

Open-Door-Policy as a Means of Solving  
the Problems of Increasing Demand for Higher Education

by

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I. Introduction

"Open-door-policy" lends itself to a variety of interpretations. In the society which emphasizes the equality of educational opportunity, the open-door-policy is usually adhered to promote the democratization of admissions. However, the trend of increasing demand for higher education during the past decade has pointedly indicated that the social demands for higher education could not be fulfilled. Consequently efforts were made in search for an educational system that would offer broadest possible educational opportunities. Attempts were made to introduce such innovative open education services such as the British open University, Iran's Free University, Pakistan's Allama Iqbal Open University and the Peoples' Republic of China's Shanghai T.V. College. For the present purpose, this article will adhere to the broad interpretation of "open-door-policy" which will include the open education concept which in fact, is the main emphasis of this paper.

II. Characteristics of Open Education Versus Conventional Education

Usually the conventional education contains the following restrictive characteristics:<sup>1</sup>

1. Restrictive access: The systems are highly selective and the selection implicitly is socially based, leading to social inequalities.

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The author is indebted to Mr. Vibool Phinit-Akson of the Office of University Affairs for his invaluable assistance in the preparation of this paper.

1. UNESCO. Bulletin of the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and Oceania. "Open Education in the Region of Asia and Oceania." Bangkok, 1978. pp. ii-iii.

As a result, large sections of the population are debarred from access to higher education or held back by requirements which the selection function of the system may impose.

2. Restrictive structures: the selection process is reinforced by educational structures which grade and direct learning by uniform pacing, allowing limited room for individual needs and expression of abilities or to move from one branch of education to another. Mobility and flexibility are limited.

3. Restrictive learning environment: conventional education restricts itself to face-to-face teaching in the classrooms and lecture rooms as the main learning environment. The potential of modern communications media for bridging distances and opening up new learning environments remain under-utilized.

In defining the important characteristics of open education, the author of this article wishes to quote analyses forwarded by MacKenzie and colleagues and Myers as basis of interpretation.

Institutions of open education would:

1. cater to students not provided with adequate educational opportunities at the present time.
2. offer courses outside fulltime formal education, but related to some important national purpose.
3. employ the learning systems which contain some element of "newness", whether in curriculum, organization, course development and delivery, and assessment or support.
4. show efficacy in some form of assessment beyond the gaining of a degree or certificate.<sup>2</sup>

The open education may be described in terms of human relations where it would mean new forms of interaction between teachers and taught; in physical terms where it would mean transcending the physical confines of the classroom; in temporal terms where it would mean a flexible schedule

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2. MacKenzie, N.; R. Postgate and J. Scupham, Open learning: systems and problems in post-secondary education. Paris, Unesco, 1975. p. 18

of learning that may extend throughout life or, finally, in curricular terms, which may imply individualized and diversified learning sequences.<sup>3</sup>

### III. Why Open Education ?

The motivations which have evoked the search for open forms of education can be synthesized as follows:

1. Access to broader educational opportunities. This motivation is derived from the idea of providing educational opportunities on an extensive scale. Open education is used to extend the outreach to cover population groups not otherwise catered for through the conventional education system. In some cases, open education has been designed as an alternative to the formal education system to serve those who are by-passed and screened out by the conventional education system .

2. Continuing education. This motivation is derived from the idea of providing continuation studies as a complementary role to the formal educational system.

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3. Myers, D.A. and L. Myers (eds.) Open education re-examined. Lexington, Mass., Lexington Books, 1973. p. 2

#### IV. Open Education and Thai Higher Education

The development of higher education as a system in Thailand emerged more than half a century ago in the form of professional schools to meet the manpower requirements of the government. At the early stage, the scope of higher education was confined to a few selected areas of study and a carefully selected group of students. Such fields of study as public administration, teacher education, law, engineering and medicine were considered the areas of high priority serving manpower needs of the government in those days. The students came mainly from the families of high-ranking officials and well-to-do sector of the population. Thus the initial stage of higher education development can be described as education for the elite while serving the manpower requirements.

Attempts to democratize higher education in Thailand, though commenced in the mid 1930's were not effectively felt until after the close of World War II when the government adopted a new policy to extend educational opportunity to all persons irrespective of class status, ethnics or racial identification. This new outlook, nurtured by Thai scholars newly returned from western countries was implemented by broadening the scope of educational programs to meet the needs of the masses, devising new modes of operation to accommodate more students and promoting the equality of educational opportunity through decentralization by establishing institutions of higher learning in various regions of the country. The approach used as bases for the expansion of higher education incorporated both the manpower requirements and social demand on the part of the masses. Thus it can be said that the present higher education in Thailand has undergone the "evolution" process and has, to a large degree, arrived at the democratization stage.

1. Growing Demand for Higher Education

Population growth, the expansion of secondary education and the growth of economy are the main forces stimulating the growing demand for higher education. The system has to be expanded in order to meet manpower requirements and the rising expectation of the masses. Potential clients of higher education are high school graduates or those with equivalent qualifications. The number of these graduates, either from academic or vocational streams, are increasing greatly. As shown in Table 1. total graduates of MS 5, MS 6 and lower certificates of education increased almost 70 % within four years. In 1973, there were 86,793 graduates. In 1976, the figure was 121,910, and the index became 140. In the following year, the index to 145. MS 5 graduates followed almost the same pattern. The MS 6 growth rate was increasing slowly. The highest growth rate is found in MS 5. This indicates the increase in potential demands for higher education.

But the actual demand is determined not only by a number of annual graduates but also by numbers accumulated from previous years. There are adults who seek opportunities for higher education and those who failed from previous entrance examinations. This adds to the growing demand at present as well as in the future. Table 2 presents the number of MS 5 and equivalent graduates, the number of applicants and successful candidates. One can see that actual demand or the number of applicants, is on the rise.

TABLE I  
High School Graduates

Year	Total		MS 5		MS 6		Lower Cert. of Ed.	
	No.	INDEX	No.	INDEX	No.	INDEX	No.	INDEX
1973	86,793	100	18,545	100	27,174	100	41,074	100
1974	100,183	115	23,323	125	28,053	103	48,807	118
1975	112,564	129	33,928	182	29,377	108	49,259	119
1976	121,910	140	41,381	223	35,529	130	45,000	109
1977	126,269	145	64,607	348	43,000	158	18,662	45

Source: Technical Department, Ministry of Education, 1978.

TABLE 2  
 Number of High School Graduates & Students  
 Applicants & Successful Candidates

Year	No. of MS 5 Graduates & Equivalent	Index	No. of Student Applicants	Index	No. of Successful Candidates	Index	Percentage of (6) : (4)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1973	91,813	100	41,430	100	10,298	100	24.85
1974	100,183	109	44,182	106	11,529	111	26.09
1975	112,564	122	49,332	119	12,823	124	25.99
1976	121,910	132	51,851	125	13,487	130	26.01
1977	126,269	138	64,253	155	13,948	135	21.70

Source: Office of University Affairs, Higher Educational Guidance Book, 1976.  
 Technical Department, Ministry of Education, 1978.

From the two tables, it is noted that both potential and actual demands are increasing. As mentioned earlier, the expansion of secondary education is one of the factors stimulating the growing demand for higher education. During the last decade there has been an attempt to expand upper secondary education throughout the country. This results in tremendous enrollment expansion. Table 3 presents MS 5 enrollments by regions and years. It can be observed from the table that enrollments are increasing, particularly in the regions. The larger the enrollments, the larger the number of graduates and the greater the potential demand.



TABLE 3  
Number of MS 5 Students by Regions and Years

Year Region		1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
		Northeast	N	1,541	1,528	1,155	1,426	1,821
	I	100	99	75	93	118	141	153
North	N	1,378	1,709	1,663	2,048	2,474	2,855	3,262
	I	100	124	121	149	180	207	237
South	N	1,115	1,339	1,079	1,381	1,785	1,961	2,121
	I	100	120	97	124	160	176	190
Central	N	711	1,030	672	918	1,181	1,641	2,344
	I	100	145	95	138	159	131	338
East	N	474	756	727	1,003	1,067	1,133	1,344
	I	100	159	153	212	225	239	262
West	N	564	648	649	811	870	1,043	1,000
	I	100	115	115	144	154	185	193
Metro.	N	12,016	12,966	12,270	15,053	16,627	17,143	18,250
	I	100	108	102	125	138	143	151
Total	N	17,799	19,976	18,215	22,637	25,771	27,943	30,553
	I	100	112	102	127	148	157	172

Source: Compiled from data collected by Office of Measurement and Evaluation, Technical Department, Ministry of Education.

## 2. Responses to the Growing Demand

Two approaches are taken in order to meet the growing demand for higher education: the traditional and non-traditional.

Traditional Approach. Traditional approach includes the following actions.

(1) Expanding existing government institutions. Enrollments are enlarged so as to accommodate the growing demand. Students are admitted on a full-time basis through entrance examination. From Table 2, it can be seen that a number of seats available are limited. The growth rate of successful candidates does not correspond to that of applicants. In fact, the percentage of successful candidates is declining, from 31 percent in 1969 to 25 percent in 1973.

(2) Establishing new institutions in the regions. In order to promote economic and social development in the regions, new institutions of higher learning have been established: Chiang Mai in the North, Khon Kaen in the North-East, and Prince of Songkla in the South. The first two institutions are stipulated in the First National Development Plan (1961 - 1966), while the last one in the Second Plan (1967 - 1971). In order to promote equality of educational opportunities, the admission quota is also set up for regional universities, as shown in Table 4. Khon Kaen University was the first to start the program in 1970 by providing the quota for high-ability students. Chiang Mai University initiated the program in 1971 and Prince of Songkla followed in 1973. During the Fourth Plan (1977 - 1981), these universities will increase the percentage of the quota, between 25 to 40 per cent of the new entrants.

TABLE 4  
Admission Quota of Regional Universities

Universities	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
Khon Kaen								
Number admitted	5	6	18	100	135	121	215	247
Percentage of new entrants	1.06	1.16	0.33	20.62	20.77	16.29	26.06	25.33
Chiang Mai								
Number admitted		16	21	90	243	254	335	565
Percentage of new entrants		1.06	3.20	6.05	8.48	14.49	18.55	30.21
Prince of Songkla								
Number admitted	-	-	-	23	44	141	272	318
Percentage of new entrants				10.0	10.12	24.02	35.65	38.59

Source: Compiled by Dr. Tong-In Wongsathorn, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University

Besides establishing new universities, some colleges are upgraded to university so as to broaden their programs of studies. This is the traditional venue responding to the growing demand.

(3) Allowing private sector to share the responsibility in providing higher education. Prior to 1969 higher education was the sole responsibility of the government where total enrollments have increased tremendously. As shown in Table 5 enrollments increased more than three times within six years. Compared with enrollments in government universities, the percentage also increased greatly, from 6.6 per cent in 1972 to almost 13 per cent in 1977.

TABLE 5  
Enrollments in Private Colleges

Year	Enrollment	Index	As Percentage of Enrollments in Government Universities
1972	4,094	100	6.6
1973	6,477	158	9.8
1974	10,105	246	14.8
1975	13,110	320	18.5
1976	14,055	343	13.5
1977	14,898	363	12.8

Non-Traditional Approach. Non-traditional approach includes the following actions:

(1) Academic market approach. Ramkhamhaeng University has been established as an open-admission institution. The university admits high school graduates or equivalents and third grade government officials completing MS 3 (grade 10). No entrance examination is required. There is a large number of students entering this university each year. In the academic year 1977-1978 the admission number was about 75,000. The university offers a variety of programs in business administration, economics, education, humanities, law, political science and sciences. Education is provided mainly on classroom-basis, supplemented by educational media such as television and radio broadcasts. Recently travelling lecturers are being introduced so as to extend classroom lectures and tutorials to the provinces.

(2) Distance learning approach (open university method). To democratize higher education to a fuller extent, Sukhothaithammathiraj University, an open university, was established in 1978. A new approach to deliver education to the masses has been initiated. Education will be home-based and provided through integrated mass media. It will be oriented toward working people as well as high school graduates. The new open university is considered an economical means to meet more effectively the increasing demand for higher education.

TABLE 6

Qualifications of University Teaching Staff, 1977.

Institutions	Ph.D.	M.A.	B.A.	%
Chulalongkorn University	20.0	61.3	18.7	100
Kasetsart University	14.8	60.1	25.1	100
Khon Kaen University	12.8	50.7	36.5	100
Chiang Mai University	10.4	48.9	40.7	100
Thammasat University	11.0	68.8	20.2	100
Mahidol University	29.5	41.5	29.0	100
Ramkhamhaeng University	4.3	69.4	26.3	100
Silpakorn University	10.7	67.3	22.0	100
Sri Nakhairinwirot University	7.5	75.7	16.8	100
Prince of Songkla University	14.3	57.1	28.6	100
National Institute of Development Administration	36.0	60.1	3.9	100
Agricultural Institute of Technology	1.7	47.4	50.9	100
King Mongkut's Institute of Technology	4.7	31.7	63.6	100
Total	15.6	56.9	27.5	100

Source: Planning Division, Office of University Affairs, 1978.

### 3. Problems & Prospects

In regard to efforts to provide open higher education in Thailand as elaborated earlier, the system adopted both traditional and non-traditional approaches. Thus it was able to respond to the needs of the masses fairly adequately. In the democratization process there were many problems encountered, however only the salient problems will be discussed here.

#### Problems

(1) Quality vs. Quantity: The effort to meet the demand implemented in the form of rapid growth of higher education has adversely created problems in academic standard and quality of education. Two factors are associated with the quality of higher education: staff qualification and resources allocation.

The first problem, staff qualifications, has long been recognized. This problem is quite evident comparing to the UNESCO standard which recommends the proportion of doctorates, masters and bachelors at 15:50:35. From table 6, it can be observed that the overall staff qualification is below UNESCO standard. Disregarding other factors, it can be clearly seen that the quality of education is seriously hampered by the accelerated growth of higher education.

Another factor which cannot be discounted is the allocation of resources. The rapid growth has resulted in inadequate allocation of resources. Looking from the budget side, "From 1967-1973, the national appropriation to the university education system of Thailand was, on the average, 15 per cent of the total budget for education at all levels. This was only about 2.5 per cent of the total national budget and approximately 0.2 per cent of the GDP"<sup>1</sup>.

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1. Niphon Kantasewi, "Higher Education and Economic Growth in Thailand" in Higher Education and Economic Growth in Southeast Asia, edited by Amnuay Tapingkae, Singapore: Eurasia Press, 1976, p. 80.



(2) Graduate Unemployment: The production of graduates in various fields, through traditional and non-traditional approaches has produced more graduates than the absorptive capacity of the country's economy. According to a number of surveys conducted by various agencies, the problem of surplus graduates is becoming increasingly crucial.

TABLE 7  
Percentage of Graduates Unemployed by Fields of Study

Fields of Study	NESDB <sup>1</sup>			OUA <sup>2</sup>		
	1973	1974	1975	1973	1974	1975
Humanities	9.7	15.8	15.8	35.3	38.8	33.3
Education	6.5	18.6	18.6	12.5	15.4	11.0
Fine Arts	2.9	10.4	10.4	14.3	19.2	20.6
Social Sciences	7.0	13.1	12.1	33.7	32.0	33.1
Law	14.5	27.3	27.3	53.3	41.1	30.7
Sciences	5.4	17.4	17.4	39.6	45.0	41.3
Engineering	3.2	10.0	10.1	15.5	15.9	20.0
Health Sciences	2.0	1.7	1.7	9.8	8.4	9.2
Agriculture	3.5	10.6	10.6	44.9	28.4	28.7
Total	6.5	15.2	15.1	23.5	16.7	18.9

- Sources: 1) NESDB, "Graduates and Estimated Unemployment,"  
3 June 1976 (Mimeographed)
- 2) Office of University Affairs, Survey of  
Graduates 1973, and 1976.

There are surplus graduates in almost every field. The unusual rise occurred in 1974 was due to a number of economic reasons. The figures clearly show that sciences is the field of study with the highest percentage of unemployment while health sciences which include medical doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists and others enjoy the lowest rate of unemployment. The marked difference of figures from the two sources was due to the different times of sampling taken by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) and Office of University Affairs (OUA) respectively.

The rapid expansion of Thailand's higher education also creates the problem of mismatch between educational outputs and job opportunities. The question of mismatch is really the problem of relevance between education and work which is another dimension of unemployment.

TABLE 8  
 Percentage of University Training Utilization in 1976

Institutions	Direct use of training (%)	Partial use (%)	Use to a small degree (%)	Not specified (%)	Total	
					No.	%
Chulalongkorn University	55.96	36.04	6.89	1.10	1,451	100
Kasetsart University	49.81	40.04	7.14	3.01	532	100
Khon Kaen University	54.52	33.24	9.04	3.21	343	100
Chiang Mai University	58.72	31.35	7.03	2.91	654	100
Thammasat University	31.11	51.03	15.92	1.94	823	100
Mahidol University	80.43	15.78	1.87	1.87	374	100
Ramkhamhaeng University	30.60	42.66	23.56	3.18	2,199	100
Silpakorn University	46.82	36.96	12.53	3.70	487	100
Sri Nakharinwirot University	51.24	33.12	13.34	2.30	4,085	100
Prince of Songkla University	38.66	33.83	10.04	17.47	269	100
King Mongkut's Institute of Technology	54.16	37.72	5.42	2.71	517	100
Total	50.18	35.62	10.26	3.94	11,734	100

Source: Technical Division, OUA 1976.

(3) Wastage: Thailand's response to the demand of the masses has created considerable wastage in higher education in the forms of drop-out and late graduation. Institutionwise, this is more evident in the academic market approach where the percentage of graduation at Ramkhamhaeng University ranged from as low as 1.8 % in law to 13.8 % in science.

### Prospects

Grim as the picture may look, yet higher education in Thailand is not entirely without alternatives or prospects.

The open university method must be utilized in order to meet the demand more effectively. This approach will employ the use of integrated media in the form of home-based education to accommodate the increasing number of potential clients. This, to include also the working people, will be one of the efforts in democratizing to a fuller extent the higher education in Thailand.

Another solution to help promote democratization of higher education is the setting up of community colleges offering short-cycle higher education with 2-3 year courses to meet the need of the communities. The emphasis will be placed on occupational and terminal programs including adult education. The pilot project by Prince of Songkla University at Phuket admitted the first group of students in mid-1978.

From the efforts to provide open higher education by different approaches earlier identified, it is believed that the adoption of manpower cum social demand approach as the basis for higher education development in Thailand will be continued. It would be desirable to find a balance between the two approaches by emphasizing the vocational and terminal and equally important, self-employed aspects of education at this level.