

Strategies and Roadmap
For Higher Education Reform in Thailand

Office the Education Council
Ministry of Education

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Foreword

The current world trend in higher education reform as well as the more than sixfold global increase in the number of students at this level during the past three decades have resulted in a rapid increase in the number of higher education institutions. In the case of Thailand, the number of the institutions has increased from 532 in 1987 to 871 at present, while during the same period of time the number of higher education students has increased from 890,000 to 1.9 million. Such quantitative increase has resulted in problems regarding quality and mismatching of graduate profiles and national development requirements and direction. The enactment of the National Education Act 1999 also made higher education reform imperative. The reform will undoubtedly serve as the driving force for various aspects of national development. It also provides academic resources necessary for developing and strengthening the community, the society and ultimately the nation as well as enhancement of competitiveness in the international arena.

In view of these exigencies, the Thai Government duly established on December 9, 2002 the Education Reform Steering Committee under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Chaturon Chaisang). The committee is responsible for making decisions concerning the direction of the education reform, preparation of the relevant work plans as well as supervision for implementation of the reform measures, including formulation of the requisite strategy. To facilitate the functioning of the committee, nine task forces have been established. Among these task forces are three which are entrusted with the tasks of higher education reform. These are :

- the Task Force on Financing of Higher Education;
- the Task Force on Administration and Management of Higher Education; and
- the Task Force on Relevant Laws on Higher Education.

The three task forces have prepared the “Draft Recommendations on Strategies and Road Map for Higher Education Reform in Thailand”, comprising six important strategies, namely :

- Reform of structure and administrative and managerial system;
- Reform of higher education financing;
- Manpower production and increased access to higher education;
- Reform of teaching and learning as well as research;

- Reform of system for development of faculty staff and educational personnel; and
- Participation of the private sector in the administration and management of higher education.

The National Education Commission endorsed in principle the draft strategy and road map, which was subsequently approved by the Council of Ministers on September 16, 2003.

As secretariat of the Education Reform Steering Committee, the Office of the Education Council would like to express its thanks to Prof.Dr.Sippanondha Ketudat, Prof.Dr.Chai-Anan Smudvanijja, Prof.Vicharn Panich MD. and Prof. Voradej Chandarasorn Ph.D., advisers to the three task forces. We would also like to express our appreciation to Prof.Dr.Boonserm Veesakul, Chairman of the Task Force on Higher Education Financing; Assoc.Prof.Dr.Khunying Sumonta Promboon, Chairman of the Task Force on Administration and Management of Higher Education; and Assoc.Prof.Pavich Tongroach, Chairman of the Task Force on Relevant Laws on Higher Education Management. Our deep appreciation also goes to the members of the three task forces whose tireless efforts have led to successful completion of their responsibilities.

The Office of the Education Council would like to record its grateful thanks to Dr. Krissanapong Kirtikara, President of King Mongkut's University of Technology,Thonburi,who has kindly edited the **Strategies and Road Map for Higher Education Reform in Thailand** in its entirety. This publication will undoubtedly provide the guideline for achieving the higher education reform in Thailand as desired.

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Strategies and Roadmap
for Higher Education Reform in Thailand

1. Background

1.1 By virtue of the order of H.E. the Prime Minister No. 396/2545 of December 9, 2002, an Education Reform Steering Committee has been established under the chairmanship of H.E. the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Chaturon Chaisang). The committee is responsible for making decisions concerning the direction of the education reform, preparation of the relevant work plans as well as supervision for implementation of the reform measures, including formulation of the requisite strategy.

1.2 At the Education Reform Steering Committee's meeting No. 1/2545 on December 17, 2002, a number of task forces responsible for various issues have been established. In his capacity as Chairman of the committee, H.E. the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Chaturon Chaisang) issued an order No. 1/2546 dated February 12, 2003, establishing 9 task forces to study and prepare recommendations for the education reform strategy in order to accelerate implementation of the overall reform measures, which will be suitably, harmoniously and efficiently carried out, leading to effective outcomes.

The 3 task forces on higher education include the Task Force on Financing of Higher Education, the Task Force on Administration and Management of Higher Education and the Task Force on Relevant Laws on Higher Education Provision. The task forces have been entrusted with the responsibilities of studying the actual situation and problems encountered as well as preparation of recommendations on the higher education reform strategy.

1.3 Having completed their assignments, the 3 task forces duly submitted the draft strategy for higher education reform to the Education Reform Steering Committee and the workshop attended by scholars and representatives of the agencies concerned on March 1, 2003.

1.4 On April 17, 2003, H.E. the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Chaturon Chaisang), accompanied by high-level administrators, scholars and task force representatives, called on H.E. the Prime Minister at the Government House for consultation on the higher education strategy, which received the Prime Minister's initial approval in principle.

1.5 The task forces submitted the draft strategy and road map for higher education reform for consideration of the National Education Council at its meeting No. 5/2546 on June 5, 2003. The Council approved the draft strategy and road map in principle as submitted and decided to forward it for consideration of the Council of Ministers.

1.6 As proposed by the Fourth Screening Committee, the Council of Ministers, at its meeting on September 16, 2003, approved the recommendations on the strategy and road map for higher education reform. In this connection, it has assigned the Higher Education Commission to supervise higher education institutions in preparing of relevant work plans in accord with the strategy and road map. It also authorized the Ministry of Education to establish various task forces, comprising scholars and representatives of the agencies concerned from both the public and private sectors, to prepare pertinent details on the different issues in consonance with the road map/mechanism for implementation and reform strategy as submitted in order to accelerate practical outcomes.

2. Prevailing situation and problems of higher education

2.1 At present, provision of higher education in Thailand (for 2003) is mainly under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, with other ministries and agencies participating through provision of specialized education. There is a total of 859 higher education institutions, comprising 123 degree-level institutions while the rest provide sub-degree education (2-year courses) e.g. community colleges, vocational education colleges and specialized education institutions.

In 2002, the total number of students was 1,872,207, representing 27.4% of the 18-21 age group. The ratio of

students in the public universities : those in the private institutions was 78 : 22. The ratio of degree-level students : those at sub-degree level was 75 : 25. The transition rate of high school graduates to higher education in the same academic year was 83.1% (43.6% at the sub-degree level and 39.5% at the degree level).

2.2 In 2002, a budgetary allocation of Baht 32,005 million* was provided to public higher education institutions, representing 14.4% of the total national education budget. Besides, the state has allocated a research grant (for 2003) of approximately Baht 2,414 million to higher education institutions through the Office of Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education. In 2003, the budget of the Higher Education Loan Fund, which provides loans to the students through the institutions, amounts to approximately Baht 13,980 million. Besides, an additional allocation from the Loan Project for Higher Education Development is available. The incomes of public higher education institutions in the same year amount to approximately Baht 15,775 million.

2.3 Globalization has resulted in increased dependence on technology, in particular the ICTs. The knowledge-based society has dramatically changed the economic and social situation as well as administration and management, leading to changed needs for human resources

* 1 US\$ is approximately Baht 40.

regarding knowledge, capability and characteristics. The higher education system, however, has been unable to attune itself to timely respond to these changes; nor can it serve as an effective mechanism for national capacity-building for self-dependence and strengthening the community as well as the grassroot economy including enhancement of national competitiveness in the international arena. The entire higher education system therefore needs to be completely reformed, with drastic changes in its direction and working methods for higher quality, efficiency and effectiveness. The reform measures, however, will have to be introduced under the constraint of limited resources provided by the state and numerous cumbersome bureaucratic rules and regulations.

2.4 The quantitative requirement for higher education grows at the annual rate of not less than 7%, with a foreseeable increasing trend. With a larger number of high school graduates and with greater educational requirements on the part of children and adults, it has become necessary to quantitatively enlarge higher education while at the same time search for ways and means of developing more diverse delivery models.

2.5 In the past, higher education development has encountered several problems, notably : lack of unity in policy, goals and direction representing a succinct overall picture; absence of a strong and effective state system/mechanism to supervise, follow up, monitor and evaluate the performance of higher education institutions;

lack of mechanism to support and assist these institutions in initiating and developing innovations; the administration and management of the institutions lack flexibility and efficiency; and absence of cooperation within and outside the institutions etc.

3. Goals of higher education reform

3.1 The goal of the reform is to enable higher education to be an effective mechanism empowering the Thailand to become a knowledge-based society. Higher education will thus serve as the main mechanism for national development in various aspects – economic, social, political, cultural and environmental; it will also provide the driving force empowering Thailand to become a self-dependent society able to benefit from innovations and increased competitiveness in the international arena.

3.2 To enable higher education institutions to serve as academic sources for strengthening the grassroots economy of the community; the main aim of higher education is to enhance the knowledge of the community through production of quality graduates; the emphasis is on empowering the community to become self-dependent and capable of developing the quality of life by availing of various kinds of research work – basic, applied and policy – oriented; the research conducted should yield practical outcomes which can be utilized for development of community production, business development and public

management system as well as laying the foundation for long-term development for the purpose of creating innovations based on Thai wisdom. The innovations will thus become value-added products, allowing the communities to benefit from their intellectual properties.

3.3 To produce graduates responding to social needs and harmonious with national development trends, particularly in the fields of science and technology, and to enhance the knowledge of the Thai people, who will be endowed with the basic qualifications of global citizenship.

3.4 To establish a desirable administrative and managerial system in educational institutions, enabling them to carry out their tasks with flexibility, academic freedom, quality, efficiency and effectiveness, and at the same time function with responsibility and accountability under the supervision of their respective councils, having regard to harmony with and exigency of national development.

4. Principles and strategies for higher education reform

With the view to accelerating the reform measures for the above goals, which could be suitably, harmoniously, efficiently and effectively implemented, it is deemed appropriate to establish the following principles and strategies for higher education reform :

4.1 Principles :

1) Observance of the principles of unity in policy; harmony between higher education and the direction and exigencies for national development; as well as links with the strategies for national development in various aspects – economic, social, political, cultural and educational;

2) The strategies adopted will observe the diversity and different aspects of higher education institutions e.g. functions, disciplines offered, features of graduate production, faculty staff profiles etc., with the main objectives of enhancing the quality and efficiency of their performance as well as providing equal access for all;

3) Observance of at least 4 different societal bases namely : societies based on competition, social status, sufficiency, and underprivilege and deprivation; and

4) Observance of the links between different educational levels, namely : basic, vocational and higher, as well as resources mobilization from different segments of both the state and private sectors, including resource utilization for maximal benefits.

4.2 Strategies for higher education reform

Strategy 1 : Reform of structure and administrative and managerial system of higher education

With the view to attaining efficiency in the administration and management of higher education,

institutions providing education at this level should be allowed flexibility in their functioning as well as academic freedom. They should be able to effectively carry out their assigned tasks in harmony with the policy and direction of national development as well as the improvement of the community and grassroots economy under the state supervision regarding the policy, plans, quality and standards desired. The following measures should therefore be taken :

National level

1.1 The state will formulate a succinct national policy, goals and plans for higher education regarding human resources needs, research and academic services. These will serve as the road map for development of national higher education, based on the knowledge gained from the policy study and research as well as relevant analyses.

1.2 Public higher education institutions will enjoy flexibility in administration and management. Degree-level institutions, which are well prepared, will become state-supervised universities so as to be able to function with adaptability and efficiency and capable of attracting competent persons with integrity to serve as faculty staff and researchers. Specialized education institutions should be under the aegis of government agencies in accord with their respective policies; these institutions should, however, be

allowed flexibility in conformity with the principle of higher education.

1.3 The state will supervise the functioning of higher education institutions regarding the policy, quality and standard by availing of the budgetary allocation as the mechanism for supervision, following up, monitoring and evaluation of their performance through post auditing. The state will also encourage and support these institutions to function in consonance with the policy, goals and plans for national development.

1.4 Sub-systems will be established through grouping or networking of higher education institutions. These will be both vertical networks, comprising institutions with differences in developmental levels, roles and responsibilities, and horizontal networks to coordinate the functioning between institutions or groups of institutions. Higher education institutions will also be categorized for development for excellence in accord with their respective prominent role. In this connection, a number of institutions with potentiality will be developed so as to enjoy the status of world class universities.

Institutional level

1.5 There will be a paradigm shift among higher educational institutions, with emphasis on the clear role in carrying out their tasks; their strategic work plans will also

be prepared in harmony with the policy, goals and plans for national development.

1.6 The internal administrative and managerial system will also be enhanced so as to acquire flexibility and good governance, which is transparent, just and accountable.

1.7 The electoral process for appointing administrators will be replaced by a search for desirable candidates with leadership. The council of an institution will assume a responsible role and will supervise as well as monitor its functioning so as to attain quality, efficiency and consonance with the policy and direction for national development.

1.8 Resources will be mobilized from various sources and duly utilized for maximal benefits both on the intra- and inter-institutional bases through different methods, especially through the inter-institutional networking of both the state and private sectors, and in cooperation with the private business concern as well as various organizations both within the country and abroad.

Strategy 2 : Reform of higher education financing

With the view to utilizing budgetary allocation as a mechanism for supervising higher educational institutions to function with quality and to attain the standard required through efficient administration and management, and in consonance with the policy and direction for national

development, the following reform measures for higher education financing should be implemented :

2.1 An organization responsible for setting the criteria and proposing recommendations for budgetary allocation for higher education institutions will be established. Such organization should enjoy autonomy and flexibility and should be under supervision of a committee comprising knowledgeable and competent scholars.

2.2 The budgetary allocation system will be adjusted from supply-side financing to demand-side financing.

2.3 The students' share for higher education expenditure will be suitably and justly adjusted by streamlining the present student loan scheme or income contingent loan for greater efficiency. There will also be various measures to support and assist the underprivileged as well as the gifted and talented.

2.4 Block grants from the national budget will be distributed to higher education institutions on the bases of the different tasks of groups of institutions, products and production costs. Performance-based budgeting will be availed of. Contracts/agreements will be signed by the institutions for their functioning in accord with the established conditions and criteria, and with state supervision through post auditing.

2.5 The state budgetary allocation for capital and unnecessary construction costs will be decreased. The amount available will be duly transferred to the general subsidy for the projects for quality improvement of higher education.

2.6 The accounting system of public higher education institutions will be streamlined and standardized. The system will be on an accrual basis. The funds, work plans, responsible units and financial statements will also be standardized for facilitating comparison.

2.7 Higher education institutions will be encouraged to increase mobilization of resources from various sources with the state providing supporting mechanisms. The funds thus raised will be added to the state budgetary allocation for implementation of the projects for quality improvement.

Strategy 3 : Manpower production and increased access to higher education

With the view to increasing manpower production, particularly in the fields in which there is a shortage, and with the view to providing equal access to higher education for all in consonance with their knowledge and capability; particularly the economically and socially disadvantaged as well as providing opportunity for lifelong learning, the following measures should be taken :

3.1 The state will encourage higher education institutions, especially public universities with limited admission and certain private institutions, which are well prepared, to produce manpower in the fields in which there is a shortage, and which are essential for national economic and technological development, particularly in the fields of science and technology. The state will also promote the production and development of faculty staff in these fields. It will provide support for those highly talented in these fields for continuous development to their highest potentiality. It will also encourage creation of new sciences essential to future national development.

3.2 Higher education modalities will become diversified and flexible so as to reach different target groups. Opportunities will also be given for continuous acquisition of additional knowledge through cross-institutional transfer of credits and learning outcomes or inter-institutional registration.

3.3 Higher education institutions will offer both regular and other types of courses in order to respond to the needs for informal education and career development. These measures should depend on the market requirements as well as social and public needs, with the state playing a supervisory and monitoring role regarding quality and standard.

3.4 Transition to higher education will be through the admission system depending on the learners' knowledge, ability and interests. Fair and equal access will be provided to all, especially the economically and social disadvantaged and those living in remote areas, with the state system/mechanism for assisting the underprivileged as well as the gifted and talented.

3.5 Establishment of new public higher education institutions requiring large amounts of capital expenditure is not encouraged. Support, however, will be given to enhancing the capacity of existing institutions through amalgamation or mobilization of resources for sharing existing facilities to their highest potentiality and for maximal benefits.

3.6 ICTs will be availed of so as to provide all people with equal access to quality education.

Strategy 4 : Reform of teaching and learning as well as research

With the view to enabling higher education to serve as a mechanism for manpower production with the view to creating knowledge to enhance national competitiveness in the international arena; increasing capacity for self-dependence while at the same time decreasing dependence on foreign technology; and ability to respond and providing guidance for social, community and local development, the following measures should be taken :

4.1 The state will provide subsidy for the functioning of the institutions. It will also provide the infrastructure and facilities for the administration and management as well as teaching-learning activities in order to support these educational institutions in their strive for excellence in accord with their respective prominent feature. Such measures will be conducive to production of outstanding graduates and research as well as academic achievements of high quality.

4.2 Graduate studies will be improved to attain the international quality and standard. These studies will serve as mechanism for creation of quality research, which can be utilized for the benefit of institutional, social and national development.

4.3 Higher education institutions will be encouraged to carry out basic and applied research. They will serve as centres of specialized research / centres of excellence or research centres for policy study in their specialized fields. They will thus serve as mechanisms for initiating research activities and developing researchers. They will also serve as coordinating centres for the research networks, for intra- and inter-institutional research activities, including those in cooperation with agencies of both the public and private sectors.

4.4 There will be a central unit/mechanism in charge of management of the overall research activities in

order to facilitate researchers in carrying out their tasks and in disseminating information on research work of the institutions.

4.5 There will be a mechanism / system to attract persons with knowledge, capability and interest in research to serve as personnel of the institutions. The researchers will be retained through advancement in their career path and mechanisms for continuous development.

4.6 There will be a reform of teaching and learning as well as curriculum reform, enabling the learners to acquire critical thinking skills, abilities for problem-solving; creation of innovations and desire for lifelong learning; ability to create new tasks; self-adjustment to the world of work; self-dependence; and capability of attaining social benefits. The reform measures will also result in the production of outstanding graduates in the various disciplines, thus providing national leadership for the future.

4.7 Benchmarks will be established as indicators of the quality and achievements of all courses, both regular and otherwise, as well as indicators of the standards of other tasks. Criteria or best practices will be set. Rating and ranking of higher education institutions will also be encouraged to stimulate enhancement of quality.

Strategy 5 : Reform of system for development of faculty staff and higher education personnel

With the view to motivating personnel with knowledge and capability to join the higher education system; and developing administrators, faculty staff and personnel already in the system for further enhancement of their moral and ethical values and professional ethics, so as to be able to carry out their duties and responsibilities with quality and remain in system as well as attune themselves to various changes, the following measures should be taken :

5.1 Establishment of a system for continuous development of administrators, faculty staff and academic support personnel in higher education institutions will be accelerated. Such development will be consonant with the roles and responsibilities of the institutions. There will also be a system of follow-up and evaluation for further development and enhancement.

5.2 Graduate studies will be qualitatively developed so as to serve as a mechanism for creating new faculty staff. A system will also established with the view to attracting persons with competence, integrity, capability and vocation to join the teaching force.

5.3 Creation of a system for networking of faculty staff and personnel at the inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional levels, both within the country and abroad. Such networking will lead to cooperation, mutual assistance and exchange regarding teaching and learning, research,

academic service, and implementation of various tasks for the benefit of the society.

5.4 The system for appointment to academic positions will be diversified in accord with the tasks of the higher education institutions concerning teaching, research and academic services. Artistic and cultural affairs will be promoted. These will also be mechanisms for supporting, encouraging and honouring the administrators, faculty staff and personnel who devote themselves entirely to the institutions.

5.5 Standards will be set for different categories of responsibilities of the faculty staff as well as recognition criteria for different types of functions for accreditation purpose.

Strategy 6 : Participation of the private sector in the administration and management of higher education

With the view to encouraging the private sector, business concern, enterprise, community and local area to participate in the administration and management of higher education in various ways, the following measures should be taken :

6.1 The private sector which is ready will be encouraged to invest in the provision of higher education, especially in the fields responding to the market and social needs, with clear stipulation by the state regarding the proportion and target groups under shared responsibilities of

the public and private sectors. There will also be different measures for encouragement, support and motivation e.g. tax exemption, support for development of faculty staff and administrators, acquisition of fund for low-interest loan, academic support etc. The pertinent state policy will be revised and cumbersome rules and regulations will subsequently be amended.

6.2 The state will provide administrative and managerial freedom to the private sector participating in education provision. There will be, however, a system for supervising, follow-up and monitoring the performance to attain the quality and standard set by the state.

6.3 Local administration organization, which are able to meet the set criteria, will be encouraged to provide higher education responding to the local and community needs and in consonance with the national educational policy and standard.

6.4 In the functioning of the public higher educational institutions, support will be given to cooperative projects between the institutions and the business concern, private sector, enterprise, community and local area. Encouragement will also be given to participation in the administration and management, supervision, follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the institutions. Donation in terms of funds and properties for

the cause of education will be encouraged through various state measures for support and motivation.

5. Guidelines/mechanisms for implementation

With the view to implementing the recommended strategies so as to achieve concrete results, the following guidelines/mechanisms should be established :

1) Preparation of detailed information on the structure, powers and duties, components and administration and management modalities will be required. There will also be established a Higher Education Funding Committee (HEFC), enjoying the status of an independent organization which functions with flexibility. The Committee should be entrusted with the following main responsibilities :

1.1 Setting the criteria and pertinent recommendations on budgetary allocation to higher education institutions concerning teaching and learning, research and special activities, based on the evaluation of the achievement of each aspect; there will also be monitoring and evaluation of the performance of higher education institutions, auditing of their budget utilization and administrative efficiency; and

1.2 Coordination with the Higher Education Commission and agencies concerned so as to strengthen the administration and management of higher education institutions, which will establish strong relationship with the

business concern, society and community and be able to provide relevant information on various aspects of national higher education.

2) Clear specification of the role and duties of the Higher Education Commission; the Commission will assume a more aggressive role regarding proposals on policy, plan and higher education standard, including supervision, follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the institutions' performance through the following measures :

2.1 Sub-commissions or task forces on various aspects will be established for promoting, supporting, supervising and following up the institutions' performance on an effective and continuous basis e.g. Task Force on Educational Quality and Standard, Task Force on Administrative and Managerial System Development of Higher Education Institutions, Task Force on Learning Reform, Task Force on Promotion of Innovation, Research, Art and Culture etc.

2.2 A 10-15 Year Higher Education Plan will be prepared to serve as framework for long-term development of education at this level. Higher education institutions will be encouraged and supported for the formulation of corresponding 3-5 year work plans on a continuous basis.

2.3 The pilot project on streamlining of the existing accounting system and financial reporting will be accelerated so as to serve as the prototype for the accounting

system of the institutions, which will henceforth be standardized. Urgent measures will be taken to survey all categories of properties of the higher education institutions, including those in the faculties, departments and sub-units, the ownership of which will be clearly specified. Standards will also be set for remuneration for the various categories of services provided by the institutions, taking into consideration the quality level and efforts required.

2.4 The projects for production and development of administrators, faculty staff, personnel and researchers of higher education institutions already implemented will be supported and accelerated e.g. project for development of faculty staff and graduate studies in conjunction with the project for capacity-building for research activities; project to support the talented to obtain qualifications at doctoral degree level; project for enhancing capacity of newly recruited faculty staff etc.

3) Urgent measures will be taken to transform public higher education institutions, which belong to the bureaucratic system and which are well prepared, into state-supervised institutions. In so doing, standardized general provisions of principle will be included in the relevant legislation for such transformation, enabling these institutions to benefit from effective administration and management in accord with the government policy and harmonious with the direction of national development.

Legislations and rules and regulations relating to financing and budgeting and other aspects will be duly amended.

4) Various task forces will be established to study the details and prepare strategic plans, based on the proposed higher education reform road map e.g. study of the situation and problems of the existing system of educational loan; per head costs for different subjects; guideline for suitable and fair share of the students to meet the necessary costs; details for development of the Income Contingent Loan System; road map for reform of higher education structure and administration and management; system for development of faculty staff and personnel etc.

5) The Office of the Education Council will further enhance its role and organization structure to assume the task of educational policy research and submit policy recommendations for consideration of the government and the agencies concerned. It will serve as the think tank of the country regarding educational policy research through networking with policy research units of higher education institutions and other agencies involved.