



Bridging Skills Gaps: An Analysis of Adult Vocational Education Programs in Thailand's Labor Market¹

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Abstract:

Background: Rapid technological change and economic transformation have intensified demand for adaptable, specialized skills in Thailand's labor market. A persistent mismatch exists between competencies provided by vocational education programs and those required by employers, particularly within the context of ASEAN Economic Community integration. Adult vocational education plays a critical role in enhancing employability, supporting economic growth, and reducing unemployment. However, traditional training models often lack responsiveness to evolving industry demands, necessitating systematic evaluation of program relevance and effectiveness.

Purpose: This study examined adult vocational education programs in Thailand to assess their effectiveness in bridging skills gaps. It evaluated curriculum alignment with employer needs across sectors, analyzed factors influencing program efficacy—including policy frameworks, private sector engagement, and accessibility barriers—and proposed recommendations to strengthen industry collaboration, curriculum modernization, and technology integration.

Methods: A mixed-methods analytical approach combined quantitative evaluation with qualitative stakeholder perspectives. Data included reviews of program structures, curricula, and outcomes across multiple provinces and sectors, alongside policy analysis. Quantitative indicators measured enrollment, completion, employment outcomes, and skill acquisition relative to industry standards. Semi-structured interviews with administrators, instructors, industry representatives, and adult learners explored implementation challenges and curriculum relevance. Demographic analysis examined accessibility variations across age, socioeconomic background, and geographic location, including the significant proportion of workforce-active adults aged 60–69.

Results: Findings revealed substantial curriculum-industry misalignment, particularly in metal fabrication, engineering, information technology, and healthcare. Limited collaboration between regulatory authorities and industry stakeholders contributed to outdated competency standards. Graduates frequently lacked both advanced technical skills and essential soft skills such as communication and critical thinking. Barriers included social stigmatization of vocational pathways, inadequate funding, urban concentration of quality programs, and inflexible scheduling. Successful industry-partnership models demonstrated improved employment outcomes, practical skill acquisition, and expanded access through

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digital learning platforms. Technological advancement and workforce aging further underscored the need for adaptable, lifelong learning frameworks.

Conclusions: Adult vocational education in Thailand holds strong potential to reduce skills gaps but requires systemic reform. Strengthening industry partnerships, updating curricula, expanding digital delivery models, increasing government investment, and promoting positive perceptions of vocational education are essential to enhancing workforce readiness and sustaining economic competitiveness.

Keywords: Vocational education; skills gap; labor market; Thailand; adult learning; workforce development; industry partnerships.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's global economy, vocational education is very important for giving people the skills they need. Technology and industries are changing quickly, and this creates a need for workers who can adapt and are skilled in specific areas. In Thailand, the difference between the skills of the current workforce and what employers want is quite clear. This means we need to look closely at adult vocational education programs. These programs are not just ways to teach; they are essential for improving job chances, helping the economy grow, and lowering unemployment among adults. The Thai government sees the need for a skilled workforce to succeed in the ASEAN Economic Community, so it is vital to understand how vocational training works. This study will look at how effective and accessible these programs are, and whether they meet the needs of the job market. This will show how Thailand can use vocational education better to close the skills gaps that exist.

Understanding skills gaps in the job market needs a clear look at the differences between what job seekers know and what employers want. This gap is often caused by fast-changing technology and different industry needs, and it is especially noticeable in adult vocational education in Thailand. The skills gap affects not just personal job chances but also limits economic growth and new ideas. In places like Southeast Asia, where adult learning programs are seen as important for improving workforce skills, it is necessary to check how well these programs are working to fix these gaps. Adult Learning and Education (ALE) plays an important role in this change by offering specific training that meets job market needs (Suwithida Charungkattikul et al., 2020). Previous studies have shown that improving skills through vocational education is key for getting more people into the workforce, which helps close the existing skills gaps in Thailand's job market (Johann Heilmann et al., 2020).

Adult vocational education programs are very important for giving workers the skills they need to keep up with the changing job market. These programs focus on developing specific skills that match what industries want, helping people improve their chances of getting a job and adjust to new technologies. They also help marginalized groups, like women and people from rural areas, gain access to job opportunities that they couldn't reach before. By combining hands-on training with classroom learning, these programs not only build vocational skills but also enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are key for moving ahead in a competitive job setting. Therefore, the success of adult vocational education programs can be judged by how well they close skills gaps and boost economic growth, underlining the need for ongoing investment and policy backing from both government and private sectors (Collectif, 2018).

Thailand's economy needs workers with specific skills, showing the important part vocational education plays in economic growth. As the country deals with fast industrial changes and global competition, educational paths that focus on gaining practical skills are



key to improving job prospects and filling labor shortages. Vocational programs give students real experiences that match what industries currently require and develop a workforce that can adapt to new technologies and changing market needs. They also help tackle the problem of youth unemployment by aligning training with what employers want, making it easier for students to transition from schooling to jobs. Therefore, to empower individuals and support national economic development, it is essential to effectively implement and promote vocational education, which calls for more investment and policy backing (OECD, 2010).

The study of adult vocational education programs in Thailand is focused on important goals to improve our understanding of how well these programs work and how they match with the local job market. First, the goal is to find out the skills gaps that are stopping both individual and economic progress, which will help in evaluating current educational programs. This means looking closely at the needs of different industries in Thailand compared to the skills taught in vocational programs. In addition, the study wants to measure how well these programs close the gaps, examining both the quality of education and how easy it is for adult learners to access. In the end, this research aims to provide policy suggestions that improve vocational training efforts, making sure they properly prepare participants for the changing requirements of the job market and boost overall socioeconomic growth in Thailand (1997).

To make a clear and organized analysis, the essay is divided into several important parts, each having a specific role in improving the understanding of how adult vocational education programs relate to Thailand's job market. The introduction sets the stage by presenting the research question and explaining the skills gap that adult learners in Thailand face. It highlights the importance of adult learning as a key element of lifelong education, claiming it is vital for boosting economic participation and social inclusion (Suwithida Charungkattikul et al., 2020). Next, the methodology section describes the structure used to analyze current vocational programs, ensuring that practical methods match the theories in adult education (Johann Heilmann et al., 2020). Lastly, the conclusion brings together the findings, stressing the need for policy changes that support flexible vocational training, which would help close skills gaps and improve workforce readiness in Thailand's changing job market.

2. CURRENT STATE OF THAILAND'S LABOR MARKET

The job market in Thailand shows a complicated mix of worker needs and lack of skills, made worse by growing globalization and changes in technology. As the country deals with more economic challenges, the need for ongoing learning, especially in adult education, is very important. Studies highlight the importance of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) during these tough times, pointing out its role in giving adults the skills they need to succeed in a competitive market (Suwithida Charungkattikul et al., 2020). In addition, the policies on labor migration and skill standards are looked at closely, showing that while Thailand has some systems set up, there is still a clear need for specific educational programs aimed at migrant workers. These programs, especially through open and distance learning, can help solve important skill gaps, improve communication and legal knowledge, and boost overall worker skills (Manoon Toyama et al., 2020). Therefore, updating adult vocational education programs is crucial to meet the skill levels of the workforce with what the market requires.

In the last few years, Thailand's job market has been greatly influenced by changes in demographics, especially the aging population, prompting concerns about workforce sustainability. Approximately 24.2% of older individuals aged 60-64 and 21.2% of those aged 65-69 are still able to work, making it important to adjust job strategies to use their valuable experience and skills (Kritsada Wattanasaovaluk, 2021). This situation highlights the need to



modify vocational education programs to serve not just the young but also older workers who can play an important role in the economy. Additionally, the significance of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in this change cannot be ignored, as it is key to improving workforce skills across various age groups. The ability of ALE to bring together and enhance a diverse workforce is central to discussions on national economic strength and growth (Suwithida Charungkaitikul et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding job trends is essential for developing effective educational programs that close skills gaps in Thailand's changing job market.

A thorough look at Thailand's job market shows clear skills gaps that hurt economic growth and worker productivity. Current vocational training programs often do not prepare graduates with the skills needed by industries, especially in fields like metal and engineering. Studies suggest that the National Skills Standards Authority (NSSA) has not worked well with important partners to create appropriate National Occupational Competency Standards (NOCS), resulting in poor alignment between what training provides and what employers want (Kyaw Zin, 2022). Additionally, the weak communication and information network leads to lost chances for improving adult learners' skills, which affects lifelong learning efforts (Suwithida Charungkaitikul et al., 2020). Recognizing these gaps is an important first step in creating focused training solutions that meet the specific needs of Thai industries, thereby building a more flexible and skilled workforce that can tackle modern challenges.

The quick growth of globalization changes what jobs need, changing the skills needed in the workforce. As markets connect more, there's a growing demand for specific skills in different fields, leading to a strong need for workers who can adjust to new technologies and ways of working. Adult education programs must change to meet these new demands, giving learners the tools they need for personal and work growth. This change matches the idea that adult learning is an important way to create job chances in an economy where improving skills is crucial. Also, research shows that adult education helps people who find it hard to keep up with the changing needs of their communities and jobs (Johann Heilmann et al., 2020). In the end, knowing how globalization affects job requirements highlights why customized vocational training is essential to fill skill gaps, as noted by the important role of lifelong learning (Suwithida Charungkaitikul et al., 2020).

In the fast-changing job market, technology is changing job needs, making it essential for vocational education programs to keep adjusting. With technology and automation making various jobs easier, people need to have technical skills along with a willingness to keep learning and adapting. The COVID-19 pandemic made this need clear, resulting in changes in education that focus on resilience and flexibility during tough times (Karen Evans et al., 2023). Additionally, as technology like computers affects jobs, some traditional roles are being disrupted, putting certain jobs at greater risk from task automation (Warn N. Lekfuangfu et al., 2020). This situation highlights the need for vocational training programs that prepare learners with skills to deal with the changing job market, helping close the skills gap necessary for both economic security and personal growth in Thailand's workforce.

The changing people mix in Thailand is changing the job market a lot, making it important to rethink vocational education programs to fill new skill gaps. As cities grow and the population gets older, old labor structures are under pressure, pushing employers to adjust to a workforce that is more diverse in age, experience, and education. This change is clear in big cities, where crowded urban areas, mentioned in (WIJAYANTI Febry, 2023), are seeing fast changes in job needs and issues. Also, the growth of lifelong learning as an important answer to these demographic shifts shows how vital it is to provide workers with skills that match what the market needs. Research from (Le Thai Phong et al., 2021) indicates that reasons for people joining vocational training differ widely among demographic groups,



showing a need for customized educational strategies that can close these gaps effectively and improve job readiness in a shifting economic environment.

3. ADULT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THAILAND

A big problem for adult vocational education programs in Thailand is making sure they fit with the changing needs of the job market. As the economy shifts to focus more on knowledge, the programs in vocational education must be regularly updated to stay relevant to what industries require today. Those involved need to see that it's important to compete not just in technical skills but also in soft skills like communication, critical thinking, and flexibility. Research shows that adding these skills into vocational training could improve job chances for graduates and help fix the skills gap seen in different fields. Additionally, working together with businesses can create training programs that are better suited to what employers want, leading to a workforce skilled in practical tasks and meeting business needs (Birger Fredriksen et al., 2008). This connection is necessary for continued economic growth and better job quality in Thailand.

The development of vocational education has been influenced by different social and economic factors over time, leading to its important role in the job market today. At first, vocational training was based on apprenticeship methods, where individuals learned skills through hands-on work and guidance from mentors, meeting the immediate needs of the community. With the rise of industrialization, especially in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the need for skilled workers increased. This led to changes in education that added formal vocational programs to high schools, connecting traditional classroom studies with real-world skills. In the second half of the 20th century, growing global economies required vocational programs to expand and include more fields and non-traditional skills, keeping up with rapid technological changes (Adhi Kusumastuti et al., 2023). In summary, the history of vocational education highlights its important role in building a strong workforce and supporting economic growth.

Vocational programs covering different areas are very important for helping people get the skills they need for today's job market. Among the many choices, technical training and certification programs provide specific skills in areas like information technology, healthcare, and trades such as plumbing and electrical work. Moreover, apprenticeships mix classroom learning with hands-on experience, allowing people to earn money while gaining knowledge, which helps them smoothly transition into jobs. In addition, programs that focus on soft skills have become more important, responding to the growing need for skills such as communication, teamwork, and flexibility. This well-rounded strategy ensures that vocational education is not just about technical skills but also about developing the personal skills needed in today's team-oriented workplaces (1997). As a result, these different vocational options show a complete plan to meet both short-term job requirements and long-term career growth in Thailand's workforce.

Recently, the Thai government has seen the important role that vocational education has in meeting job market needs. This understanding has led to the introduction of different supportive policies aimed at improving the access to and quality of vocational training programs. For example, programs offering financial support for schools to work with businesses aim to ensure a smooth move from training to work, helping to fill the skills gap in various fields. Furthermore, the government has started campaigns to raise the status of vocational jobs, showing them as good options compared to academic paths. These actions not



only want to update curricula to meet industry demands but also aim to change the culture to appreciate skilled trades. Such policies are important for providing the workforce with the necessary skills, thus boosting economic productivity and lowering unemployment in Thailand's changing job market (OECD, 2010-08-10).

In Thailand's changing job market, private organizations are very important for job training because they give specific programs that respond fast to what industries need. These organizations have the ability to change their courses and teaching methods according to new market trends, which helps directly tackle the skill shortages seen in the workforce. This flexibility is crucial, as recent studies show that care providers in institutions struggle greatly due to strict management systems ((Nattadech Choomplang et al., 2023)). Private organizations can reduce these problems by using new teaching methods and forming partnerships with local businesses to make sure training meets real-world demands. Additionally, their ability to offer various educational options, as seen in the focus on lifelong learning and adult education, makes them key players in improving vocational programs in many fields, especially in health and social care ((Suwithida Charungkaitikul et al., 2020)). So, the connection between private vocational training organizations and the labor market is vital for developing a skilled workforce ready for today's job challenges.

Even though vocational education programs in Thailand could help fill skills gaps in the workforce, they face major problems that reduce their effectiveness. One big issue is the ongoing societal stigma around vocational training, which is often seen as less valuable than traditional academic routes. This view discourages potential students from choosing vocational education, resulting in low enrollment numbers that affect program sustainability and funding sources. Additionally, many vocational programs cannot keep up with the fast-changing needs of the job market, often using outdated curricula that do not include new technologies and industry standards. This gap leads to a workforce that is not ready to meet employer demands, worsening the skills mismatch (Shubha Jayaram et al., 2017-01-09). Moreover, a lack of cooperation between educational institutions and industry partners makes it hard to align training with actual job requirements, making it more difficult to improve graduates' chances of gaining employment in a tough job market.

4. EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN BRIDGING SKILLS GAPS

An important part of vocational education is how it can change to meet the needs of the job market, especially the skills gap in Thailand. Programs that are made for real-world use help people get practical skills that match what industries need, which makes graduates more employable. This connection is highlighted by growing teamwork between schools and local businesses, making sure that what is taught matches the skills employers want. Also, vocational education creates a chance for lifelong learning, allowing people not just to get their first qualifications but also to keep improving their skills as technology changes job needs (Birger Fredriksen et al., 2008). In the end, the success of vocational education in filling skills gaps is shown by better job results and career growth for those involved, proving its important role in developing a skilled workforce that fits the changing job market in Thailand.

Good evaluation of program results and success rates in adult vocational education is very important for knowing how these programs affect Thailand's job market. Different measures, like job rates, skill development, and participant feedback, give clues about how well programs meet workforce demands. Looking at these programs using Adult Learning and Education (ALE) helps to provide a thorough review that follows UNESCO's 2015 guidelines



(Suwithida Charungkaittikul et al., 2020). In this situation, it's important to not only measure success with numbers but also to qualitatively examine how these programs help adult learners join society and the economy. Also, working together in adult education can help improve knowledge sharing, which is key for creating effective programs (Johann Heilmann et al., 2020). In the end, thorough evaluation makes sure that vocational education can change as needed with Thailand's job market, closing the skills gaps that exist.

When looking at adult vocational education programs compared to traditional education paths, clear differences in approach, accessibility, and results can be seen. Traditional education usually focuses on theories and general knowledge that might not match up with what the job market needs right away. On the other hand, vocational education programs aim to give students specific skills that fit industry needs, which improves their chances of getting jobs and makes it easier for them to enter the workforce. Additionally, these programs are often more flexible and easier to access, helping adults who have jobs and families that make full-time study hard. This practical focus leads to better use of resources for both students and schools. In the end, the connection of vocational training to actual job needs shows a modern change from the typical education model and helps to fill the urgent skills shortages seen in Thailand's job market (Shubha Jayaram et al., 2017).

The views that employers have about vocational training graduates greatly impact their chances of getting jobs and how well vocational programs work. In Thailand, these views often depend on graduates' hands-on skills, flexibility, and how well they match what the industry needs. Employers often want candidates who not only have technical skills but also exhibit soft skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. This need points to a significant gap between academic training and being ready for work, as vocational programs may not always effectively include these crucial skills in their teaching. Additionally, the differences in what employers expect across various industries make things more challenging, causing a gap between the training given and the skills that employers desire (1998). Therefore, boosting employer involvement in creating and evaluating vocational programs could lead to a more relevant educational system, ultimately helping both graduates and the job market.

In looking at vocational education programs that show success, some stand out because of their unique ways and good fit with job market needs. A local project in Thailand, for example, has worked together with businesses to adjust its curriculum, making sure it meets the skill shortages in nearby job markets. These partnerships not only make the curriculum more relevant but also help provide hands-on training opportunities, greatly boosting the chances of getting jobs for those involved. Studies show that graduates from these programs have better job placement rates and earn higher salaries than those from regular education paths, supporting the idea that vocational training is a good way to tackle economic issues. Also, using digital tools and online learning options has widened the reach of vocational education, allowing underprivileged groups to gain important skills and help the workforce (Joan DeJaeghere et al., 2021).

In Thailand, the success of adult vocational education programs is often blocked by several obstacles, with lack of funding and insufficient institutional support being the most significant. Without enough money, these programs can't offer important resources like qualified teachers and recent materials, which are needed to adapt to a changing job market. Moreover, there is a gap between what programs provide and what industries actually require, making training initiatives less applicable. As mentioned in (DVV International et al., 2020), it is vital to acknowledge and enhance adult learning in a development framework; nevertheless, political commitment and prioritization are often lacking. Additionally, (Johann

Heilmann et al., 2020) points out that teamwork is crucial in adult education; therefore, the lack of strong partnerships between schools and businesses worsens the issues, preventing the necessary solutions to close skills gaps for a strong workforce in Thailand.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

To deal with the ongoing skills gaps in Thailand's job market, some key suggestions for improving vocational education programs are important. First, adding industry partnerships to course designs can help match what students learn with what employers need, giving students useful, real-world skills that they can use in their jobs. Also, using technology in vocational training can create engaging learning opportunities; for example, virtual simulations and online resources can attract students and support different learning preferences, which can help them remember and use skills better (Marope et al., 2015). Lastly, setting up ongoing feedback between teachers and businesses can create an education system that adapts with the needs of the job market, making sure programs stay relevant and effective. Focusing on these approaches will not only improve job readiness for participants but also strengthen the economy overall.

Good curriculum development in adult job training needs a complete method that focuses on working together, being relevant, and being flexible. Getting people involved—like industry experts and possible employers - is necessary to make sure the curriculum fits the current and future needs of Thailand's job market. This teamwork helps find important skills and competencies, so teachers can create courses that are useful and match what the market requires. Also, adding hands-on learning chances, like internships or project work, can increase engagement and better prepare participants for real-life challenges (Joan DeJaeghere et al., 2021). Moreover, regular assessments and feedback are crucial for improving the curriculum, allowing educators to keep up with changes in job demands and learner needs. By creating a responsive and evolving curriculum, adult job training programs in Thailand can effectively close skills gaps and support a strong labor market.

Cooperative connections between schools and businesses are important for creating a workforce that fits the changing needs of Thailand's job market. These partnerships help in developing curriculums that focus on what employers actually need, thus making vocational training programs more useful and relevant. By working with industry members, teachers can learn about job trends and skills that are lacking, which helps them create programs that give students the right skills. Additionally, these collaborations often result in internship and apprenticeship chances, giving students valuable real-world experience while also helping companies to recruit new talent. In the end, partnerships with industries not only improve educational results but also boost economic growth by preparing graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge that are sought after (Asian Development Bank, 2021). This cooperative relationship shows how important it is to connect educational goals with industry needs to effectively address the skills gaps in Thailand's labor market.

In the fast-changing world of education, the need for ongoing professional development (CPD) for teachers is very important. This continuous learning helps teachers adjust to new teaching methods, use technology better, and meet the various needs of students. Supporting lifelong learning helps teachers improve their teaching styles, which leads to better student involvement and success. Also, as job market needs change, especially in new industries in Thailand, teachers need to learn new skills to prepare students well for jobs. This professional advancement not only enhances teachers' abilities but also improves the overall



quality of education, making a strong system that can adapt to changes. In conclusion, investing in CPD is key for making sure that teachers stay relevant, knowledgeable, and ready to guide their students toward successful careers in a competitive job market (OECD, 2010).

Using technology in vocational training programs makes the learning experience better, helping adult learners in Thailand's changing job market adapt. With online tools and simulation resources, teachers can build engaging and interactive settings that fit different learning styles and speeds. This is important for adult students who come from various backgrounds and have different motivations. Adult learning focuses on personal and professional growth in one's community (Suwithida Charungkattikul et al., 2020). Therefore, adding technology not only helps build practical skills but also promotes lifelong learning, which is essential in adult education. Also, this use of technology allows for sharing information and best practices across countries, enhancing cooperation and knowledge in vocational training (Johann Heilmann et al., 2020). So, effectively using technology is key to closing skills gaps and getting adult learners ready for today's job market in Thailand.

To fix the skills gaps in Thailand's job market, suggestions for policy should aim at boosting government help for adult vocational education. A varied approach is needed, like more money, partnerships with industry leaders, and creating a strong system for lifelong learning. Financial support for businesses that train workers can encourage teamwork between schools and employers, making sure programs match current job needs. Moreover, the government should focus on mixing formal and non-formal education paths, since adult learning includes many ways to gain knowledge (DVV International et al., 2020). Updating curricula to fit new technologies and job market changes will better prepare the workforce and deal with the need for training based on skills that match job opportunities (Johann Heilmann et al., 2020). With these focused policies, Thailand can build a more skilled and flexible workforce.

6. CONCLUSION

The study of adult job training programs in Thailand shows important information about how education links to job market needs. The results highlight the urgent need for these programs to adjust quickly to the changing requirements of different industries, which helps to close big skills gaps that affect job performance. This analysis makes it clear that teamwork among schools, government, and businesses is essential to keep programs relevant and aligned with market demands. Additionally, supporting a system that promotes lifelong learning will improve individual job chances and boost the country's economy. In summary, successfully adding focused job training into Thailand's job market requires a careful strategy based on real data and involvement from all parties, as shown by the frameworks mentioned in this essay and (Marope et al., 2015). With these combined efforts, Thailand can build a strong workforce ready to meet the challenges of a global economy.

The analysis shows a complex picture in Thailand's adult vocational education programs, highlighting both achievements and problems in closing skills gaps in the job market. Main points suggest that although these programs have made it easier for people to enroll, there are still big differences in how well the courses work and how they fit with what industries want. It is clear that vocational training outcomes relate to better job chances, but many graduates still struggle to find jobs that fit their skills and qualifications. This situation raises concerns about how well the training programs adapt to changes in job market needs. Also, working with local businesses is an important factor for the success of these programs. The study emphasizes the need for continuous review and adjustment of education systems to ensure they stay relevant to professional standards and workforce needs. This ongoing



interaction calls for more research to suggest practical solutions for improvement (Matthias Pilz, 2016).

Stakeholders in Thailand's job market must deal with a changing setting marked by more technology and new workforce needs. Employers especially confront the urgent issue of the skills gap, which requires them to work closely with vocational education programs to make sure their workers have the skills needed for today's industry. This puts pressure on schools to adjust their curricula to fit the changing job market, improving the chances of graduates getting hired. Moreover, policymakers are key in creating support for funding and making these educational programs accessible, ensuring they cater to different regional job market needs. If they do not adapt to these changes, unemployment and underemployment could worsen, especially for marginalized groups. In the end, cooperation among stakeholders—like employers, educators, and policymakers—is crucial to building a strong job market that can succeed amid globalization and technological change (Emanuela Di Gropello et al., 2011).

Studying future research areas in adult vocational education is important, especially given Thailand's changing job market. As industries change, researchers need to understand how these changes affect the effectiveness and access to vocational training programs. Research could look into whether current programs can adjust to new skill needs, especially in fields that are rapidly adopting new technologies. It is also essential to explore new teaching methods that cater to various adult learners. Both qualitative and quantitative research could improve insights into learner experiences, similar to findings from other regions focused on adult skill building, like China, where specific vocational approaches were crucial for workforce preparedness (Guangpei Wei et al., 2024). Moreover, comparing insights from other Southeast Asian nations could be useful, as seen in the discussions on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) frameworks, making sure Thai vocational education follows regional best practices (DVV International et al., 2020). These in-depth studies will not only help close the skills gap but also support the long-term sustainability of Thailand's job market.

In closing, putting vocational education into Thailand's job market is not just an educational change but also a crucial need to fill the growing skills gap. The details of today's job market show a big gap between what traditional education teaches and the skills employers really need, which can greatly affect economic growth and workforce development. Developing strong vocational programs that focus on what industries require can help people gain skills, improve job chances, and promote long-term economic growth in the area. Additionally, these programs can create a workforce that can adapt to new technologies and changing economies. As stakeholders come together to support a complete vocational education model, continuous research and careful evaluation are necessary to ensure these programs meet both current and future job market demands, thus playing a key role in national prosperity (Shubha Jayaram et al., 2017).

The success of vocational education programs depends not just on how they are set up but also on how well they can change with the job market and what learners need. Thus, it is essential for those involved to focus on updating the courses to fit better with what industries require, making sure that programs are useful and relevant. By creating partnerships between schools and local businesses, educational leaders can share knowledge that helps shape training and develop skills that meet specific job market needs. Also, putting more money into things like modern tools and technology will better prepare learners for current jobs. In the end, using these methods will not only improve the quality of vocational education but also give graduates the ability to succeed in Thailand's tough job market, helping to close the skills gap and aid economic growth. Action is needed now; the future workforce relies on it.

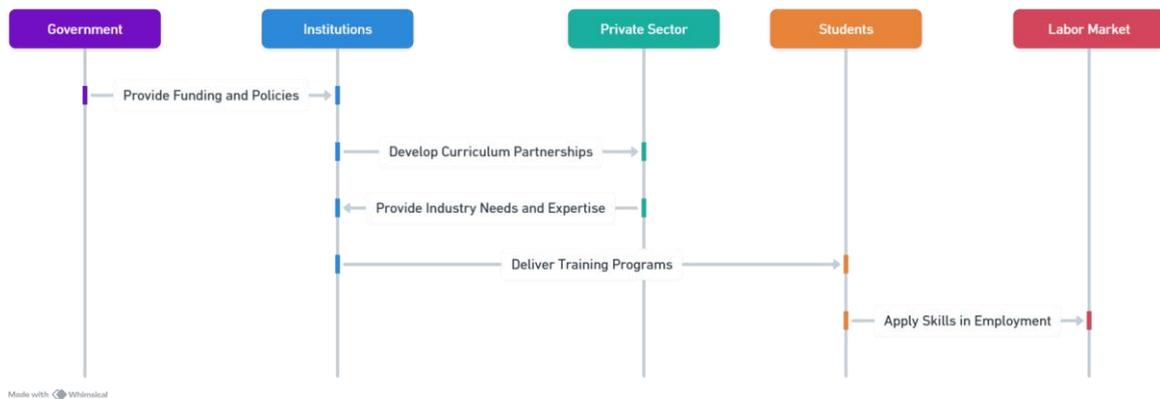


Figure 1: Partnership Workflow for Vocational Education

Originality & Body of Knowledge

Originality: This paper offers a unique contribution to the field of vocational education by focusing on the specific challenges and opportunities within Thailand's labor market. While the importance of vocational education in addressing skills gaps has been widely discussed globally, this study provides a localized analysis tailored to Thailand's unique economic and cultural context. The paper highlights the mismatch between the skills provided by vocational training programs and those demanded by employers, offering fresh insights into how these gaps can be bridged through stronger industry partnerships, updated curricula, and the integration of technology. By examining the role of government policies, private sector involvement, and accessibility issues, the study presents a comprehensive view of vocational training efficacy in Thailand. The recommendations for policy adjustments and increased collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders provide actionable solutions that are both innovative and practical, making this paper a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and industry leaders.

Body of Knowledge: This study builds on existing literature by integrating global perspectives on vocational education with a localized analysis of Thailand's labor market. It draws on foundational works such as the OECD's reviews of vocational education and training (2010) and UNESCO's frameworks for lifelong learning, while also incorporating insights from regional studies on adult learning and education (ALE) in Southeast Asia. The paper aligns with the growing recognition of the importance of vocational education in addressing skills gaps and promoting economic growth, as highlighted by scholars like Shubha Jayaram and Joan DeJaeghere. By examining the effectiveness of vocational programs in Thailand, the study adds to the body of knowledge on how vocational education can be adapted to meet the specific needs of developing economies. The findings underscore the importance of continuous curriculum updates, industry collaboration, and the use of technology in vocational training, offering a replicable framework for other countries facing similar challenges. This research not only contributes to the academic discourse on vocational education but also provides practical recommendations for enhancing workforce readiness in Thailand and beyond.

Declarations

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical treatment of experimental subjects (animals & human): The research was conducted in compliance with the principles of the Helsinki Declaration regarding human subjects, so formal ethical approval was not required.

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