

THAILAND

Country Summary of Higher Education

Background:

Recent expansion of tertiary education sector: The higher education sector in Thailand has been growing steadily since the late 1980s. The gross enrollment rates (GERs) of both higher and secondary educations were extremely low in the late 1980s as government's primary interest focused on elementary education. As Thailand experienced a dramatic improvement in secondary education in 1990s, the higher education enrollment began to grow. The GER of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) rose from 7% in 1987 to 56% in 2005. It is projected that, after the introduction of the 9-year compulsory education and the 12-year free basic education resulting from the 1999 National Education Act, the higher education sector will continue to grow.

Tertiary education system: Higher education system in Thailand consists of public and private HEIs. 76 (these include 4 autonomous universities and 2 universities for monks- also considered as autonomous) out of 78 public universities are categorized as Limited Admission University, where entering students are required to pass the national standard test, while Open University and Autonomous University apply more flexible admission system. 19 community colleges have been established since 2001 to generate opportunities for local people to improve their quality of life and develop their communities in social and economic aspects. 67 private HEIs have been established since the Private College Act became effective in 1969.

Quality assurance mechanisms: The quality assurance system in Thailand is divided into Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and External Quality Assurance (EQA). The IQA system consists of quality control, quality audit, and quality assessment. Institutions take a full responsibility to set up and operate IQA, by conducting it on a regular basis as part of education administration. The results shall be submitted in an annual report to parent organizations, relevant agencies, and more importantly the public. The Commission on Higher Education has established the standard criteria for IQA with the nine aspects of quality factors¹. EQA shall be conducted for all educational institutions by a public independent body, the Office of the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) established in 2000. All institutions need to receive EQA evaluation at least once every five years. Institutions have to submit data, self-review report, and any information requested to ONESQA or external reviewers certified by ONESQA.

Government Strategy & Policy Reforms: Under the Ministry of Education Regulatory Act 2003, the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) was created to be responsible for higher education. The CHE, directed by the Board, administers the public HEIs and oversees the private HEIs. The Board has the authority to formulate policies and issue regulations based on the National Economic and Social Development Plan and the National Education Plan. The main duties of the CHE include providing resources and support, ensuring equity, and monitoring educational outcomes. Based on the National Education Act, the CHE developed the Higher Education Plan. The main objective of the Ninth Higher Education Plan (2002-2006) was to produce citizens with high capabilities to raise a nation's competitiveness. This plan also emphasized the principle of autonomous university which encourages every HEI to manage independently. Recently, CHE has completed the drafting of Thailand Long-Term Development Plan for Higher Education (2008 – 2022), which was approved by the Board in October 2007. The Plan will cover the period of the Tenth(2007 – 2011), Eleventh (2012 – 2016) and Twelfth (2017 – 2021) Higher Education Plans.

¹ 1) Philosophies, commitment and objectives; 2) Teaching and learning; 3) Student development activities; 4) Research; 5) Academic services; 6) Preservation of art and culture; 7) Administration and management; 8) Finance and budgeting; 9) Internal quality assurance system and mechanisms.

Summary Data Table on Higher Education

Enrollment	Total Enrollment	2,359,127 (2005)	
	% of Female	52.4% (2005)	
	% of Private	18% (2005)	
Gross Enrollment Rate	Total	43.0 (2005)	
	Male	40.7 (2005)	
	Female	45.4 (2005)	
Student Teachers Ratios		35.0 (2003)	
Teaching Staff	Total Number	70,405 (2006)	
	% of Female	51.47% (2006)	
	% of teachers with Masters	58.75% (2005)	
	% of teachers with Doctorate	26.17% (2005)	
Gross Graduation Rates*	Total	23.6 (2005)	
	Male	18.6 (2005)	
	Female	28.6 (2005)	
Total Public Expenditure on Education	% of GDP	4.2% (2007)	
	% of Govt. Expenditure	22.8% (2007)	
Total Public Expenditure on Higher Education	% of total education budget	16.5% (2007)	
	% of GDP	0.7% (2007)	
Number of Higher Education Institutions	Total	161 (2006)	
	Public HEIs	Limited Admission Univ.	70 (2007)
		Open Univ.	2 (2007)
		Autonomous Univ.	6 (2007)
		Community College	19 (2007)
	Private HEIs	University	34 (2007)
		College	33 (2007)

Source: Global Education Digest 2006, UNESCO, Edstats, OECD/UNESCO WEI, MoE, CHE

* Number of graduates regardless of age in a given level or program expressed as a percentage of the population at the theoretical graduation age for that level or program

Issues:

Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio-economically disadvantaged students have little access to scholarships.
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rapid expansion of the various types of HEIs degrades quality of higher education services. Teacher/student ratio is extremely high in Open Universities (549:1 in 2003)
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic programs and research activities show weak relevance in the global arena due to budget constraints (i.e. lack of facilities that may be expensive.)
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the government allocates the budget with approximate 15% increase per annum to universities, many HEIs still rely on fee-paying students.
Governance/ Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of October 2007, there are only six autonomous universities (two being universities for monks). Most public HEIs are under the supervision of CHE.