good governance and CSR is the main indicator. We were awarded an innovation CSR company award from the Stock Exchange of Thailand”. (CP02)

Panyapiwat Learning Centres and Networking Private Vocational Schools
In addition to Panyapiwat Techno Business School (PTB), CP ALL established Panyapiwat Learning Centre (PLC) and created a network of private vocational schools (PVS) around the country, with the aim of producing qualified employees with the skills the company requires. CP01 explained the concept of the Learning Centre, which was later named the Corporate School:

“The idea of the Learning Centre was initiated by the 1999 Education Acts (Amendment in 2004). The Act allows the private sector to get involved in education by establishing a school in their workplace. At first, the aim of the law was to enhance education quality and develop working skills for the employees in
private firms and also provide quality education for the employees’ own children. In addition, the expected outcome of establishing the Learning Centre was to create a knowledge community. The curriculum was developed from the expertise of each company and approved by the Education Service Area Office nearest to them. There are over 170 offices in Thailand so far. Panyapiwat Learning Centres were named to link with Panyapiwat Techno Business School, even though they were established from different Acts”. (CP01)

Panyapiwat Learning Centres (PLC) originated from the need of 7-Eleven to expand the capacity of Panyapiwat Techno Business School to respond to the company’s mission to provide good quality education and a job not far from home for young people, while also serving the company workforce requirements. However, establishing a school campus is not that easy within the current legal system, and as CP 01 pointed out:

“The concept of learning centres started when the company realised that PTB could not serve the needs of 7-Eleven stores nationwide and also that many students were not willing to stay for away from home, because they are just at a young age – only fifteen years old. And it was also very difficult to gain practical experience at stores in other provinces while the school is located in Bangkok. Thus, we re-studied the Education Acts to see if there was a way to extend the school. The Education Act, however, stipulated that if we want to establish a new school campus, this campus should be like a mirror image of the existing school. This is a huge investment. The company could not invest another 350 million baht in about 70 provinces nationwide”. (CP01)

Although there were some obstacles, the company was, fortunately, able to overcome them when the time came:

“Fortunately, in 2005, a founder of S&P Company, Mr. Amares Sila-on, visited 7-Eleven and introduced the Corporate School Initiative to us. The Corporate School administrates as the learning centre which provides education at the company instead of establishing a new school”. (CP01)

CP02 agreed with CP01’s statement, further explaining the expansion of 7-Eleven’s Learning Centres:

“By now, 7-Eleven has 20 Learning Centres; ten in Bangkok and the rest in major provincial centres. We opened five centres in the first year and the other fifteen centres a year later. The company invested 200 million baht in 20 Learning
Centres. It cost a lot less than duplicating a new school campus, yet it is still a huge investment”. (CP02)

While the company was trying hard to expand its education sector with a limited budget and resources, the private vocational education schools were looking for training places for their students as well. Therefore, this marked a good opportunity for 7-Eleven to begin networking with these schools:

“We were pretty lucky that we were not the only ones pushed into collaboration. I am not sure why these private vocational schools came to us. I think there were many reasons at that time. Firstly, PTB is a private vocational school, we are in the Private Vocational School Committee automatically. The committee has approximately 400 schools. It was a great opportunity to build connections. Furthermore, it is a compulsory requirement for every school that the rate of students securing jobs after graduation is calculated for a school assessment by the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). These factors meant many schools were interested in the 7-Eleven school, and eventually, these schools became 7-Eleven network schools”. (CP01)

Moreover, the business was expanded to encompass higher education to further support the needs of students and strengthen the stability of the company:

“7-Eleven arranged to open Panyapiwat Learning Centres and Panyapiwat Institute of Technology in 2006 and 2007 respectively. A year later, the company was networking with private vocational schools. This is very similar to what we did in 1994. The difference between these two is a learning pattern which changed from 2:4 system to block study, the same as Panyapiwat school and twenty learning centres”. (CP01)

Field Site Settings

The observations were made at three main sites: Panyapiwat Techno Business School, Panyapiwat Learning Centre and the 7-Eleven Convenience Store. Throughout the observations, the settings of the research sites, teaching–learning activities and relationships between board committees–teachers, teachers–students and students–students were observed. The information derived from the observations was recorded by
photographs, voice recording and field notes. This section explains the general settings of the study sites. The observations of activities and relationships will be later described.

_Panyapiwat Techno Business School_

The first visit to Panyapiwat Techno Business School was made a month before the interview schedule was set. The School has a white L-shaped building and a basketball court at the centre. The building is four stories high and comprises approximately 40 rooms for studying, broadcasting, meeting and teaching. The classroom was laid out with five rows of lecture tables and two big LCD screens at the front of the room, on the left and on the right. Furthermore, the broadcasting room is located on the top floor and is separated into two main sections: the first section is a control room and the second section is a space for broadcasting.

_Figure 4-4 Broadcasting at Panyapiwat Learning Centre_

_Panyapiwat Learning Centre_

The Learning Centre, I had opportunity to observe, is a 4-storey building. There are approximately 12 rooms functioning as classrooms and a teacher room. The classroom setting is similar to the one at the PTB School. A noticeable difference between these two settings would be that, at PLC, computers are provided in the classroom, allowing for two-way communication during class activities.
At the 7-Eleven Store, there are two parts: the front and the back. In the front, the store is set up in the usual 7-Eleven store layout. There are three tills on the left-hand side, which can be seen upon walking through the store’s sliding door. There are four shelves standing opposite the tills, three big refrigerators at the back of the store, and a staff-only door leading to the back store. Here, at the back, there is a small space for employees to relax and have their meals while the main area is used to store stock.

4.2 Action Phase

This section provides information related to the implementation of the programme, including the Learning Centre curriculum, teaching-learning and training activities,
quality assurance, and the challenges the Learning Centre has faced so far, as well as the benefits all stakeholders have received from the programme.

Curriculum and Learning Strategy

As mentioned previously, CP ALL has been developing the retail business curriculum together with the VEC since the DVT was introduced, and there are two companies supporting education and training at the company. The curriculum used at all of 7-Eleven’s academies has been developed by Panyatara Co., Ltd. As CP02 explained:

“We use our own curriculum developed for a bilateral education system and developed further by Panyatara Co., Ltd., who are directly in charge of training and development for CP ALL and other business lines … our curriculum was developed by 7-Eleven and VEC since our collaboration in the dual system 16 years ago. Panyatara Co., Ltd., CP ALL’s training company, is responsible for developing the retail business and management curriculum. With more than 20 years’ experience in the education business, we know what our core competency is and the key knowledge we want all 7-Eleven employees to have”. (CP02)

In addition to this, CP01 emphasised the responsibility of Panyatara:

“Panyatara is responsible for all curricula of the education establishments under CP ALL, including Panyapiwat Techno Business School (vocational education level) and Panyapiwat Institute of Technology (bachelor and master degree) because these curricula must match the HR system requirement”. (CP01)

These days, Panyatara Co., Ltd., CP ALL’s training company, is in charge of developing curricula for (i) Panyapiwat Techno Business School (PTB), including 20 Panyapiwat Learning Centres (PLC) and 40 Networking Private Vocational Schools (PVS). Graduates from these schools will obtain a vocational education certificate; and (ii) Panyapiwat Institute of Technology, which provides bachelor- and master-level degrees. This research will focus only on the curriculum of Panyapiwat Techno Business School, which is also utilised in PTB, PLC and PVS.
Before moving on to the curriculum that the 7-Eleven academies are currently using, it is critical to know how it has been developed. Regarding the early development of the School’s curriculum, CP01 explained that it was influenced by the German Dual System:

“Before the establishment of this school, CP ALL did a lot of research regarding the dual system from many countries. This included inviting Professor Mann from Germany to be the company’s consultant. As regards developing the school’s retail business curriculum, there were several aspects of the dual system, but the main influence was from Germany. Prior to this, the company’s competency was very important. The company had to consider two critical factors: the skills the company needed and the skills that the employees of 7-Eleven had to have; then [the company was tasked with] integrating and developing them as part of the Panyapiwat Curriculum. This curriculum is the dual system programme that students have to study in classrooms and practice at 7-Eleven stores. Importantly, students have to pass the competency examination and attend seminars compulsorily at school”. (CP01)

However, recently the curriculum has changed slightly to make it more suitable for 7-Eleven’s working style. CP01 detailed this issue, claiming that the previous curriculum had a negative effect on the efficiency of both the learning and the work of students:

“There are three working shifts at 7-Eleven: morning, afternoon and night. Previously a night-shift student finished practical work at 7am and had to go to school at 8am. They did not have time to do homework or review any lessons before class. Moreover, they were too drowsy to focus on the lesson in class. A block course eliminates this with the three-month swop system. With this system, students will be separated into two groups: one studies at school and another goes to the stores and they swap positions in the three months’ time. It is going to be like this every six months until they graduate”. (CP01)

The curriculum was changed from the 2:4 system characterised by 2 days in class and 4 days spent practising at stores to a block system, which is described as follows:

“The learning curriculum of PTB, PLC and PVS is a block course. Students will be separated into two groups as follows:

**Group A** will study a theoretical course for three months at PTB and for the PLC and PVS will study through a two-way Video Conference.
**Group B** will do practical work at 7-Eleven stores for three months. Students can choose the stores they want to go to. And then they have to swap after three months” (CP03, CP04; OEC, 2007).

**Figure 4-6 Panyapiwat Learning System**

In addition to this, the key informants further explained that, for the teaching-learning activity at the 7-Eleven school, the Learning Centre and the Network School, the company uses advanced technology, such as video conferencing, as the main tool for providing lectures. As regards the teaching–learning activities, the broadcast, somewhat surprisingly, has three hosts; this was not what I expected to see. There were two teachers and one student discussing the learning article. The atmosphere was lively. One teacher talked over the learning context, showed examples and exchanged opinions and ideas with the student representative. While this process was going on, another teacher answered the questions that popped up on the computer screen. These questions came from students at the Learning Centres. Some questions were also raised to discuss over the live broadcast session. In addition to the teaching part, the students were in the
classroom with four tutors, who were supporting them when needed. Activities at the store were also observed. There were two store advisors in charge at the tills, with a third joining when the shop grew busy. A store supervisor assigned students to check the stock following the timetable sheets in their hands in order to keep the shelves full at all times. The soft drink shelves were stocked from behind the store. Furthermore, I was told that the students learned one duty at a time, with thorough training, on a rotating basis. A student would be trained in every position that was assigned in each semester. Although technology helps in strengthening the network of 7-Eleven academies, the use of advanced technology raised parental concerns regarding the quality of education. The challenges regarding technology and the problems the company faced will be presented in the following sections.

Challenges

The Panyapiwat Learning Centre has now been operating for more than half a decade and the company has faced some challenges. The key informants cited two major challenges, both related to quality.

Use of Advanced Technology

As mentioned previously the use of advanced technology in the teaching-learning process, such as video conferencing, is a major concern of the parents. They are not really confident in the quality of learning for students. In response to this issue, CP02 confirmed that 7-Eleven students, no matter where they study, are receiving the best quality of education:

“Many parents are worried about using a video conference method but we can say that students at PLC and PVS will receive knowledge the same as those who study at school. 7-Eleven uses a two-way video conference through which students can participate in class just like they are studying at school and teachers can interact with them almost at the same time. Also, we provide at least five facilitators in each classroom assisting students. These facilitators have a common
role as distance support teachers. They assist students during class, control class activities and act as tutors after class”. (CP02)

CP01 also gave details supporting CP02’s statement:

“Students study via satellite broadcasts transmitted from PTB. All centres use two-way communication in the teaching – learning process. Indeed, while it is not a face-to-face learning process, students can ask the teacher directly through on-line communication whenever they want, and also, there are 5 or 6 facilitators assisting in every centre”. (CP01)

Problem of Student Selection

Another challenge for the company is student selection. Previously, when 7-Eleven cooperated with VEC, the company had no influence in choosing the students. This led to problems, such as a high dropout rate, which, in turn, weakened the stability of the company’s growth:

“There was an obstacle for us again. 7-Eleven had no authority and was rarely involved in the student selection process. As you know, in Thailand we can divide students into two main groups: top-class students who are likely to continue their studies from a lower secondary to a mainstream higher secondary school, and those who go to alternative schools, such as a vocational school. This group of students also has top students but there are not so many and they did not choose to study with us. The teachers of these schools chose the remaining group of students for us because they thought that it might be a good chance and high possibility for them to graduate. To be frank, when we saw the list of students, we thought that it was going to be super tough and we would definitely be very exhausted. Moreover, during the semester, some students dropped out of the programme. There were, eventually, only eight to ten students remaining in the programme”. (CP01)

Hence, when 7-Eleven established its own school, the student selection process was seen as a means of recruiting the best possible students for 7-Eleven. CP01 explained the process of selecting students:

“Each student has to pass an entrance examination to be accepted to school. It includes an attitude test and interview with HR staff from the company. Because of the job-guarantee, HR has to be involved in the student recruitment process.
This interview uses the same criteria as a job interview. Also, the student has repeat interviews every year in order to keep track of their attitudes and to help the company see the trend of their attitudes in order to adjust and develop the school curriculum. It appeared that the graph dropped in the first year because the expectations students had were different from the real experience. Before registering at the 7-Eleven school, students saw the advertisement and thought that studying and working at 7-Eleven would be fun. These students, however, were not just studying at school the same as those in the mainstream schools; they have to study and work simultaneously. Students must learn real life skills such as communicating and working with other people, servicing them and managing stores; all these involve a lot of responsibility, more than just studying”. (CP01)

Now that the student selection problem has been solved, the company can confidently offer sponsorship to students and guarantee jobs after graduation:

“The 7-Eleven school has three areas of study: retail business, mechanics-electronics, and computer business. About 90 percent of the students are studying the retail business programme. The learning centres and networking schools, however, provide only a retail business course. All students who study a retail business course are offered funds from 7-Eleven but they have a choice of whether to receive these or not. All graduates are 100 percent guaranteed employment at the 7-Eleven company. This is not made-up propaganda, as we see from other institutes. The company can guarantee this because there are a lot of vacancies to fill; the number of employees is not yet enough for all 7-Eleven branches. It is to be noted that for those students who are sponsored, the company asks them to work at 7-Eleven for a year in return. After this, if they are willing to continue working at 7-Eleven, they are very welcome”. (CP01)

Quality Assurance

The issue of quality is a major concern of both parents and students. CP01 assured the quality of the school, pointing out that the school won an award for the quality of its work in 2007 and that it was designated an Innovation School by the Ministry of Science:

“This school was designated an Innovation School in 2007 by the Ministry of Science, but our expectation is to receive the Thailand Quality Award. The school and learning centres act as the HR of the company and CSR of 7-Eleven. Everyone benefits from it”. (CP01)
In addition to this award, 7-Eleven has been adapting to the rapid change to the AEC, ASEAN Economic Community. Instead of only using the evaluation of the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (NESQA), the company aims to reach the next level of quality assurance. The criterion for assessing the implementation of 7-Eleven academies is the Total Quality Management of Thailand Quality Award. The Thailand Quality Award adopted the fundamental idea and criteria for assessment from the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), which is widely used by many countries worldwide:

“Nowadays, our vision has changed slightly since the beginning. In 2015, Thailand is becoming part of the ASEAN charter so we aim to reach ASEAN standard, not just that of Thailand. In the future, there will be 7-Eleven in many countries in ASEAN, such as Vietnam. We may send our students to train at 7-Eleven in Vietnam or Japan. The most interesting thing I want to point out is TQA and TQM. TQA is the Thailand Quality Award. It is a worldwide award using TQM in managing schools. There is an evaluation by the NESQA but its criteria are not as high as TQA. I say this to emphasise that we seek to provide a high quality of education”. (CP01)

**Benefits and Career Path**

In accordance with the advantages, the key informants confirmed the benefits obtained from participating in the programme. First and foremost, while studying at the 7-Eleven school, students receive the following benefits:

1) Tuition fee exemption: students will receive scholarships to supplement their three-year curriculum.
2) Students will earn training wages while performing practical work in stores.
3) Students will obtain a vocational education certificate accredited by the Ministry of Education when they graduate.
4) When they graduate, students will receive a training certificate from CP ALL PLC. and will automatically become an employee of 7-Eleven Co., Ltd.
5) If graduates want to pursue further education, the company will provide a scholarship for studying at higher education levels (bachelor and master degrees) at the Panyapiwat Institute of Technology (Panyapiwat presentation, 2010).
CP04 explained further that students who graduate from this programme will receive the best opportunity from 7-Eleven to choose their preferred career path:

“Another thing to consider is the benefits for students. As I said, this is a win-win programme for all stakeholders. Graduates from 7-Eleven schools, learning centres and networking schools have many options to choose from when they graduate: to continue onto higher education, working at 7-Eleven stores or starting their own business … We are nourishing them like our own children. When they graduate, they have choices for their future. Indeed, they have to work at 7-Eleven for a year after they finish the programme but they can buy a franchise to operate their own stores if they want with a special offer. Moreover, the company gives scholarships to top students who want to study to higher levels. They can study at bachelor and master levels at Panyapiwat Institute of Technology, the company’s university”. (CP04)

![Options to a Bright Future](image)

**Figure 4-7 Career Paths of CP ALL Graduates**

*Source: CP ALL Public Company Limited (n.d)*

Option 1: They can study further to obtain a bachelor or master level degree at the Panyapiwat Institute of Technology, while working at 7-Eleven stores simultaneously:
“First is continuing their education. Students can continue studying for a bachelor/master degree at Panyapiwat Business Institute. 7-Eleven established this institute in order to provide higher education to Panyapiwat’s students and other students who are interested in retail business. The institute has scholarships for students the same as Panyapiwat Techno Business School. We therefore are very happy if students choose to pursue higher education at our institute because we expect them to become experts in retail business”. (CP04)

Option 2: They can work as an assistant manager at 7-Eleven and develop along the 7-Eleven career path into a manager, an assistant field manager, a field manager, and so on:

“Furthermore, we expect that graduates from these academies will be able to work immediately after graduation. Students who hold vocational education certificates and want to work instead of study will work as an assistant manager. To make it clearer, there are three shifts at 7-Eleven stores: morning, afternoon and night. A manager on each shift is an assistant manager. Bachelor graduates will be a field manager. A field manager will be a manager of five branches of 7-Eleven. This is an advantage for Panyapiwat’s graduates because they can start their career in a higher position then others who graduate from mainstream schools or vocational schools”. (CP04)

Option 3: They can invest in their own 7-Eleven franchise stores, with a special arrangement made available for the employees:

“Last but not least, some students may want to have their own shop. It does not necessarily have to be a 7-Eleven shop because our retail business curriculum can be used in every kind of store. However, there is a special privilege for these students. Normally, becoming a franchisee of 7-Eleven costs approximately 2-3 million baht (£50,000), but the 7-Eleven graduates invest only 200,000 baht (£4,000). These graduates also have more confidence than other franchisees to run 7-Eleven stores because they have had direct experience while studying”. (CP04)

Moreover, apart from the basic standard benefits students receive from the company, students also gradually improve their latent attitudes and abilities, such as discipline and service mentality, as the CP03 indicated:

“I remember one day I met a student’s mother. She told me that after a month of training, she could see some changes in her son. Her son wakes up earlier, has more responsibility. He goes to school punctually and she does not have to wake
him up. He has better manners, speaks politely and helps her doing housework”. (CP03)

CP04 also supports the parents’ opinion that:

“The on-the-job training system benefits both the company and students. These students work at the stores, they must have discipline, understand the laws and regulations of working at stores clearly and know how to live and work with a range of different people. They learn to serve people and what service means. Students seem to acquire this automatically. The thing that students like the most is the wages they earn. It is not much, just a standard wage for trainees, but it can help relieve household expenses. Normally, students earn approximately 4–5 thousand baht (£100) a month but some students may earn more if they are hard-working and get overtime payments”. (CP04)

The following are responses from graduates, collected through interviews. The same set of questions originally involved their experiences and perceptions of studying at the Panyapiwat Learning Centre. One factor that influenced their study at the Learning Centre was that they were able to earn money while studying, as CP05 explained:

“I heard about Panyapiwat Techno Business School from the commercial advertisement on television and searched for more information about this school. This programme suits me because I can learn from real experience and get paid for working in the store. I can lighten the load of my family expenses”. (CP05)

Additionally, the interviewees talked about the benefits they have received from studying at the 7-Eleven Learning Centre:

“Studying at Panyapiwat eases the household expenses of the family, and learning from real experience while working at the store shapes in us the real life skills which we hardly receive from other schools: knowing how to communicate with people, and having a good service mentality. I think I will also study at a bachelor level at Panyapiwat Institute of Technology”. (CP06)

“At Panyapiwat, I was taught to do my best in everything, and a bright future is waiting for me. I like this school. It gives the best opportunity for me to have knowledge and business skills, which other schools cannot”. (CP07)

“My mom suggested I study at this school. At first, I did not want to study here because I wanted to study at another school with my friends, but as time went by,
I realised that the teaching-learning method of this school suits me, and I have
grown up. I have enthusiasm to work, knowing that all the knowledge and
experience I learned in class and in the store can be used in real life; for example,
I can solve problems wisely, and I have good negotiation skills. Last but not least,
I have a good mind-set regarding serving people, which is very important to the
retail business”. (CP08)

Besides the benefits for students, the company receives great benefits from the
programme. In addition to this, CP01 pointed out that, to become an education provider,
the company received tax exemption on the school’s revenue and received a tax reduction
for the company. Moreover, the company has long-term loyal employees:

“Every student of Panyapiwat Techno Business School is funded by 7-Eleven.
What will the company will get from sponsoring these students? The law
stipulates that a company that provides education and/or skills training for
employees can reduce 50% of tax the company has to pay. Also, the benefit of
becoming a school is that a school has advantages in tax exemption. Therefore, 7-
Eleven does not have to pay tax on Panyapiwat revenue and also get a tax
reduction for the company itself. Moreover, the most crucial benefit for the
Company is loyalty in the long run. This is hard to convert to monetary value. If
we lose well-trained employees, it would be a huge loss for the company, because
the company has to start all the processes over again and it is a huge amount of
investment”. (CP01)

4.3 Prospective Plan of 7-Eleven Academies

The issue of the future plans of 7-Eleven academies was discussed with CP01 and CP02.
Two major plans were cited: expanding the network and improving quality, which will be
discussed below.

Expanding the Network

CP02 clarified that the 7-Eleven school has two main client groups: students and parents,
and the private sector. For students and parents, the school provides the best knowledge
and facilities to the students, the future employees of the company. Students acquire not
only the best knowledge from the programme but also the opportunities that are provided
by CP ALL, which allow them to have choices for their lives and create their own
futures, as explained in the previous section. The other client is the company itself. To produce adequate numbers of 7-Eleven employees is the primary mission of the company, but this is not easy to achieve due to the company’s own limitations and the law:

“CP ALL requires approximately 20,000 new employees each year. At the moment, there are 8,000 students, which is enough for only 600 7-Eleven stores. The 20,000 positions needed are for filling 1) vacant positions and 2) new stores. The school has limited space and it is difficult to expand the school in size. The law also limits the school’s capacity, it allows 2,300 students per school and the number of students in each learning centre should not exceed 200”. (CP02)

Due to the company’s limitations of size and budget, the aspiration to expand the 7-Eleven School and Learning Centre has become a heavy burden for the company. Consequently, CP ALL plans to expand collaboration with networked schools to respond to the needs of the company, especially regarding the human resources issue.

“Panyapiwat School, however, is a school that mainly produces a skilled workforce for 7-Eleven, and we have to follow the company demands. Therefore, if we look at Thailand’s map, we see how our future plan will be. How to facilitate easy access to 7-Eleven school for these youths in each area on the map, such as in the northern provinces, the north-east of Thailand and also in Bangkok. There are many gaps for us to fill to cover the area and it is a possible project, but 7-Eleven cannot establish new schools in every part of Thailand as that requires, as it is a huge investment. Thus, in the future - not exactly in the future, as the project is now ongoing - 7-Eleven have decided to solve this problem by cooperating with other private vocational schools around the country”. (CP02)

In accordance with the above plan, CP 02 explained in further detail that:

“These schools will use the 7-Eleven competency-based curriculum. This is a strength for these schools because it is their responsibility to find a suitable practical placement for their students and we are the answer for them. Similarly, this is our opportunity as well. 7-Eleven’s weakness is a volume issue. From the company’s future plan, we know how many staff we need in each branch. Chiangmai province, for example, may need 200 employees. Then we just plot our networking schools on the map and see where the nearest one is, because we
want to serve our students as our slogan says “Studying near home, working at your local store”. (CP02)

Furthermore, CP01 supported CP02 by noting that:

“A number of students in 2010 are approximately nine-thousand people. School is limited at 1,800 students. We cannot accept more students because there will be no place available for practical experience at stores and we also cannot send them to practice in other areas. Learning Centres’ places are limited as well, because there is no plan to open new sites. Therefore, we have to expand the networking schools. Actually that is our aim now, because so far, Panyapiwat School is serving only half of 7-Eleven’s needs. We expect that there will be Panyapiwat employees who have the same culture in every store”. (CP01)

Figure 4-8 Number of Students
Source: CP ALL Public Company Limited (n.d)

Improving Quality

Along with the plan to expand networks, the quality of 7-Eleven Academies has become a major concern for the company. CP02 asserted that standardising and improving school quality is crucial for the future of 7-Eleven education:
“Our mission today is to standardise the quality of the school, learning centres and network schools to the same level. The standard of students between students who study via distance learning method at learning centres and network schools and students who study face-to-face at Panyapiwat School are slightly different. In 2012, we are planning to enhance and develop the learning methods in several ways”. (CP02)

In order to achieve the mission of standardising the quality of 7-Eleven academies, important elements such as teachers, learning media and activities, and the role of facilitators are in urgent need of improvement.

“The teacher needs to be like a superstar because students see the teachers via television. The look and the movement of the teachers have to be attractive to them. Also, the learning media and activities must be interesting. We cannot change the students’ background but what we can do is engage each one’s learning style to help them reach their capacity for learning. We are going to do research on student learning styles and then from the results we will see how to develop the media, such as e-learning and self-directed learning tools, and activities in the classroom to support the students’ learning preferences. Last but not least, the role of facilitators at learning centres has to be more than just a facilitator. They have to inspire the main teachers, but do not need to be superstar practitioners like them”. (CP02)

However, the major focus of the school improvement plan, in CP02’s view, is the teacher. CP02 is particularly concerned about the quality of the teachers and their teaching styles. CP02 believes that teachers have a greater impact on the quality of school, on the teaching-learning process and, importantly, on the students (the future employees) than any other factor:

“ Teachers who want to teach at our school do not have to be top class teachers but s/he must have a heart and be ready to work hard. The teacher has to understand the company’s competency curriculum clearly, have skills at the required level and, importantly, have a good attitude toward vocational education. The teacher will convey skills and attitudes to work to their students directly. If the teacher does not have the right attitudes, the student does not either”. (CP02)
As regards this concern, CP02 has indicated that there were some obstacles at the beginning of the education reform. Because of the more practical system, some older teachers needed to change their usual style of working:

“There were some working culture problems at the beginning. It was not easy to change the working style/habits of a lifetime. Let us say there were two phases. The first phase was the beginning of our school, the exploration era. The older teachers were working in the traditional way. But after 10 years had passed, we needed change. We needed a work-related system. At that time, some teachers felt that they were constrained within a strict system. But many teachers had got used to their old working styles and now, they had to think again about how they worked, including Key Performance Indicators (KPI), the follow-up process and customer focus. This is hard and has taken a lot of effort but if we want our organisation developing in the way we want, we have to make the effort. It is like an S-curve. If we want another S-curve, the take-off period always takes much time and energy”. (CP02)

Moreover, a director was required to make changes to the teachers’ working habits. The director must show clear leadership and fairness to followers. CP02 expressed this by drawing a comparison between the role of the director and the roles of parents, both of whom give love and support to their followers:

“The most important person is the director. The director needs to be a person that understands the nature of human beings. Because each person is different, there is diversity. We cannot change any-one into someone else. They all have their own characteristics, their own ways of working. Therefore, it is our responsibility to make them show their potential as much as we can. To make this happen, the root of all actions come from love. Love can win everything. For example, parents can be very patient with their children even if they are naughty because they love their children. Likewise, with followers, they are like both your children and siblings. So the director has to love them like your own children and support them as if they were your sisters/brothers. It is not easy to be a boss in CP ALL culture. You have to know your followers, give clear leadership and fairness when making decisions. There is a lot of commitment to growing one of the 7-Eleven students to be an executive in the company. So why do we have to do this? A simple answer is to develop and sustain the organisation. If we do not do it, people in the next generations will never know how to do it for each other”. (CP02)
In addition to the two plans previously discussed, CP01 and CP02 have given their personal views of the prospective plan for the 7-Eleven academies. They have indicated that, currently, the 7-Eleven academies are producing employees to serve only in 7-Eleven outlets. In the future, however, they may serve other CP ALL businesses:

“CP ALL has nine businesses which can be grouped into three main categories: agriculture business (a traditional one), modern business such as telecommunications, real estate and banking, and 7-Eleven. 7-Eleven stays in the middle. As a retail business, it sells the products of the other two main businesses to our customers. However, at this moment, training the workforce for 7-Eleven is not yet sufficient, so the company has no plans to expand our school to serve the other businesses in the near future. I have to admit that it would be brilliant if we could work on developing the curriculum together with other CP ALL companies in order to serve the wider company demands”. (CP02)

“7-Eleven is our major customer but in the future, when everything is set, we can produce enough quality employees for 7-Eleven. Then, there is the possibility of serving other CP ALL businesses such as CP Freshmart, Retail Link and maybe True corporate”. (CP01)

4.4 Suggestions for Other Companies

This final section presents the 7-Eleven recommendations for other companies. This question was posed to CP01 and CP02: From your experience, do you have any suggestions for other companies that may be interested in the Corporate School programme?. Their answers were similar. Their suggestions can be grouped into three major points.

Vision

The vision of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was the key suggestion for other companies. Both informants clearly explained this point in similar ways:

“An important factor would be the CEO's vision of which directions the company should go. Many people asked if 7-Eleven will ever stop expanding, and what would happen to Panyapiwat”. (CP01)
“The vision of the CEO is very important. From his point of view, he thinks that in the future the company will grow solidly; a shortage of skilled employees will be a major problem for its growth. With the experience from a dual system, the company should establish its own school to produce a quality workforce responding to the needs of the company”. (CP02)

Being Demand-Driven

Another issue to consider is demand-driven. As CP02 pointed out:

“The second issue is that a school must be demand driven. A company needs enough labour demand to run this programme successfully. Organising a school is not easy and it takes time. If there is only a small level of demand, there will be a high chance of failure”. (CP02)

CP01 elaborated further upon the demand-driven issue:

“At this moment, 7-Eleven aims to expand to 12000 branches nationwide, which is doubled where we are now. It took about 20 years to come this far but in the future this will not be 20 years, it will take a shorter time to meet this aim. However, we have many types of retail shops such as X-tra (drug store), Kudson (bakery) and Book Smile (book store). Moreover, focusing on the core businesses of CP ALL - True Corporation, the mobile technology and network provider and CPF, the agricultural products a huge volume of employees are required”. (CP01)

Furthermore, CP01 gave the supporting view that nowadays many companies hire over-qualified employees because they do not trust the quality of vocational graduates. Underemployment has become the main obstacle to the country’s economic growth. Therefore, if 7-Eleven academies can show that their graduates are qualified according to other companies’ criteria, there will be more room for 7-Eleven’s education business to grow:

“Many firms recruit over-qualified employees. Banks, for example, often recruit bachelor graduates to work in a position where the job description does not seem to be suitable for them. I have discussed this issue with True Corp, they pointed out that the reason why True Corp still hire over-qualified employees is that they are not really sure that vocational education graduates can work successfully for them. The company thinks that these graduates are too young and show little responsibility compared to bachelor graduates. The company, however, prefers to
hire a qualified employee rather than an over-qualified one, so we can develop graduates to meet the criteria of these companies too, The more demands the business generates, the more room for us to expand the school, learning centres and network schools”. (CP01)

Additionally, the idea of expanding 7-Eleven’s education business has been expressed as follows:

“I have discussed this with the representatives from Australia, they told us that even though they have a lot of hi-tech hair-dressing equipments, the Australians do not want to do a salon-working job. They are more than ready to teach us. Thus, I am thinking that we would be better hiring such expertise to teach our students and then export the students to work around the world. With this concept, we can also do this in every business. There are plenty of opportunities available for us but the company has to be ready and sincerely committed to supporting this kind of school. I said this because there are many advantages to becoming an education business”. (CP01)

Sincere Commitment

The final suggestion reflects a sincere commitment to providing education, as described by CP02:

“The concept of the school is a work-based learning centre. It means that the company has to create a learning environment for their students. The company has to do research to understand the core competencies of their own company and develop this into a competency curriculum. I have to say this because 7-Eleven has done SWOT analysis for several times to identify the company’s requirement for specific skills and competences. This is very important. It is like passing on the DNA of the company. Many companies see work-based learning as a label, but do not understand the real meaning of it”. (CP02)

CP01 has also pointed out that a sincere commitment to providing quality education is one of the keys to making this programme successful, along with the vision of the CEO and the company’s status as demand-driven. This supports CP02’s view that the company has to know its own competencies and be brave enough to reveal this through the school’s curriculum:
“To be honest, the success rate of the dual system is quite low, if it is not run by a big company like S&P or 7-Eleven. Some firms may need only manpower, they recruit these children to work but do not give them a real education. Some companies may discontinue the programme once they have secured enough of a workforce for their companies. To make this system a success, it has to be located in a growing company and provide a good education. This is an excellent programme. It is a win-win for both the education and private sectors. There are not many companies participating in this programme because many firms are not ready. This is a very serious business. In order to get an effective result, the know-how of the company, which is something of a company secret, has to be revealed and put in the curriculum”. (CP01)

Moreover, CP02 confirmed that, besides the curriculum, which is the key secret of the company, a strong support system is a crucial element that shows the company’s sincere commitment to providing quality education:

“Also, the company has to have a strong support system. There are three units related to this support system. HR, firstly, must have a role as a strategic partner. HR has to understand that these students are the company’s future potential employees. Instead of recruiting and then training, the company does it backwards, starting with developing their skills prior to recruitment. The second unit is a Personnel Development department. Its role is very similar to school but this Personnel Development department does not provide any certificate to the employees like school does, they provide skills development for employees in order to prepare them for work and retain the employees’ skills ability. The last crucial element is a mentoring system. The students are only 15 years old. It is like bringing up someone else’s sons and daughters. To my mind, half of the school’s workload is this, mentoring students. Teaching adolescents is not as difficult as mentoring them to grow up to be good adults”. (CP02)

In line with this, CP02 illustrated how important the support system is, why this system is needed and how 7-Eleven handles it:

“Now there are approximately 10000 students in our schools. We need to have a clear strategy to look after them because we cannot deny that there are many social problems in our society. Everyone related to this programme should lend a hand to assist the school in this process. We call it a “synergy strategy” because, as I said earlier, these young students are our potential employees in the future. We therefore need everyone, including advisors, teachers, the training team and CP ALL’s HR department, to look after them. A teenage girl, for instance,
disappears from a store for a week. The store manager has to inform HR, HR must work together with an advisor and teachers to find out where this girl is. Also, after we find her, she might have some problems in her life. There should be a system to get her back to school. We cannot leave her out there in this cruel society. Not so many firms are willing to do this kind of thing. I do believe that the teachers here are more like angels. Even though they have to work harder than teachers in normal schools, they are willing to do it”. (CP02)
5. CHAPTER FIVE:
S&P LEARNING CENTRE,
S&P SYNDICATE PUBLIC COMPANY LIMITED

S&P Learning Centre is the second case study. Three major methods were employed to collect data: documentary research, observation and interviews with six informants. This chapter presents the development of the S&P Learning Centre in four sections. Section 5.1 outlines the story of the S&P Learning Centre, including how the S&P Company became involved in providing education and the general setting of the Learning Centre. Section 5.2 describes the current implementation of the S&P Learning Centre, and prospective plans are outlined in Section 5.3. Lastly, Section 5.4 offers suggestions for other companies.

The case of S&P Company used the same sampling methods the same as CP All. Six interviewees participated in this study. Two veterans of the S&P Learning Centre (SP01 and SP02) were purposively selected due to their positions and experiences but in some particular areas, the researcher was introduced to the other two informants (SP03 and SP02) who could provide more in-depth information in those specific inquiries. Lastly, the experiences of studying and working at S&P were told by two volunteer graduates.
Table 5-1 Detail of Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Main Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SP01</td>
<td>Deputy Vice President</td>
<td>Formulating policies and promoting programme quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP02</td>
<td>Director of S&amp;P Learning Centre</td>
<td>Providing overall leadership to the Learning Centre, leading strategic planning processes and making the programme a success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP03</td>
<td>Teacher (Administration)</td>
<td>Administrating support systems and activities than enable the effective running of the Learning Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP04</td>
<td>Teacher (Evaluation)</td>
<td>Monitoring and evaluating the student’s educational performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP05</td>
<td>Sale Advisor (Graduate)</td>
<td>Assisting customers in order to ensure that they have an enjoyable shopping experience, handling payment, and organising and the shop tidy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP06</td>
<td>Waiting Staff (Graduate)</td>
<td>Serving customers by taking orders, serving food and preparing tables, and making a restaurant clean and tidy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1 Background of the S&P Learning Centre and its Implementation

S&P Syndicate Public Company Limited operates a restaurant and bakery business with the vision of being “the world’s favourite Thai restaurant, Bakery, and Food products supplier”. S&P has restaurants and bakery shops nationwide under various brands including S&P, Patio, Patara, Vanilla, Golden Dragon and Bluecup Coffee. The company also has Thai restaurants overseas: Patara, Siam Kitchen, THAI and Patio. Apart from restaurants and bakeries, S&P also deals in food products such as frozen prepared foods, sausage and ham, pasta and food colourings and essences used in the food industry.
These are distributed throughout the company’s shops under the brands S&P, Delio, Patio, Vanilla, Bluecup and Royallee. Though S&P specialises in food products, the company runs additional support services, such as home delivery of foods and catering (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, n.d).

The S&P business started in 1973 with a small ice-cream and bakery parlour before the solid establishment of the bakery factory eleven years later in 1984. It was listed in the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) in 1989. S&P expanded its food business gradually, both in domestic and international markets. Currently, S&P has 385 restaurants and shops in Thailand and 21 restaurants in international centres, such as Patara Fine Thai Cuisine in London, THAI restaurant in Geneva and Siam Kitchen in Singapore (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, 2013).

Figure 5-1 S&P Structure
Source: S&P Syndicate Company Limited (2011)
**Entering the Education Business**

Although there were some documents related to the background of the S&P Learning Centre, they provided inadequate information, as they were very brief and lacked detail. As such, interviews with key informants who had direct experience were needed to clearly present the story of the S&P Learning Centre. Before establishing S&P Learning Centre, S&P Company organised dual vocational education and training with several public vocational schools. The company provided training places and work-related knowledge for students from these schools, but it did not influence the curriculum. Students who graduated from this programme received a vocational education certificate. The key informants explained that:

“It all started a decade ago. The owner of Wiroon Vocational School came to us and requested training places for his students. Finding a good training place for students was a major challenge for vocational schools because the Office of Vocational Education Commission requires training as a compulsory element of the vocational education curriculum. Students must receive practical training for between two and six months”. (SP02)

“S&P has been part of a dual education system for 10 years. These students came to practice at the company under the school curriculum. They receive a graduation certificate from their schools. It has a similar learning pattern to S&P Learning Centre; studying in class for two days and working in store for 4 days, but they do not get paid. S&P also has a co-operative arrangement for education with universities. It is at bachelor level. Some students from Food science study or HR study are trained with us for three months during the summer”. (SP01)

“Some students of a short-term training programme came from Chiangrai, a province in the northern part of Thailand. They will be trained for six months at S&P branches. These students have their own assessment criteria from their schools. S&P provides only places for the training and working experience they need but all curriculum and assessment are the college’s responsibility”. (SP03)

As a result of their experience in providing dual training, S&P Company decided to make the training more systematic. As SP02 described:
“We did accept students from Wiroon Vocational School and other vocational schools to be trained with us. But later, we decided to do it officially and move systematically. We signed the MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Office of Vocational Education Commission (VEC) in order to communicate our intent to all vocational schools in the VEC network around the country. Previously, S&P ran only two systems supporting vocational education schools’ curriculum; one is short-term training and the other is the dual system. Nowadays, the two programmes are still in operation and plus the administration of the Learning Centre”. (SP02)

This information was also supported by the S&P Company 2011 Annual Report, which stated that:

“The Company has signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Office of Vocational Education Commission (VEC) to open a vocational course in the Dual Vocational Training system for students across the country that offer working during school”. (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, 2013)

However, it was not until 2004 that S&P was invited to participate in the pilot project of the Corporate School, which was initiated by the 1999 Education Acts. Section 12 of the Education Acts stipulated that the private sector can provide education for its employees. These companies will be supported by the government through a tax exemption (OEC, 1999). Hence, in 2004, the Office of Education Council (OEC), in collaboration with the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI), the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC), the Office of Vocational Education Commission (VEC), the Office of Non-Formal Education (ONFE) and the Ministry of Labour, chose leading private businesses to participate in the pilot project. As mentioned, seven firms were selected. S&P was invited to participate in the pilot project as a role model for the Corporate School programme, which aims to develop both academic knowledge and necessary skills among employees. It aims to increase the ability to work effectively and thus boost productivity and future revenue.
Beginning of the S&P Learning Centre

Even though, as previously mentioned, S&P Company had experience in providing education, the choice to establish a learning centre was not an easy decision. Besides the invitation to participate in the Corporate School pilot project, there were three major factors influencing the S&P Company in establishing the Learning Centre: the CEO’s vision, statistics, and the benefits to the Company. These will now be discussed in greater detail.

CEO’s Vision

S&P Company’s annual report presented the Board of executives’ perspective on human resources, namely that human resources are very important for the company. According to the company, the employees should receive appropriate facilities and the opportunity to develop themselves, assuring them a better quality of both personal and working life:

“Employees are the valuable resources of the Company. They must be treated fairly in terms of opportunity for potential development and the benefits they will receive in return. Additionally, issues regarding safety at work as well as suitable welfare and provident funds should assure their quality of life”. (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, 2013)

Furthermore, the key informants supported this message:

“Developing human resources to their highest capacity is the vision of S&P Board Executives. It is no matter where their employees are or what positions they are in; the employees are an asset of the company and they shall have a chance to develop skills to become the most valuable human resource of the company. S&P, therefore, decided to participate in the Corporate School”. (SP01)

“S&P believes that education is the best tool in developing human resources in order to allow the employees to build a bright career path and have a better quality of life. It is time to contribute something to society. The company invested a lot in this programme, even free lunch for students. It was provided by Mrs. Patara, the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of S&P Company, because she wanted to provide the best facilities to the employees so they do not have to worry about anything but study”. (SP02)
Statistics

The company’s statistics regarding the education level of S&P employees showed that 17 per cent of employees held only a primary education certificate, and 31 per cent graduated at lower secondary education level. These numbers were lower than the basic education standard set by OBEC, which had been expanded to the higher secondary level or vocational education level (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, 2011). The company, therefore, recognised the importance of developing the knowledge and working skills of company personnel as part of the Learning Centre:

“The figures showed clearly that we need to enhance the employees’ education level in order to raise their knowledge and skills and also quality of life. Some employees have education lower than primary school. Even though they graduated at grade four and then left school for work, their working potential is as much as, or, let’s say, higher than new graduates because of their work experience. However, business has to move along with the changing economy, we cannot just stand still and do our old way of working as well as our employees that have to develop themselves too”. (SP02)

Benefits to Company

The Learning Centre is seen as an investment that will benefit the company in the long run. The key informants indicated that they prefer investing in the Learning Centre to recruiting part-time employees. They illustrated their ideas as follows:

“This is what I am thinking. Compare two cases: one is hiring a part-time employee, training him/her for a few days, but he resigns a week after. On the other hand, students have studied and trained with us for three years, there will be little chance to have dropouts from this group. If students pass the toughest time in the first year, with their effort and hard work, they will graduate and be employed at S&P and I am sure that these students will work with us longer than a part-time one”. (SP01)

“Frankly, we are in business. We cannot deny that the cost-benefit is one of the main issues for making the decision to establish the Learning Centre. The Company did much research and the conclusion was reached that training our own students uses fewer resources in the long run”. (SP02)
SP01 explained further why it was very confident about this:

“I can guarantee that this programme has lower dropout rate because before we accepted students onto this programme, we asked them to have pre-training in a real situation at S&P branches for a couple of months. Students will realise whether this programme and indeed, this career is exactly what they want or not. We have to do this and make it tough because service jobs are not easy. You need to have a ‘service mind’. It shows when you smile whether you smile from inside-out or just move your mouth. If you do not feel it, you cannot work here”. (SP01)

Eventually, the S&P Learning Centre was established, with the objectives to:

i. Enhance the education level of the company’s workforce with the expectation that this human resource development will boost the working capacity of the company’s employees.
ii. Develop the employees’ skills to meet the needs of the company and the economy.
iii. Support any people who may have an interest in the food business with opportunities to study and practice in a major organisation. (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, 2011)

In addition to this, the intention of the company in establishing the Learning Centre was described by the interviewees thus:

“The company supports the operation of the S&P Learning Centre, which is authorised by the Ministry of Education, to offer the vocational certificate course majoring in retail business, food and culinary”. (SP01)

Field Site Setting

S&P Learning Centre has two renovated office buildings located in the Rama 9 business area in Bangkok, Thailand. Building A is currently in operation and is located on the main road of this business hub; the next block of this building is the S&P restaurant. The building is a four-storey office building, with a reception at the front and a lobby room and preparation room on the first floor. On the second floor, there is a small section which they called the library; it consisted only of three book shelves of textbooks and cooking magazines. Next to the library are a teachers’ room and a meeting room situated opposite each other. There are two study rooms and a barista training room on the third
floor. On the top floor are the cooking rooms, one of which was occupied while I was there for the shooting of a TV programme. S&P has its own TV show, Patara Cooking School. Another building, Building B, was still in the final phase of construction at the time of visiting; I was told the plan was for it to be finished by the end of the month (November 2011) and that it was expected to open officially in 2012. SP02 took me around building B for an inspection and explained the functions of each of the rooms, some of which were already decorated but some of which were not. In Building B, the ground floor is the location of the teachers’ room, the head teacher’s room and the meeting room. The second floor is the library, which was still empty. On the third floor, there were three classrooms which were decorated with four rows of tables and chairs, whiteboard and air-conditioners. The practice rooms are on the fourth floor.

5.2 Action Phase

This section details the process of organising the S&P Learning Centre, including its curriculum, teaching-learning activities, support system and quality assurance. In addition, the advantages to the Learning Centre’s stakeholders are discussed; the challenges according to the Company’s experience are also addressed.

Implementation of the S&P Learning Centre

Role of the Learning Centre and Student Recruitment

It is crucial to understand the role of the Learning Centre in the S&P Company in order to understand the company’s strategy and the scope of its organisation. SP01 clarified that:

“The Learning Centre played its role almost as a unit of the HR department; recruiting, developing and supporting. But nowadays, the Learning Centre is separate from the HR department and running under the Managing Director’s Office, which is responsible to the Vice President”. (SP01)

The Human Resource department is responsible for the company’s strategic plan in recruiting new employees. This is connected with the student selection process of the
Learning Centre because S&P recruits new employees through the Learning Centre instead of through public recruitment as before. HR will inform the Learning Centre how many students they want in each year, and the Learning Centre will recruit students to meet that target:

“The number of students is different each year depending on the dropout rate and the company’s goals. The Learning Centre, therefore, has to cooperate with HR over recruitment in order to serve the demands of each branch of the company”.

(SP03)

However, the uncertainty of situation in 2011, which was brought about the flooding, affected S&P. The company faced an employee shortage, so the HR department had to be very careful in allocating employees to the company’s restaurants and outlets. One purpose of the Learning Centre is to provide education to current employees, but the company needed to temporarily stop current employees from taking leave for studying due to the aforementioned situations:

“Two years ago, there were S&P employees studying with us; there were none this year because of the floods. The floods affected us. If there are some current employees taking leave to study at the Learning Centre, the company will face an employee shortage problem. Thus, we have to consult with HR in order to manage enough staff for over a hundred stores in Bangkok”.

(SP01)

Curriculum and Teaching and Learning Activities

The Learning Centre provides vocational education in two major business areas: business retail and the food and beverage industry. The curriculum is a 2:4 system. This means that students study theoretical subjects for two days in the classroom and spend four days training at S&P restaurants and outlets. The education system of the Learning Centre and the benefits that students receive while studying at the Learning Centre were cited as:

“Students at S&P Learning Centre study two days in class and four days training. The company provides free lunch, uniform, text books and accommodation in the first semester to all students”.

(SP02)
Figure 5-2 Practical Training at S&P Learning Centre

The S&P Learning Centre places emphasis on the quality of its curriculum and draws heavily on its core competency as a leading company specialising in the food and beverage industry:

“The Learning Centre uses a face-to-face teaching-learning method. We do not use video-conferencing because we do not have only a business retail course but also a food nutrition programme where quality is the main concern. Food sanitation and the principles of Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) is what all S&P students must learn. S&P, therefore, provides a team of experts to teach our students in order to reach the standard of S&P Company. The teachers at the Learning Centre can be divided into three groups: S&P employees, trainers from S&P Company and academic teachers from network colleges”. (SP04)

Figure 5-3 Theoretical Study at S&P Learning Centre
During my observation of the teaching–learning activities, the classroom was packed with students. The theoretical subjects such as Mathematics and English were taught by invited lecturers from other colleges with which S&P has networks. The lecturer sat at the front of the room teaching throughout the presentation (transmission model). The room was dimly lit, and a few students were sleeping. Theoretical subjects related to practical training were taught by S&P employees, and students seemed to be more alert but not actively engaged. None were sleeping; instead, they were taking notes, but they were not actively contributing to the class activities. Moreover, at the S&P restaurant, a trainee was being trained to service the customer. He was not yet allowed to work in the kitchen due to his training level. The restaurant’s manager observed and supervised him from time to time. His attendance was checked by the manager, and his performance was recorded on the training assessment scheme, which I was not allowed to see or make a copy of.

The S&P Company encourages employees to achieve their full potential through regular training opportunities, and the Learning Centre is seen as a bridge that links staff quality and initial recruitment. To illustrate this, the company always allows the employees to develop their skills and expertise by organising a Super Chef competition as part of their training, and by creating new menus and by participating in cake decoration, barista and latte art competitions. These competitions motivate the students and also help the company produce high capacity staff with skills in various fields to support the business growth in both domestic and international markets (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, 2013).

“We are focused on personnel development to allow them to maximise their potential and through the ethos of ‘learning to excel’ or through new training methods, such as the organising of the intramural “Super Chef” competition and supporting our ‘baristas’ to compete in national and international competitions”.

(SP02)

“S&P gave me a lot of opportunities to show my talent. Studying was tough, I admit, but it was a good experience. I can be the best ‘barista’ in Thailand, Asia,
or even in the world, if I study hard and train hard. S&P supports students to get involved in many activities and I hope my day will come someday”. (SP05)

Student Care Service

The Student Care Service of the Learning Centre was outlined by SP02. The service was initiated with the aim of providing counselling for students. It is responsible for all issues related to student problems, be they academic, financial or life-related:

“I do proudly present the student care service. I assigned the head teacher to be in charge of this service. There are three main areas of student care that concern us. Firstly, all teachers and trainers have to be trained on how to take care of the students, coaching them in order to help them be successful in their study. Secondly, there is regular supervision and lastly, a clinical psychologist is provided to give advice and do activities related to adolescent issues. To my mind, this student care project was not as successful as we expected so next year, there is still a lot to be improved”. (SP02)

“We do really care about the students. Our teachers take care of all the students like they are their own children. Apart from the supervision of their study, teachers also play the role of counsellor when students need assistance. This example just happened last week. A student had diarrhoea at night, the teacher who was in charge had to look after her and take her to hospital at 4 a.m”. (SP04)

Furthermore, SP01 supported this, noting:

“All trainers and store managers must be trained in how to take care of the students in both studying and personal life. A professional counsellor is also provided to give counsel for students. The major problems which we have faced so far are teenager problems. They are very sensitive and cannot be coerced. So, the counsellor and trained staff will know how to handle them”. (SP01)

In SP02’s opinion, the student care project is in need of improvement, but a graduate who experienced the service talked about this project with gratitude:

“I would like to thank S&P and all the teachers and trainers. All the years I studied at the Learning Centre were brilliant. All the teachers were really encouraging; they took really good care of me. They were like my parents. When I almost quit studying, the counsellor assisted me to pass through that difficult moment. What I liked most about studying here was the training period. I had
such a good and memorable experience and I think I will never get this kind of experience from anywhere else”. (SP06)

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is a major concern of the S&P Learning Centre. The Learning Centre has both internal and external assessments to guarantee its quality:

“There are internal and external assessments. This year, I am going to invite the external advisors, representatives from the Office of Education Council and advisors from other vocational colleges as the external assessment committee”. (SP02)

In accordance with the assessment, students at S&P Learning Centre have to be tested on both academic and practical subjects. Students have to take examinations for theoretical subjects. The assessment criteria have been developed from the main curriculum of VEC. However, the company itself has to develop and generate an assessment framework for the training course in order to respond to the company’s own standards and priorities:

“The Learning Centre uses the examination system in assessing the theoretical subjects. There are midterm and final examinations, the same as other vocational schools. The procedure of marking and grading is not different from other schools. For practical subjects, the branch manager and training coach will be responsible for the assessment. We have our own assessment criteria, the branch manager will assess students’ performance following the assessment form, the form has scale from 3-2-1 and then this score will be calculated into a grade”. (SP04)

SP01 explained assessment at the Learning Centre in further detail:

“There are two parts to the assessment: theoretical subjects and practical subjects. For the theoretical subjects, students will be assessed by the criteria of the Office of Vocational Education Committee, which is widely used by the vocational schools around Thailand. For the practice part, S&P uses the competency assessment framework to assess students’ competencies. The framework was developed based on what skills students need to know at each level. For example, students should know how to wash dishes, clean vegetables before they chop and cook. These assessments can guarantee to both the company and the government the quality of S&P Learning Centre. The company will not employ our graduates
if they do not reach the company’s criteria. We must have a systematic assessment procedure to guarantee our quality. I would say that the Office of Education Council or the Office of Vocational Education Committee cannot tell us what practical skills to assess. These criteria should be built up from our needs. No one knows S&P like we do. If our staff do not have quality, it will definitely affect the standard of S&P”. (SP01)

However, the S&P Learning Centre is improving its assessment framework to make it more suitable for the Company:

“The criteria categories for internal assessment are still waiting for approval from the Learning Centre board committee and I am planning to use it in 2012. The assessment procedure will be using two standards, the company KPI (Key Performance Indicators) and self assessment of the learning centre personnel”. (SP02)

Benefits

The previous section has addressed the benefits for the company that the success of the Learning Centre brings. As an extension, this section examines the benefits for the students. According to Mrs. Patra Raiva, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of S&P Company, in the company’s 2012 annual report:

“Human resources are very important in today’s business development. No matter where they are, they are the most precious asset of the company”. (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, 2013)

S&P makes students’ living conditions its first priority and provides the best facilities for students. The students receive the following benefits:

1) free tuition for the whole programme
2) free lunch
3) free school uniform
4) free first semester accommodation
5) free health service
6) a training wage earned during the whole programme
7) work guaranteed after graduation or further study at the higher vocational certificate level at a college which has a joint collaboration with the company (OEC, 2007b)
In addition to this, the key informants provided the following supporting details:

“S&P organises accommodation for students in the first semester. For the second semester, S&P still provide accommodation for students but it is up to them whether they are going to stay at the dormitory provided or stay elsewhere. Other facilities such as food and hospitality are also provided”. (SP03)

“A graduate will hold a vocational education certificate and immediately be placed in a mid-level employee position without having a re-evaluation because the student was assessed during the study period”. (SP04)

SP02 stated that the board committee ratified a fast-track route for a second-year student who had a stellar study performance record to be employed at the company in the same position as the graduates:

“I would say that the students will get the most benefit from studying at S&P learning centre. Apart from the basic benefits they receive from us, such as free tuition, free first semester accommodation, free uniform and earning wages while studying, we do offer a fast track for their future career”. (SP02)

Challenges

In over five years of running the Learning Centre, S&P has faced several obstacles, such as the commitment of the supervisory government department, public relations, the quality assessment framework, a high dropout rate and a doubling in the payment of tax. These challenges are detailed below:

Commitment of the Government

First and foremost, the commitment of the government is a major challenge that the S&P Learning Centre has been facing. The key informants complained substantially about this, expressing their opinions that the Learning Centre has been left behind and that no organisation is taking responsibility for the programme:

“The Office of Education Council initiated this programme, but these days, it is like we got abandoned and have to take care of ourselves in every single detail”. (SP02)
“This programme was an initiative for almost a decade by the Office of Education Council but until now there is no person in charge. A few years ago, the OEC transferred this project to the Office of Educational Service Area, under the Office of Basic Education Committee, to have direct responsibility for the programme. In addition to this, it is sort of the light at the end of the tunnel for us; however, it is not. To me, the Learning Centre is supposed to receive much attention from these organisations the same as the mainstream schools but the fact is no one has ever heard about this programme. In lieu of being taken care of, the Company actively plays that role. We had to tell them, explain who we are and what we are doing”. (SP01)

The non-readiness of the government, moreover, has had a critical effect on the Learning Centre’s administration:

“This issue has affected the administration of the Learning Centre. The Learning Centre did not receive full support from the organisation in charge. To my mind, the government should set up an organisation which is responsible directly for the Learning Centre by section 12, 1999 Education Acts programme, to pay more attention to us, nourish us at the first start. If there is one, I can guarantee that the programme will grow stronger than it is now. Having said that, that does not mean that we are waiting for their help, we are not. When the company decided to establish the Learning Centre, it was our responsibility to manage a quality Learning Centre from that second, no matter how much support we receive from the government”. (SP01)

Public Relations

The second challenge is positive public relations. This is linked to the above issue of the lack of commitment of the government, because the organisation that is supposed to know the programme best knows little. Thus, it appears to be the mission of the company to promote the programme. Good public relations are needed to ensure that society knows and understands what the S&P Learning Centre is and what it is doing:

“To be honest, I had never heard of S&P Learning Centre before S&P came to my school and introduced me to this programme. I love cooking and I have a dream of having my own restaurant, but for me, it was just a dream because my family cannot support me on this. So, I think this programme suits me very well in pursuing my dream and making a dream come true”. (SP05)
It can be inferred from this that only a small number of people knew about this programme, even in the government; they knew very little about the programme and S&P had to explain it to them. This affected the administration of the Learning Centre and increased the dropout rate, as the parents and students did not fully understand what the aim of the Learning Centre:

“Good communication is the prime mission that we have to send to our clients. Grade 9 students are our main client. Both parents and students may have heard about the Learning Centre but, from our experience, they do not understand exactly what we do. This is an urgent message that we have to pass onto them. If they do not fully understand the mission of our programme, they tend to drop out from the programme. I got many complaints from parents in our first year. They did not understand what students were studying. They did not realise that each step of our curriculum is very important. It is different from other vocational schools. Even though we rely on the same curriculum, the training part is different. It is tougher”. (SP01)

In relation to this issue, pre-training was proposed as a school requirement to all students in order to help them decide whether or not this was the programme for them.

“Students are recommended to have pre-training for two months before the first semester begins, in order to know whether the programme is suitable for them or not”. (SP02)

**Poor Assessment System**

The third challenge is the assessment system, which is a consequence of the non-readiness of the Government. The quality of the Learning Centre has apparently depended on a systematic and reliable process of assessment, but so far no common assessment criteria have been imposed by the government agency in charge. As SP01 indicated:

“The thing that I do really worry about is the quality of our programme because there are still no criteria or framework from the government to assess the quality of the Learning Centre. The Office of Education Council initiated this programme, but these days, it is like they have forgotten about us. Although S&P Learning Centre is regulated by the Office of Basic Education Committee, it
cannot use the same assessment criteria as the secondary education level. The Learning Centre, however, cannot use the same assessment framework as the vocational education curriculum. Therefore, S&P are developing our own assessment framework and setting up our own KPIs that suit S&P Learning Centre”. (SP01)

In accordance with this issue, S&P is developing an assessment model for the Learning Centre and is going to propose it to the Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) for guaranteeing the quality of the S&P Learning Centre:

“I have the model of organisation for the Learning Centre. I use the phrase “A Quality Learning Centre” to represent the quality standard of the S&P Learning Centre. Students who graduate from S&P Learning Centre will have these three characteristics: knowledge, good manners and professional skills. These three characteristics came up from the company’s context and research and were proposed to the board committee for approval. This framework will be proposed to the ONESQA to approve the quality of S&P Learning Centre. I have to emphasise only the S&P Learning Centre because each firm has their own unique style and needs. Hence, they would rather have their own assessment”. (SP01)

However, there is always a light in the darkness. Regardless of these challenges, SP02 expressed the opinion that instead of waiting for help and system improvement only from the government, the company can improve upon these issues itself, with the hope that the government will soon be able to act faster:

“While there are many challenges we have been facing, section 12 does not force anything. It is very flexible. Now it depends on the government, which needs to develop faster in order to keep pace with the needs of the Learning Centre”. (SP01)

_Dropouts_

A high number of student dropouts is a huge problem that S&P wants to decrease as quickly as possible, as it affects the turnover rate and the needs of the company. To address this problem, S&P utilised two strategies: the recruitment of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and the student care service programme.
Recruiting Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

I was told that S&P has been accepting students from disadvantaged backgrounds and welfare programmes. Not only does this provide better educational and a skills development opportunity for these students, but it is also a strategy for reducing the high volume of dropouts:

“The Learning Centre was opened five years ago. We started off with a Business Retailing course. There were 20 students at the beginning but only nine graduated. These nine are our employees now. These employees know exactly what they are doing and what they have to do, which is very different to students who are studying continuously. There were times these employees wanted to give up as I said it is a tough job. You have to study and work at the same time. The dropout rate has stayed at around fifty per cent. In the third year, we decided to cooperate with a special unit of the Ministry of Education and accepted underprivileged students from the welfare schools, Rajaprajanugroh and Suksasonggroh Schools, and the result was unexpected but acceptable: the dropout rate decreased to 20 per cent”. (SP02)

“My family is very poor and my parents could not afford my study. I, fortunately, received an opportunity to study at Rajaprajanugroh School, funded by the King’s Foundation. And S&P has cooperated with the Ministry of Education to recruit students from my school to the programme. I think that it is an opportunity for me to continue my study, so I decided to join the programme”. (SP06)

In addition, SP02 expressed a supporting opinion regarding why the strategy of accepting students from disadvantaged backgrounds could reduce the high dropout rate:

“S&P focuses on underprivileged students more than rich students because from our experience, the parents of the rich ones always intervene in the learning process and over-protect their children”. (SP02)

Student Care Service

In relation to the dropout problem, SP03 asserted that if students could adjust and handle the pressure while studying in the Learning Centre system, the dropout rate would drop. This was corroborated by SP02:
“Normally, most dropouts occur in the first year and the number of dropouts decreases in their second and third years, this may be because the dropouts could not adjust themselves to the Learning Centre system. Seriously, studying here is tougher than studying at mainstream vocational schools. Students have to study and work at the same time. They have to be trained on Saturday which their friends from different schools do not. However, if these students can handle this pressure, a bright future awaits them”. (SP02)

Thus the Student Care Service was taken into account. This service provides a professional counsellor to give personal advice to each student. All trainers and staff must have supervision training to give proper advice and to be able to handle teenagers’ worries and problems wisely. As SP02 pointed out:

“Reducing the dropout rate is very important because it will decrease the turnover rate of the company as well. The Student Care Service is one strategy to lessen the number of dropouts which S&P provides to students. All trainers and store managers must be trained in how to take care of the students in both studying and personal life. A professional counsellor is also provided to give advice to students. The major problem which we have faced so far has been teenage problems. They are very sensitive and cannot be coerced. So the counsellor and trained staff need to know how to handle them and reassure them as well”. (SP02)

Overload Work and Cost

Last but not least, money matters. The Learning Centre is a huge investment and is quite a burden for the company financially. SP01 expressed that, although the company received funding money from the government, it has not yet received enough to compensate for it has invested:

“Regarding the Learning Centre’s expenditure, the company received supporting funds from two projects of the government: one is a headcount subsidy and another is a 15 years of free schooling programme. To be frank, it was a very small amount of money compared to what the company has to pay but it was better that nothing. In the first year, we were subsidised just half of the headcount and got nothing from the 15 years of free schooling. S&P had to appeal to the government because it was not compensating correspondingly to what the company had invested. To my mind, this may be one reason why other companies were not interested in participating in the programme. If other companies thought
that the Learning Centre was a workload for the company, they would not do it”.

(SP01)

Moreover, the key informants stated that the S&P Company has been suffering from the high costs of the company’s expenses. All these years, instead of receiving tax exemption, S&P had to pay double, because the supporting funds they received from the government became the revenue of the company:

“There is a problem regarding the law. As previously mentioned, the S&P Learning Centre receives supporting funds from the government. Even though it is a small amount of money, it is indeed better than nothing. Also, the benefits of participating in the Corporate School stated clearly that the company will receive tax exemption for providing education but what the company got was the opposite. The company had to pay twice because the incomes we received for the Learning Centre came to the company’s account, which the Department of Revenue counted as the company’s profit. This means the company does not receive a tax exemption and has to pay more. It is different from Panyapiwat Learning Centre because that one is operating under a registered school, Panyapiwat Techno Business School, so all the Learning Centre’s revenues go to the school’s account”. (SP02)

5.3 Future Plan

The S&P Learning Centre has only one branch and has not been in business long. The key informants agreed that there are many things that the S&P Learning Centre has to learn and which cautiously need to be improved upon. Thus the company does not have any intention to expand the number of Learning Centres:

“So far, there is only one Learning Centre and the Company does not have a policy to expand the number of Learning Centres. It is crucial to make our only Learning Centre grows strong with quality. Meanwhile, students in other provinces are recommended to study a dual system programme with colleges. They do not have to move into a hectic capital city like Bangkok. Also, training sessions take place at S&P branches in those provinces near their living places. Integrating these two systems together will help S&P expand its partners - networking with VEC and colleges. S&P will gradually have more clients”. (SP03)
Even though the S&P Company does not have any intention to expand the number of Learning Centres, increasing the volume of students is one of their future plans. The idea of raising the number of students is the S&P Company’s aim, as this scheme needs to correlate with the company’s business plan. As SP02 explained:

“This idea is to accept students for training programmes supported by our business plan as well. S&P aimed to reach 300 students in 2013. This plan came up because many business strategic planners agreed that integrating the student system into the employee plan helps decrease the turnover rate of the company in the long run. The students who graduate from our Learning Centre will have S&P ‘characteristics’, such as good working skills, good attitude to working and honesty. They got used to S&P’s working style and tended to work at the company longer than others who have not been trained”. (SP02)

Expansion of the Learning Centre and Opportunity for Students

The idea of the Learning Centre expansion falls into two parts. The first pertains to expanding the size of the Learning Centre itself in order to increase its capacity to accept more students:

“This year, S&P invested in a new building. I think the executives have prudential vision of their business. Our Learning Centre has just been started. We planned to increase the volume of students; however, it depends on the ratio of business demands and investment. It is clear that at this moment, S&P is still not able to expand the curriculum to a bachelor degree level. We have to collaborate with other colleges”. (SP01)

“At our beginning stage, we were running the Learning Centre slowly step by step and concentrating on the curriculum. Numbers were not our goal, but now it is time to expand the volume. We aim to have 300 students next year and in the second phase, five years later, we are planning to reach 1000 students. To get 300 students as planned, however, is not that easy. If we thought only about the quantity, it would be okay, but the quality is the most important issue to us. S&P, therefore, needs to run the two training programmes along with the Learning Centre in order to back up the required number of employees while we cannot produce enough quality employees as we planned”. (SP02)

In addition to this, the idea of expanding the Learning Centre to provide higher education and training for students was implemented to produce qualified S&P employees with
continuous training. This expansion plan was clearly stated in the company’s annual reports:

“We will continue to expand our course curriculum and accept more underprivileged students into our vocational level certificate course in Retail Trade and Food and Nutrition at S&P Learning Centre”. (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, 2011)

“In addition, the company is cooperating with institutions of education to develop an undergraduate program of culinary technologies and services in order to produce higher capability chefs and restaurant managers”. (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, 2013)

In addition, S&P is planning to give students opportunities for training overseas, which may motivate students to learn and work hard:

“S&P has restaurants and outlets overseas. It is possible to send our students for training abroad at S&P restaurants in the future. We try to create opportunities for these students but they have to be disciplined and work hard”. (SP01)

Attracting Students with Fast Track System

As regards increasing the volume of students, the company expects to use a fast-track scheme to attract students, with the aim of reducing the number of dropouts while increasing opportunities for students. The Fast Track system is, therefore, developed to attract students, to diminish the number of dropouts and to expand the volume of students of the Learning Centre:

“The company will have a fast-track system; I have already discussed this with the board committee. The second-year students who have good grades in their first two years will have an opportunity to sit this exam. If they pass, the company will place them at a primary level position. They will get paid at the employee rate, not a trainee rate, and receive full benefits the same as S&P employees, while they are students”. (SP02)

“Normally, every student passes the assessment successfully. The third-year students tend to have good grades. Even though students may feel very exhausted in the first year, they develop skills and expertise in their job at last. These students are more than welcome to work at S&P as soon as they graduate. The
new policy, moreover, offers second-year students with GPA over 2.5 a fast-track system. These students will be eligible to be S&P full-time employees and earn a salary at the same level as the practitioner-level employees. For those students who have a school record lower than 2.5, they are going to work at the company for two years after graduating at a practitioner level”. (SP03)

Moreover, the Fast Track System is seen as a tool to decrease the dropout rate while also empowering employees with S&P competency and S&P working culture:

“It has just been decided by the board that the top second-year students are eligible to be employed as mid-level employees the same as the graduates. That means they will get paid at the normal salary rate since they have studied in the second year. Also, I think these students will have more working skills than current employees. Even though they work four days and study two days, they are trained continuously for three years. This is far better than working six days a week but staying with us for only six months. Furthermore, S&P plans to expand to a higher education level. To my mind, this is the most sustainable system to raise a person with the DNA of S&P”. (SP01)

Furthermore, there is a draft prospective plan proposed by SP01 that stipulates that when the Learning Centre is more stable. SP01’s intention is as follows:

“It is expected that if we can provide further education and training for students from vocational education to bachelor degree, these students will be trained with us for approximately seven years. The seven years of training with S&P can transform these students to be quality employees of S&P”. (SP01)

In addition to this, SP02 anticipates that some of the graduates of the Learning Centre will become its future employees.

“In the future, when our Learning Centre expands more and more, the Learning Centres will not have adequate teachers. We may have to invite our graduates to be trainers or keynote speakers to train the younger generations and share experiences while studying at the S&P Learning Centre”. (SP02)

5.4 Suggestions for Other Companies

When the interviews came to the final part, the informants were asked to give suggestions, based on their experience, to other companies that may wish to establish their own learning centre. The interviewees did not give direct recommendations but
offered their personal views to all stakeholders with the hope that they may be able to help better develop the corporate school programme. The suggestions are as follows.

Vision

The board of executives should have a long-sighted vision of personnel development, and all personnel of the company should have the same vision so the company will grow strongly in the same direction. The S&P Company is a good example of this, with clear evidence in the company’s annual report and in the support of its employees:

“‘We have always maintained our principle of fairness to our customers, giving back to society through corporate social responsibility (CSR), the development of our employees so that they could maximise their potential, and continued improvement in our operation and quality control system’. (S&P Syndicate Company Limited, 2011)

“Furthermore, people who work here should agree to one vision, the company’s vision. Teachers had to adapt their teaching style to be suitable for the company’s Learning Centre. They had to understand the company’s policy, know what the business wants, develop the curriculum and train students to meet the policy’. (SP01)

“The Office of Education Council held general meetings among private sector companies regularly. There were seven firms participating at the beginning but I have no idea how many are left now. However, I would like to add that some businesses, Central Group for example, have not established a Learning Centre like S&P, yet they are in collaboration with other colleges in a form of dual system. So far, there are two main companies, CP and S&P, that are operating their own education establishments. To my mind, the vision of the board of executives is very important. S&P’s board executives have a long-sighted vision. They think that even if there were a lot of dropouts, the remaining graduates are the best because they are real high quality S&P people. S&P is facing a problem of lack of quality workforce but I strongly believe that the Learning Centre will solve this problem’. (SP02)

Being Demand-Driven

The needs of the company are paramount-Learning Centres are not generally for wider benefit—though they do benefit the community:
“Last week, I went to one S&P restaurant. The manager said he wanted eight students for his branch. He said he prefers students to current employees because, to him, students are very determined and work harder than current staff”. (SP02)

“Several organisations have visited us so many times. They wanted to know what the learning centre run by the private sector looks like and how we do it. I think they got an idea of integration from us. This is to clarify that there were two dimensions in S&P Learning Centre. It is not only a learning centre but also has to integrate the business mind into it because it was set up to serve the company. This system is very crucial for developing our country”. (SP01)
6. CHAPTER SIX:
V-ChEPC, MAPTAPHUT TECHNICAL COLLEGE AND
PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY

Vocational Chemical Engineering Practice College (V-ChEPC) is the third case study. Documentary research, observations and interviews with six key informants were employed in collecting concrete empirical data to explain the case. This chapter, therefore, presents the development of the V-ChEPC programme from its outset, its implementation and its prospective plans.

The key informants of the V-ChEPC programme were recruited by a similar set of sampling methods used at the other two case studies. Six volunteers were participated in the interviews and provided rich information according to their experience. The beginning phase of the V-ChEPC programme and its future plan were provided by a programme advisor who is a former Deputy Secretary-General, Office of the Vocational Education Commission (VEC) (V01) and by a director of Maptaphut Technical College (V02). Additionally, two facilitators were chosen to give in-depth understanding regarding the learning activities of the programme and their perceptions on the impact on the business sector. Furthermore, the studying and training experience was given by two graduates. The following table gives a short description of the V-ChEPC key informants.
Table 6-1 Detail of Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Main Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V01</td>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>Giving advice for the V-ChEPC programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V02</td>
<td>Director of Maptaphut Technical College</td>
<td>Providing overall leadership to the programme and making the programme a success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V03</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Facilitating learning activities of the V-ChEPC programme and working as an engineer at the petrochemical company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V04</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Facilitating learning activities of the V-ChEPC programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V05</td>
<td>Operations Technician (Graduate)</td>
<td>Responsible for the safe and efficient operation of the plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V06</td>
<td>Maintenance Technician (Graduate)</td>
<td>Responsible for maintenance/troubleshooting of electronics systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.1 Background and Implementation of the Vocational Chemical Engineering Practice College (V-ChEPC)

Introduction to the V-ChEPC

The background of this initiative was the first issue to be investigated. The programme is an initiative of the government over the past five years (2004-2009). It seeks to boost human resource capacity building in response to the job market demand that both the quality and quantity of potential employees needs to be improved upon. It has two main objectives:

i. to develop the technical personnel of the petroleum and petrochemical industries to meet business demand;

ii. to develop Maptaphut Technical College to be a college prototype in producing technicians who meet the needs of the petroleum and petrochemical industries,
and to develop a learning model more appropriate for vocational education (Maptaphut Technical College, 2011).

The aims of the pilot project of this programme, as explained by VP01, were that the V-ChEPC was initiated to provide extra education to increase petrochemical technicians’ capacity to their full potential, in accordance with the human resource development strategy to increase the competitiveness of the industry. This kind of education was intended to be organised in a form of partnership, with emphasis on the collaborative learning and participation of all relevant sectors. The first phase of the implementation, the V-ChEPC programme, received financial support from the petrochemical industry. All members of the petrochemical industry agreed to donate to the V-ChEPC programme an amount of 10 million baht (approximately £200,700) a year continuously for three years. These firms agreed to provide training places and experts or mentors to help in practical subjects that required specific practical skills. The V-ChEPC programme’s agreement was made between the Office of Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and the Petrochemical Industry Group, with the aims of enhancing the efficiency and competitiveness of the petrochemical industry. At V-ChEPC programme, students are expected to have a desire to learn, and they learn to develop their critical thinking and chemical engineering skills. At the same time, they gain real experience provided by the industry. To clarify this point, V01 gave the following details:

“It began with a review of the competitiveness of Thailand by TDRI (Thailand Development Research Institute). It pointed out that the knowledge and skills of the graduates of the vocational school did not respond to the industry demands. The problem of the poor quality of the companies’ human resources resulted in the company’s difficulty competing in the global market. I, on behalf of VEC, discussed the issue of the poor skills and education problem with many organisations involved, such as FTI and NESDB. We agreed to develop a collaborative project which anticipated the development of a best practice model for the other main industries of Thailand. Consequently, five petrochemical companies participated in providing financial support over a period of three consecutive years, and allowed the use of the factory plants as the training venues. In addition to this, trainers and mentors were provided”. (V01)
Why Maptaphut Technical College?

The reason Maptaphut Technical College was chosen for the V-ChEPC programme was interesting, because there are many vocational colleges in Thailand that would be qualified choices. To understand why it was selected, the backgrounds of both the college and the industry are considered. First, all petrochemical companies were located in the Maptaphut Industrial Estate, Thailand’s major industrial site. V01 pointed out that the Maptaphut industry had a problem of labour shortage due to the rapid growth of the industry. The group of petrochemical companies, with the collaboration of the Federation of Thai Industries (FTI), then tried to find a way to improve upon this problem. Fortunately, the Petroleum Institute of Thailand, a non-profit organisation with a direct mission to ensure the sustainable development and competitiveness of the industry, was aware of the problem. The Institute sought cooperation from the Vocational Education Commission and several donor organisations:

“I do not want to say this but it is true that the petrochemical industry requested our help and proposed the V-ChEPC programme to us. The industry was expanding and the skilled labour shortage constrained its growth. The companies realised that they have to recruit more workforce but a skilled workforce with specific knowledge relevant to petrochemicals is not easy to find. Then, they proposed the programme to us. The V-ChEPC programme was developed from the human resource development programme of SCG Chemical Company, called C-ChEPS. At that time, I thought it was doable so we, the petrochemical industry, VEC and other collaborative organisations started to search for an education institution to complete the programme demands”. (V01)

Suksapattana Foundation was one such organisation that lent a hand in this. Suksapattana Foundation and VEC did research in the Maptaphut area and found that Maptaphut Technical College was the most appropriate site for the V-ChEPC: it was clearly stated by one of the V-ChEPC committee members that an education establishment was a serious issue for all partners. In order to make this project successful, there were many elements that needed to be changed regarding the working culture:
“Vocational education today needs to embrace learning by doing. The learner is going to experience a real working environment from a real enterprise. Maptaphut College is located in Maptaphut industrial area, which makes applied vocational the most appropriate education to enable students to learn deeply, both in schools and in the factory plant, because they will have talented and skilled teachers who are able to develop the best technicians that truly match the basic needs of the industry. Moreover, cooperation between businesses promotes the development of local education establishments and focuses on giving opportunities to students in the factory area first, and it also creates good relationships between the industry and its surrounding communities”. (V02)

V01 further explained the process of selecting a college to participate in the V-ChEPC programme:

“In the Maptaphut area, there are four public vocational schools. Among the four colleges, Maptaphut Technical College was the most appropriate one. It was selected because firstly, the college is located in Maptaphut industrial area. Secondly, it is a small size college (approximately 500 students), which was considered to have less internal resistance than a bigger college. Lastly, another key reason that made us select this college was that the college director at that time was about to retire, so it was a good opportunity to make a change. It was like we started over altogether, I mean with the new director”. (V01)

Moreover, it was clarified later that prior to accepting the position, the new college director was contacted by the V-ChEPC committees and was given the opportunity to discuss the V-ChEPC programme. At that time, no one knew whether the programme was going to be a success or a failure, but to his mind the V-ChEPC programme would benefit Maptaphut Technical College as a whole, and he therefore decided to take the risk. The college director, on behalf of Maptaphut Technical College, eventually agreed to take part in this programme:

“It was before I accepted the director position. The committee of the V-ChEPC programme proposed the collaboration with the Maptaphut Technical College. I had chances to discuss the programme, compare the positive and negative impacts. The programme sounded doable and was supposed to have more advantages than drawbacks. Then finally, Maptaphut Technical College agreed to participate in the programme”. (V03)
Introduction to Maptaphut Technical College

The government declared the provinces of Rayong and Chonburi to be a target area for industrial development for the country. Rayong and Chonburi both have coastal plains, which are convenient for transportation by land, sea and air. The Maptaphut Industrial Estate was initially meant for the development of a natural gas plant. However, the industry was rapidly growing and labour shortage became a very serious problem. NESDB helped to solve this issue by proposing the idea of building an education establishment in order to produce an adequate workforce in response to the industry’s needs. Therefore, in 1994, Maptaphut Technical College was established. The 105-acre school is located in Rayong province, 10 kilometres from Maptaphut Industrial Estate:

“Maptaphut Technical College is located in the Maptaphut Industrial Estate. The college aims to produce skilled manpower-petrochemical in particular-which is needed by the petroleum and petrochemical industry’s labour market”. (V01)

Observations were made throughout the study. The spacious 105 acres of Maptaphut Technical College is surrounded by national forest; from the entrance, there was a green field, two white buildings, one canteen and an old brown building. The V-ChEPC programme uses one of the white buildings of the Maptaphut Technical College. The V-ChEPC building is comprised of the study rooms, laboratory site, meeting room and the facilitator’s office, as described by V01:

“Maptaphut allowed us to use one building of the college. As you see, there are two main buildings: one is for the normal programme and another is for the V-ChEPC. Also, there is accommodation for facilitators and students over there (10 minutes’ walk from the learning site)”. (V01)

Another building, opposite the V-ChEPC premises, is used for the college’s mainstream programme. Its setting is similar to that of the V-ChEPC building; it contains similar function rooms including classrooms, a laboratory, teachers’ and head teachers’ rooms. The classrooms were set up in a U-shape; there was no teacher’s or facilitator’s table. A
large whiteboard was at the front and two flip boards were located at either side of the whiteboard. V03 explained that:

“The V-ChEPC programme got its own building. There is a learning room where a variety of learning processes are going on, laboratory sites in which all experiment tools were donated from the industries, a meeting room and office for the facilitators”. (V03)

6.2 Action Phase

This section explores the on-going situation of the V-ChEPC programme, including its participation from the outset, the curriculum the programme is using currently and the learning activities. The challenges the programme has been facing are also discussed.

The Development of the V-ChEPC Programme

The V-ChEPC programme aims to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of the petrochemical industry in Thailand. This means that the curriculum needs to be of a standard that meets the business demands. The development of the V-ChEPC programme was explained through V04’s direct experience:

“I was very fortunate to have an opportunity to be part of this programme from the outset: developing a curriculum, making it appropriate to the integrated learning method, expanding the understanding of the concepts, roles and responsibilities associated with the programme for the facilitators. Preparation of learning materials, such as reference text books and learning media, and an understanding of youth psychological development are, to my mind, also crucial for adjusting students’ attitudes. The students are keen to build a dream for themselves and they will tackle all obstacles they may face because they desire success. What I found from doing this programme is that the core course curriculum may not be so different from others, but the learning methods and the ways of integrating it into real work is”. (V04)
Student Selection

Even though the V-ChEPC programme is organised by Maptaphut Technical College, the process of selecting students is conducted independent of the college and is open to all qualified students. This was not at first satisfactory to the community, who felt that the places should be reserved for local students:

“At first, we expected to accept students who live nearby or in the Maptaphut area but after the testing score had been shown, we could not follow our intent, because Petrochemicals is quite a difficult subject and it is not everyone that can study and understand it. Therefore, places were offered to those who have good knowledge which meets our standard. The college was opposed by the community because many people said we should give preference to students in Maptaphut community before initiating an open examination. But we could not do that because of the stated reason. If students’ knowledge does not meet the standard, they are the ones who suffer”. (V02)

To reiterate this point, the curriculum of the petrochemical course needs students who have solid background knowledge in chemistry, as V03 stated:

“A paper examination is used to select students for the V-ChEPC programme. This is a crucial process of student selection because it shows whether students have good knowledge in the core subjects like Chemistry or not”. (V03)

In V01’s opinion, other qualifications are not as important as an education record and examination score because all new entrants have to pass through the same learning process. They have to be freshly trained through the V-ChEPC’s learning activities anyway:

“The college had full authority in the student selection process. VEC and other partners did not interfere in this process. We provided the best education and training to all students anyway. I do believe in the V-ChEPC learning process, the education and training of the programme should be able to develop all learners to meet the objectives of the programme. However, it may take more time if the students have poor basic knowledge of core subjects”. (V01)


Curriculum and Learning Activities

The curriculum of the V-ChEPC programme focuses on two main skill areas: technical and transferable skills. The overview of the V-ChEPC curriculum and the learning activities were expressed thus:

“The curriculum of the V-ChEPC programme was carefully developed by the industrial sector itself. The extra-curricular activities, such as meditation and LEGO-Logo, are employed in every stage of development, carefully designed to support the student’s progress. This support guarantees that students of V-ChEPC receive the best and most appropriate training course that contributes greatly to the learning process. Also, it is expected to improve the employees’ skills to meet the needs of industry. Regularly, evaluation is made through show & share activities, which include presentations, training reports, and portfolios”. (V03)

“The learning process of the V-ChEPC programme is based on a diploma course majoring in Petrochemicals of VEC. It has 99 credit units which need to be completed in two years-four semesters. The students of the V-ChEPC, to my mind, receive greater opportunity than those in other vocational programmes. Because they practise precisely in the leading companies of the petrochemical industry throughout their study, this is far better than training for only two to three months in two years as in other vocational curricula”. (V02)

Focusing on Technical Skills

Importantly, the documents relating to the V-ChEPC programme support the above statements regarding the V-ChEPC’s curriculum. The V-ChEPC programme primarily aims to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of the petrochemical industry in Thailand. The curriculum was therefore developed by experts from both public and private sectors. SCG Chemicals and PTT Chemicals, with lecturers from Maptaphut College and KMUTT University and the Bureau of Vocational Education Standards and Qualification, were introduced to this programme. It is a two-year programme that is clearly divided into studying in class at college and training in the field. According to the V-ChEPC Programme Report(Maptaphut Technical College, 2011), the curriculum focuses on:
i. the fundamental knowledge, chemical and technical, that is necessary for a petrochemical industry technician;
ii. basic science concepts, such as mass and energy balance, heat transfer, fluid mechanic and unit operation:
iii. common knowledge, such as security systems, quality control, English language and learning tools (Maptaphut Technical College, 2011).

Upon examining the curriculum in detail, it becomes clear that the four semesters of V-ChEPC reflect a concrete plan of learning and skills development. Each part of the nine-month practical placement has different objectives. Work experience in the first semester is about familiarisation with the working culture of the company. This helps students learn to adapt themselves to a working environment. The one-month practice in the first semester allows students to meet their colleagues prior to working with them, and students have to learn in every department in the company. In the second semester, students learn more about the roles and duties of technicians. This preliminary preparation aims to lay a solid foundation for students to enable them to choose what kind of work they like, be it production control or maintenance. Term 3 is the longest period of practical experience: in this semester, students have to perform their duties as real technicians. Students are coached by mentors throughout their training. Lastly, students have to do a work-based project in their fourth semester. This project is based on their real experience of being an apprentice at the factory. It seeks to build up learning habits and working skills such as planning, analysis and evaluation through engagement with a real problem that has occurred during their training at the company (Maptaphut Technical College, 2011, V02 and V03).
Table 6-2 V-ChEPC Programme's Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester 1: Foundation Motivation</th>
<th>Semester 2: Learn – Connect</th>
<th>Semester 3: Commitment to Professional Practice</th>
<th>Semester 4: Project based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td>Meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>MicroWorlds</td>
<td>5-month practice</td>
<td>Project based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind Mapping</td>
<td>LEGO-Logo</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>1-month practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Habits</td>
<td>Unit Operation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Chemicals</td>
<td>Mechanicals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>Electrical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Manufacture and Fix via 2-month practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding a working culture through 1-month practice</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maptaphut Technical College (2011)

All in all, the students of the V-ChEPC programme, in the key informants’ view, have good opportunities to practice. Such opportunities result in direct experience with the leading firms at every stage of the programme. Conversely, those who are not in the V-ChEPC programme have only one semester of practical experience.

**Focusing on Transferable Skills**

In addition to the technical knowledge students receive from the programme, V-ChEPC also promotes students’ thinking and learning skills, such as meditation and problem-solving. MicroWorlds and LEGO-Logo are the main tools. These were used to create activities that help students acquire the stated skills, as the V-ChEPC Programme Report states:

“Once they enrolled on this programme, they were given the opportunity to train the conscious mind through meditation, and develop computational and math skills via MicroWorlds Pro software and other learning tools. This training helps modify their habits”. (Maptaphut Technical College, 2011)
Regarding meditation, the interviewees agreed that it is a discipline of the mind that allows students to boost their consciousness and be able to concentrate on what they are doing. This is considered a benefit not only to their study, but also to their daily life and working life in the future, as it helps them develop new ideas and innovations:

“Students that were selected for this programme came from different backgrounds, experience and ability levels. We therefore started with meditation to develop students’ minds and consciousness. When students can learn by themselves, they will be able to learn from outside as well”. (V03)

“As you may know, all students had to develop their minds through meditation, I have to confess that I did not really understand how meditation was good for my study but as time went by, I realised that we have to prepare our mind to be ready to absorb new knowledge and create our own approach to learning. Meditation is one way to develop our minds”. (V05)

“We are trained to find a way to solve problems and if we are not consciously linking this to the learning process, we will not benefit and there will, consequently, be little motivation to use this approach anymore”. (V04)

Activities make use of MicroWorlds and LEGO-Logo as tools for developing students’ learning skills. They also make use of teamwork to help students learn how to create and plan a project and solve problems as a team. This teamwork strategy enhances communication skills and working skills, and increases creativity. Concern for how LEGO-Logo benefits students through the class’s LEGO-Logo project was expressed as follows:

“This showcase is a petrochemical process simulation built by LEGO. The first time that I heard from teachers that I had to play with LEGO, I thought that they were toys for rich children! But what I obtained from using LEGO was an understanding of teamwork. This LEGO project I am showing you was built through many processes: planning, drafting, programming, action and evaluation. Thirty-five people did it together; each one had their own ideas but there was only one best plan or solution that everyone agreed on. So we had to brainstorm, share ideas and eventually make decisions about which plan/solution is the best at this moment, and then build it together”. (V04)
“LEGO-Logo introduced me to systematic learning because before starting the LEGO project, we (my classmates and I) had to plan a project rigorously, step by step. A LEGO is very small and detailed and this taught me that every single piece is important to build a huge project. While doing a LEGO project, conflicts arose for which we, as a team, had to find the best solution. I said the ‘best’ solution; that means there were many solutions, but we had to choose what was best for our project”. (V05)

Moreover, Thailand is going to be part of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), which is expected to facilitate full integration in a prosperous and peaceful region marked by increasing interaction in the political, socio-cultural and economic fields among the ASEAN nations. It would increase free trade in the fields of goods and services. English language learning has thus become a major concern, as college students would need English to survive and succeed in the AEC by 2015. An English-speaking environment has been created in the college to support this. A native English-speaking teacher is with students at all times, and presentations in English are required. V02 explained that:

“Each year students have to do projects. The students' projects have to be submitted and presented in English in front of teachers and friends. Students will be closely mentored in practising English, both writing and speaking, by a foreign teacher. This will focus on developing the potential of each student”. (V02)

V05 found it challenging to present projects in English:

“After finishing a LEGO project, we had to present our project to the panel to complete this activity. The presentation can be divided into two steps: step one is
to present in Thai to the panel and friends; then the best group will be chosen to present again in English. To my mind, it was very challenging to obtain the opportunity to present in English. The success of my presentation meant that all my efforts paid off. I think show and share is a good process of learning. It benefits me a lot”. (V05)

Before moving on to the benefits, V01 concluded that the education and skills development provided to V-ChEPC students aimed to instil in them V-ChEPC characteristics, which are expected to be significantly different from normal programmes. V01 described the four characteristics that the graduates of the V-ChEPC programme must have as follows:

1. Curiosity and attention to detail

Every single detail must be addressed in bringing learning together with knowledge. The habits of taking notes, organising and mapping ideas are needed to capture the details without being overwhelmed by them.

2. Creativity

Creativity is also an essential characteristic. With creativity, students can develop their own learning techniques because there are many ways to learn and figure out answers. Responding to their curiosity will stimulate further learning.

3. Good presentation skills

In addition, students of V-ChEPC can confidently present in both English and Thai and are able to use several techniques to convey their knowledge and understanding to others. On this point, V06 also explained that:

“Show and share is a process where you have to gather all the information and organise this systematically and clearly in order to show and explain it to others. We had to be clear about our information before presenting it to colleagues. The way of presenting is very important, the method that we are going to use is
crucial. It is important to select the appropriate presenting tool and approach that suits the audience”. (V06)

4. Respecting differences

Last but not least, respecting others’ opinions is a crucial characteristic. It promotes effective teamwork, which leads to developing the learning process and exploring new knowledge.

Role of Facilitators

In order for the V-ChEPC graduates to achieve the previously stated characteristics, V-ChEPC relies on a group of facilitators. The role of V-ChEPC’s teachers has been changed from “teacher” to “facilitator.” The facilitator is a catalyst who inspires students to explore new knowledge. With their knowledge and experience, they can guide students, organise a learning environment that supports student’s learning and learn through the learning project together. As V04 stated:

“I, as a facilitator, try to arrange activities that help students to explore new knowledge and solve problem by themselves”. (V04)

Likewise V06 supported:

“The facilitator is a guide, who is coaching us to be happy and eager to learn. We, I mean facilitator and I, act as an advisor for each other, because we learn together. There is no teacher and student. There are only learners”. (V06)

Challenges

As mentioned previously, to make the project succeed, change is needed. The hardest thing to change is people. The current personnel of the Maptaphut Technical College are used to a very traditional work culture. They therefore need to be aware of change and need to be able to understand the new learning system to act as effective facilitators; they need to be open-minded to adapt to new working habits, as V03 indicated:
“This pilot project has done its best in everything in order to create a programme that will be able to successfully meet the aims of the project. V-ChEPC focuses mainly on the learning process. The learning process has changed completely. The school principal needed to adapt his mind to a new style of learning, and to modify the management plan for the school to be compatible with new a learning approach”. (V03)

These facilitators should, furthermore, be trained by the industrial sector so that they clearly understand the working process of the factory. This is explained in further detail by V01:

“All partnerships of this programme offered training courses to train V-ChEPC’s facilitators specifically. The systems in the petrochemical industry, such as security, culture, utility process and maintenance, were the areas of training for staff at all cooperative companies”. (V01)

The idea was supported thus:

“Importantly, the trained facilitators and the programme's personnel must be able to link the knowledge of these systems to the goals of their organisations. Rajanamgala University of Technology Thanyaburi (RMUTT) assisted in training staff regarding the knowledge areas specific to the petrochemical industry. The facilitators must have a solid knowledge background in petrochemical areas such as the Basic Process Control, Electronic Process Control and the Selected Unit Operation. Darunsikkalai School, under Sukkapattana Foundation, was responsible for training in the Constructionism Learning Strategy. Prior to being a professional facilitator, all facilitators need real experience through undergoing all the processes of learning projects the same as the students. This is to enhance their understanding at every stage of the V-ChEPC study and the integration of the learning points and the course. Last but not least, PI-ChEPS of PPT Chem Company and C-ChEPS of SCG Chemical Company offered extra training such as Meditation, Micro Worlds, LEGO-logo, Dialogue, Mind Mapping, Portfolio, 7 Habits, Six Hat and Reflection. All of these promoted the wider development of the students”. (V02)

Benefits

There are several sectors involved in this programme, which have invested a great deal in terms of finance, laboratory tools and human resources to make this programme happen. V-ChEPC is expected to benefit all investors. More importantly, it is also expected to
enhance vocational education in Thailand as a whole. There are three main sectors benefiting from the V-ChEPC programme over traditional vocational education provision in Thailand.

Benefits to Students

The first and foremost party that receive direct benefit from the programme is students. Students receive full support in both academic and emotional matters from the programme provisions, such as free, catered accommodation. As V05 pointed out:

“V-ChEPC is a boarding programme. This is different from Maptaphut Technical College’s normal programme. That programme does not require the students to stay at the College, but the V-ChEPC’s students have to. For me, it was very convenient. I did not have to think about anything except studying and I got support from facilitators 24/7. The relationship between friends was good. We were so close. The relationship with teachers and facilitators was brilliant; I felt easy and had courage to consult with them at any time on every topic”. (V05)

In addition, as reported in the Manager Newspaper, the Petrochemical Institute gives scholarships to top students with GPAs over 3.0 to study at the higher vocational certificate level. This opportunity aims to develop the knowledge and skills of petrochemical technicians in a manner that is responsive to the private sector demands. It was pointed out that V-ChEPC’s students have opportunities to practice with the top companies in the field. The training courses are supported by participating enterprises such as PTT, SCG Chemical and Dow Chemical. In addition to the benefit of being a trainee at these leading companies, most students from the first phase of the programme receive offers from the companies to work permanently with higher salaries than the average wage of other college-educated job seekers. Manager Newspaper (2011) reported that all 61 graduates of the first phase of the V-ChEPC programme gained employment and earned at least 12,000 baht (£240) a month. The teachers also developed their attitudes and their teaching style. As V04 declared:
“These young-bloods have the qualifications that meet the needs of the industry. They, for instance, can use English language pretty well, are well disciplined and are eager to learn. They can learn and work together as a team. The awareness of safety and environmental protection are in their concern. As a result, these technicians get paid at a similar rate to engineers”. (V04)

Moreover, it is believed that project-based learning will enable students to develop their learning approach gradually, to slowly change their learning attitudes and habits, so that eventually they will be keen to learn throughout their lives. As V03 opined:

“Once students understand the learning process and have a good learning approach, they will be able to integrate the knowledge. This will equip these students with necessary skills they need, such as critical thinking, being positive and having good communication, all these skills will lead them to have a good attitude to learning and they will be keen to learn throughout life, which is considered to be an essential for the success of the project”. (V03)

Benefits for the Education Sector

Another sector that benefits from this programme is the Education Department. V-ChEPC was developed to be a best-practice model for other colleges and industries, with the aim of producing high quality and skilful technicians for the industrial sector. As mentioned in Manager Newspaper:

“Maptaphut College is a best-practice model for the development of executives, teachers and trainers and enables students to reach their full capacities and become high quality human resources that meet the needs of business” (Manager Newspaper, 2011).

Supporting information from V01 indicated that it is believed that the programme responds well to the needs of industry, and there is a plan to make Maptaphut Technical College a practice model for other colleges to supply adequate technicians to petrochemical industry. Furthermore, V02 expressed his opinion that the success of V-ChEPC programme will be a good catalyst in terms of the curriculum models and learning approach developments which may change Thailand’s colleges and vocational education as a whole:
“V-ChEPC, to my mind, benefits Maptaphut Technical College a lot. Teachers and students here, not only for V-ChEPC, know that this programme works well because of the project-based learning approach. Now other programmes therefore have been adapting the curriculum and learning method to project-based learning, which I think is going to be successful the same as the V-ChEPC programme. This programme, however, has a limited time. The College will not receive support from the industry forever, so it is our responsibility to adapt and modify our programme and our college to have a better quality of learning and, indeed, to meet the needs of the AEC in 2015”. (V02)

Benefits for Business

The business sector receives direct major benefits from this programme. The industry, of course, has the workers the employer needs with the skills to work immediately without needing to be retrained, as V03 affirmed:

“Three years have passed. The graduates holding higher vocational certificate normally have to be retrained for at least six months before starting work but our first group of students went to work straight away without any retraining”. (V03)

This reduces the duplication of training, where previously the company had to train new employees before starting work. If the company has to provide training, the company will waste time, money and human resources, which would impact the company performance. In addition, once the company no longer has a problem with labour shortages, or has reduced its wasted resources by retraining, it is more than ready and able to compete in the global market:

“This is an easy logic. We are not the training company. Our main mission of our industry is not providing training. It is true that we have the training section which is responsible for providing short courses of training. This is provided for current employees to keep their skills up-to-date. However, if we have to retrain these fresh graduates all the time, it is such a waste for the companies in terms of time, budget and human resources”. (V03)
6.3 Future Plans

The study then came to the last issue, the prospective plans. Even though there is no clear indication for the V-ChEPC programme regarding whether or not the Petrochemical Industry Group will continue to support the project in the third phase, Maptaphut Technical College has rigorously planned for the future of the programme and the College. The key mission for Maptaphut Technical College is to prepare the college and students for AEC in 2015. English language is a primary concern of the college, as V02 affirmed:

“Preparing the college and students for the ASEAN community in 2015, students of V-ChEPC programme will be able to communicate - listening, speaking, reading and writing - in English fluently. We have been preparing our students for a couple of years now by hiring native English teachers. The teachers are with the students at all times, they can practise language continuously which, to my mind, is very effective”. (V02)

In addition to language instruction, the College is planning to employ project-based learning in all programmes of the college, not only for V-ChEPC. Thus, the teachers need to be trained in the same way as the facilitators of V-ChEPC:

“Although other programmes are not supported by any industry, and also, students do not have opportunity to practice in leading companies like V-ChEPC, I do believe that students in other programmes are becoming more knowledgeable and skilful the same as V-ChEPC, because they learn through project-based learning as well. This will develop their thinking, communication and problem-solving skills and the college will also provide extra activities for them as well as V-ChEPC”. (V02)

However, the V-ChEPC programme did not provide any suggestions to other organisations regarding establishing a programme, as the Maptaphut Technical College did, because, as the key informants pointed out:

“To me, the programme is good for both the college and the industry but I cannot recommend any organisation to copy the programme we are working on as theirs. As I told you, there are many factors to making it successful. The major one
would depend on the demands of the industry. Also, it is a huge investment, so it may be difficult for one company to do this. As you see, this programme is supported by a group of companies”. (V03)

“What I can suggest is that the education sector should work cooperatively with the private sector in no matter what form and pay more attention to the curriculum and the learning strategy which can transfer knowledge and skills to students effectively. Also, these knowledge and skills should be what students can use for work not just for passing the examination”. (V02)
CHAPTER SEVEN:
EXAMINING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE CORPORATE SCHOOLS IN THAILAND

This chapter is focused on the second research question which is concerned with examining the impact the programme has had on stakeholders through the experiences of the three case studies; Panyapiwat Learning Centre, S&P Learning Centre, and V-ChEPC. The chapter is structured around the findings from the case studies, which are discussed.

Figure 7-1 The Chapter’s Guideline
This chapter is comprised of three main sections. *Section 7.1* presents the summary of the empirical findings derived from the analysis of qualitative data obtained from documentary reviews, the in-depth interviews and other relevant sources, which is descriptively explained regarding nine themes generated from the data by the researcher. Then, *section 7.2* reflects on the progress of the Corporate Schools’ programme in Thailand, whether or not it is meeting the proposed objectives through the lenses of (i) the skills required by the industries and (ii) benefits that both students and enterprises obtained. Lastly, *section 7.3* summarises my conclusions, where a recap on the important contents of this chapter is presented.

### 7.1 A Summary of the Empirical Findings

This section will summarise the empirical findings obtained from the three case studies of this research. The collection of the relevant sources of data retrieved through the organisation document reviews, observation field notes and in-depth interviews with the key informants of the cases is employed, interpreted and categorised into themes. The findings show that the three research cases do have common issues regarding their reasons for participation, the benefits for both workers and the participating companies and their suggestions to future participating firms. Furthermore, there are also important differences that result from the uniqueness of the cases in administrating the Corporate Schools to meet the needs of the particular enterprise.

In accordance with the findings, the data were separated into three main sections; background, present situation and future plans. They were then examined further and broken down to seven sections, probing down in detail. The seven sections are as follows:

1) Reasons for participation
2) Timing of participation
3) Curriculum and Teaching-learning strategy
4) The organisation’s administration
5) Quality assurance
6) Benefits
7) Suggestions for other companies thinking about the Programme

The empirical data from each case was coded by themes set out above. At this stage, a spreadsheet was used as a tool for organising the coding process systematically. The researcher organised the seven themes as headings of the table and then categorised the related transcriptions in different colours for the different cases under the appropriate heading. In addition, at this stage, there were some mergers between themes that had similar contents or where data could be linked and united into one theme.

1) Reason for Participation and Benefits for the Company

The reason for participation and the benefits the companies received from the programme were considered as the same issue. To begin with, all the three cases were originally initiated from the needs of the companies and industry. According to the first case; CP All, the Company wanted to reduce the staff turnover rate of the Company, they then tried to seek for collaborations which might offer ways to improve the situation. The S&P Company also had similar problems to CP All. The high turnover rate was the major challenge facing the Company. The Company had to hire part-time employees to fill the vacant positions, but these workers had to be trained by the Company to be able to work at the S&P outlets and restaurants.

The process of recruiting and training a new workforce consumes huge amounts of time, effort and resources. The Company, therefore, later got invited to participate in the Corporate School programme which inspired the Company to spend that money in establishing the S&P Learning Centre and thus invest in food and beverage industry education and training. Likewise, due to the shortage of skilled workers, the Thai Petrochemical Industry Group proposed their intention to develop high quality human resources for the petrochemical fields. With regard to this aspiration, the programme of
developing petrochemical engineering technicians, like V-ChEPC programme, was established with the collaboration of the education sector. The need of the case study organisations may be slightly different in terms of their contexts, but obviously a major reason making all of them to participate in the Corporate School programme was the perception that the traditional education system was not producing a supply of suitably trained young people who would remain in the company and help it to prosper. This dissatisfaction with traditional education systems seems to be a common issue arising in studies of Vocational education (see OECD 2010a, 2012c, for example, and World Bank 2004a, 2012a, 2012c).

Another reason for participating was the benefits for the companies. The findings showed that it is essential for the companies to perceive the benefits they will receive from the Corporate Schools’ programme prior to making a decision for participation. Tax benefits, for instance, was one of the main concerns. The companies have to be confident that the initiative will not be a burden to them. Since the law stipulated that other organisations can provide the education and training to the young people, it also relieves the expenses of the companies that contribute to this goal through tax system. In addition to this, Panyapiwat Learning Centre and the V-ChEPC programme of the Maptaphut Technical College receive additional benefits through the tax system. Because Panyapiwat Learning Centres were established as the branches of the Panyapiwat Techno Business School of CP All Company, the Company receives both tax reductions for the Company and tax exemption for the Learning Centres concerning the law. Likewise, the V-ChEPC programme is a school-based Learning Centre which advantages the petrochemical companies in providing workers with skills that match to the needs of the Industry and reduce the problem of the duplication of trainings. The V-ChEPC programme, therefore, receives some tax exemptions as well. However, S&P has problem with the tax issue which will be explained in a later section: The Corporate Schools Administration Pattern.
2) Timing of Participation

The timing issue concerns two scope areas: the length of their involvement in educational activities and their participation in the Corporate Schools’ programme. Firstly, the length of the involvement in education activities of the three cases may demonstrate their experience in education. In accordance with the cases, even though Maptaphut Technical College is an education institute which is seemed to have more experience than the other two cases, the length of involvement in education is not different from CP All. The Maptaphut Technical College was established in 1994 while the CP All has been involved in education for almost 20 years since their first collaboration with the VEC in developing the retail business curriculum and offering training places for the dual vocational training system. However, S&P is the one which has least experience in education, in both collaborating with other partners and providing education itself. Before participating in the Corporate School programme, S&P has been organising the dual system for only ten years, according to the data from the interviews.

Secondly, in terms of their participation in the Corporate School programme, both CP All and S&P were invited to participate in the pilot project of the programme in 2004, whereas the V-ChEPC of the Maptaphut Technical College joined later. CP All began the programme with five learning centres, but there was only one centre of the S&P at the outset of the programme. Moreover, this centre did not accept students on the programme on its first operation; the S&P Learning Centre was officially opened in the following year. Regarding V-ChEPC, although the programme was established in 2009, its curriculum was developed from the programme called ChEPS (Chemical Engineering Practice School) which the company has been using for developing human resources for Chemical Engineering roles for several years. This reflects the point made by Ernst and Young (2011) that industries competing directly in the global economy need employees with higher levels of skill than the education systems in developing countries typically produce, so employers often take actions themselves to bridge the ‘skills’ gap’.
3) **Curriculum and Teaching-Learning Strategy**

Of course, the curriculum offered is a key element in determining how well the Corporate Schools programme can transfer the required knowledge and skills to their trainees. The studies show that typically about two-thirds of the German dual curriculum is oriented towards vocational skills. Subjects like technology and applied sciences feature strongly, along with particular industry requirements, while the remaining one-third extends general education, with focus on language and computational skills, and social skills that can increase students’ general employability (BMBF, 2003; Kirpal, 2011). With regard to the Thai education system, the main curriculum covers eight core subjects: Mathematics, Science, Thai, Social studies, Health and Physical Education, Art, Career and Technology and Foreign Languages (Kantamara, Hallinger, & Jatiket, 2006) that should provide a good basic education, but it seems likely that these things are not always well taught or learned, particularly in the rural schools where teacher quality is often poor. This seemed to be the weakest part of the curriculum in the Corporate Schools too, and the emphasis on basic skills required for any job seems rather less than is advocated in the Dual system (Allais, 2010).

All the case study schools use the main curriculum established in the vocational education schools, though the curriculum regarding the specific technical skills is different depending on the industry. According to the data collected, Panyapiwat Learning Centre of CP All is using the retail business curriculum for this part of the curriculum, which the Company has developed together with the Vocational Education Commission (VEC) since their first collaboration. The S&P Learning Centre largely adapted the existing training schemes of the Company in order to equip their future employees with skills specialising in food and beverage industry issues that meet the Company’s standards. V-ChEPC employs the curriculum from the Chemical Engineering Practice School (ChEPC) programme. This curriculum separates the training at the industrial plants into four semesters, and moves from initial familiarisation with the
working culture and processes to the development of specific transferable and technical skills that improve employee effectiveness.

The teaching-learning strategy is another critical process for achieving the objectives of the curriculum. As Nothdurft (1989) pointed out, combining practical vocational training in work contexts with theory-driven lessons based in the public vocational schools is a major strength of the German Dual system. Affiliated companies provide the practical training using approved instructors for 3-4 days a week, while the local state-run vocational school (Berufschule) delivers academic subjects for the other 1-2 days (BMWi, n.d.; Cockrill & Scott, 1997). This is quite similar at S&P Learning Centre. S&P utilises a 4:2 system which means that students receive the job-specific training at S&P restaurants and outlets for 4 days and attend more traditional academic courses, such as Mathematics, Science and English, at the learning centre for 2 days each week. However, Panyapiwat Learning Centre employs a block study system. The system provides theoretical knowledge to one group of students and practical skills to another group for a three month period, and then swaps these groups over for the next three months. This raises some questions about whether the order or integration of these learning experiences influence the quality of learning outcomes, and seems not to be exactly what is meant by a ‘Dual’ model.

In all three Schools, a range of teaching–learning methods is used which covers distance learning and traditional face-to-face learning approaches. The distance learning approach is utilised by Panyapiwat Learning Centre, CP All Company. To date, there are twenty locations where Panyapiwat Learning Centre operates, and it has been explained in a previous chapter that it is not easy to provide education at all locations with the same quality standards. Therefore, CP All Company, which has three core industries (agriculture, retailing business and telecommunication service), takes advantage from being the leading company in the telecommunications industry by transmitting some
lessons on the more theoretical subjects via satellite from Panyapiwat Techno Business to the Learning Centre.

Whereas CP All chose to use their capacity in advanced technology to deliver education in the ‘traditional’ school subjects, the S&P Learning Centre provides education largely through face-to-face learning, using teachers brought in from elsewhere. With regard to the basic subjects such as Mathematics and English, the S&P Learning Centre employs lecturers from other colleges to teach at their Learning Centre. By contrast, the technical and practical input regarding the knowledge and skills needed for work, such as Food Safety, is provided by the Company’s senior employees. Project-based learning is a feature of the V-ChEPC approach for developing and promoting students’ basic and transferable skills. The programme also utilises face-to-face learning combined with the use of technology, with a belief that the technology is a tool that assists learners to acquire knowledge and skills easier and faster.

So, we can see that each of these schemes takes its own approach, though none of them seem to be very closely modelled on the ‘Dual system’ that Thailand has supposedly adopted to improve the provision of vocational education. This means than none of the schemes show the integration of basic/general skills and work skills that is advocated by (for example) Kirpal (2011) in the delivery of their programmes. However, the V-ChEPC approach- especially the practical projects carried out in groups- seems to best reflect the advice from studies of other vocational schemes.

4) The Corporate Schools Administration Pattern

The method of organising the Corporate School programme in each case has affected the benefits the company received, especially regarding the tax issue. The selected cases have different ways of administrating the Corporate School. Panyapiwat Learning Centre and V-ChEPC are similar, both learning programmes are the responsibility of education
institutions, a school and a college, but S&P Learning Centre is entirely controlled by the company.

CP All is operating its learning centre in cooperation with Panyapiwat Techno Business School which means that it is organised as an education institution, not a training department of the Company, though it gives privileged access for current workers to enter to the programme. This benefits both the Learning Centre and the Company itself, as mentioned in chapter four - legislation stipulates that the education establishment receives tax exemption and the company that provides for education obtains a tax reduction of fifty per cent. This clearly offers incentives to both partners to engage in the programme, though the inventive does not seem linked to impact of the scheme, only the provision of it. Likewise, the V-ChEPC training centre is under the control of Maptaphut Technical College, which is originally an education institution, and similar tax benefits are available, but this seems to be a stronger example of cooperation with clearer understanding of which partner does what, and why.

While the CP All and the V-ChEPC of Maptaphut Technical College receive substantial benefits, S&P Company is suffering under the same legislation. As the S&P Learning Centre was established as a section within the HR department of the Company, thus the income of the Learning Centre becomes the Company’s ‘revenue’. This means that the Company does not get the tax exemption or reductions, on either basic education provision or on activities linked to the practical content of the training, which is obviously unfair. While it is possible to argue that such vocational programmes benefit the economy as a whole, and should be subsidised by the central government, or either that the companies themselves will benefit from the training they provide, so they should pay, it does not seem sensible that some pay all the costs and others pay less.
5) Quality Assurance/Assessment Framework

Regarding the issue of quality assurance, as previously noted the research suggests that can best be addressed through a solid assessment framework (OECD 2010a, World Bank 2012b). Foundation subjects, such as Mathematics, Thai and English are assessed through the national assessment scheme developed by the National Educational Standards and Quality Assurance board (NESQA) and all three case study companies do employ this scheme as the main accreditation system. However, with regard to the job related training, both knowledge and skills elements, each of these case-study companies has developed its own assessment scheme to evaluate how well their programme is performing and whether it is meeting the objectives set by the Company. According to data collected, the Total Quality Management (TQM) of Thailand Quality Award has been adopted for assessing the impact of the 7-Eleven’s academies on their students. This not only assesses the quality of the training skills demonstrated by students, but also the overall performance of the Learning Centre.

The S&P Learning Centre sees the development of an assessment framework as a top priority. S&P Learning Centre has developed some assessment criteria relating to the Company’s core competency requirements, which were still waiting for approval from the company executive board when the data collection was done. In the V-ChEPC programme, the training skills are assessed using a system developed by the group of petrochemical companies in order to ensure that the appropriate training skills and competencies responding to the industry demand are being acquired by trainees. However, the details of the assessment processes used are not always made public, and neither S&P nor V-ChEPC revealed exactly how their assessment is carried out, so it is hard to judge whether this is sufficiently robust and fit for purpose.

Further, the quality of the teachers themselves should not be overlooked. This is a core determinant of the quality of a learning centre. In all three cases, there were shortcomings in this regards. Panyapiwat Learning Centre conceded that their more senior teachers
sometimes needed to update their teaching methods. Although this was not always easy to achieve, it was said to be a priority, since the quality of individual teachers was a key concern and was a major component of the school’s improvement plan. There was recognition of the importance of teachers, despite relying on the electronic broadcasting of basic skills lessons to remote locations, teachers’ knowledge, delivery skills and personal qualities were all seen as important determinants of learning:

“The teachers have to be attractive to them [students] ... the learning media and activities must be interesting. We cannot change the students’ background but what we can do is engage each one’s learning style to help them reach their capacity for learning.” (CP02)

“Teachers have to understand the company’s competency curriculum clearly, have skills at the required level and, importantly, have a good attitude toward vocational education.” (CP02)

The quality of teachers and delivery methods are also recognised as very important for the V-ChEPC programme. The personnel at Maptaphut Technical College are used to a very traditional working culture. It was thought that perhaps they need to be made more aware of the changes taking place in the world of work and indeed all around them and to understand the practical approach of the V-ChEPC programme. In particular, the teachers (facilitators) must have a good knowledge of key science concepts, and before they can teach students they should undergo similar group learning processes as the students, to appreciate what is needed and optimise their own teaching skills.

“A trained facilitator needs real experience through undergoing all the processes of learning projects the same as the students. This is to enhance their understanding at every stage of the V-ChEPC study and the integration of the learning points and the course... the facilitator tries to arrange activities which help students to explore new knowledge and solve problems by themselves.” (V02)

Similarly, although the S&P Learning Centre did not mention this issue, the data collected for this thesis shows teachers there are not as engaged as they might be with modernity. During one lesson, for example, some students were actually asleep as a
teacher displayed a slideshow. The delivery and/or the content should be looked at seriously to avoid such lack of engagement.

While the data collected here suggests that the Corporate Schools’ programme has a long way to go in terms of quality assurance, it can be noted that this is a not a problem limited to Thailand. In fact, studies show that many skills development systems in different countries fail to carefully monitor or evaluate the quality of training provided, or the levels of competence achieved (ADB 2012b).

6) Benefits for Workers

Under the 2007 Thai Constitution, the government provides a minimum 12 years of basic education of quality, free of charge to all children nationwide (MOE, 2009). The students of the Corporate School programme also receive benefit from this legislation, as a tuition fee is paid by the government. Furthermore, the basic equipment such as textbooks, learning materials and school uniforms are given to these children as well. The Panyapiwat Learning Centre, under the CP All Company, provides these free items for their students who are also earning a wage while training at the 7-Eleven stores, and are guaranteed jobs after graduation. The company also offers scholarships to students who want to continue into higher education at the Panyapiwat Institute of Technology.

Similarly, the Learning Centre of the S&P Company provides the free items that are funded from the government. The S&P students also receive daily wages for their training and also are given free meals and free first-semester accommodation from the Company. These are provided through the influence of the Company’s chairman who wants the students to focus only on education and training without worrying about other distractions. The V-ChEPC programme of Maptaphut Technical College, similarly, supplies the same benefits as the other two companies to their students, including the privilege of being subsequently employed in the collaborating companies. It seems therefore that in the short term at least, trainees at all of the case study companies receive
some benefits, and that for some the benefits can extend into successful careers. This encourages school leavers to continue education after the point when they would otherwise leave formal schooling, at least until their ‘12 years’ entitlement is achieved. OECD (2012b) is keen to promote extended schooling in developing countries, and describe this as a ‘win-win situation’.

However, though a job is indeed guaranteed for most students in the Corporate School programmes, this does not lead to a solid career path in all cases. Nevertheless career prospects are what attract students to participate in the programmes, so if this is not happening it is likely that students will be disappointed and the programmes will be difficult to sustain. Concerning this issue, the Panyapiwat Learning Centre is the only one that ensures a career path is routinely available for their students. It offers three career path options to students: continuing study to higher education levels, such as bachelor or master degree level at the company’s institute, working at a 7-Eleven store as an assistant manager, which is likely to greatly enhance career prospects, and even buying a 7-Eleven franchise through a special agreement.

In contrast, the S&P Learning Centre and the V-ChEPC staff interviewed did not indicate anything very relevant to the career prospects for their students. S&P affirmed that there is employment for the graduates of the Learning Centre, and also gave their views on the graduates’ opportunities to establish their own business, however, S&P does not offer any clear future pathways for the graduates after working with the Company beyond a year’s experience within the programme contract. Nor does the V-ChEPC programme make any employment promise and it does not guarantee jobs to its graduates. They are confident however that the knowledge and skills their graduates have acquired will be in demand, in future if not immediately, and so expect that graduates will receive opportunities for their future employment elsewhere if not in the sponsoring companies, as they will develop working skills that many employers will seek.
7) Advice to Other Companies thinking of setting up a Corporate School

As previously noted, the informants from V-ChEPC did not give any opinion regarding this matter, but the other two companies provided some suggestion to other enterprises about making such a school successful. The details of this issue are explained below.

Both companies offer some suggestions from their direct experience for other companies that might like to participate in the Corporate Schools programme or get involved in similar programmes to boost the quality of the labour force. The Panyapiwat Learning Centre suggested three major factors are needed for a successful programme, covering the support of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), a demonstrated demand for studentships and a sincere commitment to provide education not just to train for jobs. Likewise, the suggestions regarding the CEO support and a demand for places were pointed to by the S&P Learning Centre as well. The vision of the CEO is seen as a compass point that leads the direction for the company, a commitment to promote human resource development directs the company to join and continue participating in the programme.

Focusing on the CP All Company, the CEO’s vision played a crucial role in establishing the 7-Eleven academies; school and learning centres. The CEO recognised the need to recruit workers with good education and practical skill levels to fill the available positions and respond to the expansion needs of the Company in the future.

Another factor is the level of demand – both from students for places and from companies for trainees. These companies state that the demand for better quality human resources, with increased working capacity is a driving force for the company to continue recruiting these students and training them to become qualified workers to meet the need of the company and the economy. In addition to this, the CP All Company showed a clear marketing strategy, that the Company is planning to expand franchises. The expansion of the 7-Eleven outlets has increased the demand for suitably trained employees and this
creates room for the Learning Centres to grow. Similarly, the S&P Company also has plans for the company expansion in both domestic and international markets.

The demand regarding the quantity and quality employees is increasing and of course, there also needs to be a supply of potential students, creating a demand for training places. As opportunities for young people in Thailand are quite limited, recruitment is not a problem the Learning Centre of the S&P Company. The views of both these companies suggest that there are benefits that can be learned from their experience. Sadly, it is clear that the Thai government has not so far had any way to tap into this experience, and to promote it to other sectors and companies. Again, we see that that compared with more successful approaches to vocational education elsewhere, in Thailand the central government has not been sufficiently well organised to make sure these companies experiences can be used to develop better opportunities for young people and better recruits for the job market.

7.2 Discussion of the Research Findings

This section offers a discussion regarding the implementation of the Corporate Schools in Thailand to consider whether or not it has progressed to meet the objectives of the programme and also identify the impact the programme has had on the programme’s stakeholders. The first and foremost issue that needs to be addressed here is the goals of the Corporate School programme. This provides direction for the analysis and discussion. Two main objectives of the initiative were derived from the document reviews. This established that the Corporate School was initiated to (i) offer an opportunity to young people to have education and skills training in order to develop their working potential and (ii) equip increasing numbers in workforce with skills which are responsive to the labour market demands (OEC, 2008b, 2010a).

The first objective is examined through data collected from field work and the relevant documents. The target group and level of education and training provided are highlighted
as the main issues to consider in assessing the performance of the programme concerning the first goal. In regards to goal two, this is more complex assessment than the first one, and a systematic analytical framework is needed. As previously mentioned, two lenses of the theoretical framework will be used; (i) the skills required by the industries and (ii) the benefits that both students and enterprises obtained.

7.2.1 Opportunity to access Education and Training

As noted in Chapter 2, globally, about one-third of employers currently find difficulty in recruiting suitable workers to fill all the positions available in their companies (Ernst and Young, 2011). Experts agree that this problem must be tackled by providing better training opportunities to potential employees. School leavers and other young people need to have education and training levels that are responsive to current business needs (ILO, 2011, 2012, 2013a; OECD, 2010a, 2012c). Despite the failing economy, this problem exists in Thailand too, therefore the first objective of the Corporate Schools programme in Thailand is to offer an opportunity to young people to access both the education and skills training required in order to develop their working potential (OEC, 2008b, 2010a). Here, there are two elements involved; the opportunities made available to young people and the quality of education and skills training provided to those who take these opportunities. To evaluate how well the programme met these issues, the responses from the case study companies and the patterns of education and training provided are considered.
The discussion is structured case by case, starting with, the Panyapiwat Learning Centre. This offers training to young people who have already graduated from the lower secondary school and want to continue their studies in the vocational stream. However, not all young people can enter to this Learning Centre; they have first to pass the entrance examination and interview to test their attitudes and basic knowledge. The interview is important in the process of student selection in order to get the students that can meet the 7-Eleven Company’s requirements. The Panyapiwat Learning Centre gives support to all students admitted no matter what their backgrounds are; the Panyapiwat Learning Centre’s students are offered scholarships by the 7-Eleven Company, to enable them to undertake the programme.
Furthermore, the education and training for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is highlighted in the S&P case. The students with disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances are the prime target group of the S&P Learning Centre. From their experience, S&P Learning Centre prefer accepting students from the welfare schools (Rajaprajanugroh and Suksasonggroh Schools) rather than students from better off districts. The S&P gave the reason for this as their belief that disadvantaged students tend to have better work attitudes than the more fortunate peers. Hence, immediately these students have graduated the lower secondary education level, they directly receive the offer to study at the Learning Centre. Studying at the S&P Learning Centre, the students have access to opportunities to develop practical knowledge and skills which are essential for their working lives and a small daily wage is also paid during this practical training. While it is identified in the empirical findings that this money does not cover all expenses to their families of supporting the young people, nevertheless it makes significant contribution which enables the young people to participate in the programme.

There is a similar system in place at the V-ChEPC programme. Vocational education and training, focused around the work opportunities in petrochemical engineering, is provided to these students, who have also completed the lower secondary education level. However, the student selection process is different. The students’ academic school records are very important to the V-ChEPC programme. The students must have demonstrated excellent performance in science subjects especially in Chemistry, because petrochemical technicians require a solid basic knowledge of Chemistry. Additionally, students may struggle and even drop out of the programme if they do not have sufficient knowledge of or aptitude for science. The college feel it is difficult to progress quickly enough to be able to work in an industry that requires specific scientific knowledge unless basic concepts have been mastered during schooling.
7.2.2 The Impact of the Corporate Schools’ Programme

As noted above, OECD (2012b) pointed out that the German dual system, which was the original model for vocational education in Thailand, creates a ‘win-win’ relationship between individual trainees and the company or industry providing the practical training. Skills’ development is not only necessary for equipping young people as employees in a changing world (ILO, 2011, 2013a; OECD, 2013c; UNESCO, 2013a; World Bank, 2012c) but it also helps to motivate less academic school leavers to re-engage with the education system (Berg, 1995). This section examines the implementation of the Corporate Schools’ programme in Thailand and asks what impact the programme has had. The analysis is underpinned by considering the skills that students acquired from the programmes attended and the effects on the companies involved. This analysis and discussion is essential for determining the value of the programme.

7.2.2.1 The Impact on the Attitudes and Skills Levels of the Participants

One major aspect of the skills training programmes- the dual system, with workplace training and more traditional classroom based study, is that students are able to connect what they are asked to learn in school with real-life applications. The students’ comments support Berg’s (1995) proposition that learning in ‘real life situations’ encourages students to take more responsibility for their own learning. They understand that the traditional knowledge based education is no longer enough, and that developing the skills looked for in the employment market will affect their whole lives (ILO, 2013a; UNESCO, 2013a; World Bank, 2004b, 2012a).

Therefore, it is critical to understand what skills are required within the labour market and also to identify appropriate attitudes to work that are required among the workforce. The literature review identifies various types of skills. Many skills required for the 21st century are inevitably associated with ICT. Some literatures categorise ICT skills as a distinct type, but elsewhere this is now viewed as basic skill, with the implication that it...
has become a fundamental skill that every young person should have. This research adopted UNESCO’s three main categories of skills, which are basic, technical and transferable skills, as the framework for analysis.

Figure 7-3 Roadmap to identify impact on students

The basic and transferable skills appear to be the main preoccupation of employers when recruiting staff, rather than technical skills. It seems that companies feel that the pace of technical change is so fast that skills quickly become obsolete, so they prefer to develop these themselves, rather than looking to recruit young people who already have these. But to acquire these skills, and to be re-trained as technology changes, young people need a solid set of basic skills, and also some of the transferable skills that are needed for success in the workplace. With regard to the basic skills, the Global Monitoring Report
(GMR) suggested that basic skills, including literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are fundamental for the development of other skills. It is essential that human resource development is grounded in solid basic skills if it is to lead to a good quality of life and also being qualified to learn more and develop more in the future. If the basic skills are meant to improve a better quality of life, the transferable skills are not only enhancing the quality of life but also crucial for securing their jobs in an increasingly fast-moving world. These are seen as the required characteristics for a successful working life, and include communication skills, interpersonal skills, research and planning skills, organisational skills and management skills (Myers, 2009).

The learning activities of the V-ChEPC programme focus largely on promoting transferable skills: the group of petrochemical companies believes people who have competent transferable skills, such as communications and managerial skills, are more likely to achieve than those who do not. Extra-curriculum activities, such as LEGO-Logo and MicroWorlds and industrial training at specialist facilities, benefit students as this allows them to develop appropriate transferable skills. The findings based on data collection indicate planning, management; problem-solving and teamworking skills were all developed by students as a result of the programme. During the LEGO-Logo activity in particular, one of the students said the experience had taught him to plan a project systematically and learn to work as part of a team:

“LEGO-Logo introduced me to systematic learning ... a LEGO project needs a rigorous plan ... it taught me that every single piece is important.” (V05)

The companies too said they were satisfied with the performance of graduates from the V-ChEPC programme, indicating that they also thought that communication and other transferable skills are key qualities they seek in potential recruits.

The 7-Eleven and the S&P Learning Centres attributed the development of their students to a combination of the basic skills programme and work experience, further underlining the benefits of the ‘Dual’ model. Both companies indicated students had learned useful
skills and adapted their attitudes to work as a result of their training. The students themselves said the programme had gradually improved their awareness of attributes such as discipline and service quality:

“Working at the store shapes in us the real life skills which we hardly receive from other schools, knowing how to communicate with people, and having a good service mentality.” (CP05)

“I can solve problems wisely, have good negotiation skills...I have a good mindset regarding serving people, which is very important to the retail business.” (CP08)

Students realised that working life is tough, requiring a lot of patience and resilience:

“Studying here is tougher than studying at mainstream vocational schools. Students have to study and work at the same time ... if students can handle this pressure, a bright future awaits them.” (SP02)

Besides this, the Panyapiwat and S&P Learning Centres strongly emphasised the importance of workers with technical skills specific to the company needs, with the hope that they produce qualified workers who can boost productivity across the sector, as well as workers with basic and transferable skills. In this respect, the emphasis seems different from that of the ‘Dual’ approach:

“The dual system of Germany is regarded as conferring upon the individual a greater set of employability skills more than the specific technical skills required to meet the demands of the occupation for which they trained.” UKCES (2012: 47)

In fact during this research little evidence concerning how effectively the cases of Panyapiwat and S&P Learning Centres address the development of basic and transferable skills was discovered, though they both expected that the graduates of their programmes will have the company’s ‘DNA’, which means that not only will they have work skills and behaviours needed by the company but also be loyal to the company and contribute to lower staff turnover in future, thus lowering recruitment costs. Perhaps it is the attention paid to developing the practical skills required for particular jobs that explains
why the programme seemed to largely neglect the transferable skills which have been highlighted by experts as the most ‘useful’ skills young people can have in today’s labour market (ADB, 2009; Maclean & Ordonez, 2007; Singh, 2005). Such assist with adaptability to different working environments and can significantly improve prospects of employment. However, as noted above, neither CP All nor S&P companies paid serious attention to these skills, this may imply that they want to produce a workforce only to meet their own companies’ needs, rather than to build capacity for the sector, or boost the quality of Thailand’s manpower as a whole.

7.2.2.2 The Impact on the Companies Involved

In addition to the attitudes and skills the students acquired from participating in the Corporate Schools’ programme, there is another critical issue to be explored; the impact the programme had on the Companies involved. In accordance with this concern, below I will address the benefits the companies reported from the programme. The findings show clearly that the participating companies believe they obtain direct advantages from the programme, as mentioned in above section. The reasons offered for participation in the Corporate School programme varied between the enterprises. The government or other organisations did not force them to participate in the programme. All the companies, obviously, did their own calculations, regarding costs and benefits, prior to becoming involved in the initiative.
With regard to the issue of the impact on the companies, the benefits the companies obtained from programme participation were outlined in the previous section. First and foremost, collaboration in the education of young people has the benefit of smoothing the transition from school to work. It can facilitate the recruitment process, by allowing employers and employees to get to know each other and the employees are also blended gradually into the working culture of the workplace during the training (see Berg, 1995). This benefits the companies in terms of not wasting their resources through two issues: developing appropriate skills for workers and reducing employee turnover. Looking at individual cases, CP All explained that the Company prefers investing in training their own employees to hiring from elsewhere and having to retrain them. Also, the CP All
Company stated that they had noticed novice recruits often resign after they finish training, or after just a few weeks of the real work.

The company gave the reasons for this happening, because these young people do not have appropriate attitudes to work; they are not patient enough to learn about the business and often they do not work as hard as the 7-Elevens expect. Similarly, the S&P Company expressed concern about this issue as well. S&P had been suffering with this retraining issue, thus the Company considered that investing in the Learning Centre would profit the Company in the long run, as the informants mentioned, even though the three year programme of the S&P costs a lot of money. Still, the Company thought it was better than recruiting new employees who quit after the expense of training them. Moreover, technicians with solid knowledge and skills in the petrochemical industry are essential and urgently needed for the development of the industry in Thailand. It is likely to be difficult to attract competent newcomers who have little knowledge of the industry, and also the job as a petrochemical engineer requires employees to work offshore which is not a normal condition in other jobs, so a willingness to live like this is very important.

Human resources are a crucial asset and new recruitment and retraining mid-career workers is such a huge investment that the industry considered that it is more worthwhile investing in a programme which is expected to produce appropriately trained young persons who are committed to a career in the industry. Of course, to equip these young people with the specific petrochemical industry skills and knowledge is an important and very rigorous process; the V-ChEPC bears the main responsibility in this matter.

The ILO (1999: 116) suggested that the companies will only invest in training if they can be reasonably confident of retaining the trainees. In connection with this, the Corporate School programme is expected to produce employees that have the characteristics the enterprises need in order to be able to do the work, have positive attitudes to working and who will not easily quit the job even when facing problems. ADB (2009) supported that even during an economic downturn, effective skills training can reduce staff turnover,
improve motivation and increase productivity. Furthermore, these workers are expected to become a loyal core workforce in the companies, because in providing them with training the company invests in them and begins to build a relationship. From the findings, the Panyapiwat Learning Centre initially wants to reduce its turnover rate. The CP All Company mentioned that turnover is the main obstacle for the growth and expansion of the Company. Loyal employees, with the characteristics the enterprise wants are therefore essential and urgently needed, and that is its reason for involving the company in the education business.

The S&P Company faced a similar challenge to the CP All Company; the high turnover rate. The S&P Learning Centre was thus established with the aim of diminishing the turnover and wastage rates of the existing training provision. “The employees with S&P DNA” was the phrase used when they talked about the workers the company is seeking and aims to produce from the Corporate School. It can be deduced that such employees are those who are highly committed to S&P, they must have the skills and competencies needed to become the S&P quality employees. In the third case; the V-ChEPC programme, the informants did not mention the loyalty workers or the problem of the high turnover rate.

This does not mean that the petrochemical industry does not need loyal employees or does not have the turnover issues, but the informants did not address these matters specifically. In terms of human resources, the petrochemical industry faces slightly different issues to CP All and S&P Companies; the main challenge of the petrochemical industry is the shortage of skilled workers because of the specific requirement of the industry. However, with this industry specific knowledge and skills, the graduates of the V-ChEPC become the mainstay and a very important asset to the industry. Besides the specific technical skills which are fundamentally required by the petrochemical firms, the interviewees from the V-ChEPC programme proposed the four expected characteristics that the graduates of the programme must have. These characteristics were curiosity and
attention to detail, creativity, good presentation skills and respect for differences, and graduates from the programme are expected to bring benefits to the companies that employ them, helping to avoid problems which may occur during work, enhancing the quality of work performance and boosting productivity and business growth.

Another point to consider, the tax reduction and exemption, is further advantage for the participating companies. This issue benefits the school-based learning centres: Panyapiwat Learning Centre and the V-ChEPC, but it is a severe problem to the S&P Learning Centre. The benefit regarding the tax status depends mainly on the law, it is stipulated that the education sectors such as schools, colleges and universities do not have to pay tax, and also that other organisations such as the individuals and the private sectors that provide education and training can receive a fifty per cent tax reduction. In accordance with the findings, CP All benefited clearly from the tax reduction the Company received from participating in the Corporate School programme, as did the V-ChEPC programme. The V-ChEPC programme does not have to pay tax because it is organised under the Maptaphut Technical College. Additionally, the current phase of the V-ChEPC programme is receiving a financial donation, to assist in developing curriculum and human resources, and technical tools and training places, from a group of companies across petrochemical industry. However, as yet there is no evidence regarding whether or not these facilities provided by the industry become a significant burden to the enterprises involved, but with regard to the evaluation of the first phase, the companies cooperating were quite satisfied with the results of the implementation so far.

With regard to the research plan, the researcher hoped she would be able to investigate whether or not the programme had any impact on the local labour economy but, in practice this was not possible. As noted in Chapter 3, the normal activities of government were severely disrupted during the period when this study was carried out, and no data regarding employment rates has been published during this time, and the data derived from fieldwork was not sufficient to enable sensible discussion of this topic. While this
was partly due to the devastating floods and the civil unrest in Thailand that have made life difficult over the past years and greatly complicated my data collection plans, another factor that has become clear from my interviews is that the functions of government itself in Thailand has been relatively chaotic during this period. These unexpected events affected the Corporate School Programme, as many work-related policies were frozen or suspended. Uncertainty surrounding the scheme also led to several companies dropping out, and what data I was able to collect does not capture its impact on the labour economy. By consequence, I was not able to follow up this aspect of the scheme’s impact.

7.3 Concluding Remarks: the chapter summary

This chapter examined the implementation of the Corporate Schools programme using three case studies to answer the research questions numbers one and two. The first research question aimed to assess how the programme has progressed, how the curriculum has been developed, what challenges the cases faced and so on. This research question has substantially been answered descriptively in the previous findings chapter. This chapter then started by summarising the findings to see the similarities and the differences of the three cases to make it easier to understand the different schools and examine the extent to which the implementation is meeting the programme’s goals or not, in order to pull together information relevant to the second research question.

The research question number two was scrutinised through analysing the two stated objectives of the Corporate Schools programme. The first aim was investigated by reviewing the ongoing process of each case, such as the progress of its target group of students and the curriculum and learning strategies developed. The second objective, regarding whether the programme gives education and training that is responsive to the labour market demands, was studied through the perceived impact of the Corporate Schools’ implementation on the sponsoring companies. This issue went into details to see what and how the programme had affected the two main stakeholders; one being the
attitudes and skills of the students, and the other the extent to which the companies felt they were meeting their own goals. As noted, impact on the local labour economy has been more difficult to establish, and this question has not been addressed.

What has become clear has been that in the beginning of the German Dual system and the conceptualisation of Thailand’s Corporate School programme were relatively close. Both programmes were initiated and developed by the needs of the industrial sector. But the German Dual system has been embedded in its education system for almost 100 years. It was first developed as a commercial occupations training model, and eventually approved and introduced as a general model by the German government in the Vocational Training Act in 1969 (BMBF, 2003). Its long history and the perceived economic success of Germany over many years has persuaded other nations to follow this system (Kasipar et al., 2009). When it was clear that Thailand was not keeping pace with global labour markets and economies, the industry federation proposed the development of a collaborative skills training programme to the government and, later, Thailand’s Vocational Education Commission began its collaboration with Germany to develop the dual vocational training (DVT) in 1988 (OEC, 2005, 2010a).

However, the outcome was not thought satisfactory by Thailand’s industries, because this cooperation did not make any real changes to Thailand’s vocational education system. The curriculum used in vocational schools was obsolete and students still did not have adequate knowledge and skills to secure jobs (OEC, 2010a). About 20 years later, there was another attempt to replicate the ‘German’ model. Thailand’s vocational education commission and the industrial sector worked and developed a new collaborative project—the Corporate School Programme (OEC, 2007a; 2008c). This time, there were no helping hands from the Germans or indeed any other international organisations, those these were features of successful development of skills programmes elsewhere. The initiative was planned and developed by collaboration between the Thai government and the private sector. It was agreed that the enterprises would provide both education and training for
their prospective employees in order to ensure the quality of education and training and to produce graduates who were expected to have both knowledge and work skills that met the needs of the School’s sponsor and the labour market generally. Clearly, this initiative seems not to have the success it has had in Germany, or in other countries using the model. In the next chapter I will consider what might be done to make the programme more effective.
8. CHAPTER EIGHT: IDENTIFYING MEANS OF IMPROVEMENT

This chapter will address the third research question, which seeks to identify ways of making the Corporate School programme more effective. The above analysis of the empirical findings and the literature review will guide the discussion. The chapter comprises two main sections, the first of which recaps the challenges that have hindered the impact of the initiative. The second section puts forward recommendations for addressing the challenges identified and recommends opportunities for improving the programme. The theoretical perspective which was developed through the relevant literature, mainly from UNESCO, the World Bank and OECD, is adopted here in order to analyse and propose means of improvement.

Figure 8-1 Roadmap to suggest strategies for improvement
8.1 The Challenges Confronting the Corporate Schools

Before moving on to consider lessons emerging regarding how the Corporate Schools programme might be improved, I would first like to reflect further on the discussions of the previous chapter in light the literature that provided the start point for this research. Published research enables the beginning researcher to get to grips with the field of study, to assimilate existing knowledge and to identify gaps that might be fruitful areas for further exploration. The initial review of theoretical and empirical work relating to vocational education thus helped me to develop and refine my research questions.

Additionally, when it comes to the analysis of data gathered and discussion about what is significant in this, the review of literature becomes a framework to analyse whether or not what has been found in the fieldworks supports existing theories or finds similar themes to studies conducted elsewhere. Of course, in reality, there is always a ‘gap’ between theory and practice. Theory rarely describes exactly what happens in real situations, and the findings from case studies are always unique, though they may also reveal outcomes and relationships that lend general support to theoretical propositions.

However, another complicating factor of this study was the political instability in Thailand over the past years, which has been much worse and longer lasting than I anticipated when I was planning the study. The past five years was the very unusual period in Thailand, with two major times of civil unrests and eventually a coup d'etat in May this year. Moreover, the devastating floods in 2011 obstructed and hindered both the Corporate School programmes I was attempting to study and my own fieldwork plans and activities. I was not able to find any published ‘research’ findings relating to such a difficult context, so while theories and experiences from other skills training programmes globally have been of some help in understanding what happened within Thailand’s Corporate School programme, it should be remembered that my own study took place in an unusual environment. Consequently, though the early descriptions of the programme indicate that as with several other developing countries, the German Dual system
provided the initial framework for the development of the programme, there is not much
evidence within my data that either any further guidance from the government was
published or that the detailed plans developed by the case study companies were very
faithful to the ‘Dual’ model.

However, the literature reviewed did show that many skills training programmes
worldwide have common backgrounds and draw on similar concepts. These programmes
have been created to solve problems relating to the mismatch of skills in the workforce
and demands of the labour market, so skills shortage and skills mismatch are main issues.
These issues become more important than before as a result of the advent of
globalisation. The rapid change of technology and the free movement of human resources
influence directly the labour market, affecting job seekers and current employees
(Department of Labour, 2011). In terms of conceptual models, the literature depicted
various systems that can be used to equip workers with specific occupational skills in
order to serve labour markets and improve employment prospects of workers (BMBF,
2003; IDB, 2012; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2013). Among these, the German Dual system
was widely adopted by several countries as a model for their skills development
programme, and the Corporate School programme in Thailand, initially at least, borrowed
much from the German Dual system.

If we take a closer look at the literature, it is apparent that there are successful vocational
training examples globally, such as the dual training model of Germany, the school-based
learning approach of the Netherlands and also the Chilean ‘Joven’ programme, it is very
important to learn from those successes and find out what were the principal factors that
made the Corporate School Programme in Thailand fail.

To begin with, one major factor that differentiated the Corporate School Programme from
other more successful initiatives was the level of support. In the matter of support, it can
be categorised as domestic support and support from international organisations. Up to
this point, Thailand seems to lack support from either source. A weak government, as
mentioned earlier, and political instability created a lot of confusion affecting all stakeholders. Most government policies and businesses were suspended. The violent civil uprisings affected directly the industrial sector and Thailand’s economy. Additionally, the complicated re-organisation of Thailand’s ministry of education, many times in just a few years, has resulted in poor coordination of education systems and policies. The World Bank (2012a) and TDRI (2013) pointed out that the very complex organisation of the education sector in Thailand was a factor that created confusions over the government’s role and responsibilities.

The Ministry of Education in Thailand has five sub-organisations (as illustrated in figure 2-6) and in many circumstances their work overlaps, which results in the poor programme management. The overlapping responsibilities and disputes finally led to no section of the Ministry taking responsibility for the Corporate Schools project. To illustrate, the Corporate School programme was started as a pilot project by the Office of Education Council (OEC) but, later, the programme was transferred to the Education Services Areas (ESA) (OEC, 2007a). However, ESA did not know anything about the programme and most of written records regarding the initiative’s development and progress were missing, as noted in the research findings. In fact, if we compare the Corporate School programme to its ‘role’ model, the German Dual system in details, weak support from the government affected the programme development substantially. While the German dual system is systematic and well-planned and organised, there has been a lot of confusion for those operating the Corporate Schools programme, which has increased more and more since its first launch, exampled by the lack of information regarding the programme and its history that could be found.

There is little documented apart from the National Education Act 1999, that stipulated the right for ‘social organisations’ to provide education and training, and a few reports written about the introductory meetings between the VEC and the seven original participating companies. Additionally the policy, which should act as a guideline for
organising the Corporate Schools was itself not clear, with different understanding in different companies. Without clear direction, the stakeholders of the programme often felt lost, and getting answers from government was like looking for a needle in a haystack! The seven invited firms participating in the programme had varied experience and knowledge of education and training activities. As stated in the regulations, the companies have full authority in organising the programme for their Schools, which means that they had to develop all procedures by themselves and those companies who did not have experience of education before had to start from scratch. The companies had to develop their own curricula and manage the resources, such as human resource, learning venues and financial resources, by themselves. It was a heavy burden on these companies and seemed to be much greater when there was no support, little encouragement or follow-up from government and even no evaluation of the programme.

Some companies decided it was not worth the effort and opted to leave the project. This was a very serious issue, and affected the continuation of the initiative- which is still not fully resolved. In addition to this problem, interviewees pointed out that some stakeholders became quite confused, and did not really know what to do with the programme because of uncertainties about its future, and about support, about costs, and so on. The government did not seem to seriously support this initiative once it had been launched, so some of the organisations participating felt they had been misled and were confused about their roles and responsibilities, and the Corporate School programme was abandoned by several companies. I did not have access to those companies to investigate why they gave up, but we can conclude that the programme did not develop in ways they had hoped when they signed up to it.

Given these difficulties, it is not surprising to discover that the findings from the case studies show that there are significant challenges hindering the initiative’s progress. Below, specific challenges are discussed, and opportunities to change or improve the situation are considered. Also, recommendations are put forward that might improve
effectiveness and efficiency for decision-makers and the relevant organisations in charge of the Corporate School programme. In connection with this, it should be noted that the Corporate School programme in Thailand faces similar problems to other skills development schemes around the world.

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two identified several barriers to skills development programmes and also suggested methods of improvement. These remain relevant documents regarding challenges and opportunities for skills development and they function as guidelines for the discussion, as the empirical findings are interrogated in an attempt to identify specific strategies in some cases. For example, the cost of travel to training locations and the size of businesses involved are identified as factors that also exert negative influence on the Corporate School programme in Thailand. Accordingly, the following sections discuss the particular challenges faced by these schools that nevertheless remained in the programme, whose experiences can be viewed in the context of both the available wisdom about the development of vocational systems and the materials collected in the case studies.

8.1.1 No Robust Policy Regarding the Corporate School Programme

First and foremost, the policy is important, as can provide a map that gives directions for action. In this study, no comprehensive official policy document regarding the initiative was found; only a series of statements relevant to the Corporate School programme were available, released by various government members and officials. The main statements that underpin the programme are in sections 12 and 18 of the National Education Act, where the permission for private sector organisations to provide education and training is set out. Other government records just refer to the initiative as one kind of TVET that is operated by private sector enterprises. Without a clear policy, each company has been relatively free to implement its own Corporate School programme following the vision of the company and its CEO, subject to the minimal rules and regulations provided by the Office of the Education Council (OEC) during the pilot phase. But though some
regulations for the programme were written by the OEC and implemented with the pilot companies in order to set standards for the Corporate School programme, the implementation in each case was rather different, due to the varying needs of companies involved. The findings consequently show that without clear direction from policy, most companies struggled with the many uncertainties and related challenges arose.

8.1.2 Confusion over the Tax System

Confusion over the tax system is one of the consequences arising from the issues cited above. Since there was no systematic policy regarding the treatment of Corporate Schools, the organisations associated with the programme have not received equal benefits. Regarding the law, schools, colleges, universities and other educational parties shall receive exemption from tax, and those alternative social organisations that provide education to young people (as stated in the National Education Act) shall receive a tax reduction. However, in the actual implementation, the legislation is not adjusted to facilitate the programme as companies were led to believe; the Department of Revenue still acts in the same way towards commercial companies. This puts a heavy burden on the S&P Company because not only does it receive no tax reduction, but it also has to pay double on the income it earns from the implementation of its learning centre, even though this income comes from government support funds given to all education providers.

Most education activities receive benefit from these funds, but the S&P does not. This is because this income is counted as revenue to the company, not to the education learning centre, so the company has to pay tax for this part as well. However, this issue does not affect the Panyapiwat Learning Centre or the V-ChEPC because both are school-based learning centres apparently independent of the companies. All revenues go straight to the schools’ accounts, so that both learning centres receive direct benefits from the tax system.
8.1.3 Lack of Programme Management

Major political and social instability affect the administration of the Ministry of Education and, indeed, the Corporate School programme. During the last three years (2010 – 2013), the Ministry of Education has had seven education ministers. These frequent changes of minister and in the direction of the ministry have affected the administration of all national programmes. The implementation of both routine work and projects often came to a standstill and some projects were abandoned. This influenced the Corporate School programme, as initially the initiative was the responsibility of the Office of Education Council, but is now under the oversight of the Education Service Area and the Vocational Education Commission.

This change not only affected the programme’s administration but also disrupted the flow of communication and information. Most information regarding the Corporate School programme was re-directed to new organisations. The newly-in-charge organisations may have received archival records from the Office of Education Council, but they did not identify any person or sub-department with overall responsibility for this programme. Consequently, due to the lack of systematic transfer and document storage, many documents were mislaid, and any sense of direction was lost.

8.1.4 Little hard evidence about progress.

In connection to the previous issue, as part of the change of the organisation in charge of the programme, records were often mislaid. This was the reason that the new organisations responsible for the programme could not provide me with relevant information when the data collection was in progress and it was not only the unsystematic data storage at the responsible organisations that made collecting data difficult, but also the web-based information which had also been disrupted and was not up-to-date. Official documents, relating to the evaluation of the pilot project and, official statistics regarding the numbers of participants, were rarely discovered. Such documents are essential for monitoring outcomes and to see how successfully the programme has
progressed. Available information was derived largely from the companies’ records, which may have biased the discussion.

In research, it is very important to triangulate information from different sources to confirm the trustworthiness of the data, but this has not been possible between company and government sources, because it seems the government has not systematically compiled any data about the initiative. While this was an ‘initiation’ of sorts for the researcher, it is a much more serious problem for the future of the Corporate Schools’ programme.

8.1.5 No Clear Basis for Planning or Investment

In accordance with the purposes of the Corporate School programme, it seems that the government has tried to make the programme more attractive to the private sector. The final point in the regulations mentions that the enterprise can end its participation at any time. While such flexibility might re-assure companies that they will not be ‘locked-in’, this has more negative consequences than positive, especially for the students. As mentioned in this research several times, the programme started with seven companies participating, but there are now only two companies that will continue the programme into the next year. In order to understand the reasons why the other five enterprises have discontinued the programme, it is necessary to acquire detailed information from these firms.

Several attempts to contact these enterprises were made, but none seemed comfortable responding to the research inquiries, with the exception of the Royal Cliff Beach Resort. However, this specialised hotel and tourism company provided little information regarding its Corporate School experience. Recording was not allowed during interviews and there was no documentary evidence they were willing to share. However, in the view of the HR manager of the Royal Cliff Beach Resort who was responsible for the hotel skills training programme they offered, the Corporate School programme was initiated
with good-will, but the unsystematic and poorly-structured support for programme made the enterprise feel unstable and led them to quit the programme.

As has been pointed out, a key requirement for a successful partnership is strong political commitment and support. Unusually this programme had quite a lot of financial support from government for some Schools, but the political commitment at the nation level that should be seen as a driving force that stimulates participation for all stakeholders (Kasipar et al., 2009) was missing. In this case, the Hotel group decided to quit the programme after a year of operation because it did not think the programme would achieve its goals. Unfortunately, the trainees of the Royal Cliff Beach Resort were not then able to transfer credits to other schools and so that one year was effectively a waste of time for the students.

8.1.6 Lack of Effective Public Relations

The issue of public relations was raised by CP and S&P. Public relations are seen as a tool that can be utilised for enhancing the understanding of the initiative, and for promoting the programme to those who may be interested. So far, the Corporate School initiative has been in place for over half a decade, but there are still many misunderstandings regarding the programme and still a lot of people have not heard about the initiative at all, which constrains its implementation. Uniquely to the companies, CP All promotes its Panyapiwat Learning Centre through the 7-Eleven television commercials, which is why it is also known as the ‘7-Eleven’ Learning Centre. S&P is also different; the company did not make use much of TV commercials, but did organise a roadshow visiting schools to promote the S&P Learning Centre, especially at the welfare schools which are their main target.

However, this was less of an issue for V-ChEPC programme because their programme requires entrants with specific knowledge and skills. The V-ChEPC programme is quite well-known to those who are interested in working in the petrochemical industry.
Nevertheless, poor public relations does seem to have affected the development of the Corporate Schools programme as a whole. For the cases identified, being demand-led is the driving force in determining whether the programme should continue or cease its administration. Being demand-led does not only depend on an enterprise with growth potential - the effectiveness of training and retraining for the unemployed depends first and foremost on whether jobs will be available at the end of the training (ADB, 2009) – but also the demand from potential students who want to work in the industry. It seems likely that some of the companies that have withdrawn from the programme have not had sufficient interest from appropriately motivated students, and better publicity about the programme and its benefits would have helped here, and may have made the difference.

8.1.7 Educational vs. HR Development Goals

In accordance with the goals of the Corporate School programme, the initiative was established to (i) offer young people the opportunity to receive education and skills training in order to develop their working potential and (ii) equip the workforces with skills which are responsive to the labour market demands (OEC, 2008b, 2010a). The implementation of the programme suggests nevertheless that the prosperity of the company comes first. The companies showed their interest and participated in the programme after calculating the benefits it would bring them, rather than from concerns about the quality of education of young people in the country as a whole. In addition, all the cases in this study started with human resource problems – high turnover employees and skills shortages - and then participate in the initiative with the hope that providing education and skills training will relieve these problems. Even where the companies were satisfied with their Corporate Schools because the programme served their HR development goals, they show little enthusiasm to pursue the wider educational goals. The issues such as a long-term plan for students and the quality of trainers raise serious concerns about whether the longer term goals can be met by the programme.
The exception is CP All, which has developed concrete plans for students to choose what best suits for their future. Although two of the three case study companies provided options through working paths, continuing to higher education at Panyapiwat Institute of Technology, a CP All-owned institution for higher education, is offered to CP’s students. While these students receive scholarships for studying at a higher level, the Company anticipates a need for employees that are better qualified in terms of both working skills and attitudes, and these employees are expected to be loyal to the Company, which makes this an investment for the future. Moreover, the clear future path the company provides to students is a major factor that attracts suitable young people to CP’s Corporate School. Besides this, CP All also pay much attention to marketing, using television commercials and the roadshow to promote the programme, to attract students that meet the company’s goals.

By contrast, S&P and V-ChEPC did not mention any plans for students. In the case of S&P, there were no long-term plans provided for students. Its Learning Centre is still in the early stages and its main objective, so far, is to provide education and skills training of the best quality to its students. The S&P Learning Centre is now focusing on curriculum, a supportive system and the development of a quality assurance scheme. The Company shows its sincere commitment to develop the programme through an investment in a new building for the Learning Centre, which provides new training equipment and appropriate study environment. It aims to serve a larger number of students and offer a better quality of study activities.

However, it seems that the S&P Learning Centre implemented these changes to meet only the needs of the Company to fill vacancies, and does not address the limitations of the national education system. According to V-ChEPC, the programme is a school-based programme organised by a group of petrochemical companies. It operates as one programme of the Maptaphut Technical College, therefore, the V-ChEPC does not focus on a long-term plan for students because this is seen as a responsibility to the college.
Rather, V-ChECP concentrates on developing quality technicians that meet the short-term requirement of the industry and is less concerned about wider educational goals. But its success might indicate that education development and economic development are not so closely linked as OECD or the World Bank would have us believe.

Furthermore, the quality of trainers is a major concern influencing whether the Corporate School programme will achieve its goals or not. Research into the dual system of German education generally affirms that the teacher and trainers should hold appropriate qualifications that guarantee their subject knowledge and also have a teaching license to confirm their ability to transfer knowledge and skills to students (BMBF, 2003; Kirpal, 2011). Additionally, appropriately qualified trainers are very important for human resource development in order to properly equip workers with the work attitudes and skills required by employers. However, the Corporate Schools did not seem to be aware of this issue, or if they were they paid little attention to it, and the Thai government was keen to attract interest from the private sector by making the programme as flexible as possible to suit the enterprises recruited. Perhaps this is why the regulations of the Corporate School programme did not require the teacher and trainers within the programme have to hold a teaching license, or even any formal teaching or training experience (OEC, 2007b). This matter was left to the companies to decide. It can be argued that this freedom came up from the belief that long serving employees who have experience and relevant skills in particular work themselves can be effective trainers.

However such people may not have an education level that meets requirements and the government did not want to lose the interest of the companies and obstruct the implementation of the initiative by laying down such conditions. According to this study, the three cases employ different methods of organising trainers for their Corporate Schools. Since the Corporate School programme regulations stated that it is not necessary for programme trainers to hold a teaching license, their training will vary between companies. CP All and S&P are similar in this respect. Trainers of these Corporate
Schools are divided into two groups: trainers for theoretical subjects and those for practical subjects. The former are recruited from colleges and schools that have connections with the companies, while the latter are veteran employees and executives of the companies. By contrast, the V-ChEPC programme trainers are drawn from the group of petrochemical companies. These trainers have experience in the business and were trained through the C-ChEPC programme, which was designed and developed by the petrochemical industry partners to use specifically for training their technicians.

8.1.8 Barriers in the Community

Looking at the implementation of the Corporate Schools’ programme, certain specific community barriers arose in each case. Most of these barriers formed as a result of misunderstandings between the Corporate Schools and the communities they seek to recruit from. These misunderstandings are related partly to poor public relations and business competition. Focusing on the cases, the V-ChEPC programme had problems with the Maptaphut community because of the new student selection rule. Normally, young people who live in the local area can enter the college without taking any examination but, as mentioned, the V-ChEPC programme only accepts those students who have a good knowledge of Science, especially chemistry, and achieve a ‘pass’ standard in the entrance examination. Because of this requirement, the community was not happy and appealed for a return to the former acceptance rule. However, this was not acceptable to the V-ChEPC programme. The programme organiser considered that it is best for students to have the knowledge that meets the programme requirements because the students with low performance in Science will in the end suffer studying and training in a programme in which they cannot succeed.

The cases of CP All and S&P differ from V-ChEPC in this respect. Initially, CP All did not have any problems with its community, but after publicity and the programme becoming well-known, the Panyapiwat academies, including school and learning centres, received a number of criticisms, such as it was suggested that CP All were not sincere in
providing education and training, rather than they only wanted ‘cheap’ labour for the company. Furthermore, it was said that the agreement made between the company and students was unfair, and that students would be at a disadvantage. A CP All representative also said that the company believed that they had been deliberately criticised by other firms. As a result, all the company could do was to ‘hard-sell’ their products and provide clear and correct information to the public. With S&P, the business is not so large as CP All, and its learning centre is much less well-known than Panyapiwat. Therefore, although S&P does not receive negative publicity, it can perhaps be prepared and learn from CP All in order to cope with any situations if its S&P Learning Centre becomes a target of criticism in the future.

In summary, as regards the above-mentioned challenges, it is apparent that ‘accountability’ is a major challenge facing the Corporate School programme in Thailand. In other words, the various stakeholders have not fully acknowledged their responsibilities within the initiative. This is true of government and companies alike, and requires what the key informants from the Panyapiwat Learning Centre suggested: to allow the Corporate School programme to grow and sustain itself, all stakeholders in the programme, including the government and enterprises, must have a clear stake in organising it, because ‘the close cooperation of all stakeholders’ (Kasipar et al. 2009) is a key determinant of success.

8.2 Moving Forward: How to Make the Programme More Effective?

The challenges described above were identified directly from the experience of the case study Schools and the scant documentation underpinning the development of the Corporate Schools’ programme. Looking at lessons learned from other vocational skills programmes developed elsewhere, I have already indicated that many of these challenges might have been tackled differently. I will now further develop this as a discussion framework for answering the third research question: how to make the programme more effective by proposing ways to enhance the initiative. The following section will offer
some key elements of a strategy to push forward the Corporate Schools programme and increase its impact.

8.2.1 Strengthening Partnerships

To begin with, it is important to remember that the Corporate Schools’ programme was established because of a perceived disconnection between the education system and the needs of employers. Both sectors acknowledged the need to address the problem of the ‘skills gap’, and so the collaboration between the public and private sectors in providing a new pattern of education and training was promoted within the Corporate School. The initiative was set up around the idea of ‘partnership’; therefore, a main concern was to strengthen partnerships, as noted above, ‘to ensure the close cooperation of all stakeholders’ (Kasipar et al. 2009) This research would like to propose two major factors which are important in intensifying partnerships: first, developing clear, systematic and coherent understandings, and second, defining the respective roles of public and private partners.

Firstly, a clear, systematic and coherent understanding is needed in building partnerships. As stated, policy plays the role of a navigator that directs the actions of any scheme. Commitment too, is enhanced by plans that enable partners to navigate towards their goals. Studies demonstrate that creating a more coherent policy and setting out a clear operational framework for providers and consumers of education and training is able not only to reduce duplication in planning, financing, monitoring and evaluation but also increase the efficiency of the policy and its effective implementation (ADB, 2009; Kasipar et al., 2009). In the case of Thailand, the Corporate School programme has been implemented without clarity about these issues, and so without clear understandings between government and participating companies. This has caused inconvenience to the private sector organisations participating in the initiative, and there has been too little assistance from the government to develop a coherent set of policies, or even any clear understanding of what might be achieved through this partnership of government and the
private sector. Clear policies should clarify the roles, processes and also the objectives of the programme. When all partners have the same goals, understand their roles and agree clear processes of implementation, then the implementation will be improved and if necessary can be modified in ways reflecting these goals.

In connection to the previous point, the roles of both the public and private partners need to be addressed. To overcome the fragmentation that has occurred in this programme, a clear chain of accountability is also crucial. As mentioned previously, a main problem arising in the Corporate Schools programme in Thailand is confusion about ‘accountability’. Accountability involves all stakeholders, but two major parties in particular: the sponsoring company and the government. But as explained, the administration of the Thai education system is excessively complex. The Ministry of Education (MOE) consists of five independent offices with overlapping functions. The overlaps and fragmentation in planning, financing, monitoring, evaluation, and other functions appear to generate functional incoherence and inefficiency (Parandekar 2011).

Additionally, nowadays, the Educational Service Area (ESA) is an organisation responsible for the Corporate Schools’ programme in Thailand. There are 185 Educational Service Area offices nationwide. Each ESA office has its own authority in administrating education in its local area. However, the ESA does not work as effectively as it should. It may be because the ESAs are responsible for not only the Corporate Schools’ programme but also other educational matters in their area as well, but the ESA is responsible for organising Corporate Schools, and each one can administrate its Corporate School differently. This seems to be too flexible, and lacking in systematic organisation. To review and revise the administration of Thailand’s education and training system for a better performance and to clarify accountability for the quality and relevance of the outputs from the education and training systems established, Thailand needs to re-define the roles and responsibilities of both government and company partners.
As demonstrated by these cases, the private sector can play a crucial role in skills development, not only through the financing and delivery of skills training but also through their participation in its administration and coordination. The government should, therefore, take a stronger lead in the programme, as recommended by the World Bank report (2012), which clearly lays the responsibility for developing systematic and coherent policies, putting in place the operational framework, and establishing strong coordinating bodies to guide the actions of both providers and consumers at the government’s door. In addition to this, to revise the Corporate School programme into a more co-ordinated programme, there would need to be a central organisation set up that acts as a head-quarters of the programme, and only the government can do this.

Such an organisation could function in promoting the community and industry links, providing effective career guidance, overseeing curriculum and assessment scheme development for each industry, and setting standards for the Corporate Schools’ programme as a whole. As Kasipar et al (2009) conclude, political commitment at the national level is the driving force of successful vocational education schemes, and stimulates participation from other partners. The Thai government must act more decisively if it hopes this programme will make a real contribution to the country’s educational and economic development.

Another thing to consider in any future development is whether Corporate Schools should be organised as a company-based or an industry-based programme, as these were the two models discovered from the case studies. This issue is considered as the key for developing a more efficient and effective Corporate School programme, because if we look closer to the way of administering the Corporate School programme, it has so far been operating fully in the private sector. The way of administering skills development programme in most countries and, of course, the German dual system which has been a model, is to centralise the accreditation and assessment schemes under the government, with the private sector only responsible for specific training. Experts have pointed out the
drawback of the Thai approach, for example, during the economic crisis, companies all over the world were reluctant to provide regular training and the government had to find new training venues or cooperate with new partners (ADB, 1991; BMBF, 2003; ILO, 2011). Just as the three companies of this study suffered both from world recession and from the devastating floods which obstructed and hindered their businesses, and this affected the companies’ plans. However, because there was no systematic national plan, the Corporate Schools in Thailand had to face these problems on their own.

According to the finding, CP All and S&P companies organise their learning centres based on single company objectives. The companies had to manage and hold responsibility for every single detail, which may put more work-load onto the company, though it reflects their particular needs. Another form of the Corporate Schools’ programme is demonstrated by V-ChEPC, which serves an industry. It was established because of the similar needs of a group of companies in the same industry. It cannot be said that the work-load is less heavy than the company-based ones but, with the industry-based programme, all companies in the industry share thoughts, ideas, responsibility and benefits together not just specific on one company. The findings suggest S&P is struggling with its organisation but the other two case study companies are satisfied with their programmes.

It is interesting that both CP ALL and S&P are company-based but their performances diverge significantly. What made CP ALL’s learning centre more successful than the S&P learning centre? In the case of CP ALL, its learning centre curriculum was developed with the needs of the company in mind, focusing on the company’s core competency of retail business. The company also encouraged entrepreneurship by promoting prospective ownership of a 7-Eleven store. This not only supports the continuing growth of the company, it also inspires its trainees to use the knowledge and skills they have acquired. In contrast, S&P, a company specialising in the food and beverage industry, did not focus its learning centre on developing skills and expertise.
related to its core business. It would appear S&P is content to confine its training to recruitment for prospective employees and training for its current staff, rather than equipping them for management or even expansion of its retail chain of food outlets and restaurants.

As for the V-ChEPC programme, it differs from the other two in that, rather than being company-specific, it is the brainchild of a group of petrochemical companies who use it to educate and train aspiring staff. However, there are certain similarities between the V-ChEPC and CP ALL. They both believe learning centres must pay serious attention to teaching the specific skills required to ensure applicants meet their own employment standards. They also develop their curricula and learning activities to match to the need of the company/industry. Nevertheless, the types of training appropriate and suitable for various industries need more study. At this stage, the V-ChEPC programme can be regarded as the model best able to adapt to fit most companies and industry sectors. As it was set up by a group of companies to develop skilled technicians the petrochemical industry as a whole, there is cooperation that will help grow the sector as a whole to the benefit of the entire market.

However, this also has its limitations and what might work in one sector might not be applicable in another, where competition is more apparent. When any company or organisation deems a certain generic education and training programme to be unsuitable, it might decline to participate in it or discontinue it. This is less of an option where there is buy-in across and entire industry that wants to develop a pool of workers with transferable skills to the benefit of all participants. In any case, a shared understanding of the needs and goals of any programme and the contributions expected of the sponsors will be a prerequisite for success.
8.2.2 Sustaining Demand

The second critical element to address is the sustaining the demand for the Schools, both from providers and from trainees. It was mentioned by the participating companies, when making suggestions to other companies that may have interest in joining the programme, that the demand from both individuals and private sector employers are the major factors that drive the existence of the initiative. Each element can be explained as a causal variable. This is, in fact, a reciprocal process. If more enterprises with growth potential join the initiative, they will definitely need a greater number of qualified workers, and to equip these workers with the skills they need, the Corporate Schools would be an appropriate approach. At the same time, school leavers seeking job training will have more career choices, due to the diversity of the participating industries. The workers’ or job seekers’ career options influence the choices they make to improve their knowledge and skills to meet the private sector demand. In addition to this, the Corporate School is required to enhance the basic skill levels of workers. The following three aspects are proposed in this section to sustain the future of the Corporate Schools’ programme.

First, systematic data regarding the impact of the Corporate School programme is very important for all stakeholders, including students, and the education and private sectors. To have concrete data available will be beneficial in analysing and evaluating the performance of the programme. This would be information relevant to the overall development of Thailand’s education and training system, to skills development and the Corporate Schools programme itself, and above all to young school leavers facing choices about their future employment options. As mentioned above, all relevant data is very important in order to measure the programme’s success or constraints. This information can be used to confirm both internal and external quality and also provide direction for improving the initiative, to make it more effective and efficient. The availability of such information among the case study companies was disappointing; only a small amount of information related to the Corporate Schools and other relevant issues was available.
This also has consequences for the problem of accessibility. The archival sites based at the Educational Service Areas (ESA) and Thailand’s Vocational Education Commission (VEC) were not able to be accessed easily, and the Internet-based archive always had technical errors and the information that could be retrieved was mostly outdated. Furthermore, even though each company has its own method of administration, the government should establish a coordinating body with direct responsibility for organising the Corporate Schools programme. This coordinating organisation would be accountable for strengthening partnerships and establishing a well-structured database, with the expectation of helping to set standards for the programme, validating the assessment schemes and sharing responsibility for improving the programme to meet the needs of all stakeholders. Without such systems in place, we are failing to learn from experience, and have built no base for future development of the programme. Thailand could learn from the example of the Swiss government, where the vocational education is also based on the German Dual system, but is supported by a well resourced and efficient administration that uses up-to-date systems and equipment (Fazekas and Field, 2013b).

In connection with the above point, another factor to consider is improving information about the transition from school to work. This includes career counselling and job database assistance. The lack of available information presents continual problems to young people. First, it directly affects those who are seeking work, especially young people whose working lives have just started. These young people often have little knowledge and experience of the world of work, and without systematic, consistent and up-to-date career guidance, it is difficult for them to make sensible and informed choices – rather like walking through a dark tunnel. Furthermore, this is one of the factors that contributes to the skills mismatch and in turn to youth unemployment. The lack of appropriate databases increases the problem of career mismatch too, and makes it impossible to derive accurate data for analysing the needs of the private sector and also for developing education and training systems to match the employers’ demands. Because of this, the company may be forced to hire employees without the requisite
skills, and vice versa, recruits may take jobs requiring lower qualifications than they can offer.

Providing effective career guidance has been attracting global attention for more than two decades. Many Asian countries with leading economic status, such as South Korea and Japan, have solid career guidance systems. South Korea provides both offline and online career guidance services for those who need assistance, which is similar to the provision given in Japan. There are approximately 37,000 professional trained advisors in Japan in order to provide career counselling for young adults. Such effective employment services are urgently required in Thailand. In conclusion, up-to-date job information necessitates collaboration between public and the private sector. The enterprises will know best what they need to keep up with the moving economy while the government should have accurate information on the numbers of likely entrants into the job market and the educational qualifications they will possess. In addition, students will have access to up-to-date careers information, which will enable them to make better decisions for their careers.

Thirdly, promoting better understanding of the programme amongst stakeholders is crucial in sustaining demand. As stated in the findings, many people have not heard of this programme, and those who know of it rarely understand exactly what it is and what it is for, which is due chiefly to poor information and publicity. As part of the programme’s implementation, the participating enterprises were left to promote their own Schools. The story of the Panyapiwat Learning Centre was advertised through 7-Eleven TV commercials and the Centre developed a roadshow for schools, as did S&P with the welfare schools in particular. In addition to this, the government should have promoted the programme to highlight its importance and show that they are serious about it. Furthermore, an issue that urgently needs to be addressed by the government is the general image of Thailand’s vocational education and training.
This issue arises in many countries. Vocational Education and Training (VET) is viewed as a system for those who are not good at academic tasks, and may be the favoured route for young people with poor attitudes or behaviour, who do not aspire to further or higher education. This view has undermined the image of VET systems in many countries (OECD, 2012), though this has not been the case in Germany, where the combination of theoretical and general subjects combined with practical experience of work contexts is seen as attractive to both young people and employers (Kirpal, 2011). In addition, negative coverage of riots and fighting between vocational colleges has been a major factor that has been detrimental to the VET school image in Thailand. This has had consequences for the Corporate Schools and for other kinds of skills training too. Thus, the government should address this issue and attempt to enhance society’s perceptions of these institutions and their purposes.

8.2.3 Developing Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Quality assurance and the accreditation system are critical elements of confidence in any qualification system. A systematic qualification framework can ensure the quality and coherence of the approach, which are necessary to coordinate stakeholders’ actions and establish competency standards (OECD, 2010a; World Bank, 2012b). Assessment of the impact of this initiative suggests that at least two of the case study Schools have had sufficient impact to justify the continuation of the programme, but this section presents two points that demonstrate the need for quality assurance of these programmes by central government, rather than the companies themselves.

The first point concerns the quality assurance framework. Taking a closer look at the German’s quality assurance system, all stakeholders, including the labour unions, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce and the Chamber of Crafts, and the private sector partners, have influence on the programme of assessment, to ensure that skills and competences the students are trained for in the company meet the country’s economic demands (BMBF, 2003; Kirpal, 2011). The trainees are assessed by a variety of methods,
such as written tasks and oral examinations, regulated by individual occupation training requirements which are applicable nationwide and also provide a uniform standard (Euler, 2013). Additionally, the Chambers are responsible not only for advising and monitoring the companies’ training provision and evaluating the aptitude of training instructors at the company level, but also establish the examination arrangements for interim and final examination (BMBF, 2003; Kirpal, 2011).

In Thailand, the National Qualifications Framework was introduced to define qualifications, set competency standards and test and certify skills (World Bank, 2012) and this system seeks to facilitate improved knowledge and skills among students to meet certification requirements and has also brought together the various stakeholders in education and training sectors. As indicated in the ILO study, the participation of diverse stakeholders is of further benefit, leading to the reform of systems and promoting lifelong learning (Allais, 2010). Nevertheless, regarding the cases of the Corporate Schools’ programme in Thailand, quality remains the issue of greatest concern throughout.

The Corporate Schools’ programme utilises National Qualification Framework (NQF) as the main assessment scheme, but since no systematic assessment scheme for skills training has yet been established, all the companies had to develop their own assessment schemes. For instance, CP developed a quality assurance system through TQM, while V-ChEPC adopted the skills evaluation scheme from the ChEPC programme. These enterprise-owned assessment systems were developed to confirm the quality of skills acquired by the graduates of the Corporate Schools’ programmes. However, ADB’s study showed that many skills development and TVET systems fail to monitor or evaluate the quality of training in terms of the specific competencies achieved (ADB, 2009) and this was unfortunately the case with the Corporate School programme in Thailand.

Even though the companies are actively developing their own evaluation frameworks to ensure the quality of their learning centres, the government should play a central role in developing a single quality assurance scheme which is useable not only for vocational
and higher education courses, as it is now, but also for other skills development initiatives
which may be established in the future to serve the demand of all stakeholders in
education and training. Furthermore, the accreditation system needs to be taken into
account when the quality issue is addressed.

Accreditation is crucial to making the programme more clearly recognised by all
stakeholders and confirming quality standards. An accreditation scheme also facilitates
students’ mobility, by allowing transfer of credits to any institutions that utilise the same
curriculum, or at least a similar one at which some credit units can be waived, so they do
not have to quit and start over, or worse yet, be unable to restart because there is no
second chance for them. ACPET (2011) supports a central accreditation system as one
approach that supports student needs because it allows students to move freely between
providers to get the best education and training. However, the service does not yet cover
the Corporate Schools’ programme. This was the reason why the leavers from the Royal
Cliff Beach Resort could not continue their study at other vocational schools. In order to
avoid repetition of the Royal Cliff Beach Resort case, the government should develop a
system to prevent this problem, and this may promote sustainable development of the
programme.

8.3 Summary of Chapter

Before moving onto conclusions and recommendations in the final chapter, I would like
to briefly summarise the key points arising from my analysis, based on the literature I
reviewed and the data I gathered during this research.

This chapter drew upon the key challenges which emerged when compiling the case
studies, and the advice regarding vocational education provision gathered together in the
literature chapter. These challenges have been identified as major obstacles holding back
the implementation of the Corporate Schools programme in Thailand. To overcome these
challenges and lead to a more effective programme, three main suggestions were proposed.

The first is strengthening partnerships, which can be developed through developing clear policies and defining the roles of the government and private sectors in order to enhance accountability and avoid overlap and establishing much clearer common understandings among the partners. There should also be a central organisation that is accountable for making decisions and organising the administration of the Corporate Schools in a more systematic way. Additionally, the suggestion to study further whether company-based or industry-based schools are appropriate and suitable for particular sectors was made, to ensure a more systematic Corporate Schools programme in the future.

The second is ensuring that a level of demand – from employers and school leavers – that will guarantee the continuity of the initiative is maintained. To sustain demand for the Corporate School programme, three priorities for the government were considered: developing an employment database, providing effective employment advice and ensuring services available were properly publicised.

Finally, developing a quality assurance and accreditation system is very important for evaluating the performance of the initiative, for improving the programme’s standards, facilitating student mobility and also ensuring appropriate information is available to other industries to allow them to make sensible decisions about whether to join the programme.
9. CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to examine the development of the Corporate Schools’ programme in Thailand through three selected case studies: the Panyapiwat Learning Centre, the S&P Learning Centre and V-ChEPC. The research findings were derived from an analysis of both theoretical perspectives and the empirical findings, and offer some answers to the research questions. In examining the implementation of the Corporate School programme, perspectives informed by the skills requirements of employers, the benefits gained by programme stakeholders and satisfaction regarding the programme’s performance have been explored. These explorations have underlined the fact that there are key issues and problems facing the Corporate School programme which play a significant role in influencing the programme’s overall performance. Three main proposals are made in order to improve the overall performance and effectiveness of the Corporate Schools as well as to encourage participation from other employers.

This conclusion, the final chapter, seeks to reflect on the research process and to consider the way forward for the programme. This chapter consists of three sections. Section 9.1 revisits the research process, reflecting on the research gap and research questions and briefly addressing research methodology. Section 9.2 presents an overview of the Corporate School programme in Thailand; here, key challenges and ways to improve the programme are concisely delivered. Finally, the contribution of this research is presented in Section 9.3.

9.1 Revisiting the Research Process

9.1.1 Identifying Emerging Gaps and Research Questions

Due to limited literature relating to the Corporate Schools in Thailand, there is a significant space that this research can help to fill. The research gap was identified and
described in Chapter One, showing that there are a relatively small number of critical studies on the implementation of the Corporate Schools programme in Thailand. Even though the initiative received attention every time there were changes in the Ministry of Education, it seems that no systematic progress has been achieved. Additionally, the scale of the operation has been quite disappointing, with the number of participating companies having reduced dramatically since the pilot phase of the programme.

Within the identified research gap, the investigation focused on three research questions which guided the development of this thesis. The three research questions are:

1. How has the Corporate School programme in Thailand been developed and implemented?
2. What impact has the programme had, for example, on the attitudes and skill levels of the participants, on the companies involved in the initiative, and on the local labour market/economy?
3. How might the programme be made more effective?

9.1.2 Research Methodology

The case study method was chosen as it was seen as the most appropriate approach to examine the development of the Corporate Schools in Thailand. Chapter 3 explained and discussed how the methodology was developed and employed. Three selected cases of Panyapiwat Learning Centre, S&P Learning Centre and V-ChEPC were investigated. Empirical data collection was conducted in Thailand. Three data collection techniques were used, including documentary research concerning these companies’ visions, documented goals, objectives, strategic plans, annual reports and official websites, observation of the schools in action, and semi-structured interviews with executives, trainers and graduates, during a period of eight months between August 2011 and March 2012.
Chapter Four, Five and Six presented the stories of the three case study schools in order to shed light on research question one. It started by examining the background to the initiative, its objectives, administration and performance. The impact of the Corporate School programme was examined through an analytical framework that was presented in Chapter Seven. The experience of the cases also helped with the identification of the challenges that may obstruct the implementation of the programme. These challenges were then addressed in Chapter Eight, in order to discover ways to improve the programme. Three strategies for enhancing the implementation of the Corporate School were suggested in order to offer a way forward for the programme.

9.2.1 Development of the Corporate Schools in Thailand

The Corporate Schools’ programme in Thailand was stimulated by two major factors: the National Education Act and studies regarding the relative lack of competitiveness of Thai industries. These two factors were driving forces that turned government attention to the importance of human resource development, and raised the issue of public and private sector collaboration as a strategy to improve the quality of the workforce, boost productivity levels and enhance Thailand’s competitiveness.

To begin with, the National Education Act 1999 stipulated that non-government social organisations have the right to provide education for young Thais in order to bypass the limitations of the national system. To realise this aspiration, educational bodies such as the Ministry of Education and the Office of Basic Education Commission put a lot of effort into getting such organisations involved in education provision, though with little apparent success. The law did not generate much attention from Industrial partners, perhaps because many had already been operating Dual Vocational Training (DVT) with public vocational schools.
Another important factor was identified relating to the Thai economy. Studies by the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), a public policy research institute responsible mainly for providing analyses of social and economic issues to help formulate policies and support long-term economic and social development, showed that the performance of Thai industries was relatively weak compared to neighbours in the region. A major factor identified in the poor performance of Thai industries was the low quality of the school-leaver workforce; skills deficits resulted in the need for significant training for the newly employed. These workers were not ready for work and their skills did not equip them for the roles industry had to offer. Thailand is not the only country that faces this skills mismatch problem; in fact it is a major problem in the global labour market. Many countries have thus turned their attention to skills development programme in an attempt to improve the quality of the workforce. Following the publication of these studies, Thailand also highlighted the importance of human resource development.

Consequently, the Office of the Education Council (OEC), a government agency with the main responsibility for developing the National Education Policy, proposed the Corporate School programme to the government, with the hope that such a programme would:

1) Offer an opportunity to young people to receive education and skills training in order to develop their working potential; and
2) Equip the workforce with skills responsive to labour market demands.

The pilot phase of the Corporate Schools’ programme was implemented in 2005, with seven pilot companies. However, little evidence regarding the process of the pilot phase or the evaluation of the programme was found. In fact, during the preliminary research, only two businesses were found to be still fully participating, indicating that the scale of operation had dropped significantly from seven to two participating firms. Issues relating to the programme’s disappointing outcomes were discussed in the following section. Nevertheless, there were some indications of continuing support from the government, and the programme has not been abandoned completely. As well as the two companies
still in operation, one more initiative was added to the programme. The new participant is under the responsibility of the VEC, and is slightly different from the previous cases, because it collaborates with not just one company, but represents a group of companies drawn from across an industrial sector.

At present, there are three Corporate Schools in Thailand: the Panyapiwat Learning Centre of the CP All Company, the S&P Learning Centre operated by the S&P Syndicate Company and the V-ChEPC of the Maptaphut Technical College and the Petrochemical Industry. All three Corporate Schools became case studies in this research. The current situation of the cases can be summarised as follows.

To begin with, the first case: the Panyapiwat Learning Centre has the longest experience of the Corporate Schools’ programme. In fact, the development of the Panyapiwat Learning Centre can be traced back nearly twenty years, to when the CP All Company severely suffered from the high turnover rate of the Company’s employees. CP All sought ways to solve this problem and eventually realised that in order to do this, the main cause must be addressed. In conjunction with this problem, the quality of the workforce was a major concern, and seen as a limit on development. The key tool to empower the Company’s human resources was education and training. The CP All Company’s involvement in education thus started with collaboration with the VEC, public vocational schools and the company in providing Dual Vocational Training. After participation in this kind of system for a while, the turnover rate did decrease slightly, through not by as much as expected. This problem was explained in the following way. In the DVT system, the Company provided training places for students of the public vocational school and was able to tap into a source of manpower to fill job vacancies in return. However, this only temporarily relieved the turnover situation because these students were not employed as permanent workers and also their knowledge and training did not yet fully meet the company’s needs. CP All then decided to establish its own school, the Panyapiwat Techno Business, which originally aimed to equip its students
with retail business knowledge in order to supply company demand for such workers. Furthermore, the size of the school was limited by the law, meaning that the Company was unable to produce sufficient skilled workers for their needs. The idea of school expansion was discussed among the Company and school committees, but it was difficult to invest in another school. Fortunately, not long after this problem was identified, the company received an invitation to participate in the Corporate Schools’ programme, which gave them the opportunity to establish branches of the Panyapiwat Techno Business School but with limited investment required. The school was thus transformed into a Learning Centre. There are now 20 Learning Centres nationwide: ten located in Bangkok and another ten centres in various provinces. These Learning Centres use the same curriculum as the central School, and learn using video conference broadcasts from the School, in a two-year (four-semester) programme. The students of the School and Learning Centres of CP All are divided into two groups. One group studies theory for three months, and then exchanges with the other group to be trained in practical subjects at 7-Eleven outlets for three months. One semester is thus six months long in total. While studying at the Learning Centre, students not only receive education and training free of charge, but also get paid trainee’s daily wage while training.

The second case was the S&P Learning Centre, operated by S&P Syndicate Public Company Limited, which began a year after the Panyapiwat Learning Centre was established. S&P and CP All were actually invited to participate in the Corporate Schools’ programme at the same time, but S&P was not ready at that time to proceed. Even though S&P had experience of the DVT system over several years before participating in the Corporate School programme, the Company had not developed its own curriculum in the way that CP All did. Thus the Company needed to prepare and develop the Learning Centre curriculum to be responsive to the needs of the company. The S&P Learning Centre was established with similar aims as CP All; seeing it as a tool for developing the company’s human resources, and a way of empowering their workers with higher quality skills tailored to the company’s needs, as inspired by the company’s
board committees. It was set up with the hope that a workforce equipped with the competencies the company needed might be able to decrease the skills shortage and reduce the employee turnover rate. In addition, the S&P Learning Centre has a slightly different learning system from the CP All Learning Centre. Both run a two-year programme, but the S&P Learning Centre uses a 2:4 system which means that students are taught theoretical subjects by lecturers from network colleges at the Learning Centre for two days, before spending four days training at S&P outlets and restaurants. As regards administration, the S&P Learning Centre is part of the company’s HR department. This did not appear problematic at first, but has become a source of difficulty for both the company and the Learning Centre. The Learning Centre income is counted as Company revenue, meaning that the Company has to pay taxes on this income, instead of receiving a tax benefit in return for providing education as stipulated by the law. This differs from the other two cases, which benefit from the tax system because they are set up, so that all income goes straight to the school and college accounts. The Company has been trying to solve this problem by seeking help from the government department in charge, but there appears to have been little progress.

The third case is the V-ChEPC programme. The V-ChEPC, or Vocational Chemical Engineering Practice College, was launched in 2009 based on broad collaboration between education organisations such as the VEC, Maptaphut Technical College and KMUTT; non-profit institutes, including Petroleum Institute and Suksapattana Foundation; and the Federation of Thai Industries. It aims to provide knowledge and skills relevant to the petrochemical industry to young people who wish to work in that sector, with a view to enabling the industry to overcome the shortage of skilled labour. The curriculum and learning activities were designed by KMUTT, the Suksapattana Foundation and the petrochemical industry. This curriculum aims to provide solid petrochemical knowledge and skills for the industry’s future technicians. As previously mentioned, the origins of V-ChEPC were slightly different from the other two cases. A whole industrial sector rather than one company is responsible for the programme. Even
though the V-ChEPC was founded as part of the Maptaphut Technical College, it was financed and supported by laboratory tools and knowledge resources from companies across the industry. An evaluation of the first phase of its implementation showed that all stakeholders were satisfied with the programme and they continued to support the second phase of the programme with the same budget and with the same amount of other resources.

9.2.2 Key Challenges and Suggestions for Improving the Initiative

Eight challenges obstructing the ongoing development of the Corporate School programme were identified. These were: 1) the lack of coherent policies; 2) confusion over the tax position; 3) chaotic government and more specifically a lack of continuity between ministries/administrations; 4) no systematic monitoring or evaluation of the programme; 5) the lack of any clear basis for planning or investment; 6) ineffective public relations; 7) organising the schools in a way that pursues educational or HR development goals; and 8) barriers in the community. These challenges were identified through documentary analysis and the data derived from the key informants is the case studies. However, in addition to this, it can be concluded that these challenges occurred partly as a result of the lack of an accountability structure amongst stakeholders, especially in the public sector. Therefore, in order to strengthen accountability, several ways of enhancing the initiative were proposed, comprising the following strategies:

1. Strengthening partnerships
   1.1. Establishing clear priorities
   1.2. Defining the roles of the public and private partners
   1.3. Central organisation and support
   1.4. Considering the most appropriate model for the Corporate Schools in Thailand

2. Sustaining the programme
   2.1. Developing a systematic database
   2.2. Setting up effective employment and career services
2.3. Developing awareness through improved PR

3. Confirming quality
   3.1. Developing a quality assurance system
   3.2. Establishing an accreditation system

It is expected that these challenges and suggestions will be need to be weighed when judging the future of the initiative and deciding whether it should be continued or abandoned. If the programme is considered worth persevering with the proposed recommendations are expected to be helpful to its continuation.

9.3 Contribution of the Research

It needs to be remembered that the Corporate Schools’ programme is still at an early stage of development. Even more than five years after it was first implemented, comparatively few people know about its existence. This research sought to provide a systematic in-depth analysis of the Thai Corporate Schools’ programme by exploring and assessing the experiences of three participating cases since they first joined the programme, looking at what they are currently doing and what they plan to do, too. The findings of this study scrutinise issues that have not previously been explored, in the hope that this will increase understanding of the programme and inform other companies that may have an interest in the programme of its challenges and opportunities. The investigation also offers some judgement on what the programme has achieved, as well as what needs improvement, which may be useful in justifying its continuation. In accordance with the key suggestions made for improvement in the previous chapter, this section proposes strategies for improving the programme’s effectiveness as follows.

This plan proposes the implementing of several steps that are necessary to improve and sustain the development of the Corporate School programme. These can be divided into short-term and long-term plans. A short-term plan is expected to handle issues that the Corporate Schools are facing at the moment, such as the lack of systematic data about the
programme and a poor marketing strategy, and these issues can be tackled straight away using existing resources. In order to tackle these issues, there needs to be a system to keep track of national performance within vocational education. Even though the Corporate Schools’ programme focuses on skills training, a solid mastery of basic skills should not be neglected. The Corporate School programme adopted the National Qualification Framework (NQF) as an assessment scheme to ensure its equality. Therefore, each academic year, students must sit a national literacy test just like their peers in other vocational schools to provide records and set programme standards. This record will be useful to the Government and to the companies concerned to confirm the educational quality of a particular programme. It can also be used to promote the programme to students, parents and new investors, creating more effective marketing strategies and to strengthen partnerships within a programme. Effective public relations is a key determinant in persuading employers to support young Thais to create better opportunities for the development of knowledge and skills that fit an employer’s needs and to increase overall employment, which will benefit the country’s economy as a whole.

Whereas the short-term strategy seeks to address immediate problems facing the Corporate School programme, the long-term plan must be to build a concrete base layer and significantly improve and expand the programme.

**Establishing an ‘umbrella’ organisation**

The first and most vital step is to establish an ‘umbrella’ organisation in order to streamline plans for improvement under the programme’s current management and develop a better Corporate Schools’ programme in the future. This organisation, which can be formed through representatives from both the government (ESA) and the industrial sectors, can become the coordinating body, bringing together the programme’s stakeholders. This could also form the headquarters which will hold the main responsibility for administrating and developing the Corporate Schools’ programme.
Furthermore, it can particularly focus on the development of four areas: a systematic database, effective training, a monitoring system and sources of funding.

1. A systematic database

To date, the private sector has amassed more resources than the ESA. These resources include programme information, human resources, and experiences. Instead of pushing all responsibility to the government and the ESA, the companies can help to improve the programme by sharing their experiences. The companies would consequently have concrete information to share that can potentially be used to improve the programme, to better meet stakeholder needs and to promote the programme to sustain demand and strengthen the programme’s continuity. Even though systematic research is not likely to be done by the companies, their efforts should be supported by the government in terms of both financial support and the building of a systematic data collection and evaluation programme.

The government should take responsibility for organising a systematic database regarding outcomes of the programme, and for making this available to those who are interested, including participating companies, the government departments, young people, and potential investors in particular. Empirical information relating to student performance, the management budget, the quality of teachers and trainers, and turnover rates, can all help companies to evaluate their own Corporate Schools, directly tackle the challenges they face, and may also attract new investors. Similarly, the government needs such clear and up-to-date information to improve the initiative in terms of establishing clear policies, developing effective careers services, marketing the programme, and improving the effectiveness of the monitoring scheme. Additionally, concrete information about the Corporate Schools’ programme will help attract suitable young people to the scheme. In conclusion, the availability of a systematic database could help to support partnerships, attract more students and confirm that quality assurance procedure are effective, which are keys in directing the future of the Corporate Schools’ programme.
2. Effective teacher training

Another crucial step is the maintenance of an effective training programme for teachers and trainers employed under the Corporate School programme. Although the initial regulations stipulated that a teaching license is not required in teaching and training at the Corporate Schools, a good basic knowledge and effective teaching delivery methods that meet the quality standards of the programme cannot be neglected. In Germany, teachers usually hold a relevant university degree, while company trainers must hold a certificate appropriate to the occupation in order to make sure that they are able to deliver quality education and training to meet the industry needs (Hippach-Schneider, Krause, & Woll, 2007). Therefore, the ‘umbrella’ organisation should set teaching quality standards and provide a training programme for teachers and trainers that meets these standards. It should also monitor the quality of instruction provided in the Corporate Schools.

3. Monitoring system

As noted above, improving monitoring systems is a very important factor in the development of the programme. Thai Corporate Schools use the National Qualification Framework (NQF) as their main assessment scheme for basic theoretical knowledge evaluation. To date, the assessment of practical training is the responsibility of the company, who will confirm that the quality of skills meets industry standards. However, such local scheme cannot easily be extended to create a national skills training framework, sector specific skills training and accreditation, written a broad national accreditation framework is needed. Both public and private sectors should work together in developing one main quality assurance scheme in order to set minimum standards of skills that are needed for all industries. In addition, the above mentioned database can play a major role here. This framework will support the development of an accreditation system that allows students to move freely among the education and training systems. As previously mentioned, some students may not know what they want to do initially, or might realise that the training they have undertaken is not well suited to them. A flexible
accreditation system will benefit them by enabling them to change path and continue their studies without losing accreditation for basic skills learned.

4. Funding

Both the government and the sponsoring companies are accountable for the Corporate Schools’ programme, and they should therefore share the responsibility for funding the programme. The Corporate Schools receive some financial support and tax exemptions and reductions from the government. However, continued confusion over the tax position must be addressed and resolved by the government as a matter of urgency. Although financial issues can be arranged more systematically once the roles and responsibilities of the public and private partnerships have been defined, the arrangement should broadly be as follows:

1) The government should give financial support to stimulate development of the Corporate School programme. Although the companies will take responsibility for governing training, because of their direct experiences and resources, the government should be the main source of capital to fund the development of schools.

2) The ongoing funding for training trainers, training the students at business plants and other costs such as tuition fees, uniforms and accommodation should be taken care of by the companies, since if the training is effective, it will add value to the students and, in turn, increase company profitability.

Such an arrangement would encourage companies to join the scheme, but would not impose unknown and potentially increasing costs on the education industry.
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