

POLITICS OF CHANGES IN THAILAND'S UNIVERSITY
ADMISSION POLICY (1999-2017)



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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
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การเมืองในการเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายการสอบเข้ามหาวิทยาลัย (ระหว่างปี พ.ศ. 2542 -
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งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้มุ่งศึกษาปรากฏการณ์ที่สำคัญคือการเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายการสอบเข้ามหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทยในช่วงปี พ.ศ.2542 – 2560 โดยในช่วงเวลาดังกล่าวระบบการสอบเข้ามหาวิทยาลัยไทยถูกเปลี่ยนแปลงทั้งสิ้น 6 ครั้ง โดยงานวิจัยนี้ให้ความสนใจตัวกระทำทางการเมืองที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อ นโยบายการสอบเข้ามหาวิทยาลัย ในบริบทของการเมืองหมายถึงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่าง นักการเมือง ข้าราชการ โรงเรียน และภาคประชาสังคม

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้คือ 1) เพื่อทำความเข้าใจถึงสาเหตุและขั้นตอนการเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายการรับสมัครบุคคลเข้าศึกษาต่อของมหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทย 2) เพื่อศึกษาและเข้าใจความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการเมืองและการเปลี่ยนแปลงระบบการรับเข้าศึกษาของมหาวิทยาลัย 3) เพื่อทำความเข้าใจความคล้ายคลึงกันและความแตกต่างของนโยบายการรับเข้าศึกษาของมหาวิทยาลัยและนโยบายอื่น ๆ 4) เพื่อศึกษาประสิทธิภาพและประสิทธิผลของนโยบายการรับสมัครนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทยระหว่างปี 2542 – 2560

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ในกระบวนการสร้างนโยบายการคัดเลือกบุคคลเข้าศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทยตั้งแต่ 2542 – 2560 มีเพียงองค์กรเดียวเท่านั้นที่มีบทบาทสำคัญในการกำหนดนโยบายได้แก่ สมาคมที่ประชุมอธิการบดีแห่งประเทศไทย ไม่ปรากฏว่ามีกลุ่มบุคคลหรือองค์กรอื่นที่มีส่วนร่วมในกระบวนการกำหนดนโยบาย โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในช่วงระยะเวลาของการสร้างนโยบาย หน่วยงานราชการภาคการเมือง ตลอดจนรัฐบาลไม่ได้มีโอกาสเข้าร่วมกระบวนการนี้ สมาคมที่ประชุมอธิการบดีแห่งประเทศไทยได้ผูกขาดระบบการรับเข้าศึกษาในระดับมหาวิทยาลัยอย่างต่อเนื่อง สมาคมดังกล่าวดำเนินการโดยกลุ่มคนจำนวนจำกัด เช่น อธิการบดีและผู้บริหารระดับสูงของสถาบันการศึกษาชั้นนำต่างๆ การเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายการรับเข้าศึกษาของมหาวิทยาลัยมีผลกระทบในวงกว้างซึ่งเป็นเหตุผลการเลือกนโยบายควรได้รับการพิจารณาโดยกลุ่มคนหลากหลายฝ่าย ผลการศึกษาชี้พบว่าการเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายการคัดเลือกบุคคลเข้าศึกษาต่อในระดับมหาวิทยาลัยยังส่งผลต่อโอกาสทางการศึกษา โดยการเปลี่ยนแปลงนโยบายการรับเข้าเรียนทุกครั้งทำให้ระบบการศึกษามีความซับซ้อนมากขึ้น ระบบที่ซับซ้อนเหล่านี้ไม่ส่งผลต่อนักเรียนในเมืองชนชั้นกลางหรือชนชั้นสูงมากนัก แต่จะส่งผลต่อนักเรียนในชนบทที่มีต้นทุนทางเศรษฐกิจต่ำ ระบบการรับเข้าศึกษาในมหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทยเป็นรูปแบบการกีดกันทางสังคมที่มีความซับซ้อน นโยบายดังกล่าวดูราวกับว่าจะสร้างโอกาสและทางเลือกสำหรับเยาวชน ตรงกันข้ามนโยบายการคัดเลือกบุคคลเข้าศึกษาของมหาวิทยาลัยเป็นเพียงระบบที่ช่วยให้มหาวิทยาลัยสามารถเฉลี่ยจำนวนนักศึกษาให้พอดีกับจำนวนนักศึกษาที่พวกเขาต้องการในแต่ละมหาวิทยาลัย เนื่องจากในปัจจุบันที่นั่งในมหาวิทยาลัยมีมากกว่าจำนวนนักเรียนที่ต้องการเข้าศึกษาต่อ

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KEYWORD: Thailand's University Admission System Education Policy Inequality in Education Policy Elite

Nitchapat Kitchareern : POLITICS OF CHANGES IN THAILAND'S UNIVERSITY ADMISSION POLICY (1999-2017) . Advisor: Asst. Prof. PITCH PONGSAWAT, Ph.D.

This research aims to study a significant phenomenon, the changes in Thailand's University Admission system between 1999 and 2017. During this period, the admission system was changed six times. This research focuses on the political factors that led to the changes in admission policy, particularly the relationships among politicians, bureaucracy, schools, civil society and students.

The purpose of this research is threefold: (1) to understand the causes and procedures of changes in Thailand's university admission policy, (2) to study and understand the correlation between politics and changes in university admission system, and (3) to understand the impact these changes had on students.

The research findings indicated that in the process of Thailand's University Admission policy formation from 1999 – 2017, the Council of the University Presidents of Thailand was the dominant policy maker. Bureaucracy, the political sector and the social sector had a minimal role in the policy making process. The Council of the University Presidents of Thailand has consistently monopolized the admission system. The Council is a group of executives from elite universities in Thailand. The study found that changes in the university admission policy also affected educational opportunities. Every change in the admission policy makes the education system more complex. Although the complex system affects every student, the middle class and elite are able to deal with the process more easily than students with added socio-economic costs. The university admission system in Thailand is another example of social exclusion. The education policy should create more opportunities and options for young people, however the university admission policy in Thailand is more so a system to help elite universities equalize the number of students due to the oversupply of seats in universities.

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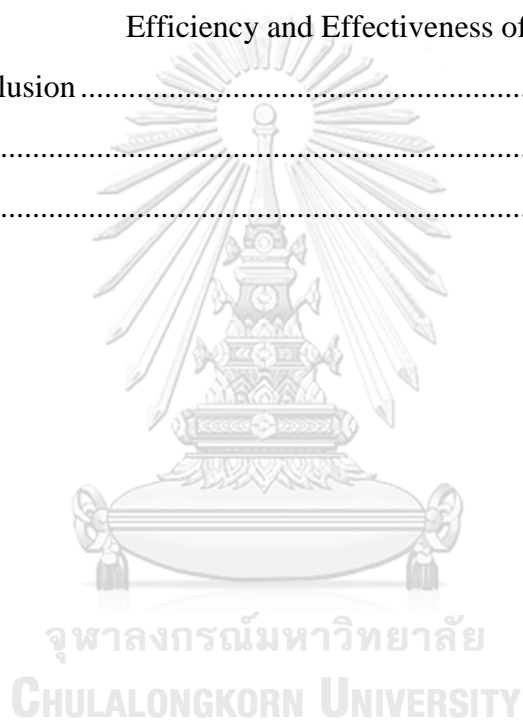
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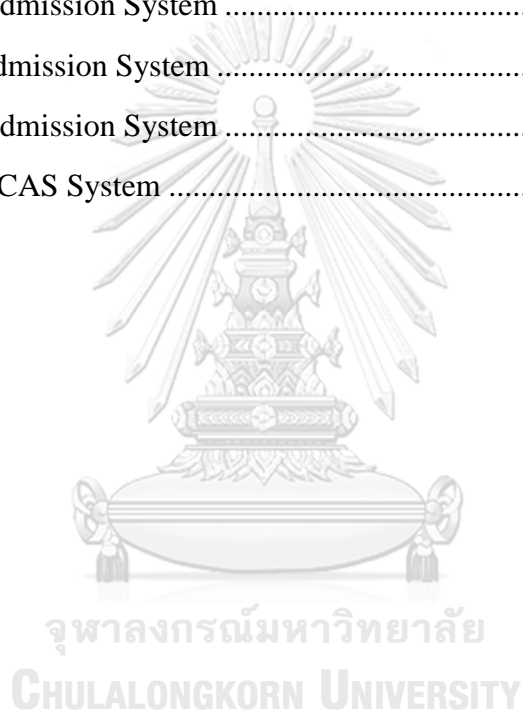
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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Problems Statement and Significance of Study

The policymaking process is a complex phenomenon. Agenda setting, the development of alternatives, and choices seem to be influenced by different actors.¹ The process that leads to an effective policy should provide chances of participation from various sectors. The policymaking process must consist of multiple sectors including the prime minister, cabinet, government officers, social sector, and people. Multiple sectors' participation can help create and shape policies that benefit all. It can also reduce the problems that may come after because the policy is linked to the people's wants and needs. An inappropriate policymaking process affects the efficiency and stability of the policy. Improperly generated policy may result in poor policy performance and the policy will lack stability.

From 1961 until the present, Thailand's university admission system was changed eight times. Each change lasted an average of three years. The number of changes and the length of use of each system raise the question of the effectiveness and efficiency of Thailand's university admission policy.

There have been several issues related to the university admission policy and, as a result, frequent changes. For example, changes in the university admission policy have an impact on student's preparation and plans for applying to university programs. Every change in the university admission policy leads to a change in the content of teaching, the content of the exams, and the format of the exams. Changes in the university admission policy also affect the quality of high school education. For example, if the exam was scheduled prior to the end of the semester, or close to the end of the semester, teachers will rush to finish the courses as early as possible to make sure their students have enough time to prepare for the test. Also, more complicated examinations and an increase in competition have led to the rise in the need for tutorial schools.

There are many questions about the changes in Thailand's university admission system. The main question is 'why does the university admission policy change frequently?'. It is interesting to study such issues in depth using the framework of politics of policy formation. Studies of higher education in Thailand often focus on the higher education system and quality assessment.² Research directly

¹J.W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Harlow: Pearson, 2014).

²See for example Lao, R. (2015). *A critical study of Thailand's higher education reforms: the culture of borrowing*. London ; New York: Routledge, and Waraporn Seehanart. (2005). *A development of an appropriate model of national institute of*

related to the policy of recruiting students into the university is still very rare, despite the fact that problems related to the university admission policy have accumulated over the years and are still occurring in Thailand today.

Between 1999 and 2017 there have been six main types of university admission systems. Apart from the six main changes, there were also several modifications such as the introduction of a selection standard and score allocations, which have been re-announced almost every year. Every change in the university admission policy affects many people across many sectors. The policy affects about 100,000 students who participate in the admission system each year,³ about a million high school students⁴, parents, teachers, schools, and 301 universities⁵.

Moreover, the changes in university admission policies have made the examination subjects more complex. Additionally, the number of exams has increased as more complex subjects and examinations are required now compared to the university admission system before 1999. For example, in the admission system used from 1973 to 1999 (Entrance System), students could only take the examination one time per year and the examination was comprised of 5-8 subjects. In the 2010 system, students could take the examination up to five times per year (1 O-NET, 4 GAT, and 4 PAT examinations). In the 2017 admission system, students took a set of examinations that were broken down into four main parts: O-Net, Gat, Pat, and the Nine Commons (3-9 subjects).

Changes in the university admission policies have reflected several political and social issues. The frequency of change in the university admission policy has incited doubt regarding the performance of Thailand's administration. There have been several changes in the university education policy cannot solve the policy problems that occurred from previous policy changes. For example, there was a proposal to add an extra year to the education studies program, from four years to five years, after the 1999 Education Reform. The proposal was successfully adopted into an official policy in 2004 in accordance with which the education department of every university changed the four-year study requirement into a five-year requirement. The goal of this change was to advance the undergraduate program in education to become more professional. Students who finish the five-year program will automatically obtain the certificate in teaching, which allows them to be able to teach in a school. However, in 2018 the Minister of Education announced a resolution of the committee

³"Summary of University Admission System 2017," 2017, accessed 20 June 2018, <https://www.admissionpremium.com/content/2687>.

⁴"Statistics of Thai Education in 2014-2015," accessed 29 July, 2018, https://www.m-society.go.th/article_attach/19341/20693.pdf.

⁵"Summary of Number of Higher Education Institutions Classified by Province," updated April 2015, accessed 28 July, 2018, http://www.mua.go.th/users/bpp/main/download/other/HiEduSum_0458.pdf.

of the Teacher's Council of Thailand (Khurusapha), composed of the education minister and all the major directors of education ministry, to change the education studies program from five years back to four years. The committee argued that an extra year does not make a difference, but now students who graduate from the four-year program will need to take the teaching certification test.⁶ This new policy proposal will surely facilitate changes in the curriculum of all education departments in Thai universities. Students who are currently studying in the program may also be affected by this sudden policy change because although it is occurring in the middle of their study, the government is planning to change the policy right away.⁷

Generally speaking, improving or changing public policy should make the policy more appropriate or more up-to-date to match with the social reality. However, researching Thailand's university admission policy revealed that the old problems with the admission system that policymakers attempted to address are still rampant today. These problems include students paying less attention to attending classes, the exam-based system of education, and the widespread increase in tutorial schools. Moreover, the changes in university admission policies caused new problems such as educational inequality among students from different classes and locations.

It can be observed that Thailand's university admission system is not much different from Thai politics in general. At present, both Thai political and administration systems are in need of decentralization and increased participation, but the power from the central state and bureaucracy, and the power of the expert at the center is very strong.⁸ Thailand's educational system and the university admission policy are still trapped in the same direction as the direction of general politics.

In addition to the centralized bureaucratic and technocratic systems, the political system itself may also have significant implications on the stability of the university admission policy. For example, in the two decades following the education reform of 1999, there were 19 education ministers. This is not to mention frequent rotation of staff in the Ministry of Education. As a result, education policies often lack the knowledge and continuity necessary to solve Thailand's education problems.⁹

⁶ "Ministry of Education Modified Curriculum of Educational School," updated 17 October 2018, accessed 5 November, 2018, https://www.khaosod.co.th/around-thailand/news_1699928.

⁷ "Reveal the Department of Education Issue)", accessed 17 August, 2018, <https://www.voicetv.co.th/read/504445>.

⁸ Tanet Charoenmuang, *Thailand: A Late Decentralizing Country* (Chiang Mai: Urban Development Institute Foundation, 2016).

⁹ Athapol Anunthavorasakul, "When Education Trapped in the Competition," *Sarakadee* (2017).

Frequent changes of policymakers, staff, and policy do not seem to genuinely address Thailand's social needs.

Studying Thailand's university admission policy is not just about focusing on the frequency of change, but also the contents of change each time. Each change results in an increase in the number of times a student can participate in an exam (one or more rounds of examination per year), the types of examinations (one entrance examination or a combination of high school grades, general standardized test for overall high school performance, aptitude test, and specific test required for each school), and the scope of the exam (eight subjects for the standardized test measuring overall high school performance and nine subjects tests as required for certain schools). For example, the so-called Entrance examinations used before 1999 were held at the national level only one time per year. The new university admission examination policy announced in 2017 has about four to six types of central admission examinations that students will have to take in a year. It can be seen, then, that the current number of examinations is increasing and becoming more complicated compared to all previous systems.

Changes in the university admission policy might affect the opportunities of many students, especially the poor, as students have to pay to participate in every examination and for the process to enter the university. It is not only the cost of the exams that parents have to bear, but also the cost of special classes and tutorial schools to make sure their children are ready for the examination. As a result, tutorial schools are seen as just as important as the normal school-based education, and sometimes the tutorial schools that focus on entrance exam preparation are even considered to be more important than school-based education. Statistics in 2017 revealed that the highest earning tutorial school earned 479 million baht per year, with a 134 million baht increase from the previous year.¹⁰ Nowadays, tutorial schools are important for students because some subjects on the entrance exams are not covered in high schools.

The increased cost of admission to higher education institution may lead to a gap in opportunities for students. For example, the students who want to participate in the central admission system need a score from the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS). Each examination has a different cost. The GAT and PAT are offered twice a year, with a cost of 140 baht per each subject. The PAT is available for up to seven subjects, meaning that the total cost of the exam can be up to 1,120 baht per student yet the official minimum wage in 2018 is only 330 baht per day¹¹ The GAT and PAT are the exams necessary to apply in the main system. This is

¹⁰"The Income of Top Tutorial Schools in Thailand," updated 30 November 2018, accessed 30 November, 2018.

¹¹ "Thailand Minimum Daily Wage," (2018).

not counting other examination costs from ‘the nine-subject general test’ or the direct exam that many universities arrange. There is also the cost of traveling to the testing center. Overall, the cost of the university admission system in Thailand is very high, leading to a disparity in educational opportunities.

The university admission policy affects people nationwide, yet in the policymaking process participation is restricted from various stakeholders, particularly students, parents, and schools. This research intends to explore why people and social sectors are restricted from participating in the policymaking process despite the widespread impact on society; whether civil society movements related to Thailand's education are strong enough to bargain and negotiate with the government; and if Thailand's political system deprives people from participating in policymaking activities. These issues have inspired the study of the process and the factors that lead to changes in Thailand's university admission policy.

Table 1 Timeline of Changes in Thailand University Admission

Year of Change	Examination System
1961	Single Examination Each University has their own examination to admit student.
1973 The Entrance System	Single Examination Students choose between one and six programs that they want to apply for. Students will be assigned to the program according to their examination score.
1999 The New Entrance System	Examinations offered two times per year. Students choose between one and four programs that they want to apply for. Students are evaluated based on their best examination score, plus 10% of their high school GPA in application to the central admission system. Students will then be assigned to the program according to their examination score.
2006 The ONET System	Examination offered one time per year. Students choose between one and four programs that they want to apply for. Students then take the O-NET test and the A-Net test. Students will be assigned to the university program based on their O-Net score, A-NET Score (which one depends on each university's requirement) + 20% of their high school GPA.
2010 The Admission System	Examinations offered several times per year. One time O-NET examinations GAT and PAT Examinations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2010: four rounds per year - 2011: three rounds per year - 2012: two rounds per year + the seven common subjects examination <p>Students take O-NET test and GAT test. There is no longer an assignment of students to the program according to the score submitted prior to the test. Students know the result of the test first and then apply to each university program. They can choose to apply for up to four programs. Students will then be assigned to the university program based on their O-Net score, GAT, PAT Scores (which one depends on each university's requirement) + 20% of their high school GPA.</p>
2013 Modified Admission System	<p>2010 System combined with Clearing House System</p> <p>This was the first attempt to centralize all direct admission systems of each university. The new system encouraged each university to use the centralized testing system (the 7-Subjects Test) for each university's direct admission. The CUPT changed the 7-Subjects Test into the 9-Subjects Test.</p>
2017 TCAS System	<p>Central Admissions System</p> <p>The CUPT unified all admission systems, including direct admission of each university, quotas, and national admission into one single system. There are 5 rounds of application.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Application with Portfolio 2. Quota Admission 3. Coordination of Direct Admission among all university 4. National Central Admission 5. Final Application for those universities who have available seats left after the first four rounds.

Information from the official website of Council of University President of Thailand. (n.d.). Retrieved November 9, 2018, from <http://www.niets.or.th/en>.

1. Objectives of the Study

This research aims to study the changes in Thailand's university admission policy between 1999 and 2017 on the following issues:

- 1.1 To understand the causes and procedures of changes in Thailand's university admission policy and subsequent admission system.
- 1.2 To study and understand the correlation between politics and the changes in the university admission system.

- 1.3 To understand the similarities and differences between the university admission policy and other relevant policies.

2. Research Questions

- 2.1 Which political factors contributed to the changes in university admission policies during the years 1999 to 2017?
- 2.2 How are changes in the university admission policy made during 1999 to 2017?
- 2.3 Do the changes in Thailand's university admission policy impact the educational opportunities of students or not? If they do, in what way?

3. Scope of Study

The reason for choosing this period to study is due to the fact that it is the time when the most frequent changes in university admission policy occurred. The specific scope of this research is to study changes in the university admission policy at the undergraduate level in Thailand between 1999 and 2017. During this period, there were six major changes in university admission system: in 1999, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2015, and 2017. This research also focuses on the political factors that influenced the changes in university admission policy between 1999 and 2017.

The word 'political context' refers to the interactions between changes in the university admission system, bureaucracy, forms of government, and the social sector. This study also examines the effects of such changes in the university admission policy on the inequality of educational opportunities for Thai students.

5. Hypotheses

- 5.1 Thailand's bureaucratic state plays a leading role in facilitating changes in the university admission policy.
- 5.2 Changes in university admission policies result in educational disparities and increasing inequality.
- 5.3 The lack of government stability, and different forms of government, has resulted in policy changes.
- 5.4 Thailand's lack of strong civil society is an important factor in influencing changes in Thailand's university admission policy.

6. Expected or Anticipated Benefits

- a. Recognize and understand the true causes of change in Thailand's university admission policy.
- b. Indicate the impact that change in Thailand's university admission policy has had on society.
- c. Obtain useful information to improve Thailand's university admission policy.



CHAPTER 2 Theoretical Framework

Politics and Public Policy

Policy

Dye (1978) defines that public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do. Governments do many things, such as regulate conflicts within society; organize society to carry on conflict with other societies; distribute a great variety of symbolic rewards and material services to members of the society; and extract money from society, most often in the form of taxes.¹² Dearlove (1973) furthers this definition by stating that 'public policy' refers to how a government commits resources in response to what they consider to be problems or challenges.¹³ For Lindblom(1993), a policy is sometimes the outcome of a political compromise amongst policy makers, none of whom had in mind quite the problem to which the argued policy is the solution. Therefore, Lindblom asserts that policies are not necessarily decided upon, but instead, just "happen."¹⁴

Colebatch(2002) argues that policy is a central concept in both the analysis and practice of the way we are governed. It gives both observers and participants a handle on the process, a way of making sense of the complexity of governing.¹⁵ For policy participants in the government, such as presidents or cabinets, policy is exceedingly important because it is how they control and govern the government and the policy statement shows the method by which they are going to do so. For other participants outside the government, policy may be a vehicle for contesting the existing order and asserting the right to participate. Policy can be the result of activities by concerned people or the response to some occurring problem that pulls

¹² "Official Website of National Institute of Educational Testing Service," National Institute of Educational Testing Service

accessed 7 August, 2018, <http://www.niets.or.th/th/catalog/view/247>.

¹³ J Dearlove, *The Politics of Policy in Local Government: The Making and Maintenance of Public Policy in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

¹⁴ C. E. Lindblom, & Woodhouse, E. J. , *The Policy-Making Process (3rd Ed)*. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall, 1993).

¹⁵ H.K. Colebatch, *Policy* (Buckingham: Open Univ. Press, 2002).

attention from the people. For participants inside the government, policy development may provide some leverage against other arms of government.¹⁶

Therefore, policy can act as a tool for control: elected leaders over bureaucrats, central bureaucrats over field staff, or company headquarters over operational managers.¹⁷ This illustrates how policy can mean different things to different people. It is not only participants and observers that have different perspectives, but also participants from different positions within the political arena that are likely to see the same scene in different ways.¹⁸ Policy may be used to mean a broad orientation, an indication of normal practice, a specific commitment, or a statement of values. It should not be assumed that policy only has one meaning; therefore, this research intends to explore the various ways in which the term is used and to illuminate the nature of different usages.¹⁹

The idea of policy usually rests on three core assumptions about social order: instrumentality, hierarchy, and coherence. Regarding instrumentality, policy can be understood as a device for the pursuit of particular purposes. The best way to understand an organization is to know its objective and how successful the organization is at achieving that objective. Policy, then, is to be understood in terms of objectives and the methods utilized to achieve them. In terms of hierarchy, governance and authority flow from the people at the top who give instructions to the people at the bottom. In terms of coherence, it is an assumption that all the smaller actions fit together. Policy in this context is concerned with how this system is steered. In the policy process, there are many parts that require many participants, demonstrating why the policy process should also be concerned with coordination.²⁰

Policy Process

Policy can be described as a project that has goals to achieve. The policy process, then, is the plan followed to achieve those goals. It includes the stages and procedures of the policy from the beginning to the solution. In the perspective of Dye,²¹ the policy process should consist of six successive stages, as outlined below.

¹⁶Ibid.,p.2.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.,p.4.

¹⁹Ibid.,p.8.

²⁰Ibid.,p9.

²¹ Thomas R. Dye, *Understanding Public Policy (3d Ed)*. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1978).

1. Problem Identification

The authorized leaders determine the objectives they wish to achieve.²² In this process, the policymakers need to identify public issues and public problems. The issues that make it on the policy agenda and receive the most attention from policymakers usually have the following features: natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes, political events that lead to violence, an event that has become a point of interest in social- and mass media such as crime, environmental issues such as air pollution or oil spills, and threats to the security of the state.

The government itself, political parties, researchers, or academics can present problems to the people in order to gain their attention and interest. Each group of actors is interested in different types of issues. Problems that are addressed through policy may not only come from political pressure. Rather, these groups of actors may already recognize indications that the problems exist. Policymakers will observe the change that happens to the indicators and label it as a public problem.

Feedback is another thing that leads to policy problem identification. For instance, feedback on activities and events held by the government may identify some issues to which solutions should be developed by policy. Problems that occur in each country can be numerous and various. The key issue is how policymakers choose to work on solving some problems but not others. Budget is the most important factor in determining whether a solution to a problem is addressed through policy. Issues that have been determined to require a lot of money to fix often do not make it to the policy agenda.

2. Agenda Setting

In this stage, policymakers will determine the course of action that will lead to the goal of the policy. There might be many alternatives, but the policymakers will choose the most practical option to best fit the budget and have the highest impact. Additionally, the choice they make should be consistent with the values of society.

The agenda is the list of problems to which governmental officials, and people outside the government, are paying the most attention to at any given time.²³ The

²² Colebatch, H. K. (2002). *Policy* (2nd. ed). Buckingham: Open Univ. Press.

²³ Kingdon, J. W. (2014). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies* (Second edition, Pearson new international edition). Harlow: Pearson.

agenda can also be affected by political processes such as the result of an election, the mood of the people, public opinion, or changes in the cabinet.

3. Policy Formulation

Policy formation is the development of policy proposals. In this stage, people who are involved in the policymaking process, including government officials, cabinets, academics, and interest groups, have to consider the most appropriate courses of action to solve the problems included in policy agenda. The most important consideration in this process is in regards to the direction and goal of solving policy issues. In response, policymakers should consider creating clear policy procedures that are easy for implementers to understand and follow.

4. Policy Legitimation

The most obvious basis for a claim to a place in policy process is the possession of legitimate authority.²⁴ The policy legitimation process, then, is an authorization of the policy decision. The purpose of this process is to legitimize the policy via the majority system in the parliament or in court.

5. Policy Implementation

Once the policy has passed the legal process and gained legitimacy, it will be forwarded to the appropriate government agencies. The policy must then be analyzed to see which government organization will be responsible for implementing the policy. The relevant organization will prescribe the strategy to implement the government's policy. Once the strategy has been set, the organization must define the project to meet each strategic goal. Each project will have a definite goal of delivering outputs. The success of policy implementation depends on many factors such as the difficulty of the situation, non-cooperation or resistance of the people, and performance issues such as budget, machinery, resources, information, technology, etc.

6. Policy Evaluation

Policy evaluation refers to the activities that involve measuring of the effects of policy and comparing the effects of practical policy. Policy evaluation is an important step because it can identify problems in how the policy was implemented. This step also helps to determine how to improve future policy. The policy evaluation process should be inclusive of various participants and stakeholders, not only the

²⁴ Colebatch, H. K. (2002). *Policy* (2nd. ed). Buckingham: Open Univ. Press.

government agencies themselves but also outside consultants, the general public, and media.

Participants in Policy Making Process

The people who are involved in the policy process is determined by the detail of the policy in each particular case. Sometimes a policy process requires many organizations to work together. In other cases, it may only take one individual organization to create a policy. In general, however, the policy process should consist of various groups of policymakers such as the cabinet, prime minister, minister, government officials, the public sector, and the private sector. According to Kingdon, participants in the policymaking process can be divided into two main groups, as will be outlined below.²⁵

1. Participants inside the Government

Participants from inside the government consist of three subgroups: the president (head of government), presidential staff, and political appointees.

The head of the government can set the policy agenda by himself. No other individual actor in policy process has the authority to do so. In the U.S., the president is not always the one who oversees the entire policy process. Generally, though, the head of the government maintains the power to nominate people who are then responsible for the policy process. Nevertheless, the president's policy agenda also needs support from the public. The public's attention can serve as a strong source of pressure to push the president's agenda. Therefore, the president's impact on the policy agenda depends on his direct involvement.

Presidential staff in government offices also play a significant role in the policymaking process. These people are the advisers to the president himself, or to other council members in the government. They are an important part of the process, but are not often mentioned.

Political appointees such as cabinet members and members of the House of Representatives influence the setting of the policy agenda. They gain authority from the president via the chain of command. Political appointees are constantly working with policy because they are the main representatives of the people, connecting people to their government. The duty of political appointees is to choose the most

²⁵ Kingdon, J. W. (2014). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies* (Second edition, Pearson new international edition). Harlow: Pearson.

urgent agenda items and elevate them to the government. The study about policy agenda setting by Kingdon shows that people see political appointees as important actors in the policy process. Sometimes, they are actually perceived as more important than the presidential staff or the president himself.²⁶

2. Participants outside the Government

Participants outside the government might not have formal positions nor do they have formal decision-making authority, but they play an important role in pushing the policy agenda and policy alternatives.

An interest group is a group of individuals or institutions who share the same political interests and goals. Anyone can be a member of an interest group. For example, business representatives might try to contact government officials or politicians in hopes that the government will pursue policies that are beneficial to them. Individual actions may not have as strong of an impact compared to group driven actions, which typically draw more attention from the government. Interest groups are different from political parties. Political parties participate in political activities in order to achieve the authority to govern the country. Interest groups intend to maintain the interests of its members without necessarily filling a political or governmental role. Interest group activity often affects policy in a more negative way than positive one, as interest groups usually fight against policies to block them from being implemented. Sometimes interest groups can have a positive impact on the policy agenda. In many cases, interest group actions include writing letters or sending delegations to support the government.

Academics, researchers, and consultants are some of the most important groups of people that affect policy. Policy makers always invite experts, researchers, and analysts to participate in meetings, hearings, and conferences. The voice of academics will impact policy the most when their expertise is directly related to the issues that the government is currently addressing. The specialists who make negative comments regarding what the government wants to do may be eliminated from the process.

Media also affects policy because it is one of the most important tools that shapes public opinion. Media can help shape the policy agenda, but it cannot help to create policy. Media also draws attention from the government and politicians, as policymakers usually listen to the points raised by media. However, media has very short attention span meaning that journalists have to move from one crisis to another

²⁶ Ibid.

very fast. Media can be considered an indirect participant in the policymaking process.

Political parties are associations organized to promote principles or policies by means of the Constitution. Political campaigning is one of the tasks that a political party should do regularly, whether it is before the election or after the election. Political parties have a duty to monitor the needs of the people and to address those needs through policy development.

Public opinion can be both positive and negative, recognizing that each person's opinion is important. In democratic countries, freedom of expression is protected by the laws of liberty and equality. Public expression is a privilege of the people and beneficial to the state. While public opinion affects the policy agenda, it does not really affect the policy alternatives. In the policymaking process, public opinion should be given priority because public policy directly affects the public. The most righteous policy connects the people to both the policymaking process and the implementation.

Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions of policy

There are two main dimensions that have a major impact on policy: the vertical and the horizontal dimension.²⁷ These dimensions represent a relationship between the decision makers, policymakers, policy implementers, and other people who are involved in the policy process.

The vertical dimension recognizes policy as a rule. It is the normal and traditional process of policymaking, conveying top-down policymaking method. Policy decisions will be made by one group of people and passed down to another group to develop the policy. Once the policy is set, it will be transferred to the lower level officers for implementation. The vertical dimension is faster than the horizontal dimension because policy decisions can be made faster. If policy needs to be created within a limited time, this method is suitable and more efficient.

The horizontal dimension of the policymaking process usually happens when different organizations collaborate for the same purpose. This method provides the opportunity for a variety of groups to participate in the policymaking process. Though it is a more democratic and inclusive policy process, the problem is that the horizontal process takes more time because it requires many people to agree on one decision. Therefore, the final policy product of this method can take a long time to achieve.

²⁷ Colebatch, H. K. (2002). *Policy* (2nd. ed). Buckingham: Open Univ. Press.

Politics and Policy

Politics is the concept that is very closely related to the word policy. The English word “policy” refers to the whole pattern of government. Throughout time, the word “policy” has developed various meanings. Policy is what politicians should focus most of their effort on, and can be described as a government objective. The policy process consists of a series of a political activities, creating what is referred to as “public policy”.²⁸ Public policy is an instrument of the government used to govern and administrate the country. “Policy” is concerned with outcomes as the primary objective, while “politics” is concerned with the processes and participants in the game, with an additional focus on the partisans.²⁹ Therefore, politics and policy are two things that cannot be separated.

Politics refers to any activity related to the authoritative allocation of values, while policy refers to various political factors such as public mood, pressure groups, election results, and so on. Policymaking must also take into account political motivations and political factors.³⁰ For example, in order to gain popularity, politicians will typically try to raise the issues and give more attention to policy agenda items that will benefit people in their electoral area the most. The formulation of public policy depends on the political system in each country, as different forms of government will have different policy processes.

National mood, or public opinion, represents the demands and general awareness of the people in society on particular issues. National mood is dynamic and can change from time to time. A shift in the national mood affects the prioritization of the policy agenda and the relevant policy outcomes. Changes in the national mood also relate to people’s attitude towards the government. Such changes may impact the success of the policy.

It must be admitted that it is difficult to create policy that will satisfy everyone in the country. A policy may benefit one group while adversely effecting others. In some cases, public policy is used as a political tool by those who were adversely effected by the policy. Whenever there is a distortion, prejudice, or intentional concealment, the policy may incur in negative results.³¹

²⁸ Dye, T. R. (1978). *Understanding public policy* (3d ed). Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.

²⁹ Kingdon, J. W. (2014). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies* (Second edition, Pearson new international edition). Harlow: Pearson.

³⁰ Ibid.,p.145.

³¹ Kingdon, J. W. (2014). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies* (Second edition, Pearson new international edition). Harlow: Pearson.

Elite Theory

Policy can be seen as a tool of the ruling elite. The belief that public policy is a reflection of the need of the masses is not an accurate description. Rather, as Dye explains, the elite actually shape mass opinion more than the masses shape elite opinion. Public policy, in practice, represents the preferences of the elite.³²

Changes in politics and public policy usually occur when something threatens the stability of the elite. The policy represents values chosen by the elite to protect their consistency and to maintain their advantageous situation. Changes in public policy enacted by the elite normally happen more incrementally than radically. The elite typically refer to changes in policy as a modification or an amendment, not a replacement.³³

The concept of 'noblesse oblige' can be used to explain how the elite feel as though they are responsible for policymaking.³⁴ This concept refers to the duty of the rich to help the poor. In their perception, the elite view their actions as helping the masses because the elite typically assume that the masses are passive and lack information. Therefore, the concept asserts that the elite have the right to manipulate policy to help improve people's lifestyles. Elite opinion is not always unanimous, but it is typically easier for this group to reach an agreement because they are a small group of people. Additionally, decisions are made in a limited space, which is why elite opinion is normally a consensus.³⁵

Public policy is more likely to represent elite opinion than mass opinion. For example, elite opinion has been particularly influential in the determination of civil rights policy. However, it is likely that elites can operate dependently of environmental resources and demands for very long.³⁶

Mills defines the elite as a group of people that hold positions within the top circles of society.³⁷ Those positions give them the authority and power to make decisions that have far-reaching impacts. The elite are able to realize their will, even if others resist it by taking command of the situation.³⁸ Mills's work states that the elite

32 Dye, T. R. (1978). *Understanding public policy* (3d ed). Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.25.

³³ Ibid.,p.26.

³⁴ Ibid.,p.27.

³⁵ Ibid.,p.27.

³⁶ Ibid.,p.308.

³⁷ C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

³⁸ Ibid.,p.9.

is always the group of people who possess three basic things: money, power, and prestige. Normally, the group of people who possess those three properties are the very rich, celebrities, warlords, chief executives, senior government officials, politicians, and technocrats.

Elite Power is a theory that contradicts the concept of power distribution. The elite are a powerful minority who acquire political power from the masses. The elite theorist, Mosca 1980³⁹, stated that the elite power model is a form of inevitable power.⁴⁰ Whether in an extremely well-developed country or an underdeveloped country, people in society can be divided into two groups: the ruling class and the class that is ruled.⁴¹

Entering into the Power of the Elite

We know that the elite is a minor group with strong political power, but what we do not clearly know is how they become so powerful and how they exercise this power. Ham and Hill reveal that there are elite whose formal power is determined by their political position, and elite who maintain a more informal political power.

Elite can come to power from many directions and methods.⁴² Such methods could include revolutions or military victories, as the winner will have the right to reconstruct the societal system in the way that they choose by changing the regime, political paradigm, or political system. If the elite can win the revolution, they can place more elite in power. The status of “elite” can be inherited from the family for maintenance of a political dynasty. People who possess an enormous amount economic resources can also be considered elite. In a capitalist state, the people who own the most economic capital can thereby acquire authority.⁴³

The emergence of modern bureaucracy led to the creation of a new group of elite in society. Although the bureaucratic system can contribute to the modern organization systems, it has also created a position of authority and title for some groups of people. Senior officers and high ranked officers have been promoted to positions that can exercise authority in national affairs, making decisions regarding important policies. Some elites do achieve power positions based on their abilities, for

³⁹ Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class - Scholar Choice Edition* (Babillolife DBA of Babillio Bazaar II, 2015).

⁴⁰ Christopher Ham & Michael Hill, *The Policy Process in the Modern Capitalist State (2nd Ed)* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf., 1993).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

example technical experts from various fields. Such elites use their position to guide government policies and other important events in the country.

In a study of the power of the elite in the United States, Mills found that the elite is a minority in the social system, but they have a very strong connection. In the United States, the elite is the group that drives politics and society. They use connections amongst their small group to maintain their power and to strengthen their status. Some imply that elite is just another word for ruling class.⁴⁴

From many studies on elite theory, it can be inferred that the elite are the people who possess wealth, reputation, high social status, and positions in government. These properties and characteristics of the elite are what provide them with the power to guide, manipulate, and make decisions in the country.

Intellectual and Technocratic Elites

“Intellectual” is a term that is interpreted to represent a group of people who are highly educated and have academic ability. Some define intellectual as a social group or social status. The variety of intellectuals has been expanded by the complexity of society. Marxist scholars believe that “intellectual” refers to a group that is related to the formation of social class. For Gramsci, an intellectual can be any person who disseminates knowledge or enlightens people in some way. However, the intellectuals in different societies have different origins and roles in their own society.⁴⁵

Intellectual and technocratic elite in Thailand rose in the reign of king Chulalongkorn.⁴⁶ In those days, there were attempts to modernize Thailand in a Western way. Another significant event that demonstrates the role of intellectuals and technocrats in Thailand is the Siamese Revolution in 1932. The revolution took place under the leadership of a group of intellectuals who were the product of Western education. The revolution defined intellectuals as persons that are well educated, for example university students, government officers, academics, and barristers. At that time, education was still restricted to the elite and the rich. Therefore, it can be assumed that the intellectuals in Thailand during that period were elite.⁴⁷

Many studies about Thai intellectuals and technocrats found that intellectuals in Thailand are typically people who were born to middle-class families and elite

44 Ibid.

45 "Statistics of Thai Education in 2014-2015."

46 Ibid.,p.17.

47 Ibid.

families.⁴⁸ From the past until the present, those groups of people work to manipulate society through various methods. Basically, the methods that intellectuals use to control the direction of society can be divided into two ways. First, intellectuals influence people by creating values and beliefs in society and convincing people to believe in their ideas. This method controls people at the foundation level. Second, intellectuals can manipulate people via rules, laws, or policies. At present, Thai intellectuals are a primary group in determining the direction of national policies. Guidance from academics is integrated in the policy process. With their abilities and skills, intellectuals can easily achieve positions of power, both in public and private organizations.⁴⁹

The study of Siamese intellectual culture found that Thai intellectuals tend to be conservative.⁵⁰ However, in different parts of the world intellectuals are not always conservative, nor elite, yet Thai intellectuals role in society and politics is very similar to that of the elite. Thai intellectuals create and control the knowledge that widely impacts the country.

Education and Education Policy

Education Philosophy and Education Policy

The word education can be used in two different contexts. First, education can refer to the scientific process of teaching and learning. Second, education can refer to the socialization process that creates citizens that are suitable for society's goals. Other than socializing and ensuring that human beings can live together in society, education also serves as a medium for transmitting the culture of each community to the next generation.⁵¹ For John Dewey, an important educator, education is part of a social process that helps human being clearly understand themselves and the society in which they live. Dewey further asserts that education is not a process to prepare humans for the future.⁵²

Education is a complicated process. The philosophy of education primarily focuses on three things: to understand humans as individuals, to understand how human beings live together as a society, and to understand the universe and society in

⁴⁸Ibid.,p.18.

⁴⁹Ibid.,p.22.

⁵⁰Ibid.,p.25.

⁵¹ Nicolas Butler, *The Meaning of Education : And Other Essays and Addresses* (New York: Macmillan Company, , 1898).

⁵²Wit, Witthayawate. *Prachya Kansuksa Thai*. (1983).Vol. 1. Bangkok: Funny Publisher.p18.

which humans live.⁵³ On the other hand, the philosophy of education is the formulation and standardization of a subject in order to guide people. The importance of educational philosophy is to define the current norms and goals of each society. Education, then, is a process of gathering information and analyzing it using theories from various sciences.⁵⁴

The goals of education are divided into three major categories: education for career, education for human development, and education for learning. Education for career is a system that teaches specific knowledge to people who will work to serve society. Education for human development strives to develop people in physical, mental, and personal matters. Finally, education for learning helps people to analyze information systemically.⁵⁵

Education and Society

Society is a large structure in which humans come together. Each society has different paths which determine and control human life. Education has a close relationship with society as an intermediary to transmit the path of each society to the next generation.⁵⁶

Education is also very important in terms of creating a dynamic society. Therefore, education has to keep changing in order to follow changes in society. The Reconstructionism educators point out that education should not just supplement social change, but should be the main reason that changes occur in society. This group of educators believes that education can actually change the social structure and people's values.

Educational management must also be aware of the context of society at that time. Education systems that conflict with reality will bring many problems, disagreements, and futile human resources. In Thailand, the elite have organized the education system into a sub-bureaucratic system. Through political monopoly, they

⁵³Banjong Chantrsa. *Pratchya Kub Kansuksa*. (1979). Vol. 1. Bangkok: Thaiwattanapanich. pp.26-32

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Wit Witthayawate. *Prachya Kansuksa Thai*. Vol. 1. Bangkok: Funny Publisher, 1983.

⁵⁶ Banjong Chantrsa. *Pratchya Kub Kansuksa*. (1979). Vol. 1. Bangkok: Thaiwattanapanich, p.28.

design the education system as a kind of tool to ensure maintenance of their political rule, explaining that it is actually their duty to manage education.⁵⁷

Education Policy

Education is the heart of development in every country. In modern society, competition between countries depends on the knowledge and ability of the people. Therefore, education policy is vital in achieving the goals of the country. This explains why there are different forms of education policies in each country.

In Thailand, the education policy is also in line with the national development plan. Thailand's Education Policy consists of the nine following aspects:

- 1.) The development of education by reforming the learning system.
- 2.) Creating equal educational opportunities for everyone in the country and reducing the cost of education to support sufficient educational resources.
- 3.) Raising the status of teachers to a higher professional status. The curriculum to train teachers should emphasize knowledge, morality, and ethics.
- 4.) Planning higher education courses and vocational education courses that are in line with Thailand's labor market.
- 5.) To develop information technology to make Thai students more competitive with international students.
- 6.) To support research in order to build more national intellectuals.
- 7.) To empower human resources in order to support globalization.
- 8.) Integrate knowledge with traditional wisdom of local communities.
- 9.) Develop the education system in areas of Thailand that would benefit from supporting diversity, particularly in conflict areas, by focusing is on education as a means of coexistence and peaceful diversity.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Wit Witthayawate. *Prachya Kansuksa Thai*.(1983). Vol. 1. Bangkok: Funny Publisher,p.109.

⁵⁸ Pinyo Sainui,Sakda Sathaponwajana and Prasert Intrarak.Thailand's Educational Policy Formulation in Next Decade . *Academic Journal Phranakhon Rajabhat University*, 5(1), 108-117. Retrieved from <https://tci-thaijo.org/index.php/AJPU/article/view/42163>

Higher Education

Higher education is the level of education that comes after high school. The objectives of higher education are the following: to provide the knowledge necessary to develop expertise in a specific field of study; to help expand social development; to disseminate knowledge to communities; to preserve culture and national heritage; and to shape people morally and ethically to benefit their futures.⁵⁹

In Thailand, the concept of higher education is influenced by Western countries.⁶⁰ In the beginning, Thailand's higher education institutions were set up by the Thai elite who chose to adopt the concepts and curriculum of higher education from the West, and was established in the reign of King Chulalongkorn.⁶¹ Originally, higher education in Thailand aimed to create government officers and vassals to serve the modern bureaucratic system. Currently, the management of higher education in Thailand is under the supervision of the Office of the Higher Education Commission and the Ministry of Education.

Lao's critical study of Thailand's higher education reform used the concept of policy borrowing and lending by Steiner and Khamsi's⁶² to explore why global education policy, including education quality assurance, has become an important framework for the implementation of policy in Thailand.⁶³ She found that such policies have been implemented and interpreted by stakeholders in the higher education system. In 1994 the issue of education quality assessment policy became a topic of interest in Thailand's higher education system. The National Education Act 1999 was enacted based on the idea of educational quality assessment, as well as the establishment of the National Education Quality Assurance Institute. Comparing education quality assurance institutions with the global political landscape, Lao argued that the process of globalization might have influenced the establishment of Thai education quality assurance institutions.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Rattana Lao, *A Critical Study of Thailand's Higher Education Reforms: The Culture of Borrowing* (London New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁶⁰ Rattana Lao, *A Critical Study of Thailand's Higher Education Reform: The Culture Borrowing* (London New York: Routledge, 2015)

⁶¹ Joseph and Cynthia, *Equity, Opportunity and Education in Postcolonial Southeast Asia*. (London: Routledge Critical Studies in Asian Education, 2014).

⁶² G. Steiner-Khamsi, & Waldow, F. , *Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education* (London: Routledge., 2010).

⁶³ Rattana Lao, *A Critical Study of Thailand's Higher Education Reform: The Culture Borrowing* (London New York: Routledge, 2015)

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Through a case study of education quality assessment policy, Lao also found that the development process of education policy in Thailand was borrowed from other countries, particularly the Western countries, as influenced by the Thai elite. Lao's historical analysis of the Thai government's role in making higher education policy shows that Thai elites have a strong focus and tend to refer to policies and patterns from other countries, especially the West.⁶⁵

Additionally, policymakers in Thailand desired to enter a new era of modernization. Using the culture of borrowing framework, Lao stated that the shared culture of borrowing, as seen from Thailand's quality assessment policy, illustrates that Thailand utilizes Western modernization and Western development to influence policy.

Apart from the issue of quality assessment in Thailand's higher education, the issue of finding an appropriate model for the National Institution of Educational Testing is also a key area of research. Waraporn conducted a comparison study of effective models of the educational testing institutes around the world. She wanted to analyze various formats of educational testing services, develop an appropriate model of educational testing institutes for Thailand, and assess the social and educational context of Thailand in order to determine the model most suitable for Thailand.⁶⁶

Waraporn found that the most appropriate form of educational testing for use in Thailand is a public organization. This form of educational testing must be a joint action between the government and the private sector, including mutual action between the people within the organization and outside. A good national institute of educational testing institute must work in conjunction with universities, educational service area offices, schools, and other educational organizations.

The most comprehensive study on the development of higher education systems in Thailand is Samrit's work on the governance structure of Thai higher education and the policymaking process used to formulate the national development plan in respect to higher education policy. Samrit observed the relationship between governmental agencies involved in the development of Thailand's higher education throughout the history of changing management systems. The study was based on the concept of the relationship between bureaucracy and policy process, as well as the concept of institutionalism, to illustrate the relationship between subsystems of society. He found that Thailand's university system is still subject to governmental bureaucracy and thus may experience problems in the same way as the central bureaucratic system.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Waraporn Seehanart, "A Development of an Appropriate Model of National Institute of Educational Testing Service for Thailand" (Chulalongkorn University, 2005).

⁶⁷ Samrit Yossomsakdi, *The Development of Governance Structures of Thai Higher Education at the National Level: A Legal Aspect* (HUFS Law Review, 2007).

CHAPTER 3 Research Methodology

The study of the politics of change in Thailand's university admission policy is a qualitative study that utilizes three methods of research: personal interview, group discussion, and literature review.

1. Personal Interviews

Direct interviews are a method of collecting data through interview and discussion. The groups of people who are related to and effected by the university admission policy were divided into four main groups of interviewees.

The first group consists of government officials and staff that work directly on university admission policy and have been involved with several of the changes in admission policy. These interviewees included:

1. A senior head of the Office of Higher Education Commission's Office of Policy Planning. She was working during the transition period that established the Office of Higher Education Commission;
2. A former chief of the National Institute of Educational Testing Service. She also played an active role in founding the National Educational Testing Service in 2005;
3. A staff from the Council of University Presidents of Thailand;
4. The Vice President of academic affairs of the Council of University Presidents of Thailand.

Key Questions for Interviews:

1. Does the university admission system have any problems? If yes, what is/are the problem(s)?
2. Which organizations are involved in creating the university admission system?
3. What was the original objective in the founding of the National Institute of Educational Testing Service? What is the current objective?
4. What is the process of Chulalongkorn University's admission system at the undergraduate level?
5. Why does Thailand's university admission policy change so often?

6. How do changes in the university admission policy affect your university's admission process?

7. What is the main goal of changing the university admission policy?

8. What is the relationship between the government and the university admission policy? Do different governments, either authoritarian or democratic, or political parties affect the creation of university admission policy?

9. What is the degree of openness of the university admission policymaking process for universities and civil society representatives to participate?

The second group consists of students and parents who were affected by the changes in the university admission policy. This group of interviewees included:

1. Two medical students from different medical schools. The reason for choosing these interviewees is that the process of admission for medical schools in Thailand is more complicated than the regular admission process. Apart from the common requirement (60% up of ONET score), the Consortium of Thai Medical Schools (COMES) requires an extra test comprised of 7-9 subjects. Thus, students who want to apply for the medical schools will take twice as many exams. Also, medical schools usually have their own direct admission system, which is open for applications before the central admission system.

2. Two dentistry students from different dentistry schools. The reason for choosing these interviewees is that the process of admission for dentistry schools in Thailand is also more complicated than the regular process. There are three ways to apply for dentistry programs: direct admission by each dentistry school with their own test, the COMES system, which is the same as the medical school, and the central admission system.

3. The former Chairman of the Parents – Youth Network for Education Reform who was very active between 2004 and 2016.

4. Six undergraduate students from several schools who took admission tests in different years. Since the tests have changed several times, some of them took admission tests from different systems. One student was from the department of education, one from the department of commerce, and one from the department of engineering. The other three students came from the department of liberal arts.

Key Questions for Interviews:

1. What is the role of the Parents – Youth Network for Education Reform?

2. As a parent, what is your view on each of the changes in the university admission policy?

3. Why has Thailand's university admission policy changed several times? How has each change affected you?

4. What is the process of admission to medical school? How did you prepare yourself for admissions?
5. What is the process of admission to dentistry school? How did you prepare yourself for admissions?
6. Why did students who received admission to the university decide to deny admission and re-apply again next year? This is very common phenomenon in Thailand is called “fossil students”.
7. What is the degree of openness of the university admission policymaking process for universities and civil society representatives to participate? To what extent do the movements of the Parents – Youth Network for Education Reform impact the creation of the university admission policy?

The third group consists of experts on education issues. The research includes an interview with an expert on education policy who is also an assistant professor at the faculty of education. He is also the current director of the Thai Civic Education Center, which is a research organization that works on the issue of the relationship between citizenship and democracy in Thailand. The center was founded to support teachers and educators in creating curriculum that promotes the concept of democratic citizenship for students. The center aims to encourage people to be socially committed to society through establishment of a network of those who are concerned with education. This informant has also criticized the inequality and quality of the Thai education system in several media events and conferences.

Key Questions for Interviews:

1. What is the impact of changes in the university admission policy on Thailand’s education system and quality of education?
2. What is the primary reason for the number of changes in the university admission policy? How does each change affect those who are involved in the education system?
3. What is your opinion of Thailand’s “education equality”? What is the relationship between education equality and the university admission system in Thailand?

The fourth group consists of a web master and staff from the most popular education website in Thailand, www.dek-dee.com. This website has been providing information on the university admission system in Thailand since 1999. This website works as an intermediary between students and the government agencies that create the university admission policies.

Key Questions for Interviews:

1. What is the role of www.dek-dee.com in the process of university admissions?
2. What was the objective of the establishment www.dek-dee.com? What is the current mission?
3. Why does the university admission policy change so often?
4. What is your opinion of each change in the university admission policy?
5. What is the degree of openness of the university admission policymaking process for universities and civil society representatives to participate?
6. What is your opinion of Thailand's "education equality"? What is the relationship between education equality and the university admission system in Thailand?

2. Group Discussions

Three focus groups were held with about 10-15 participants in each one. One focus group took place in Bangkok and two focus groups took place in Kanchanaburi. Bangkok and Kanchanaburi were selected for this study because these two provinces represent different socio-economic demographic characteristics.

Bangkok has a population of over eight million, making up 12.6 percent of the country's total population. Over fourteen million people (22.2 percent) live within the surrounding Bangkok Metropolitan Region, according to the 2010 census,⁶⁸ making Bangkok the nation's primary city, significantly dwarfing Thailand's other urban centers in terms of importance. Bangkok is home to the oldest universities in Thailand: Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, Kasetsart, Mahidol, and Silpakorn. These universities were founded between 1917 and 1943. The city has maintained its dominance of higher education as the majority of the country's universities, both public and private, are located in Bangkok or its surrounding metropolitan region.

Kanchanaburi is in the western region of Thailand and is the third largest province nationally. Many schools in Kanchanaburi are located in remote areas and have difficulty accessing the central admission system. Kanchanaburi has a population of over 887,979 people, ranking 74th in the country. The population density is 43.53

⁶⁸ "National Statistical. Planning Regions and Provinces the Census and Projected Population of Thai Planning Regions and Provinces," accessed 13 August, 2018, <http://citypopulation.de/php/thailand-prov-admin.php>.

people per square kilometer.⁶⁹ There are about 30 Matthayom schools, one university (Kanchanaburi Rajaphat University), and two small satellite campuses (Mahidol's veterinary school and Western University) in Kanchanaburi.

The first focus group took place in Kanchanaburi. It was a group of high school students, parents, and a university professor. The participants are as follows:

1. Six high school students and five parents from both urban and rural areas;
2. A university professor from a university in Kanchanaburi;
3. Two university students who are from Kanchanaburi but study in an area outside of Kanchanaburi;
4. A student activist who is part of the youth network promoting education reform, including reform of the university admission policy.

Key topics for discussion:

1. Are there any problems in Thailand's university admission policy? If yes, what are the problems?
2. What do you think will be the direction of development of the university admission policy in Thailand?
3. As a student, what is your opinion of each change in the university admission policy?
4. As a parent, what is your opinion of each change in the university admission policy?
5. Why has the university admission policy changed so often? How does it affect you?
6. How do Kanchanaburi students participate in the national university admission system? What are the similarities and differences between the Kanchanaburi case and the rest of Thailand?

The second group also took place in Kanchanaburi. It was mainly a group of teachers, education counselors, and university students. The participants are as follows:

⁶⁹ "Population and Housing Statistics Annual 2560," accessed 3 April, 2018, <http://stat.bora.dopa.go.th/stat/statnew/statTDD/views/showDistrictData.php?rcode=71&statType=1&year=60>.

1. Five high school teachers from schools in Kanchanaburi, both urban and rural;
2. One high school guidance counselor in Kanchanaburi;
3. Two university students who study in Kanchanaburi.

Key topics for discussion:

1. Are there any problems in Thailand's university admission policy? If yes, what are the problems?
2. What do you think will be the direction of development of the university admission policy in Thailand?
3. As a teacher, what is your opinion of each change in the university admission policy?
4. As a parent, what is your opinion of each change in the university admission policy?
5. Why has the university admission policy changed so often? How does it affect high school education?
6. How do Kanchanaburi students participate in the national university admission system? What are the similarities and differences between the Kanchanaburi case and the rest of Thailand?
7. What is your opinion of Thailand's "education equality"? What is the relationship between education equality and the university admission system in Thailand?

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CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

The third focus group took place in Bangkok. This group included university students, graduate students, high school teachers, and a university professor. The participants are as follows:

1. A university student who went to a high school in the Bangkok metropolitan area;
2. Six graduate students: three went to the high schools in the poorest region in Thailand, the north-eastern region; one went to a high school in the northern region; and two went to high schools in the central region. They all participated in the admission system from a region outside of Bangkok. Due to their age difference, some of them went through different admission systems. For their undergraduate education, one studied at a university in the eastern region; two studied at a university in Bangkok; two studied at a university in the northeastern region; and one studied at a university in the central region.

Key topics for discussion:

1. Are there any problems in Thailand's university admission policy? If yes, what are the problems?
2. Why has the university admission policy changed so often? How does it affect those involved?
3. How do changes in the university admission policy affect the Thai education system and the quality of education?
4. What is your experience with Thailand's university admission policy? How is your experience different or similar to others in the group?
5. What is your opinion of Thailand's "education equality"? What is the relationship between education equality and the university admission system in Thailand?



CHAPTER 4 Comparative Perspective of Education and University Admission Systems

The methods of selecting people to study in higher education institutions in different countries are influenced by the educational management system, government policy, society and culture, social values, the emphasis on higher education, and the reputation of the university. For example, Asian countries' examinations are highly competitive at all levels of education. In countries that share similar social and cultural values such as China, Korea, and Japan, university admission policies tend to be similar. In Europe, higher education has a higher rate of competition in certain sectors, such as medical school or law school. However, European students have the opportunity to study in the field that they choose.⁷⁰

Education and University Admission in the United States

The United States of America has an approximate population of 329 Million, which is the third most populated country in the world.⁷¹ It is a country with high diversity in ethnicity and culture. The United States is a highly developed country with the world's biggest economy, according to the world's GDP. It is also in the top rank of several social and economic performing measurements. While the U.S. economy is considered as post-industrial, their manufacturing sector is still the world's second largest.⁷² Moreover, the United States is an outstanding country in politics and culture, and leads the world in scientific research, innovation, and technology.

⁷¹ "U.S. And World Population Clock.," updated 14 December 2018, accessed 14 December, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/popclock/>.

⁷² "World Bank National Accounts Data, and Oecd National Accounts Data Files. ," updated 14 December 2018, accessed 14 December, 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.IND.MANF.CD>.

Education System:

In terms of the education system, every state in the U.S. has its own system of quality control for curriculum, teaching, and education planning, which is independent from the federal government. In each state, there is an educational department, similar to the Ministry of Education, which sets the standards of their education system.

Structure of Education:

The educational structure of the U.S. is divided as follows:

1. Kindergarten: American children begin kindergarten between ages three and six, before going to the next level of school, which is divided into sections called "Grades".
2. Elementary School: total of 6 years: grades 1 - 6
3. High School: This level is divided into 2 phases:
 - 3.1 Junior High School: total of 3 years: grades 7 - 9
 - 3.2 High School: total of 3 years: grades 8 - 12

In each state, compulsory education (consisting of kindergarten and grades 1-12) for every American student is free of cost at a local, public school.⁷³

Types of Higher Institution:

The higher education institutions are divided into four types as follows:

1. Community College: community colleges offer two tracks of study:

1.1 Transfer Track: Offers basic subjects which are equivalent to the first two years of required courses at a bachelor's degree college. After completing the required courses, the student will be able to transfer into the third year of either private or public colleges or universities. The average GPA that students have acquired during these two years will determine if the student will be accepted in the intended college/university.

1.2 Terminal / Vocational Track: Offers a two-year program of courses. After completing the program, students will receive a vocational diploma in the selected subjects.

⁷³"The U.S. Higher Education System: Levels of Study," accessed 9 August, 2018, <https://www.idp.com/usa/forstudents/whystudyintheus/education-system>.

2. College: A college is a higher education institution which offers courses in undergraduate programs (four years) and graduate programs. After completing the program, students will receive a bachelor's degree diploma. The diploma is honored and equivalent to the bachelor's degree diploma granted by both public and private universities.

3. University: A university is a higher education institution which offers undergraduate level programs up to graduate levels. Most of these universities offer both Master and Ph.D. programs.

4. Institution of Technology: Most of these institutions are focused on teaching science and technology. The institution offers bachelor's degree programs, with some offering Master or Ph.D. programs as well.

Higher Education Degree:

Higher Education in the United States is divided into three levels of degrees:

1. Undergraduate: Student usually needs four years to graduate with a Bachelor's Degree. The students are able to choose to study these four years in community colleges, colleges, or universities.

The higher education system of the United States is very flexible, making it possible for students to change their major. American students often change their mind to study other majors they prefer, even after beginning courses in another major.

2. Graduate in pursuit of a Master's Degree: Students will have to submit an entrance examination report along with the application. The examination is determined based on the subject they have selected for study, for example for the law students have to submit the LSAT score, business students have to submit the GRE or GMAT score, and medical students have to submit the MCAT score. In general, students will be attending school for one to two years to complete the Master's Degree.

3. Graduate in pursuit of a Doctorate Degree: The Ph.D. is an advanced education in a specific subject through coursework and seminars, as well as at least one year of research and writing of a dissertation. The dissertation has to contain a perspective, design, or research that has never been published before.

University Admission System:

The admission system in the United States has three main components:

1. Standardized Test Scores: Standardized Test Scores are the main test scores used for the application. There are several tests that universities may choose to require

from potential students such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing Assessment (ACT).

2. Grade Point Average (GPA) from High School

3. Other elements such as portfolios are also very important for admissions decisions. Portfolios may include a student's activities and their achievements in music, sports, social activities, essays, and class rank. A letter of recommendation by a high school teacher is also typically an important part of the application. This letter is a guarantee from a qualified person that the recommended student is eligible to be accepted into the university.

The so-called "American College Entrance Examination"

Even though opportunities for higher education in America are very open, the competition is still very stressful for students who hope to get a seat in a world class university, such as an Ivy League university. The university entrance exam that affects most students is called the "American College Entrance Examination" which is comprised of the following:

1. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT): the SAT is a three-hour standard test that measures the verbal skills and mathematical reasoning skills of the student. The test aims to assess these skills that have been developed the past three to four years of education. These skills are important for students to succeed in studying at the university level. In the admission decision process, most colleges and universities in the United States will refer to the SAT results as an important requirement. In addition, the SAT may also be used to determine a student's eligibility for scholarships.

The SAT is arranged by the ETS (Educational Testing Service) and is open to all students in America seven times per year. The test is divided into seven sections and the examination time is three hours. The SAT components are:

- SAT Verbal: There are three parts of this test: reading, grammar, and analytical reasoning. The forms of questions are analogies, sentence completion, and critical reading. The length of this section is one hour and fifteen minutes.
- SAT Math: This test also contains three parts: algebra, arithmetic, and geometry. The forms of questions are quantitative comparisons (QCs), regular math, and grid-ins. The length of this section is also one hour and fifteen minutes

- Experimental Test: This section is a test which may be either a verbal or a math test. It is only used for internal data of the ETS. The score of this section is not combined with the scores from the other two sections.⁷⁴
2. American College Testing (ACT) Assessment: the ACT is a standard test to assess the reasoning skills, analytical skills, problem solving skills, and communication skills required for higher education in the United States and Canada. The ACT is divided into five parts: English, mathematics, reading, science, and writing.⁷⁵ The ACT score can be used to apply for higher education in the same way as the SAT score.

Each university has their own admissions office for consulting and arranging the process and requirements for admission.

The higher education system in the United States is highly stable and efficient. There are several groups of people involved in the admission process:

1. High school students who have graduated from grade 12
2. Parents: it has actually been studied that parents may get stressed from the admission procedure as much as the students.⁷⁶
3. High school counsellors and consultants: responsible for providing guidance to students when choosing their major and potential universities. They also give advice to the students on application essay writing for the universities they prefer and are qualified to apply for.
4. College Admission Staff: this group of people is involved in the entire admissions procedure. They are usually university staff and professors, and are responsible for setting the admissions schedule, receiving the application documents, and interviewing the applicants.

College and University Visits

Visiting college and university campuses is an important event for the high school students, providing them with their first experience with higher education. In this activity, the student will get a tour of the university, observe and/or participate in courses, and talk with university students and professors. This is very beneficial to

⁷⁴ "What Is Sat? ," updated 30 July 2008, accessed 9 August, 2018, <https://www.dek-d.com/studyabroad/9924/>.

⁷⁵"Digging Deeper to Act Examination, the Examination for Applying to United States and Canada," updated 27 March 2017, accessed 9 August, 2018, <https://www.dek-d.com/studyabroad/45198/>.

⁷⁶ Dwight Garner, "Application Adventure: A Dad's College Essay," *The New York Times*, 3 March 2011.

students as it allows high school students to have direct experience with university life and helps them decide on a major.⁷⁷

Education and University Admission in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has an average population of around 62 million⁷⁸ and the education system is under the control of both the national government (Department for Education) and the local government.

The National Curriculum:

Education is divided into five levels as follows:⁷⁹

1. Key Stage 1 (Ages 5-7, Years 1-2): Students in this level are in the age range of five to seven years old. The three main subjects taught include mathematics, English, and science. This level also teaches general knowledge and topics related to health; for example religion, sports, health care, arts, and recreation.

2. Key Stage 2 (Ages 7-11, Years 3-6): Students in this level are in the age range of seven to eleven years old. The main subjects taught are still mathematics, English, and science. This level also offers additional subjects such as French (or other language studies), advanced mathematics, reading and interpretation, research, and speech. Trained teachers of each subject are responsible for such classes.

3. Key Stage 3 (Ages 11-14, Years 7-9): Students in this level are in the age range of eleven to fourteen years old. In this stage individual subjects are taught by teachers who are trained on each specific subject. These teachers also follow each students' progress and record. The subjects offered at this stage include English, mathematics, science, history, geography, foreign languages, information technology, art and design, music, physical education, demography, and computers.

4. Key Stage 4 (Ages 14-16, Years 10-11): Students in this level are in the age range of fourteen to sixteen years old. This stage is considered high school level. The students have to choose 8-12 subjects to prepare for the IGCSE (International General

⁷⁷Brennan Barnard, "How to Make the Most of a College Visit," *The New York Times*, 11 June 2012.

⁷⁸"U.K. Population (Live)," updated 14 December 2018, accessed 14 December, 2018, <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/uk-population>.

⁷⁹"The National Curriculum," updated 9 August 2018, accessed 14 December, 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum>.

Certificate of Secondary Education) or GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education). The IGCSE test is a national general educational examination of the English educational system, and is offered by international schools that use the English educational system.⁸⁰

The GCSE test is offered by other schools or colleges in England. Students can choose four to five subjects that they have studied in school for the test. However, out of these choices, three subjects are mandatory: English, mathematics, and science. Most students will take the GCSE examination in 5-10 subjects and they have to get at least a C to pass the GCSE exam.⁸¹

5. Key Stage 5 (Ages 16-18, Years 12-13): This level has a study period of two years, which are Year 12 and Year 13. The goal of this level is to prepare for the A-Level Test, and to apply the test scores to their application for admission to the university. The A-Level Test is an academic test for students age 16 and older. While there are more than 50 subjects to choose from, students usually choose only two or three subjects for examination, for instance in science or humanities. The test results are divided into five Levels which are A, B, C, D, and E. All of these five grades are considered as passing the exam, but most of the university will only consider and accept the students with grade C and above. However some universities might only accept students with grades A and B. The A-Level test, then, is an important requirement that the university uses for admissions in higher education.

Higher Education in the United Kingdom

Higher Education in the United Kingdom can be divided into two main levels:

1. Undergraduate Level: This level of study takes an average of three years to complete. Graduates from this level will receive a Bachelor's Degree. Some undergraduate programs that take more than three years to complete include engineering (4 years), architecture (5 years), dentistry (5 years), veterinarians (5 years) and medicine (6 years).

2. Postgraduate Level: This is the next level after completing an undergraduate degree. This level is divided into three levels:

2.1 Postgraduate Certificate Diploma: study period between nine months to one year for students who have graduated with a Bachelor's Degree

2.2 Master Degree: study period between one and two years

2.3 Doctoral Degree: study period of three or more years

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

The University Admission in the UK

Traditionally, the admission system in the UK was based on the way each university independently accepted students, with their own requirements. Later the universities started to accept the O-Level test score (a requirement to ensure the standard of high school students) and the A-Level test score, which is the test every university requires to make the admission decision. In 1961 the Universities Central Council on Admissions System (UCCA) was established to help universities effectively manage multiple applications from students to various universities.⁸²

In 1993 the UCCA merged with the Polytechnics Central Admission System (PCAS) and Standing Conference on University Entrance (SCUE) to create a single independent service: the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). UCAS is a non-profit organization that operates and coordinates the application process for UK universities. It is an independent charity that is funded by fees collected from applicants and universities, as well as the income generated by its own media. UCAS is governed by a Board of Trustees, the majority of whom are leaders of higher education providers.⁸³

UCAS provides several services including several online application portals, search tools, and free information and advice to those who are interested in university admission in the UK.

UCAS announces an admission period once per year during which students complete the application form in order to apply to universities in the UK. Each student can choose five universities and majors. Students also have to submit a recommendation letter and cover letter, which is essential to the admission process of each university.

The UCAS application process is as follows:⁸⁴

1. Register in UCAS website;
2. Fill in the rest of personal details;
3. Choose up to five courses;
4. Add education history;
5. Enter all the qualifications from secondary education onwards;
6. Write a personal statement;
7. Pay the application fee and send the application.

The UCAS Clearing System is another opportunity to apply for undergraduate level studies if the student has already applied to several universities with no response. The UCAS Clearing System is another round of admissions that expands

⁸² "Ucas Official Website 'Who We Are'," accessed 11 November, 2018, <https://www.ucas.com/about-us/who-we-are>.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ "Filling in Your Ucas Undergraduate Application," accessed 11 November, 2018, <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/filling-your-ucas-undergraduate-application>.

opportunities for the students. The procedure is as follows: the student will register and fill out the application along with the personal statement. However, with this system they will not be able to choose subjects other than what they had previously chosen with the regular UCAS application. After applying, the student will get an e-mail with a Clearing Number in order to search for universities with an available slot. Then students will have to contact the university by themselves to begin the admission process of the individual university.⁸⁵

Education and University Admission in South Korea

Education System in South Korea

The educational system of South Korea includes compulsory education for nine years. All citizens have the right to be educated according to their ability. The Education system is divided into a system of 6-3-3-4. This means that students take primary school for 6 years, junior high school for 3 years, high school for 3 years, and university for 4 years.⁸⁶

The basic education consists of 3 levels: kindergarten or pre-school, primary school, and high school as follows⁸⁷

1) The Pre-School: This level is set for children ages three to five years old. The education in pre-school level has several components. The curriculum covers physical activities, social activities, expression, languages, and learning. The Korean Ministry of Education is pushing public schools to provide education at the kindergarten level, as well as encouraging the private sector to participate in this arrangement. There are several organizations providing this level of education in various forms, for example the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.⁸⁸

2) The Primary School: Education at the primary level is mandatory and free of charge.

3) The Junior High School: The junior high school level is mandatory and partially free. Students in the rural areas and students in the special education group under the Special Education Promotion Act will receive this level of education free of charge. Students graduating from primary school will be assigned to a junior high

⁸⁵"2018 Entry Clearing Opens," updated 5 July 2018, accessed 8 August, 2018, <https://wwwucas.com/events/2018-entry-clearing-opens-278741>.

⁸⁶"Education System in South Korea," updated 10 March 2014, accessed 17 August, 2018, <https://www.bic.moe.go.th/index.php/twi-pakee-menu/asia-menu/item/4240-korea-education-system>

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

school by a number-drawing method. This method is used by both public and private schools.

4) The High School: The education at the high school level is divided into two programs: the general high school program and the high schools with vocational programs. Both types of high schools are subdivided into many subject-specific schools, for example schools for science, arts, foreign language, and physical education. While students in the general program are focusing on general academic learning and practice, the specialized high schools were established to match children's intelligence with a specific educational program. For instance, Kyonggi Science School, and also other science schools, have their own student selection method.

Higher Education in Korea

The purpose of the higher educational level in Korea is for students to learn essential theory, to prepare for competition, and to work in the rapidly changing and developing society. Institutions are branched into seven categories, which are colleges or universities, university of industry, university of education, polytechnic college, Post Office University, technical colleges, and other colleges that offers a diploma leading to the undergraduate level.

All higher education institutions are under quality control management of the Ministry of Education. The government will set specific criteria as a standard in order to guarantee the quality of the university. The standard might be set differently according to the type of university. Currently, the government allows universities to be set up at the provincial level, through establishment of small universities that meet the community's needs or professional needs. The university must conduct its own self-assessment every year. External qualitative assessments will be based on research and quantitative assessments from the number of graduates.

The Korean government aims to develop universities to meet the 21st century context. The aims are to elevate higher education institutions to a level of excellence, to be diverse, and to be a university with expertise. Therefore, universities are competing to develop the quality of their education in order to keep up with the knowledge-based society and to be the leading university through improvement of their quality and management.

Universities play a key role in research, development, and producing the workforce necessary to meet the needs of the industry. They have set benchmarks to produce a high quality workforce. Certain regulations have been abolished in an effort to improve the quality of the university. The goal of university development is to create higher education institutions that are strong, administratively autonomous and accountable, flexible and adaptable to change, and efficient. Another goal of university development is to improve universities' management and innovation in

order to enhance the ability of students to meet international standards. The new principle of higher education is to focus on limitless, innovative learning to keep pace with the changes and developments in the modern, knowledge-based society. Students must have the ability to acquire information and must have foreign language skills.⁸⁹

The College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT, also abbreviated as Suneung) is a type of standardized test accepted by South Korean universities since 1994. CSAT is managed by Division of College Scholastic Ability Test, the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE). KICE is officially in charge of creating the questions, printing the tests, correcting the tests, supervising the test-making processes, setting the test fee, and administering the tests.⁹⁰

The group of people who are primarily responsible for the examination for the admission in South Korea consists of the Committee from KICE, high school teachers, and university professors. The group is further divided into two groups with different functions: a group who creates the exams and a group who facilitates the exams.⁹¹

November of every year is an important period for high school students as many of them are anticipating to take the Sunueng. Approximately 650,000 students participate in the exam every year in an effort to enter the top universities in Korea, yet only about 1% of the students will achieve their goal of acceptance into their intended university. The examination took place for the first time in 1994 and has been used continuously since.

There are 6 major subjects in the examination

- National Language
- Mathematics
- English Language
- Subject groups : Korean History, Social Studies, Science, and Vocational Education . Korean History is the only mandatory subject of the group . Other subjects are chosen according to the student's study plan .
- Foreign Language

⁸⁹Office of the Education Council. (2014, March 10). Education system in South Korea. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <https://www.bic.moe.go.th/index.php/twi-pakee-menu/asia-menu/item/4240-korea-education-system>

⁹⁰"Organizational Chart," accessed 17 August, 2018, <http://www.kice.re.kr/englishDept/list.do?m=0104&s=english#>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

The subjects the students have to take exams in are determined by the program and the university that the students intend to study, not by a central unit or government sector. South Korean students must choose the program they want to study first and look at the program's requirements before selecting the exam subjects that correspond to the selected programs. The results are announced in two ways: on the website of the examiner and in the information sent to the students' school. After receiving their score, the student has to apply to the program and university directly. The final admission announcement from the university will be conducted by each university's program departments. There is no central agency involved in the final admission announcement process.⁹²

Regardless of the intensive content of the examination, all examinations must be taken within one day. The CSAT, or Sunueng test, is essentially a test that determines the future of Korean students since it is only offered once. High pressure and expectations, along with the stress from competition, have led to an increase in suicide around this time of year. In addition to the intense preparation, the stock market and department stores open one hour later than usual on the examination day. Also, there will be no taking off or landing of aircrafts for about 30 minutes during the English listening sessions in order to not to disturb the examination. Furthermore, buses, trains, and other services are available and ready to take the students to more than 1,200 examination sites nationwide in a timely manner. Students may also ask for help from the police to send them to a testing site. The news agencies reporting news on the exams throughout the whole day.⁹³

Education and University Admission in China

The educational system in China is conducted by the Ministry of Education. There are nine years of mandatory education in China, and the education system is divided into three main levels: basic education, high school, and higher educational.⁹⁴

1. Basic Education: Six years of primary school followed by six years of junior high school and high school. The Chinese government gives great attention to basic education. The primary school level in China begins at the age of 6 years old,

⁹²"Korean Entrance System," updated 24 February 2010, accessed 19 August, 2018, <https://www.dek-d.com/studyabroad/19314/>.

⁹³Suneung, the tuff university admission of South Korea. (2016, October 20). Retrieved August 19, 2018, from <https://www.admissionpremium.com/content/3035>

⁹⁴ "Explainer: Everything You Need to Know About the Gaokao," updated 6 June 2018, accessed 19 August, 2018, <http://www.thatsmags.com/china/post/13965/explainer-gaokao>.

according to the Chinese education law. The junior high school is a period of three years.

2. High School level: High school in China is categorized into general high school program, high school with professional training, and vocational education. High School in China takes three years and it is not mandatory, therefore students are responsible for their own tuition fees, which differs according to location. The subjects offered in high school are Chinese, mathematics, foreign language, physics, chemistry, biology, and more. Most of the high schools in China are public schools but there are also some private schools. In order to enter into the high school level, the student has to take an examination and will be selected based on their exam score. Exams are administered by the Regional Education Department.

3. Higher Education Level: Higher education level offers a diploma, Bachelor's Degree, Master Degree, and Doctorate Degree. The diploma program usually takes two to three years. A Bachelor's Degree usually takes four years. The faculty of medicine and some other majors offer a five-year program. The Master's Degree takes two to three years and the Doctorate Degree takes three years.

The University Admission in China (Gaokao)

Every year, the 7th - 9th of July are the days that admission exams are offered, marking the fate of Chinese high school students nationwide. After the examination season ends, there will be more than a million disappointed students in China, while there will be only a few who passed.

For Chinese children, passing the exams means a guarantee for the future and a stable job, on the other hand, the future of those who failed the exams seems to be dark and difficult. The atmosphere during the exam is very tense. Chinese students have to practice for the exam a few years in advance, leading to high school students facing high stress levels from extra tutoring.

The Chinese government is trying to reform the entrance examination to solve the problem of memorization. The government creates examination questions that encourage student to use their creativity, along with promoting creativity in learning and teaching in the primary and high schools. The government also encourages higher education institutions to be self-reliant, which means establishing an inclusive and fair selection system for potential students.

The current examination system is called "Gaokao". The examination is held only once per year with the following subjects ⁹⁵:

⁹⁵ "Is China's Gaokao the World's Toughest School Exam? ," updated 12 October 2016, accessed 19 August, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/12/gaokao-china-toughest-school-exam-in-world>.

1) Mandatory Subjects

1.1 Chinese with the score of 150

1.2 Mathematics with the score of 150

1.3 English with the score of 150

2) Elective Courses

2.1 Subjects in Arts: Geography, History, and Chinese Politics

2.2 Subjects in Sciences: Physics, Chemistry, and Biology

The Gaokao Examination has a full score of 750. In 2016 Peking University, the top university in the country, admitted the lowest score of 678, which shows that university admissions in China are very intense and highly competitive, particularly due to the large population. For this reason, a large number of Chinese students choose to study abroad at the university level in order to remove themselves from the competitive system. The government is also focusing on addressing fraud in the admission system by imposing a maximum of seven years imprisonment.⁹⁶

Education and University Admission System in Japan

Japan pays a lot of attention to its education system, and the current system is influenced by the American educational system⁹⁷. The Japanese Constitution sets forth the basic national educational policy as follows: "All people shall have the right to receive an equal education corresponding to their ability, as provided by law. The people shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive ordinary education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free."⁹⁸

⁹⁶"Get to Know Gaokao," updated 31 May 2017, accessed 19 August, 2018, <https://www.dek-d.com/studyabroad/45803>.

⁹⁷"Education in Japan," updated 1 May 2005, accessed 19 August, 2018, <https://wenr.wes.org/2005/05/wenr-mayjune-2005-education-in-japan>.

⁹⁸Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. (n.d.). Principles Guide Japan's Educational System. Retrieved August 19, 2018, from <https://web.archive.org/web/20130601071835/http://www.mext.go.jp:80/english/introduction/1303952.htm>

Education and University Admission

The Japanese education system is divided into the 6+3+3+4 system:

1. Kindergarten (Yochien): pre-school level of education for children ages 3-5 years old with the purpose of developing the children's mind, brain, and introduction to society.

2. Elementary Schools (Shogako): primary school level for children ages 6 years old and above, the study period is six years.

3. Lower Secondary Schools (Chugakko): junior high school level for students ages 12-15 years with a study period of three years.

4. Upper Secondary Schools (Koto-gakko): high school level for students who have graduated from elementary schools and lower secondary schools. Usually, the student has to compete in the examination to get into high school. In 2003, 72.9 percent of upper-secondary graduates (including those retaking the university entrance examination) enrolled at an institution of higher education of some description.⁹⁹

5. Secondary Schools (Chuto-kyoiku-gakko) , is a level of education established in 1999, that offers both lower secondary school and upper secondary school education in the same institution throughout a period of six years.

6. Institution of Higher Education: institutions in this level are divided into three main categories¹⁰⁰ :

6.1 Universities (Daigaku) : a university that focuses on advanced academic knowledge and research. Students who wish to continue their study here has to graduate from the Upper Secondary Schools and take an exam. The study period usually takes four years. After graduating, the student will receive a Bachelor's Degree. Furthermore, there is also a program for Master's Degree and Ph.D.

6.2 Junior Colleges (Tanki-daigaku) : an institution that focuses on vocational courses that can be applied in real life. Students studying in this level must have graduated from Upper Secondary Schools.

6.3 Colleges of Technology (Koto-senmon-gakko): these institutions differ from Universities and Junior College in that Colleges of Technology accept students from Lower Secondary Schools and have a study period of five years. These institutions focus on providing technical knowledge that can be applied later in a career.

⁹⁹Clark, N. (2005, May 1). Education in Japan. Retrieved August 19, 2018, from <https://wenr.wes.org/2005/05/wenr-mayjune-2005-education-in-japan>

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

University Admission in Japan

The University Admission exam in Japan is divided into two rounds¹⁰¹ .

1. The National Center Test for University Admissions: A national test is used by many private and government universities as a requirement for university admission. The examination is held in January every year. The examination period is two days and the examination will be held at the same time throughout the country. The National Center Test is carried out by each university in conjunction with the National Center for University Entrance Exams. The National Center Test is the driving force behind the diversification of university admission selection methods. The National Center Test primarily aims to measure basic academic achievement by applicants to universities upon concluding a high school level education. National and local public- and private universities use the test scores by applying their own criteria and using a multifaceted approach to judge the ability and aptitude of the examinees to receive higher education.

The university admission examination arranged by the National Center Test for University Admission is a social issue that has been raised by the media. This is because the test is held only once per year. The student who fails the test will have to try again in the year after, which means the exam is an important event that many people are paying attention to. Some universities decide on successful candidates using only the National Center Test, but the most prestigious universities require the candidates to take another, institution-specific exam, which is often more difficult than the National Center Test.

The National Center Test contains both subjective tests and objective tests with multiple choice. The test consists of 26 forms of examination from 6 subjects. The scope of the test is correspondent to the high school program of the Ministry of Education: culture, sports, science, and technology.

The student chooses which subjects to take according to the university major they intend to enter. There are approximately 700 test sites in Japan and approximately 800 universities using the test result for admissions.¹⁰² Students will not know their own scores before applying for admission.

2. University Test: The University Test is held at the end of January. It is an examination specifically arranged by each program or university. The subject of the test is also arranged by the program or university. The content of the examination corresponds to the program that students are applying for.

¹⁰¹"University Entrance Examinations ,a Key Life Stage for Young Japanese. ," updated 11 April 2015, accessed 19 August, 2018, <https://www.nippon.com/en/features/jg00032>.

¹⁰² "National Center Test for University Admissions," accessed 19 August, 2018, <https://www.dnc.ac.jp/albums/abm00006725.pdf>.

Models of University Admission

The admission models that are widely used in higher education institutions are

1. **Center Test only** : Some universities only use the score of the National Center Test in the admission procedure .Universities using this method are usually private universities .
2. **Center Test and Secondary Examination** :The university will select candidates based on two factors :The National Centre Test score and the score from their own university's test .Universities using this method are usually public universities .
3. **Center Test as primary decision**: Some universities use this method by taking the National Center Test score as the first criteria to select the applicant .If the score meets the requirement, the student will be eligible to take the University Test .This method is usually used in leading universities with high competition .

Key Agencies Involved in University Admissions

1. National Center for University Entrance Examinations) NCUEE : (An independent organization that conducts the **National Center Test for University** Admissions . It was founded in 1977, but did not manage the national university entrance examination until 1999.¹⁰³

The roles of NCUEE in proceeding the National Assessment are as follow:

- developing the examination;
- producing the test and sending it to all the test sites nationwide;
- producing the examination preparation manual and university guide;
- solving the problems associated with the university admission system;
- grading the test, calculating and announcing the test score;
- sending the individual test scores to the university .

2. Public and Private Universities across the country.

The university will be the one to set their own criteria for future students in different majors. The criteria may vary from university to university, including the model of examination. Some universities also arrange their own university test.

The universities participating in the central university entrance examination will have the following responsibilities:

- announcing the criteria and subjects required;
- facilitating the students with location and authorities on the day of examination;
- handing out examination manuals for the examination candidates;

¹⁰³ Ibid.

- collecting the exams and handing it over to the examiners;
- assisting in the development of the examination system and test.

3. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology

The responsibility of this ministry is to set the high school curriculum and use the content of the curriculum to develop the National Center Test.

4. High Schools

The high schools' role in university admissions is to facilitate students who are graduating from high school in applying for the National Center Test.

There are two application methods. In the first method, students in high school can apply during high school. The second method is for students who already graduated from high school and are not affiliated with any educational institution. They can apply directly at the NCUEE.

Chapter 5 Higher Education and the University Admission System in Thailand

History of Higher education in Thailand

Higher education in Thailand started in the reign of King Rama 5 in the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴ Originally, the establishment of higher education institutions was to produce more human resources for the new bureaucracy, which had just gone through major reforms to better serve the modern absolutist state. In 1902 a training school for civilian officers was founded.

With the vision to build a university in Thailand, King Rama 6 established Chulalongkorn University as the first comprehensive higher education institution in Thailand in 1917.¹⁰⁵ After the revolution in 1932, higher education institutions in Thailand developed their role in society by performing as an institution to promote democracy¹⁰⁶ and to prepare Thai citizens for the new political environment. Thammasat University (The University of Moral and Political Science) was founded in 1934. Between 1932 and 1949 many universities were established around Bangkok. For example, three universities were founded in 1948: Kasetsart University as an agricultural institution, Silapakorn University as an art institution, and Mahidol University as a medical institution.¹⁰⁷

Originally, universities in Thailand were under various relevant ministries. Chulalongkorn University was under the Ministry of Education, Kasetsart University was under the Ministry of Agriculture, etc. In 1959, under the new developmental and authoritarian regime led by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat as the Prime Minister, all universities were moved to be under the administration of the Prime Minister's office. The centralization of university administration made managing the universities easier. In 1967 the first form of the Ministry of Higher Education was founded under the Prime Minister's Office, and was fully developed into the Ministry of University Affairs in 1970.

¹⁰⁴David Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

¹⁰⁵ "History of Chulalongkorn University," accessed 17 August, 2018, <https://www.chula.ac.th/about/overview/history/>.

¹⁰⁶Oliver S. Crocco, "Thai Higher Education: Privatization and Massification," in *Education in Thailand: An Old Elephant in Search of a New Mahout.*, ed. Gerald W. Fry.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Following the demands of society, private universities were established by the Private College Act 1969.¹⁰⁸ Private universities have contributed to the public sector by producing the human resources necessary to meet the needs of society.¹⁰⁹

In 1972, the Council of University Presidents of Thailand (CUPT) was founded to organize the management of universities. The first major role of CUPT was to cooperate with the Office of the Education Council to propose separating the universities from the bureaucracy to Field Marshall Thanom, the head of the junta and the Prime Minister at that time. The idea behind the proposal was that in order to achieve academic excellence, the university needs to have administrative autonomy, the freedom to disseminate knowledge, and the ability to conduct research. The proposal was paused due to disagreements among the universities and the fact that the junta was not ready to make a decision.

In 1987, the Ministry of University Affairs initiated the 15 years plan (1990-2004). One of the six major recommendations of the plan was to promote government reform of the relationship between higher education institutions and the government. The main objective of this plan was to develop all public universities under the Ministry of University Affairs to be autonomous, flexible, effective, and academically excellent. All existing public universities would be transformed into non-bureaucratic institutions, and future public universities would have a non-bureaucratic status right away.¹¹⁰

After 1997, the year Thailand was hit hard by economic crisis, the idea of an autonomous university was seriously proposed and encouraged during the Chaun Leekpai administration. The move was an effort to meet the conditions from the ADB (Asian Development Bank) to receive a loan. The cabinet resolution of 27 January 1998 stated that:

1. The university will be granted administrative power over their operations budget, but not the salary budget from the 1999 fiscal year onwards. Operational outcome monitoring will be set up to ensure accountability and transparency of the university's operations.
2. All public universities will be developed into either an autonomous university or a university under the supervision of the government by 2002. By December 1998 at least one public university will be transformed into a university under the supervision of the government.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.,226.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid,

¹¹⁰ "University Privatization: From the Beginning to Presents (1)," updated 19 October 2012, accessed 17 August, 2018, <https://thaipublica.org/2012/10/autonomous-university1>.

¹¹¹Ibid.

Currently, there are 157 universities in Thailand which can be divided into the following groups¹¹²;

- 11 Limited admission public universities
- 2 Open admission universities
- 21 Autonomous university
- 75 Private higher education institutions
- 38 Rajaphat universities
- 9 Rajamangala universities of Technology
- 1 Community college institute

Higher education in relation to overall education in Thailand

According to the Educational Act 1999, Section 15¹¹³, there are three main types of education systems in Thailand: formal education, non-formal education, and informal education. Section 16 mentions that Thai education can be divided into two levels: Basic Education and Higher education.

Basic Education is the 12 years of education before higher education. The first six years are called 'Prathom Sueksa' in Thai, and the following six years are called 'Matthayom Sueksa'. Moreover, Mathhayom is divided into two levels; 1) the first three years are junior high school and 2) the second three years are high school. Students who have graduated from the junior level can choose to study another three years in a high school or change to a three-year vocational school.¹¹⁴

The Thai education system can be divided into four stages as follows:

2.1 Pre-School Education

Pre-school education, or kindergarten, in Thailand has very long history. Around 1892 or 1893, Kindergarten was established to provide education for princes and princesses. A few years later, kindergartens were built in many areas across the country.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Oliver S. Crocco. (2018). Thai Higher Education: Privatization and Massification. In Gerald W. Fry (Ed.), *Education in Thailand: An old Elephant in Search of a New Mahout*.

¹¹³ Ministry of Education of Thailand. (n.d.). The elation of Thai Education Act 1999. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <http://www.moe.go.th/hp-vichai/ex-prb05-3.htm>

¹¹⁴ Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, "History and Development of Thai Education," in *In Education in Thailand: An Old Elephant in Search of a New Mahout*. , ed. Gerald W. Fry (2018).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.,4.

Pre-school education provides knowledge for children under the age of five. Although the education at this level is not part of the basic education curriculum, or considered compulsory, statistics from 2013 reveal that 39% of children between three and five years old are enrolled in the local authority's Child Development Center, and 58% of Thai children are enrolled in the Ministry of Education's kindergarten schools.

2.2 Primary School

Primary school is the next level of education after pre-school. Traditionally, primary schools were located in- and operated by Buddhist temples, with monks in the teaching roles.¹¹⁶ Article 17 of the Education Act in 1999 stated that the primary education is the beginning stage of basic education in Thailand. Thai children have to enter primary school when they are six years old and not older than seven years old.¹¹⁷ Primary school education is divided into six levels with students between the ages of six and twelve.

2.3 Matthayom School

Secondary education in Thailand is divided into two tracks: the general Matthayom school and the vocational school (Ar chee wa School).

- The General Matthayom School:

The Matthayom school is divided into two levels: Matthayom Ton (Matthayom 1-3 equivalent to Junior High School Grades 7-9) and Matthayom Ply ^{ระดับ} _{ศึกษา} (Matthayom 4-6 equivalent to High School Grades 10-12).

Matthayom Ton students may choose academic courses and professional courses that are suited to their abilities, while Matthayom Ply students can choose courses that will benefit their future careers.

The Matthayom Ply level of education places emphasis on academic knowledge and professional skills that suit with the student's age, needs, and interests so that the student is better equipped to choose their future career. Matthayom Ply is a three-year program and the students are 12 to 17 years old. Matthayom graduates are then able to choose the career that fits their age and capability, or to further their studies at the university level.

- Vocational School

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ministry of Education of Thailand. (n.d.). The elation of Thai Education Act 1999. Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <http://www.moe.go.th/hp-vichai/ex-prb05-3.htm>

Article 20 of the Education Act 1999¹¹⁸ stated that vocational education and training can be organized at the public educational institution, private educational institution, workplaces, or through the collaboration between educational institutions and the workplace. Vocational schools are under the Ministry of Education's Office of the Vocational Education Commission, which was founded in 2012.

There are three levels of vocational education in Thailand:

Level 1: The Certificate in Vocational Education, Bor Wor Saw. This level is pursued during the upper secondary period.

Level 2: The Technical Diploma, Bor Wor Chor. This level is pursued by students after leaving school.

Level 3: The Higher Diploma. This is a university level program that may offer a bachelor's degree.¹¹⁹

1.4 Higher Education

Every university in Thailand is under the supervision of Office of Higher Education Commission. Universities in Thailand can be divided into four main groups:

- 34 National Universities (Autonomous universities under government supervision)
- 39 Rajaphat Universities
- 9 Ratchamongkol Universities
- 66 Private Universities

Higher Education in Thailand is primarily divided into two levels:

- Undergraduate level:

Generally, undergraduate curriculum in Thailand takes an average of four years. However in some programs such as the Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Education, or Faculty of Architecture, the curriculum takes more than four years.

- Graduate level

Graduation programs in Thailand can be divided into two levels: Master degree and Doctoral degree. Master degree programs typically take a minimum of two years and Doctoral degree programs take around three to six years.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ "Vocational Training in Thailand," updated 10 February 2018, accessed 17 August, 2018, <https://www.vocationaltraininghq.com/vocational-training-in-thailand/>.

History of Changes in Thailand's University Admission Systems (1961-2017)

Before 1961

The system of selecting people to study in universities in Thailand before 1961 was a system in which each university created their entrance examinations independently.

1961

Kasetsart University and Mahidol University¹²⁰ started to cooperate by creating a common university entrance system.

1962

More universities joined the common university entrance system, including Chulalongkorn University, Thammasart University, Silapakorn University and King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi¹²¹

1964

Chiang Mai University and Khon Kaen university joined the common university entrance system.

1966

Chulalongkorn University proposed to the cabinets to cancel the common university entrance system and to instead hold separate university entrance examinations. The cabinet agreed at first, but many problems occurred. One example is that many universities had to postpone the beginning of the semester because there were too many interviews being held across the various universities.

1967

The cabinet ordered to cancel the separation of university entrance examinations and to reinstate the common system. Two more universities joined the common system: Prince of Songkla University and King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang.

¹²⁰ Mahidol University was the hospital's medical school at that period.

¹²¹ King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi was the Thonburi Technical College.

1973 Entrance System

The Ministry of University Affairs was founded in 1972 and played an important role in creating the first comprehensive, centralized university admission system (“Entrance System”), introduced in 1973. The Entrance System was used the longest when compared to future admissions systems. The entrance examination was offered only once per year and consisted of five subjects. Students who participated in the Entrance System could choose up to six programs to apply for. However, academics and students have pointed out that this system caused many problems. For example, students paid less attention to class and more attention to tutorial school because the content of the entrance examination did not correspond to the content of the class.



1999 UCAS System

Under the framework of “Educational Opportunity Expansion”, introduced by Thailand’s Education Reform in 1999, the reform of Thai education came after the strong demand of the government to improve the quality of education in line with social and global conditions. Educational reform during that time was divided into two periods.¹²² During the first period, the 1997 Constitution assigned the government to create the educational law, resulting in the Education Act 1999. The purpose of this Act was to improve the curriculum, learning management, teacher development, and educational quality assessment, and to reorganize the structure of educational organizations.

In 2011, there was a second education reform. One of the significant purposes of the second education reform was to improve and expand educational opportunities for people in all areas to have equal access to education. During this period, a policy providing 12 years of free education was launched. It was found that the law was able to successfully promote the expansion of educational opportunities. Both 12 years of free compulsory education and the student loan fund helped students to stay longer in the educational system.¹²³

The Ministry of University Affairs and Council of the University Presidents of Thailand (CUPT) worked together to introduce a new university admissions system. Students were given two chances to take the examinations each year and would know

¹²² Anyarat Nameung, "Educational Reform in Thailand," (2010).

¹²³ Athapol Anunthavorasakul. (2017, July 12). Mauekansueksatha0itidkubdukkankhaengkhan [Thai education trapped in competition] [Interview]. *Sarakadee*. Retrieved October 30, 2018, from <https://www.sarakadee.com/2017/07/12/athapol-anantaworasakul/>.

their scores before choosing faculties and universities, allowing students to estimate the probability that they could attend the chosen department. The major change in this university admission system was the use of 10% of a student's high school GPA to apply to the university.¹²⁴ However, the claimed improvement of this system still brought new problems upon students, parents, and many schools. They explained that each school has a different GPA system so the high school grade should not be used for university admission. However, this system was still used continuously for seven years.

2006 Admissions System or O-net/ A-net System

CUPT proposed a change in the admission policy to the Ministry of University Affairs by arguing that 30% of the student's high school GPA should be used in the new admission system. Additionally, they proposed that each university has the autonomy to have their own examination and qualification requirements, and that the O-Net (Ordinary National Educational Test) and A-Net (Advance National Educational Test) would be administered by the new National Institute of Educational Testing Service (Public Organization). This university admission model proposed by CUPT was unanimously approved to begin in 2006. This new university admission system was called "Admission" and is also known as the "O-Net / A-Net system".

The O-Net / A-Net system led to many new problems. Students complained about the number of examinations they had to take in one year, as O-Net required eight subjects and

A-Net required five. The requirement to use 30% of a student's high school GPA created controversy regarding the credibility of each school's standards. The O-Net and A-Net system became unpopular. Students turned instead to the direct admission system of individual universities to increase their chance of gaining admission, even though the direct admission entrance exam costs more than the O-Net / A Net system.

2010

In 2009 CUPT announced a new university admission system, which was a modified version of the old one. The A-Net examination was abolished and in its place came the GAT and PAT system, administered by the National Institute of Educational Testing Service. GAT, or General Aptitude Test, is an examination divided into two subjects: Analytical skill and English. PAT, or Professional Aptitude

¹²⁴ Waraporn Sehanart Former director of The National Institute of Educational Testing Service, interview by Nitchapat Kitchareern, 17 April, 2018.

Test, is divided into ten subjects. The admission score of each student is then comprised as follows: O-Net (30%), High School GPA (20%), GAT and PAT (as determined by each program)¹²⁵. This system was used for university admissions in 2010 and allowed students to take the GAT and PAT up to four times per year.

However, in 2010 the Consortium of Thai Medical Schools organized an additional, specific test consisting of seven specialized subjects for those who wanted to apply to the Faculty of Medicine at each university in Thailand. This came about in response to the argument from the Consortium of Thai Medical Schools that the GAT and PAT system did not meet the requirements of the Consortium¹²⁶. GAT and PAT examinations were reduced to three times per year in 2011, and two times per year in 2012. In 2012, the CUPT introduced a new kind of examination called the Seven Common Subject Examinations (Jed Wi Cha Sa Man – 7 subjects), administered by the National Institute of Educational Testing Service. The CUPT encouraged all university's direct admission systems to use the Seven Common Course score.

2013

The new admission system, Clearing House, was added into the existing admission system to reduce students' burden of applying through several direct admissions processes. The new Central Admission system had two rounds: the Clearing House and the regular admission. In the first round, students took and submitted the Seven Common Subjects Examinations score directly to each program they were applying for. If applicants were accepted in more than one program, the students were required to select only one. Those who were not accepted through this program would continue on to the regular admission system.

2015

The CUPT expanded the Seven Common Subject Examinations (Jed wi cha sa man) into nine subjects (Nine Common Subject Examinations - Kao wi cha sa man), stating that the Seven Common Subjects Examination was not enough to meet the university's requirements. However, the Nine Common Subjects Examination became less popular among universities that offered the direct admission process. This led to an increase in direct admissions and the quota system.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ For example the Department of Government of Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University Political Science Program required 50% from GAT and 0% PAT while the Department of Public Administration of Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University Political Science Program required 40% from GAT and 10% PAT.

¹²⁶ Former director of The National Institute of Educational Testing Service, 17 April 2018)

¹²⁷ For example, direct examination of Srinakharinwirot University that is held every year is the most popular one. There were 29,799 applicants in 76 programs. There were 10,475 people who passed the test and 3,079 people who passed through the interview (*Sathiti*

2017

On June 1, 2017 CUPT proposed a new university admission system, the TCAS, or Thai University Central Admission System. The TCAS system consists of five rounds of applications. In the first round, students submit a portfolio. The second round is a quota application. In the third round, students are processed through a system similar to the old Clearing House. The fourth round is regular admissions, and the fifth round allows universities to admit any student autonomously.

The TCAS system still led to several problems, including the popularity of tutorial schools due to the complex and competitive examinations, an increase in the number of examinations for admissions, and an increase in the overall cost of examinations.¹²⁸



Yodphusamak Laephankhaorobtangtang: Rubtrongtuapai SWU Peekanseuksa 2560 [Direct Admission's statistics of applicants and the finalists in Sinakharinwirot University 2017], 2018x.

¹²⁸ In the third round of TCAS, for example, the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy of Chulalongkorn University announced the list of 166 students who passed the program's entrance exam. However, there were only 49 students who showed up to the interview. This is because those who were admitted to the program were also admitted to other programs, such as the Faculty of Medicine. (*TCAS Robsamyoungwunmailerk [Disorder of TCAS system the third round still occur continuously]*, 2018). The CUPT announced the addition of another round of applications to solve the problem mentioned above. The CUPT, however, argued that the problem is not a serious one because it affected only few universities. (*CUPT Yaewya TCAS Robsam, - [CUPT solve third round TCAS's problems.]*, 2018)

TCAS System

First Round	Portfolio Round for students with special skill No written exam
Second Round	Quota System i.e. quota for network schools, quota for student in the area etc. System with applicants required to submit scores from O-Net,Gat,Pat and probably other tests that universities deem appropriate.
Third Round	Direct Admission System with applicants required to submit scores from O-Net,Gat,Pat and Nine common subject.
Fourth Round	Central Admission, a scores-based admission system. Require O-Net, Gat, Pat and high school GPA
Fifth Round	Direct Admission System offered by institutes that still have seats left. Each universities can create their own examination and selection criterion.

*Applicants who have already got a seat from a previous round will not be allowed a seat in a further round.

Figure 1 TCAS System 2017



Chapter 6 Important Actors and the Processes in Thailand's University Admission Policy

Important Actors

- Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education was established in the reign of King Rama 5th on April 1, 1892. Originally, this ministry had responsibilities in education, religion, nursing, and museum. Nowadays, the ministry has a major role in providing education, religion, and culture.¹²⁹ This organization is a Ministry of the Thai government. It has the duty to equally promote education to people of every age and in every area of Thailand. The Ministry of Education is responsible for educational opportunities and controlling the quality of education at every level.

The reform of Thai education in 1997 came after strong demand from the government to improve the quality of education in line with social and global conditions. The Thai Ministry of Education consists of five government departments under its control, including the Office of Permanent Secretary Minister of Education, Independence Committee for Education Reforms, Office of Basic Education Commission, Office of Vocational Education Commission, Office of Higher Education Commission and Office of Ministry of Education.

The Office of Higher Education Commission is the most relevant to the university admission policy as this department used to be a university admission policymaker, but it is no longer relevant to the university admission system at all. The objectives of the organization are:

- 1.) Provide equality and educational opportunities;
- 2.) Encourage various agencies to participate in education;
- 3.) Promote professional education;

¹²⁹ "Introducing the Ministry of Education," accessed 12 October, 2018, <http://www.moe.go.th/moe/th/profile/index.php?Key=profile>.

- 4.) Encourage Thai students to pursue higher education, in both local and open institutions;
- 5.) Provide life-long learning opportunities;
- 6.) Provide education for personnel development;
- 7.) Encourage talented people to learn to express themselves in the right way;
- 8.) Provide services to help develop society.¹³⁰

From 1999 to 2018, the period observed in this study, there were 21 ministers of the Ministry of Education as follows:

Table 2 Minister of Ministry of Education 1999 - 2017

Name	Year	Political Party
1.Somsak Pritsananutthakul	1999-2001	Chart Thai Party
2. Doctor Kasem Wattanachai	2001	Appointed by the junta
3. Taksin Shinnawatra	2001	Palangdharma Party
4.Suwit Kunkitti	2001-2002	Social Action Party
5.Pongpol Adiraksan	2002-2003	Chart Thai Party
6.Adisai Potharamik	2003-2005	Thai RakThai Party
7. Jaturon Chaisaeng	2005-2006	Thai RakThai Party
8. Vichit Srisa-an	2006-2008	Appointed by the junta
9.Somchai Wongsawat	2008	People Power Party
10. Srimaung Chareonsiri	2008	People Power Party
11. Jurin Luksanavisit	2008-2010	Democrat Party
12.Chinnaworn Boonyakiet	2010-2011	Democrat Party
13. Vorawat Aeu apinyakul	2011-2012	Phue Thai Party
14.Suchart Tharadumrongdech	2012	Phue Thai Party

130 Official Website of Ministry of education. (n.d.). Introducing The Ministry of Education. Retrieved October 12, 2018, from <http://www.moe.go.th/moe/th/profile/index.php?Key=profile>

		Party
15. Pongthep Thepkanchana	2012-2013	Phue Thai Party
16. Jaturon Chaisaeng	2013-2014	Phue Thai Party
17. Sutsri Wongsamarn (Acting minister)	2014	Phue Thai Party
18. Adm. Narong Pipatthanasai	2014-2014	Appointed by the junta
19. Gen. Daopong Ratthanasuwan	2014-2015	Appointed by the junta
20. Doctor Theerakiet Charoensetsiri (Acting minister)	2015-2016	Appointed by the junta
21. Doctor Theerakiet Charoensetsiri	2016-Present	Appointed by the junta

Information from the official website of Ministry of Education of Thailand Retrieved from <http://www.moe.go.th/moe/th/profile/index.php?Key=profile>

- Council of University President of Thailand (CUPT)

The CUPT was founded in 1970 at Chulalongkorn University, at the same time as the national university started to compete in sporting events. According to the history of the Rector of Thailand, it appears that before the founding of this organization Thai universities were in crisis. The government at that time was reforming the administration system in order to abolish unnecessary agencies and organizations. The Advisory Board Governors of the government then proposed transferring all universities to the Ministry of Education. In the establishment of CUPT, it assigned university presidents to make an agreement regarding cooperation between universities. This agreement is called 'An Agreement on the Council of University Presidents of Thailand 1972.' After the draft was complete, the first meeting was held on January 29, 1972 at Chulalongkorn University.

The meeting approved the agreement, which was then signed by representatives from twelve institutions including Kasetsart University, Khonkaen University, Chulalongkorn University, Chiangmai University, Thammasart University, Mahidol University, Ramkhamhang University, Silapakorn University, Prince of Songkla University, Vittayalai Vichakarnsuksa, Sukhothai Thammathirat University and Institute of technology. The objective of creating the CUPT in the first place was to facilitate cooperation among the members and to help protect the interests of the group. Later, the CUPT changed their role in the Thai education system and started to perform as a policy influencer. In 1972 they proposed the

privatization of national universities to the Prime Minister.¹³¹ After that, the CUPT slowly expanded its role in many significant education policies in Thailand.

The CUPT is an independent organization for the benefit of coordination between universities and higher education institutions and currently has 34 members. It is a center that allows space for universities and higher education institutions to exchange experience and opinions, and to propose initiatives that will enable their innovative ideas to work.

The members of the CUPT are:

1. Chulalongkorn University
2. Kasetsart University
3. Khon Kaen University
4. Chiang Mai University
5. Thammasat University
6. Mahidol University
7. Srinakharinwirot University
8. Silpakorn University
9. Prince of Songkla University
10. King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang
11. King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi
12. King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok
13. Naresuan University
14. Burapha University
15. Maharakham University
16. Maejo University
17. Mae Fah Luang University
18. Walailak University
19. Ubon Ratchathani University
20. Thaksin University
21. Suranaree University of Technology
22. Nakhon Phanom University.
23. University of Phayao
24. Kalasin University
25. NIDA
26. Suan Dusit University
27. Princess of Naradhiwas University
28. Navamindradhiraj University
29. Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
30. Mahamakut Buddhist University
31. Ramkhamhaeng University
32. Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University

¹³¹ University Privatization: From the beginning to presents (1). (2012, October 19). Retrieved August 17, 2018, from <https://thaipublica.org/2012/10/autonomous-university1/>

33. Chulabhorn Graduate Institute
34. Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music

The mission and status of the CUPT as announced on October 30, 1999 are:

1. The CUPT will increase its role of policy guidance to the government and lead the community and society in solving development problems. To develop resilient communities and promote sustainable development of the country using knowledge gained from research.
 2. To accelerate the academic excellence of each university and institution, and maintain its ideology by the following methods:
 - Strengthen management;
 - Be flexible, effective, transparent and verifiable;
 - Be independent in management of finance, academia, and human resources;
 - Promote academic cooperation between public and private universities, both domestic and international.
 3. The CUPT will be held on other special projects to promote the role of the university.
 4. Promoting arts, culture, development of local wisdom, and sports, including activities to promote the role of women, peace, and the environment both in the national international context.¹³²
- Association of the Council of the University Presidents of Thailand
This organization was formed to establish a legal status for the CUPT.¹³³
 - Ministry of University Affairs

The Ministry of University Affairs was established in 1967. Originally, the organization was under the administration of the Prime Minister's Office. Later in 1970, the Ministry of University Affairs separated from the Prime Minister's Office and became an autonomous ministry. This provided the organization more freedom to administrate and develop the higher education system. The duties of the organization are to create the higher education policy, to evaluate the performance of universities,

¹³² "History of Council of University Presidents of Thailand," accessed 12 October, 2018, <http://www.cupt.net/aboutus>.

¹³³Wattanaporn Sukprot Director Bureau of Policy Planning in Office of Higher Education Commission, interview by Nitchapat Kitcharern, 2 April, 2018.

and work as a liaison among universities. The organizations that work under the control of the Ministry of University Affairs is as follows:¹³⁴

- Office of Permanent Secretary of Ministry of University Affairs
- Chulalongkorn University
- Kasetsart University
- Khon Kaen University
- Chiang Mai University
- Thaksin University
- Thammasat University
- Naresuan University
- Burapha University
- Mahasarakham University
- Maejo University
- Ramkhamhaeng University
- Srinakharinwirot University
- Silpakorn University
- Prince of Songkla University
- Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University
- Ubon Ratchathani University
- King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi
- King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok
- National Institute of Development Administration

In 2003, the New Administration Act was launched to transition from the Ministry of University Affairs to become the Higher Education Commission.¹³⁵

- The Higher Education Commission

The Higher Education Commission was established under the New Administration Act in 2003. It is one of the five major organizations of the Ministry of Education. There is also a committee for higher education who is responsible for the higher education system in Thailand. The Office of the Higher Education Commission has the authority and responsibility to study, analyze, investigate, and guide the development of higher education and to propose policy and standards for institutions that provide higher education all over the country.

The Higher Education Commission is responsible for planning the development of higher education in accordance with the requirements of the National

¹³⁴ "History Of the Offices of Higher Education Commission," accessed 12 October, 2018, http://www.mua.go.th/2018/?page_id=1666.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Economic and Social Development Plan. This National Education Plan must follow the international agreement. The committee then needs to follow up with the education system in universities including examine and evaluate the management of higher education, gathering information for higher education, assess the quality of teaching as well as the instructor and take care of the curriculum in the institutions under the control.

The organization needs to allocate subsidized funds to higher education institutions and community colleges. The Office of the Higher Education Commission also coordinates and promotes human resource development to every student including disadvantaged people in the higher education system.

Another duty of The Office of the Higher Education Commission is to promote research to create new knowledge that help development of the country. Aside from that, The Higher Education Commission must work as assigned by the Minister of Education and other relevant legislation.¹³⁶

- National Institute of Educational Testing Service

This government agency, which acts as a public organization, was established by the Act on the Establishment of the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (Public Organization) (NIETS) in 2005. This organization is under the supervision of the Minister of Education.

The National Education Testing Institution was established as a public organization in order to provide the most effective work and to be able to use existing resources, maximizing benefits. Being an independent organization, the institution is able to create a more fair exam. With this neutrality, the organization can work efficiently to achieve its objectives, provide education evaluation, and facilitate precise educational testing services. It also serves as a national and international educational testing cooperation center for many countries.

The National Education Testing Institution is responsible for arranging exams in the following subjects:

- The General Aptitude Test, or GAT, was introduced in 2010

¹³⁶ The official website of The Offices of Higher Education Commission. (n.d.). History of The Offices of Higher Education Commission. Retrieved October 12, 2018, from http://www.mua.go.th/2018/?page_id=1666

- The Professional Aptitude Test, or PAT, was also introduced in 2010 and includes the following subjects:

PAT1 or Mathematical Aptitude Test

PAT2 or Scientific Aptitude Test

PAT3 or Engineering Aptitude Test

PAT4 or Architecture Aptitude Test

PAT5 or Professional Teaching Profession Test

PAT6 or Aesthetics in Fine Arts Test

PAT7.1 or French Language Proficiency Test

PAT7.2 or German Language Proficiency Test

PAT7.3 or Japanese Language Proficiency Test

PAT7.4 or Chinese Language Proficiency Test

PAT7.5 or Arabic Language Aptitude Test

PAT7.6 or Pali language Aptitude Test

PAT7.7 or Korean Language Aptitude Test

- The Ordinary National Educational Test, or ONET, was introduced in 2006
- The nine common subjects test (Kao wi cha sa man) was introduced in 2012
- Vocational National Educational Test, or V-NET
- Islamic National Educational Test, or I-NET
- Non-Formal National Education Test, or N-NET
- Buddhism National Educational Test, or B-NET ¹³⁷

Civil Society

In Thailand's university admission process, civil society groups and organizations are also involved. One that has remained an important actor is a website named www.dek-dee.com. Dek-dee.com was established by a group of high school students in 1999 with the purposes of creating an online community for high school students. The website was very famous among the high school students at that time

because there were no other informational websites, web boards or any other place for students to discuss about the university admission process.¹³⁸

This website is a forum to exchange information about education between students in Thailand. In the years before digital communication developed into social media, this website was the center for news distribution to Thai students all over the country. During the admission period, Dek.Dee.com fills the role of an intermediary to collect complaints and appeal to examining agencies and universities. When students find problems in the university entrance exam, they will post questions and comments together on the website. This website has been Thailand's largest news center to inform and help students with the admissions process and the university entrance examination for 19 years.

Since the establishment of dek-dee.com, website resources have expanded to include a score comparison program, university admission training program, guidance program, and pre-university admission examination program to help students prepare for the university admission exam. Staff from dek-dee.com are invited to meetings that seek to resolve the problems that occur in the university entrance examination, in order to represent students and negotiate with the governmental organizations. It can be assumed, then, that Dek.Dee.com is the largest and most concrete university admission problems claim center in Thailand.¹³⁹

Another important civil society actor that works on university admission policy problems is the Parent-Youth Association Thailand. The association was active from 2006 to 2017. The purpose of the association is to reform education in Thailand, especially the university admission system. The Parent-Youth Association Thailand established their position by sending many open letters to various organizations involved in university admission policy making. However, the president of the Parent-Youth Association stated that "The movement of civil society about the university admission are always the weak movements and sometimes it is a waste of time because the policy maker do not really listen to the civil society."

¹³⁸ Manas Ornsung News editor and website administrator of www.dek-d.com, interview by Nitchapat Kitcharern, 28 May, 2018.

¹³⁹Ibid.

Thailand's University Admission Policy Making Process

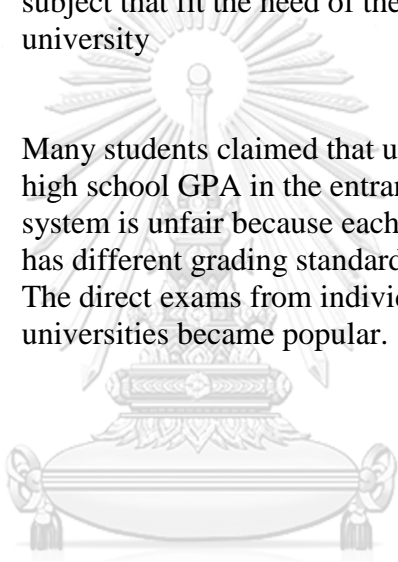
Table 3 1999 Entrance System (UCAS)

Process	Activity	Participants
Problem Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High School Equivalency Testing discouraged students to stay 3 years in the high school. - Offering the exam only once per year led to stress for students 	Ministry of University Affairs
Agenda Setting	Ensure that students stay in the high school system	Ministry of University Affairs
Policy Formulation	<p>Ministry of University Affairs appointed the education committee to develop the university examination system.</p> <p>The committee came up with idea to use students' high school GPA in the university entrance system.</p>	Ministry of University Affairs Education Committee
Policy Legitimation	Ministry of University Affairs announced the new entrance system.	Ministry of University Affairs
Policy Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses 10% of a student's high school GPA <p>Offers the entrance examinations twice per year</p>	Ministry of University Affairs Education Committee
Policy Evaluation	<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decreases the stress of high school students - Increases the chance to receive a higher score - Solve the high School Equivalency Testing - Students know their score before choosing the program 	The policy evaluation process was conducted by society and media.

	<p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first round of entrance exams began in October. Students had not yet finished high school at time. - This meant that teachers had to teach the same content in a shorter amount of time - Tutorial schools became popular because students needed to finish all of the high school subjects before the first round of entrance exam 	
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Table 4 2006 Admission

Process	Activity	Participants
Problem Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GPA was not standardized across all high schools - Criticism regarding the standard of the examinations 	CUPT OHEC Media
Agenda Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A specific organization must take on the responsibility of arranging exams for university admission - The GPA must be qualified by the Ministry of Education. 	CUPT OHEC
Policy Formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The National Institute of Educational Testing Service (Public Organization) or NIETS was established in 2005. - CUPT assigned NIETS to create a new examination for the new entrance system. - OHEC worked as a coordinator 	CUPT OHEC NIETS
Policy Legitimation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CUPT announced the system on April 30,2005. 	CUPT

Policy Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The O-net and A-net exams launched in 2006 - 30% of a student's high school GPA was included in the new entrance system 	NIETS CUPT OHEC
Policy Evaluation	<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students paid more attention to high school classes - A-Net test provides more specific subject that fit the need of the university <p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many students claimed that using high school GPA in the entrance system is unfair because each school has different grading standard. - The direct exams from individual universities became popular.  <p>จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย</p>	The policy evaluation process was conducted by society and media.

CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Table 5 2010 Admission System

Process	Activity	Participants
Problem Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O-net and A-net exams are not the best method to assign the right students to the right program 	CUPT

Agenda Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a new examination system 	CUPT
Policy Formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NIETS created the GAT and PAT examinations - CUPT decided to run the admission system under name of AUPT 	NIETS CUPT AUPT
Policy Legitimation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CUPT announced the system in 2009. 	CUPT
Policy Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Canceled A-net - Created GAT and PAT - Added 20% more weight to GPA 	CUPT NIETS AUPT
Policy Evaluation	<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students paid more attention to high school classes - More chances to take exams meant that students could choose their best scores to submit for entrance evaluation <p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many students claimed that using high school GPA in the entrance system is unfair because each school has different grading standard. - The direct exams from individual universities became popular. - Contents of the exam (GAT and some portions of PAT) were not aligned with the subjects taught in high school. - The content of the exams caused an increase in the use of tutorial schools. 	The policy evaluation process was conducted by society and media.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University admission costs were increased - Some universities do not fully trust the admission test, They still organized their own admission test - Too many examinations for students 	
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Table 6 2013 Admission System

Process	Activity	Participants
Problem Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students went to several direct examination provided by many university - Students was unwilling to commit oneself to the school they got accepted. Student in the waiting list is losing an opportunity to get it. - High cost of direct admission system - Tutorial school problem 	Media Social media Public CUPT
Agenda Setting	Solving the amount of direct examination and students unwilling to commit oneself to the school they got accepted	CUPT
Policy Formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a new examination: The Seven Common Subjects examination. 	CUPT NIETS
Policy Legitimation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CUPT announced the system in 2012. 	CUPT
Policy Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Seven Common Subjects examination was launched - Begin centralization of direct admission examinations. 	CUPT NIETS

Policy Evaluation	<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students paid more attention to high school classes - More chances to take the exams meant students could choose their best score to submit in the entrance evaluation - Clearing House can solve the problem of student unwilling to commit oneself to the school they got accepted. <p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many students claimed that using high school GPA in entrance system is unfair because each school has different grading standard. - University admission costs increased - Some universities continue to use the direct admission - Less but still an issue of students unwilling to commit oneself to the school they got accepted. Student in the waiting list is losing an opportunity to get it. - Inequality between rich and poor students - Too many exams for students 	The policy evaluation process was conducted by society and media.
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Table 7 2015 Admission System

Process	Activity	Participants
Problem Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The problem of student unwilling to commit oneself to the school they got accepted. - High cost of examinations - Tutorial schools 	Media Social media Public CUPT

Agenda Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To solve the problem of student unwilling to commit oneself to the school they got accepted. 	CUPT
Policy Formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve the direct admission system by using a Clearing House method 	CUPT
Policy Legitimation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CUPT announced the system in 2013. 	CUPT
Policy Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing the Seven Common Subjects exam to include two more subjects, creating the Nine Common Subjects exam 	CUPT NIETS
Policy Evaluation	<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearing House can help the problem of student unwilling to commit oneself to the school they got accepted. - More chances to take the exams meant students could choose their best score to submit in the entrance evaluation - Provides more opportunities for admission <p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University admission cost increased - Too many exams for students - Inequality between rich and poor students 	The policy evaluation process was conducted by society and media.

Table 8 2017 TCAS System

Process	Activity	Participants
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Problem Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearing House can help the problem of student unwilling to commit oneself to the school they got accepted. - High cost of university admission system - Tutorial Schools - Examination period is too long. It must be shortening. - the problem of student unwilling to commit oneself to the school they got accepted. 	Media Social media Public CUPT
Agenda Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CUPT held several meetings with its members and came up with the following agenda: - Examination period is too long. It must be shortening. 	CUPT
Policy Formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CUPT designed the TCAS system in member meetings 	CUPT
Policy Legitimation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CUPT announced the system in June 1,2017. 	CUPT
Policy Implementation	<p>5 rounds of university admissions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portfolio submission 2. Quota filling 3. Direct Admission 4. Admission 5. Direct Admission System offered by institutes that still have seats left. 	CUPT
Policy Evaluation	<p>Arranged a public briefing after TCAS round 3 and round 5</p> <p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides more opportunities for admission <p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The period of examination preparation is too short. - Increased cost of application from the addition of Round 1 (cost of creating a portfolio) 	CUPT

Note: - Information is from

1. The official website of The National Institute of Educational Testing Service. (n.d.). National Testing and Assessment. Retrieved October 12, 2018, from <http://www.niets.or.th/en/>
2. Official website of Council of University Presidents of Thailand. (n.d.).TCAS. Retrieved October 12, 2018, from <http://www.cupt.net/aboutus/>
3. Waraporn Seehanart. (17 April 2018). Former director of The National Institute of Educational Testing Service. [Interview.]
4. Wattanaporn Sukprot. (2 April 2018). Director Bureau of Policy Planning in Office of Higher Education Commission [Interview.]
5. CUPT appointed AUPT to arrange the new admission system. (2009, May 7). Retrieved October 12, 2018, from <http://www.moe.go.th/moe/th/news/detail.php?NewsID=13503&Key=hotnews>

CUPT - Council of University Presidents of Thailand

NIEST-The National Institute of Educational Testing Service

AUPT- Association of Council of University Presidents of Thailand

OHEC - The Offices of Higher Education Commission

CHAPTER 7 Analysis: The Politics of University Admission Policy in Thailand, 1999-2017

The Dominant Role of the Council of University President of Thailand

Kingdon describes the policymaking process as comprising of four key steps: 1) choosing key issues that will lead to policy – these may be problems that are happening at the moment or a long succession, 2) narrowing down the issues to the extent required. In this process, there are always issues to be recruited and issues that are being dropped, 3) choosing one particular option among all the alternatives, and 4) putting the policy into practice.¹⁴⁰ Kingdon believes that success in one step of the process is not as important as success of the whole. If only one or two steps succeed, this cannot guarantee the success of the whole process. In this analysis, the concept of policymaking was applied to study the process of changing the university admission policy.

Kingdon explained that in the process of shaping policy, the agenda must be clearly defined. The agenda is a list of issues, or a single issue, that has been proposed by the government, officers, and other stakeholders. The stakeholders involved in this process are divided into two groups: the internal and the external groups. The internal group includes the Prime Minister or the Minister representing the leadership in the administration who will play a key role in shaping the policy and senior government officials that are of high rank in the administration. The external group consists of interest groups, political parties or political organizations, media, academics, and groups of public opinions.¹⁴¹ In the policymaking process, there is a gateway through which policy problems and issues from around the country flow, but whether they can pass through is dependent on the decision of gatekeeper. As gatekeepers are very important, they should consist of various groups of people.¹⁴²

In the process of Thailand's university admission policy making, the study found that since 1999 the most important actor in the process is CUPT. This organization monopolized the entire policymaking process. Before 1999, the cabinet, the Minister of Education, and the Ministry of University Affairs and the Office of

¹⁴⁰ Kingdon, J. W. (2014). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies* (Second edition, Pearson new international edition). Harlow: Pearson.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Colebatch, H. K. (2002). *Policy* (2nd. ed). Buckingham: Open Univ. Press.

Education Council had full authority to make admission policies. Those groups and organizations are state agencies that are legally responsible for policymaking process.

One of the key rationales behind the new admission system is the notion of “autonomous university” which is the idea that the university should be autonomous from tight bureaucratic control. Despite the fact that the idea had been discussed since 1964, the actualization of the idea took place in the late 1980s amidst a change in the university administration. Since the late 1980s, public universities started to have more autonomy from government control, especially in terms of budget and administration. The new wave of globalization in the 1990s and the economic crisis in 1997 played key roles in increasing financial constraints on the universities, which were increasing the sizes and availability of programs in order to finance themselves with less support from the government.¹⁴³

Despite the collaboration between CUPT and the Ministry of University Affairs in formulating the university admission policy in 1999, CUPT gradually gained more power and became the dominant policymaking power in 2003. The Ministry of University Affairs was changed into the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) with less administrative power. The function of the testing administration (testing service), which once belonged to the Ministry of University Affairs, was transferred to a new public organization, The National Institute of Educational Testing Service. The OHEC has no direct authority over The National Institute of Educational Testing Service¹⁴⁴. With the separation of policy administration and testing administration of the Ministry of University Affairs, CUPT gradually gained more influence in the university admission policy formulation.

At present, the authority to make changes in the university admission policy is under control of CUPT. This research found that changes in the university admission policy came from agreements among the representatives from the main members at the CUPT meetings at which the admission system is reviewed.¹⁴⁵

CUPT proposes their decision to change the admission system to the Minister of Education. Then, CUPT announces the new admission system to the public by holding a press conference. CUPT coordinates with the National Institute of

¹⁴³ The concept of an autonomous university began most substantially in 1987 when the Ministry of University Affairs initiated the 15-Year Plan for Higher Education. One of the key issues was to develop higher education institutions that are independent, efficient, and able to achieve academic excellence on their own. They changed the structure to be a university *under the supervision of government*. Autonomy directly effects the university's management of their budget, leading some universities to increase the tuition fees.

¹⁴⁴ Manas Ornsung. (28 May 2018). News editor and website administrator of www.dek-d.com. [Interview.]

¹⁴⁵ Waraporn Seehanart. (17 April 2018). Former director of The National Institute of Educational Testing Service. [Interview.]

Educational Testing Service for test administration. The National Institute of Educational Testing Service only works on the contents of the test to serve the admission system that has been determined by CUPT in terms of the subjects required to apply for each program.

From an interview with an officer of the Office of Higher Education Commission, the reason why CUPT's decision to change university admission policy each time since 2003 has been accepted by the government agencies is based on the belief that CUPT's decision is based on evidence and professional experience. Thus, the policy made by the CUPT is considered a reasonable policy that can be trusted. Another reason is that every university in Thailand has academic freedom and autonomous administrative power that the government should not interfere with. The government is only responsible for supervising and supporting them.¹⁴⁶

Aside from CUPT, the Minister of Education, other public organizations such as Office of Higher Education Commission and the social sector have a limited role in the policymaking process. People and the media were excluded from participating in CUPT meetings. Students, parents, and media were only invited to the public hearing session organized by CUPT in response to the problems that were raised with the admission system. After the hearing session, CUPT would decide among their members to revise or change the system. However, this is done without further consultation with- or approval from those affected by policy. These findings did not correspond with Kingdon's idea of participatory policy formulation in which the policymaking process should consist of the people, media sector, and the group of people who are involved. The Thai case shows that although limited participation took place, the social sector still maintains a small role in policymaking.

CUPT is in fact neither a government agency nor a civil society organization. CUPT's dominant role in the formation of admission policy might be seen as a way to focus on the interests of its members rather than the general public. Also, CUPT's dominant role might go beyond its mission of providing general opinions and suggestions to the government, not a full packaged policy.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Wattanaporn Sukprot. (2 April 2018). Director Bureau of Policy Planning in Office of Higher Education Commission [Interview.]

¹⁴⁷ The Agreement on CUPT in 1971 stated that there are three missions for CUPT to practice. First, CUPT was established to coordinate among universities in Thailand. Second, CUPT must be a connector between universities in Thailand and the government. And third, CUPT is an organization that suggests policy and provides broad opinions regarding the shared interests of the universities. (The Official website of Council of University Presidents of Thailand. (n.d.). Retrieved June 3, 2018, from <http://www.cupt.net/aboutus/>)

The Council of University Presidents of Thailand as a Policy Elite

Lao argues that the early age of higher education in Thailand was intended to educate the ruling class on the new administration of the bureaucracy.¹⁴⁸ This indicates that the higher education policy of Thailand originated from the elites in the country. From the past to the present, the elite in Thailand, such as high ranked officers, politicians, and academics, still express themselves clearly as influencers of policy decisions. Thai elites attempt to involve themselves with domestic policy in various ways. Typically, the way they create policy is based on Western knowledge. The educational policy is also one of their products.

The role of the policy elite in policymaking has been discussed by many academics. The policy elite refers to policy influencers who have positions in the government or in departments that are involved in policymaking processes. The policy elite is influential, has the power to make policy decisions, and takes responsibility for the policies that they have created. The policy elite is usually composed of cabinets, government officers, and legal organizations. The form and characteristics of the policy elite in each country might be different. In some countries, they may not be represented by only one group, but can be many groups of people that push policy in various ways.¹⁴⁹

When talking about elite in Thailand, such persons are linked to every sector and level of the country in various ways, including at the policy level. The elite is an influential group who support or oppose policy. The question of this analysis is, if we prove in the beginning that the changes in Thailand's university admission policy was caused by CUPT, then which is the main influence sector in this policymaking process, and who are the people that play an important role in the meetings that create the admission policy?

The research found that the policy elite in Thailand's university admission policy process is the group of elite universities that are members of CUPT. CUPT is an organization that coordinates the cooperation between the participating universities, officially formed in 1972. Currently, there are 34 universities as its primary members. Member universities have to pay 40,000 baht per annum. CUPT acquired legal status as the Association of Council of the University Presidents of

¹⁴⁸ Wyatt, D. K. (1969). *The politics of reform in Thailand: education in the reign of King Chulalongkorn*. New Haven: Yale University Press. As cited in Lao, R. (2015). *A critical study of Thailand's higher education reforms: the culture of borrowing*. London ; New York: Routledge.

¹⁴⁹ Rattana Lao, *A Critical Study of Thailand's Higher Education Reform: The Culture Borrowing* (London New York: Routledge,2015)

Thailand as there is a legal requirement to do so if fees are collected from the members.

It must be emphasized that CUPT does not include all the universities in Thailand as their members. However, non-members of CUPT can participate in decisions by providing input, but only upon CUPT's invitation. Non-members have typically accepted the decision of CUPT and have participated in the admission system since 2003.¹⁵⁰

The research found that in spite of their limited role in admission policy formulation, most CUPT non-members (Rajabhat, Ratchamangala, and private universities) accepted the university admission policy actively created by the main members of CUPT. They also participate in every round of the admission process to recruit students into their universities.¹⁵¹ It seems as though the Rajabhat and Rajamangala universities have the option not to comply with CUPT admission policy, but it is clear that the choice is very limited. The reason they participate seems to be that they want to be included into the system of admission in order to attract students into their universities even when they are not the first preference.

The case of university admission policy in Thailand also complies with the theory of top down policymaking proposed by Dye¹⁵². The theory states that most public policy in the United States is driven by the political sector rather than public offerings. The elite are also the groups that influence things and drive the main policies of the country in a way that maintains their power, further passing elite power on to the following generations.¹⁵³

University admission policy in Thailand is an example of a tool utilized by the elite to maintain their influence and power in the country. A small number of universities in Thailand are reputed to be the top universities in the country.¹⁵⁴ Getting

¹⁵⁰ There are four “groups” or “tiers” of the university in Thailand. The first group is the elite group who are the main members of the CUPT. They represent the famous national universities. The second group is the group of Rajabhat Universities which was developed from a teacher/ community college. The third group is a group of Ratchamangala University of Technology, developed from a technical/community college. The fourth group is a group of private universities. (News editor and website administrator of www.dek-d.com, 28 May 2018).

¹⁵¹ Manas Ornsung. (28 May 2018). News editor and website administrator of www.dek-d.com. [Interview.]

¹⁵² Dye, T. R. (1978). *Understanding public policy* (3d ed). Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Not all large and rich universities are considered elite universities. The two largest universities in Thailand are Ramkhamhaeng University and Sukhothai Thammathirat University. They are open universities, while several rich universities are private universities.

into such universities has become a high value marker in Thai society. This kind of university is the university that produces famous people including politicians, academics, high-ranking officers, medical officers, and celebrities who are highly respected in society. This type of university attracts many people and requires a top-ranking score from both the old Entrance system and the new Admission system. That's why admission to this type of university is very competitive. The 2017 TCAS admission system record (first round) shows that there were 79,493 applicants to apply for the 34,993 seats offered from the CUPT main members and famous universities. On the other hand, in the Rajabhat university system there were 47,854 applicants to apply for the available 63,305 seats¹⁵⁵.

The top universities can also choose highly qualified high school students to enter the university. These youths are key in maintaining top universities' leading status. These famous universities are the ones that hold primary membership in CUPT as admissions policymakers. It can be concluded that these elite universities have created the format and the rules for admission to meet the needs of their own universities. The number of examinations and rounds of admission provides the top universities with more opportunities to recruit and find talented students. The more rounds of university admissions, the more chances for elite universities to gain students. Thus, Thailand's university admission policy is a filter designed by the policy elite and in favor of the elite universities' demands.

The examination timelines are another way to give the elite universities more opportunities to recruit talented students as the university admission timeline is based on the top universities' schedule. Some universities, such as Rajabhat and Ratchamongkol, have different semester systems and different timelines but they have to comply with the elite universities.

Lao's work regarding the logic of the Thai higher education sector on quality assessment policy explained that Thai education policy was originally established by the Thai elite, and has been borrowed from a successful education policy in Western countries. However, Thailand's university admission policy is not simply a borrowed policy in terms of the direct import of a foreign model. Instead, it is a re-contextualization from a model that the elite consider as modern and successful even though the policy may not fit with the Thailand's reality and may create a more complex system with less success. Domestic factors, including the elite's preference to maintain their status and power by limiting involvement from society and their complaints about the cost of admission to the poor, confirms that the re-contextualization of the admission policy does not help students to get to the top university. The university admission policymakers claim that most of the examinations, such as the O-net and A-net, are influenced by the O-level and A-level

¹⁵⁵ "Statistics of Tcas System in the First Round, Recruitment by Portfolio 2017 ", updated 6 February 2018, accessed 20 June, 2018, <https://www.admissionpremium.com/content/3290>.

in England.¹⁵⁶ In fact, the substance of the tests does not seem to be compatible. The content of the test in Thailand has faced several critiques from students, parents, and the public.¹⁵⁷

Oversupply and Rhetoric

Another problem that is occurring in Thailand's university admission system is the decreasing number of students who apply to universities. Between 2010 and 2017, the number of seats in universities are more than the number of applicants throughout the year. For example, in the year 2017, seats in the Central Admission System were 136,030, with only 81,232 candidates.¹⁵⁸ The reason for decline in the number of university students can be divided into two major causes.

First, the decline in fertility in Thailand is a leading cause in the decreased amount of university applicants. According to demographic statistics in Thailand, the incidence and number of children in Thailand is continuously decreasing. The number of children under 15 years old between 2005 to 2035 will be reduced from 14 million (23% of the total population) to 9 million (14%). The rapid decline in the number of young people will result in a steadily decreasing number of school-age children (ages 6-21) from 16 million in 2005 to 11 million in 2035.¹⁵⁹ When the population of school children decreases, the number of people entering higher education is declining in the same way. The number of students are decreasing, yet the universities continue to open new faculties and new programs. This is why in the past seven years there are enough seats in the university system for everyone that applies.

The shift in global educational trends also contributes to oversupply in Thai university. In the United States over the past ten years, 500 universities have closed

¹⁵⁶ Waraporn Seehanart. (17 April 2018). Former director of The National Institute of Educational Testing Service. [Interview.]

¹⁵⁷ The UK admission system has no central admission system, unlike Thailand. Instead the UCAS, University and College Admission System, is organized by a charity organization that coordinates students to apply for university, and students can also apply directly to each university in the traditional manner. (The Official website of UCAS. (n.d.). Retrieved June 5, 2018, from <https://www.ucas.com>)

¹⁵⁹"Thai Population in the Future," Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, <http://www.ipsr.mahidol.ac.th/IPSR/AnnualConference/ConferenceII/Article/Article02.htm>.

down and it is projected that in the next 15 years, more than half of the 4,000 universities will experience financial problems.¹⁶⁰

Since 1990, most universities in Thailand have been in some forms of autonomous ones. That means they are free to manage themselves in every way, including finances and budgeting. When fewer students are enrolled, the universities need to adjust themselves more as the lower number of students affects the financial condition of the university. Many universities have come up with new marketing plan by opening special programs to attract more students. Those special programs usually cost more than the normal program in the university.¹⁶¹

Another factor contributing to oversupply in the university system in Thailand is the state funds in terms of student loan provision: the student loan fund (Kor Yor Sor). The loans are administered by a government agency under the supervision of the Minister of Finance. The purpose is to support and create more opportunities in education by providing loans for students in various ways. Eligible students are those who lack funds and who study in the fields that are essential and necessary for the development of the country. This fund covers fees up to the university level, and repayment begins after graduation. This loan program resulted in the expansion of educational opportunities at the university level and has allowed many students to enter the university system who may not have had access before.

Due to the oversupply problem at universities in Thailand, universities need to enroll a large number of students each year in order to maintain the university's economic condition. This may lead to more complex systems of admission examinations every year by adding more rounds of examinations, adding more subjects, or adding more examination fields. The policymakers claim that the different examinations facilitate various results to match the diversity of the available study programs and give students more opportunities to enter the university. Compared to the old Entrance system in 1973 – 1998, a one-time selection process leaves many people out of the university system who may then enter a private university or must wait another year to retake the test. The current system of selection to the university with several rounds seems like it provides more opportunity to the students. In fact, an extension of the university admissions system becomes a big and powerful rhetoric. The real reason is that the university admission system is a way for many universities to accommodate all of the students who want to apply for an elite university. This provides students with many chances to receive admission to CUPT

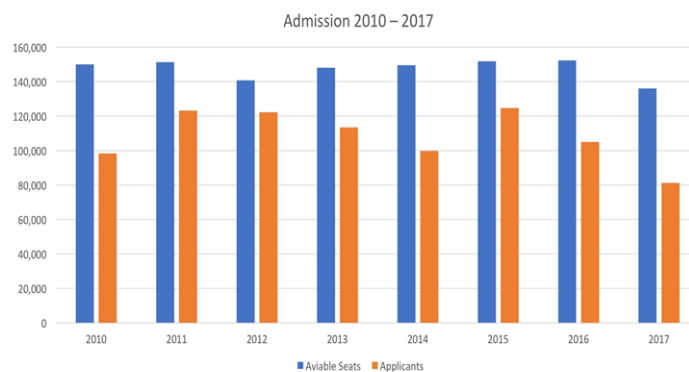
¹⁶⁰"Harvard Business School Professor: Half of American Colleges Will Be Bankrupt in 10 to 15 Years," updated 15 November 2017, accessed 20 June, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/15/hbs-professor-half-of-us-colleges-will-be-bankrupt-in-10-to-15-years.html>

¹⁶¹ For example, the tuition fees in regular programs at Kasetsart University (Bangkhen) are 12,000-17,000 baht, but a special program can cost up to 40,000 baht. (Information from Official Website of Kasetsart University retrieved from July 20, 2018 from <https://www.ku.ac.th/web2012/index.php?c=adms&m=mainpage1>)

member universities, rather than turning to private universities or alternative educational systems.

*Figure 2
of seats*

*Number
and*



applicants in Thailand's university admission 2010 - 2017

Note: Information from <https://www.admissionpremium.com/content/1033> and <https://www.theactkk.net/home/homenew1/DetailsNews.asp?TID=8355>

Impact on Openness of Equality and Educational Opportunity

The study of changes in Thailand's university admission policy found that such policy in Thailand is not only related to the elite universities, but also affects social class.

There have been several reasons for changes in Thailand's university admission policy each year from 1999 to 2017. But one of the most popular reasons used to support the change is to create more equal educational opportunities for students in Thailand. According to the announcement of CUPT, the main problems of the university admission system in Thailand from the past to the present are still the same problems: high cost of university admission examinations, importance of tutorial schools, etc.

Furthermore, a policy may set out to solve one problem but on the other hand may cause a different problem. For example, the policy of using students' high school GPA for university admission set out to solve the problem that students do not pay attention in high school classes. However, many students claim that using the high

school score is unfair because each school might have different standards.¹⁶² The CUPT has responded to students by claiming that every school in Thailand is closely monitored by the Ministry of Education. Thus, the GPA from each school is of the same standard and they are generally acceptable.¹⁶³ In fact, this issue reflects the problem of disparity in quality of Thai education, especially among several schools.

The university admission policy not only exacerbates disparity in the quality of education, but also the inequality of opportunity. The policymakers always state that the changes in university admissions are created to solve the problem of unequal opportunity. In reality, however, the changes in university admission policy have created more gaps in the equality of educational opportunity. Thailand's university admission systems affect the educational opportunity in several ways i.e. the changes affect poor students, both in the city and in the rural area, more than students in middle class families who live in the city. The prices that a student has to pay to access the admission process include examination fees, admission application fees, portfolio, tutorial schools, and the traveling cost to the examination center and tutorial schools.

By accident or not, the university admission systems have shown that they provide even more opportunities to the people who have money. Conversely, the systems actually reduce the opportunities for the poor. Every change in university admission policy in Thailand has inevitably increased the burden on parents and students. An obvious example is the increased cost of participating in examinations, as students must pay for each exam regardless of whether the number of exams has increased.¹³ On the most popular education website among the high school students, www.Dek-D.com, there are a lot of posts and questions about how students and parents spend money on the university admission systems.^{164 165}

¹⁶² At the beginning of the admission policy, there were students in Traim Udom high school and other schools in Bangkok that claimed the inequality. The students gave the reason that their school is a high standard school. Many subjects and content of studies are different from other schools in the rural areas. (Interview with a former director of The National Institute of Educational Testing Service, 2018)

¹⁶³ Waraporn Sehanart. (17 April 2018). Former director of The National Institute of Educational Testing Service. [Interview.]

¹⁶⁴ Many people spend money on admission examinations, both in the central admission and the other round, not less than 5,000 to 10,000 baht. In the central admission system, students will be required to take GAT, PAT, O-Net and the nine common subjects (Kao vi cha sa man) examination. GAT and PAT examinations cost 140 Baht per subject. For PAT, student can take a maximum of seven examinations. For the nine commons examination, the cost is 100 Baht per examination. Students can take nine maximum subjects. Students will be required to pay about 140 - 2,820 Baht per person. And it is not only the cost of the examination that they have to pay; there are also many other things that incur costs, for instance, the cost of tutoring and special classes outside school. The tutorial school is in high demanded because some

Interviews revealed an interesting trend that many students spend money to confirm their seat in several programs they were accepted before they decide whether they will attend or not.

In the latest version of admission policy, TCAS was made to reduce the cost of the admission system. In reality, however, those problems still remain. In order to apply for the first round of TCAS, students must submit their portfolio, which can be sent to several universities. The application fee for each university is up to 600 baht, not to mention the money that students spend on creating the portfolio and the cost of shipping. In this system, it was found that middle-class students apply to many universities and their parents are willing to pay.¹⁶⁶

Table: Example of university admission examination and application Cost in 2014



subjects that are used in admission examination are specific subjects not taught at school. Students need to learn the lesson by themselves or go to the tutorial school, which is more expensive but also more effective.

¹⁶⁵ An interview with a university medical student about her experience before getting into medical school revealed that she had taken about seven examinations including GAT, PAT, the nine common subjects (Kao vi cha sa man), and Consortium of Thai Medical School examination, in addition to traveling around the country to take the examinations at many universities, such as Khon Kaen University. She paid about 15,000 baht to take these examinations in her last year of high school (Interview from a medical student, 2018).

¹⁶⁶ Manas Ornsung. (28 May 2018). News editor and website administrator of www.dek-d.com. [Interview.]

Central Admission System	Other direct exams in many universities			
GAT / PAT 140 – 1,820 bath	Kasetsart 600 bath	SWU 600 bath	Chula 350 bath	Burapha 500 bath
seven common course 100 – 700 bath	Ubon 300-500 bath	KMUT 500 bath	TU 400-500 bath	Silapakorn 350 bath
Apply for admission 100 – 250 bath	Suandusit 300 bath	KMUTNB 500 bath	Medical School 700 bath	Total 0 – 5,400 bath
Total 140 – 2,770 bath				

Figure 3 Example of Thailand's university admission costs

Information from <https://www.dek-d.com/tcas/34663/>

From the above issues, it can be seen that the discourse of educational opportunity is just a theory created by one group without taking into account the reality. Students who want to enter the university will do anything necessary and grab every opportunity that is available to them. In this case, those who are not affected, or who are only slightly affected, are typically students from the middle class and the elite. Parents of these middle-class students do not lose as much in this process as the poor. Although money may not be used directly to buy seats for their children in university, money can buy more opportunities through the ability to pay for more application fees.

One of the arguments of CUPT to legitimize their university admission policy is the number of seats that are available. The president says that "our policy has an objective to provide more chance to all students and we have enough seats for everyone who want to study in the university".¹⁶⁷ However, the idea of enough seats for everyone can be interpreted to include seats at small universities in the rural areas, like Rajabhat Universities, which are less popular and less competitive.

¹⁶⁷ Prasert Kanthamanon. (11 June 2018). the secretary of CUPT, [Interview.]

Although rural students can go to a university near their home and graduate equally like other people, those students may face the trap of social exclusion after they graduate from those small institutions. For example, many jobs require staff who have graduated from top universities. The organizations use the university's reputation as one of the criteria for selecting people. The number of people graduating from those institutions has turned out to be an excess resource in the labor market. Education is an important way in which people can advance or maintain their social status. Educational opportunities that are 'purchased' help the middle class and elites in Thailand to ensure the social status of their heirs is maintained via education. The lower classes have much more limited choices, making it difficult for them to promote their social status or make a difference in their life.

Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Policy

It is obvious, then, that the university admission policy in Thailand is facing the challenge of a lack in efficiency. The policies continue to create more problems and do not seem to solve the initial problems. Consider the effectiveness of the university admission policy from the policymakers' point of view: it is effective because it achieves the goal created by CUPT. The changes in university admission policy benefit the shared interest of the main members, but do not solve the problems faced by students. Also, the changes in university admission policy are effective in terms of increasing the availability of university seats.

On the other hand, the university admission policy is ineffective in many other ways. It cannot solve the old problems and moreover the policy creates more new problems. Such problems include increased complexity of examination subjects; the role of- and increased costs of the tutorial school; increased stress and anxiety to students and parents; and the reduced educational opportunity for poor students

CHAPTER8 Conclusion

The study aims to answer 3 questions as follows;

- How are changes in the university admission policy made during 1999 to 2017?

Thailand's university admission policy appeared to happen under the demand of a group of people. The main actor that made changes to the university admission policy is Council of University of Presidents of Thailand. The organization changed the policy according to the rhetoric of educational opportunity, rhetoric of improving the quality of education and many other reasons. In fact, the university admission in Thailand are changed under the condition of interest among the member of The Council of University Presidents of Thailand i.e. the policy changes by creating more round of examination and more round of admission because the want the member universities to gain as much as students they want. The Council of University of President of Thailand tried to centralize the examination system that make it easier for them to control all the education system and make it more benefit to them.

According to the democracy, the policy making process should prioritize the participation of variety group of people. Especially, the group of people who affected by the policy. Thailand's University Admission Policies in 1999 - 2017 have failed and leaved many issues in the society because the policy making process lacks participation. Increasing of the popularity of tutorial schools, decreasing of the quality in education, increasing of the university admission cost are some of the problems that raised by the changes of university admission policy. Even in the period of electoral government, the changes were still generated by the same group of people.

- Which political factors contributed to the changes in university admission policies during the years 1999 to 2017?

There are 2 political factors directly contributed to the changes in university admission policy, the policy elite and weak civil society.

The concept of policy elite was used to explain the changes of Thailand's university admission policies. In the policy formation since 1999 – 2017, there is only one important organization that plays the role of the policy maker. The study shows that the University Presidents of Thailand has monopolized the admission system. The organization consists of 34 representative out of 149 universities in

Thailand. The changes of university admission policy have a wide impact that is why the choice of policy should be decided by several sectors who involved and affected by the policy.

Another factor is lacking of strong civil society in Thailand. From the hypothesis, the weak civil society in Thailand influenced to the changes of university admission policies. Lacking strength of civil society in Thailand is one on the big factors that make the university admission system in Thailand change frequently. From the interview of two actors in civil society that work on the university admission problems indicated that the people who participated in the movement about the university admission policy are the ‘come and go’ people. The university admission policy in each year effect a group of students who participate in that year. When they pass through the process, the students and parent will not look back to the problems that happen in the next years and the problems in the other years will be lived be hide.

There is another issue that makes the civil society weak in the field of education. The civil society in Thailand are more of the organization for helping people to solve their problems. In university admission systems, many new problems are raising all the times. The civil society must work on those problem to help the people who are currently in trouble and they have no time to deal with the long term problems.

The stability of the government has no effect to the changes of university admission because lacking of government stability and difference form of government have no specific effect to policy changes. The study found that the changes in Thailand’s university admission are not related to the government stability. No matter what form of government is, the change of university admission system still occur in the same way. Whether in the period of weak election government or the period of the stably military government, the changes in Thailand’s university admission system are still the system that went beyond control.

According to the hypothesis about the bureaucratic state that plays a leading role in facilitating changes in the university admission policy. The study indicated that, Thailand’s bureaucratic state did not play a leading role in the changes of the university admission policy because the policy maker that make change to the university admission policy is not a bureaucratic organization. CUPT is just a general association, not a government. In fact, the people who lead CUPT are university officer who work in public organizations which is autonomous from the government. Therefore, CUPT performs to the public as an organization that make their decision an official one, with the passive participatory roles of democratic politician, bureaucracy, and civil society.

- Do the changes in Thailand’s university admission policy impact the educational opportunities of students or not? If they do, in what way?

The study is related to the hypothesis. It is found that changes in university admission policy also affects the educational opportunity of the students. Every change of admission policy makes the education system more complex and the cost to deal with such a complex system is put into the shoulder of the student. Even though the policy maker of the university admission system proclaims that the policies were made to increase the education opportunities for student. In reality, there are something different from what they have done. Thailand's university admissions increases the chances for the middle class students and the rich students. On the other hands, the more they make changes the less chance for the poor. The university admission in Thailand in the past decade seems to be a marketization system. There are plenty of chances and opportunity in the system, but only the people who has money can buy them.

As university admission policy appears to create opportunities and options for young people. On the opposite, university admission policy is just a system that helps universities to equalize the number of students they want in each university due to its oversupply of seats in universities. Providing more opportunities is just the rhetoric that the policy maker try to explain the reason of changes. The truth is just a sharing of benefit among some group of people.

It can be seen that changes in Thailand's university admission appear to be in a circular motion. It seems to improve something, but it adds more problems and make existing problem more complicate. Thus policy process of university admission in Thailand is another vicious circle in Thailand's politics of public policies.



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