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EXPLORING THE CURRENT STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE, RESEARCH CULTURE AND PRACTICE IN THAILAND'S HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY DEVELOPMENT: FACTORS INDICATING RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE AND ENHANCING QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THAILAND

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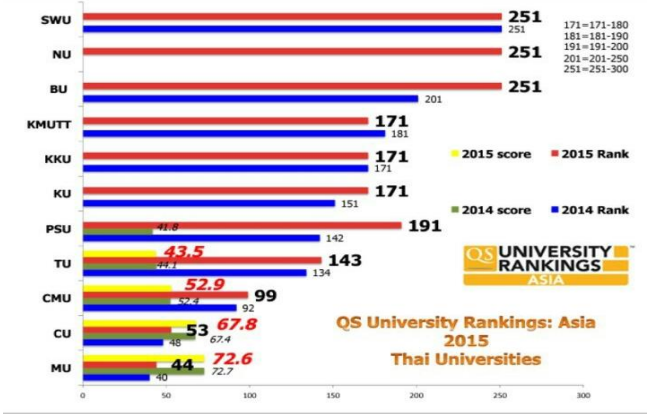
Abstract

The research culture and policy context of Thailand's higher education reforms by furnishing with a rich historical account of its higher education system and associated policies. As it reflects this by conducting an in-depth investigation for policies. This paper aims to explore several policies and factors related to current status of knowledge, research culture and practice in Thailand's higher education quality development. Major research universities are being investigated through document and policy analysis. Burapha University is raised as case example.

Introduction

The research culture sector has played an important role in shaping the Thai national education and higher education for many decades. Institutional innovation and collaboration among Thai higher education institutions is fairly recent, with a boost from the government. The Royal Thai Government (RTG) through the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) initiated and implemented the National Research University (NRU) idea beginning in 2009, with the main purpose of promoting their research and academic excellence in order to improve higher education rankings and national competitiveness. Nine universities were selected and approved by the OHEC to be NRUs based on past research performance and publications (Sombatsompop 2010).

However, there are very few studies on their performance and there is still a lack of systematic research, documentation, or standardized information on Thai NRUs, especially with respect to their roles in teaching, research, or service.



In Thailand, universities are a major source of knowledge research and development. According to the statistics and ranking from the QS universities rank in 2105 the top 4 are MU, CU, CMU and TU This paper will take an investigation through role and mission policies on NRU in Thailand which are:

Chiangmai University (CMU)

CMU ranked third nationally and was established in 1967 in Chiangmai province, northern Thailand. One of its mission statements highlights the academic excellence and quality of graduates with high moral and ethical consciousness and the CMU is employing the unique Thai philosophy of sufficiency economy developed by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej for sustainable development and applied to its management system and management. The CMU has several research groups including: medical sciences; nanotechnology; an economic and business information centre; an agricultural biotechnology transfers and service centre; and a regional centre for social science and sustainable development (CMU 2017; OHEC 2011).

Chulalongkorn University (CU)

CU, Thailand's oldest university that initially evolved from the School of Thai Civil Servants, was founded by King Rama VI in 1917. Today, CU is usually ranked among the top three universities
of Thailand. The university currently offers multidisciplinary programmes and courses, but also tries to indorse interdisciplinary education and research throughout existing programmes and research clusters. Like most universities considered important among the NRUs, CU groups its research expertise into eight clusters, namely: energy; food and water; climate change and disaster management; health; ageing society; advanced materials; social development and human securities; and ASEAN studies (OHEC 2011, p.29).

Mahidol University (MU)

MU was founded in 1943 as a medical science university but later developed into a multidisciplinary institution, while still retaining its strength in medicine. MU's original campuses were located in two areas of Bangkok – Bangkok Noi and Phayathai areas – but recently the campuses were expanded to cover three more provinces, Karnchanaburi, Nakhon Sawan and AmnajCharoen (MU 2017). There are 17 faculties, seven institutes and six colleges and various disciplines such as
medicine, medical science, public health, engineering, environment, social science and humanities etc. The university is strong in physical sciences with several research clusters and its response to the OHEC's NRU project led to the establishment of nine clusters that have specialised in fields of research for health, complex system science and diseases, social and environment, innovation for social well-being, etc. (OHEC 2011). In addition, MU is among the first of the nation's universities to develop sustainability policies, having initiated its green master plan in 2008. It has aimed to develop MU to become an "ideal university" that could provide a favourable environment for learning with physical structures that could harmonise with society and the environment (MU 2017).

Thammasat University (TU)

TU, the second oldest university of Thailand, was established in 1934 as the first "open" public university for law and politics with a mission to provide higher education opportunities for Thai people with no entry requirements. The university

was founded after Thailand's political transition from an absolute monarchy to a democratic system. Initially, TU only offered programmes in social science and humanities but later, in 1975, it expanded to cover other fields in science and technology with the establishment of a Rangsit Centre outside Bangkok which officially opened in 1986 (TU 2017). Also,TU has two learning centres in Pattaya and Lampang centre established in 1995 and 1996 respectively (OHEC 2011). Therefore, there are three major areas of research; social science and humanities; science and technology; and health sciences. According to NRU projects, it has been further divided into a further seven research clusters.

Background of Burapha University International College (BUUIC)

The Burapha University Council granted the International College full status on March 28, 2003. The Council's strategy is to promote the following 5 main factors as (1.) educational internationalization, (2.) educational and research exchanges for professional development, (3.) proficiency in the English language, (4.) technological and professional skills for career or advanced study at international or national institutions, (5.) to create an educational center for overseas students to study and experience the culture, language and environment in this picturesque region of Southeast Asia.

Burapha University International College is developing degrees that allow international students to undertake some of their courses in their own counties also extends a warm welcome to students from overseas universities who wish to come to Burapha University as visiting international students for a semester or an entire year. Visiting students who attend courses may, if they wish, have their performance assessed and certified.

Burapha University International College offers programs: Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.) majoring in Marketing, International Business Management, Finance, Logistics Management, International Hospitality and Tourism Management. Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) majoring in Communication Skills for Human Resource Development and Global Business Communication. Bachelor of Fine and Applied Arts (B.F.A.) majoring in Communication Arts and Design with minoring in Arts and Design Management, Fashion and Textile Design, Film and Animation.

Vision of Burapha University International College is **"**the leader of the international learning community" which has mission on (1.) Teaching: to produce students with the leadership, morality, vision, qualities, and qualifications to work in Thailand and abroad. (2.) Research: to create new knowledge to promote excellent academics. (3.) To provide academic services for all societies. (4.) To promote artistic and cultural studies and activities to encourage environmental conservation. Lifestyle of Burapha University International College has characterized into excellent academics, cross-cultural friendships and vibrant campus life.

Research Strategy

As Burapha University International College (BUUIC) is one unit under Burapha University (BUU). So, every college and faculty were applied the same research strategy for the whole university. As Burapha University has positioned as research university, therefore research activity is fundamental to the identity of the university. Burapha University faces the challenge of providing a high-quality research-informed

curriculum built upon knowledge creation and application with impact on the globalization.
An integral to the mission of research function of Burapha University is to develop excellence in research and practice in selected fields, and seek peer recognition through the research excellence framework. BUU will therefore invest, on a selective basis, in areas of research excellence that align with our subject strengths and strategic priorities. BUU has to date operated variable practices in relation to research activity and locally determined approaches to research time allocation. The future research planning will be based on a consistent approach aligning research activities with strategic priorities and colleges and faculties plans. BUU invest more than 45% of academic staff costs in researches and scholarly activities. The academic's time will be fully supported to enhance the strategic aims with regard to reputation, master and doctoral education, income generation, external engagement, and scholarly activity underpinning teaching.

The research excellence framework, and in pursuit of BUU mission as research university, BUU will further invest in excellent research areas, together with areas demonstrating potential for research excellence, in the best interests of a research based university. The guiding principles will be a transparent approach to resource allocation and to the reporting of research activities. Research costs can be highly variable across BUU when measured by student or by staff member, such that we need to align approaches to investment across the whole university and target resource at priority areas. Consonant with the intentions of the new strategic plan research will link strongly to teaching, support the development of educational/ industries and businesses, enhance the university's profile, and also be relevant to mission and subject base.

BUU Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, the priority goal for research is "to embed research, scholarship, practice and consultancy in all our activities". To achieve this goal, BUU will pursue the following 6 main functions as (1.) to ensure that all courses are informed by a combination of scholarship, research, and professional practice, (2.) to provide all teaching staff with opportunities to identify and pursue through appropriate means their ambitions for research, or professional practice, or consultancy, as well as ensuring all teaching staff pursue scholarship in their subject, (3.) to develop a successful submission to the research excellence framework, (4.) to identify which research areas the university should prioritize for investment with a view to achieving excellence. Regarding to this function, the university will apply a transparent approach to decision making for research support, based on cost-value analysis, (5.) to provide opportunities for students to engage with research at undergraduate as well as postgraduate level, (6.) to invest in the postgraduate research community and develop its ethos for the benefit of students, supervisors and other researchers.

Types of Research

BUU pursues and supports four types of research activities, listed below:

Type of Research Activities	Descriptions
Research and Scholarship	Activities to support subject knowledge and pedagogy, professional practice, and the development of research-informed teaching.
Income Generating Research	Commissioned or user-defined work for External Agencies e.g. Businesses/ industries.
Postgraduate Research	The Supervision and Training of Postgraduate Research Students.
Research Excellence Framework	Research towards Internationally Excellent.

Research Cooperation with the University Plans

Within the wider range of strategies and approaches under BUU strategic plan, this strategy sits alongside the Learning and Teaching Strategy, and supports, among others, the emerging development strategy. BUU's teaching and Learning Strategy has research/practice informed teaching as one of its main priorities. Other priorities for research-and-teaching profiles are the scholarship of teaching and learning, student employability, research degree study, and capacity building in research supervision and examination. These are supported in colleges and faculties through time for both postgraduate research support and for research and scholarly activities.

QS world University Rankings by Subject 2017

วัดโดยตัวชี้วัด 4 ด้าน

1).Academic reputation (survey) 2).Employer reputation (survey) 3).Citations per paper (scopus) 4).H-index (journal H-index)

	2016					2017	
	5 อันดับแรกของประเทศ (อันดับโลก) QS world University Rankings by Subject 2016						
สาขาวิชา	อันดับ 1	อันดับ 2	อันดับ 3	อันดับ 4	อันดับ 5		
Art & Humanities						-	
1. Archaeology	-	-	-	-	-	-	=
2. Architecture/Built Environment	AIT	CU	TU	KMUTT	KKU	-	=
3. Art & Design	SU	MU	KMUTT	TU	-	5	↑
4. English Languages & Literature	CU	MU	TU	CMU	KKU	-	↓
5. History	CU	TU	CMU	MU	KMITL	-	↓
6. Linguistics	CU (101-150)	TU (201-250)	TU	TU	SUT	-	=
7. Modern Languages	CU (51-100)	TU (201-250)	CMU (201-250)	MU (251-300)	KU	2 (201-250)	=
8.Performing Arts	CMU	MU	CU	-	-	4	↓
9. Philosophy	CU	TU	KKU	KU	SU	-	=
10. Theology, Divinity & Religious Studie	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Engineering & Technology						7	
11 Computer Science & Info Systems	CU (201-250)	AIT (351-400)	KMUTT(401-450)	TU	KU	8	=
12. Engineering - Chemical	CU (51-100)	KMUTT	KU	TU	PSU	-	=
13. Engineering - Electrical	CU (151-200)	KMITL (251-300)	AIT	KMUTT	CMU	4 (351-400)	↑
14. Engineering - Civil & Structural	AIT (151-200)	CU (151-200)	TU	KMUTT	KU	-	=
15. Engineering - Mechanical	CU (151-200)	AIT	TU	CMU	AIT	2 (351-400)	↑
16.Engineering - Mineral & Mining	CU	AIT	KMUTT	MU	KMUTNB	-	=
Life Sciences & Medicine						3	
17. Agriculture & Forestry	KU (47)	CMU (101-150)	PSU (151-200)	KKU	AIT	2 (101-150)	=
18. Anatomy & Physiology	-	-	-	-	-	3	↑
19. Biological Science	CU (151-200)	MU (151-200)	KU	CMU	KKU	4 (401-450)	↑
20. Dentistry	CU	MU	CMU	PSU	KKU	3	=
21. Medicine	MU (101-150)	CU (151-200)	CMU (251-300)	PSU (301-400)	KKU (301-400)	3 (251-300)	=
22.Nursing	MU	CU	CMU	PSU	KKU	2	↑
23. Pharmacy & Pharmacology	MU (101-150)	CU (101-150)	CMU	PSU	KKU	4 (251-300)	↓
24 Psychology	CU	MU	KKU	CMU	PSU	-	↓
25. Veterinary Science	CU	MU	KU	KKU	CMU	4	↑
Natural Sciences						2	
26. Chemistry	CU (101-150)	MU (301-400)	KU	CMU	KMUTT	4	=
27. Earth & Marine Sciences	CU	AIT	KU	CMU	MU	-	↓
28. Environmental Sciences	CU (151-200)	AIT (201-251)	KU(251-300)	KMUTT	MU	6	=
29. Geography	CU(151-200)	CMU	MU	TU	UBU	2	=
30. Materials Science	CU (151-200)	KMUTT	CMU	MU	KMITL	3	=
31. Mathematics	CU (301-400)	KMUTT	CMU	MU	NU	3	=
32. Physics & Astronomy	CU	MU	CMU	KMITL	KMUTT	3	=
Social Sciences & Management						5	
33. Accounting & Finance	CU (101-150)	TU	MU	CMU	AIT	-	↓
34 .Anthropology	CU	TU	CMU	MU	KKU	-	↓
35 Business & Management Studies	TU (151-200)	CU (151-200)	AIT	MU	KU	6	=
36. Communication & Media Studies	CU	MU	TU	KU	WU	-	=
37. Development Studies	TU	AIT	CU	NIDA	MU	-	=
38. Economics & Econometrics	CU(201-300)	TU	AIT	CMU	MU	6	↓
39. Hospitality & Leisure Management	-	-	-	-	-	4	↑
40. Education	KU	CU	TU	CMU	KKU	4	=
41. Law	MU	AIT	CU	TU	CMU	-	↓
42. Politics & International Studies	CU	TU	MU	CMU	AIT	-	↓
43. Social Policy & Administration	CU	TU	MU	PSU	AIT	9	=
44. Sociology	MU	CU	TU	KKU	BU	-	=
45. Statistics & Operational Research	TU	CU	AIT	CMU	MU	-	↓
46 Sports-related Subjects	-	-	-	-	-	3	↑

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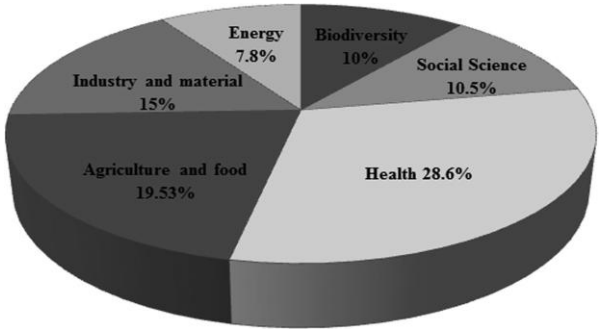
The recent table from QS rank showing the growing down of the ranks in Thai universities.

The OHEC began implementing its NRU initiative during 2009–2010 as part of the RTG policy to promote research and academic excellence among Thai Higher Education (HE) institutions, with the main purpose of boosting Thai national competiveness in HE. The NRU project has been financially supported by government with the ultimate goals of, first, improving national research capacity, and second, providing much needed human resources in the anticipation that this could also raise Thai university rankings (OHEC 2011).

Therefore, NRUs are expected to help solve current national problems as well as analyze and respond to socio-economic challenges. The NRUs are also expected to serve as a solid foundation for increasing the quality and scope of industrial

productivity as well as various aspects of social and economic development. NRUs are further expected to help improve Thai HE quality and promote Thailand as a regional educational hub (OHEC 2011).

Thai government and the OHEC launched the NRU project because they believed that HE institutions such as national universities are the source of intellectual power to create technology and stimulate innovation. The NRUs are also expected to produce academic research papers and patents in anticipation that this will strengthen the country's competitiveness and improve the overall quality of Thailand's HE system. Thailand also now hopes to be a research, education, and training hub for the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region. It is estimated that the RTG has funded research in the nine NRUs to provide a total budget of approximately 6,500 million THB, the equivalent (in 2016) of around 183 million USD. Almost 30 per cent of this budget has gone to health sciences, while 20 per cent was shared among the three subgroups in the food and agriculture supra-cluster (OHEC 2014b) (Figure 1).



Budget allocation in six research areas

As you can see from the above, most Thai universities are more dedicated on health and science research. s. All HE institutions, including NRUs, need to enhance and improve their networking, increase their commitment and outreach with the wider community and society, and inspire the involvement of its staff and students with different stakeholders in the society.

Analyzing factor Indicating Research Development Performance and Enhancing Quality of Higher Education in Thailand:

The importance of a strong national data and policy research infrastructure should be covering by several key policy issues in Thai higher education: Enforcement of Policy of education and culture of research; Education and change: learning and teaching; Engineering the human of education

Enforcement of Policy of education and culture of research

This tends to be biased towards a centralized top-down policy study, thus highlighting the essential role of the state and its agencies to the appearance and success of transformations. In reality, the reform of the Thai higher education sector also owes a fair amount to a mixture of stakeholders, including employees and students. It particularly seems to be the case with issues regarding university rankings and quality assurance. Growing reputation has been placed on universities to contribute to the innovation process and as a result academic research and development expenditures have increased in recent years. Nevertheless, little is known about the specific ways in which universities have expanded their research capacity.

Education and change: learning and teaching

Much of the current debate concerning teaching and learning in higher education discusses the merits of moving from a didactic conception of teaching to a position of greater mutual respect and collaborative reflection as a motivating conception for improving teaching and learning (Trigwell and Prosser, 1999; Ramsden, 2003). Explicitly, this theorising acknowledges that prompting change requires awareness of the values of staff and students, but the implied shifts in values and underlying power relationships are not detailed. This makes it unclear as to how sustained changes will be achieved in beginnings of either teaching or learning, and may cause academic staff development to be challenging. Indorsing changes in teaching practice could cause pressures and unexpected outcomes, if attempts to transform practice are not supported with insight into the unarticulated beliefs that underpin practitioners' conceptions as well as those of their students. The risk of not considering these fundamental beliefs is the likelihood that practitioners, and their students, will make surface changes in practice when deep change is preferable. Such a possibility illustrates the type of praxis trap (Grundy, 1992) that consequences when change occurs in relative isolation from personal and contextual factors. For example, a rebirth of hegemonic values (among students and teachers) causing a retreat to a more didactic status quo or entrenched resistance towards any ideas of change would not be a useful outcome of academic staff development intending to promote student-centred teaching practice (Land, 2001).

Dominant values are generally recognizable in behaviours such as verbal and written communications or positions expressed during dialogue. For example, if a teacher's description of a preferred teaching strategy is didactic and rigid rather than collaborative or student-centred then it is usually premised on the teacher controlling the learning environment. The features of such a strategy would be conduction of concepts and the teacher's knowledge to the students (Trigwell and Prosser, 1997).

Here, the curriculum design is product-oriented and teaching practice will rely on lectures and predetermined learning activities. Assessment will rely on quantifiable designs and be focused on aspects of content within the teacher's personal expertise. Inevitably, students will adopt a surface approach to learning (Biggs and Moore, 1993) and may under-perform in the teacher's eyes.

Alternatively, a teacher's description of a preferred teaching strategy that articulates how interaction with students might support learning is usually premised on understanding and collaboration, adaptation and greater flexibility within the learning environment. Those teachers and students who prefer this learning environment will

usually have experienced learning where they were motivated by the need to use dialogue as a tool for clarification, to understand concepts, to change conceptions and to construct personal knowledge.

In an ideal world, both teachers and students would have the opportunity to move beyond these limiting conceptions of teaching and learning towards a more sophisticated and emancipatory form (Mezirow, 1990) where they join together as learners embarking each semester upon a new learning journey of discovery free from imposed ideology and constraint. However, not many teachers or students, as Freire's work has shown (Aronowitz, 1993), have embarked on this journey, and that is quite understandable given the institutional and social constraints that bind the practices of teaching and learning in higher education and elsewhere.

Engineering the human of education

Creating views of how knowledge is formed with the extensive change hypothesizing could enhance the change agent role acknowledged by most academic developers (Fraser, 2001). Engaging the participants in a dialogue about achieving desired outcomes of change as a way of uncovering their existing (usually unacknowledged) values, and moving towards consensus about a way forward, holds promise as a useful strategy in this facilitation role. A starting point for gaining insight into teachers' and students' fundamental beliefs might be a discussion or inventory of the most common approaches used by the teachers (Trigwell and Prosser, 1999)

An academic staff developer could draw more deeply from theorising about group learning to gain insight into ways of promoting conceptual shifts in views about teaching and learning. In order to leverage positive feelings towards change, an atmosphere of trust that supports the sharing of positive and negative personal emotions is highly desirable (Angelo, 1999).

In summary, transformative change will be more likely to occur if:

- it is based on core values founded on understanding rather than controlling the learning environment (Mezirow, 1990);
- change processes embrace negotiated rather than imposed collaboration (Smyth, 2002);
- deep learning takes place during the process of change (Angelo, 1999);

the development of an atmosphere of trust is based on authentic rather than placatory consultation (Mezirow, 1990).

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