

The Logic of the Thai Higher Education Sector
on Quality Assessment Policy

Rattana Sae-Lao

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ABSTRACT

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Although the concept of quality has been an essential part of the higher education sector, the global quest for Quality Assessment (QA hereafter) has raised attention to quality to a new level. Van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) argue that the common characteristics of QA policy include: meta-level organization to conduct external evaluation, self-evaluation, peer review (site visits), published reports, and no link to public funding. Based on the document analysis, at least 48 countries established a meta-organization to implement QA between 1983 and 2010. This finding substantiates that QA has become a "global education policy." This term, coined by Verger et al. (2012), refers to "similar education reforms and a common set of education policy jargon [that] are being applied in many parts of the world" (p. 1).

Influenced by policy borrowing and lending theory (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012), this dissertation was interested in understanding why a "global education policy" such as QA resonates in Thailand. Furthermore, it explored how the policy was introduced, implemented, and interpreted by the stakeholders within the higher education sector since its inception. This dissertation deployed a qualitative case study methodology with a triangulation of three methods to collect data: document analysis, 80 elite interviews, and a three-month internship at the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA).

In 1994, QA was a topic of policy discussion within Thailand's higher education sector. However, it was not until 1999, with the promulgation of the National Education Act, that QA became a legal mandate for every institution. ONESQA, a public organization, was established

in the year 2000 to be responsible for conducting external quality assessment. Comparing the timing of Thailand's institutionalization of QA to the international landscape, the country is considered to be a late adopter of the policy. Steiner-Khamsi (2006) aptly argued that a study of a late adopter is equivalent to a study on globalization.

Why did a "global education policy" such as QA resonate in Thailand? It is argued that historical legacies of the Thai state, policy timing, and the policy belief systems of the policy elites help to explain the policy resonance and the introduction and implementation of QA in Thailand. Historically, the Thai elites have always, actively and purposefully, made reference to policies from elsewhere in order to legitimize national reform. The historical development of the Thai higher education sector is the case in point. While the establishment of universities during the early days of nation-building relied on European models, American models became the blueprint after the Second World War. QA resonated in Thailand because of this historically rooted logic of the Thai state that favored global trends. Policy timing was also an important factor. Given that QA was a byproduct of a sector-wide education reform, the Asian Economic Crisis provided a much needed "window of opportunity" to legitimize the new legal framework (Fry, 2000). The policy belief systems of Thai policy elites mattered. Through cross-sectoral borrowing, senior bureaucrats, university executives, and representatives from the private sector based QA on their professional experiences.

How was QA introduced, implemented and interpreted within Thailand's higher education sector? The introduction of QA was perceived as an "irresistible global model/ trend" that Thailand needed to follow. The implementation of QA has been amalgamated within the existing hierarchy, seniority, and structure of Thailand. While QA policy was bureaucratized in every visited university through the creation of a central office, there has also been a professionalization of QA at extensive meetings, trainings, data collection, and self-assessment reports. The interpretation of QA differs depending on the type of institution, official position of each individual, and academic discipline. It is evident that university executives are more

favorable to QA, while academics criticize QA for its abundant paperwork and question the link between quality education and quality assessment.

This dissertation primarily contributes to the advancement of policy borrowing and lending theory. In addition to the politics and economics of borrowing, the case of Thailand elucidates the existence of a culture of borrowing. Thailand deploys externalization strategy to justify the locally and historically rooted logic and aspiration that becoming modern and adapted to global trends is a national necessity. By identifying the multiple faces of globalization and how it has been used as problem, policy, and politics, this dissertation also contributes to strengthening Comparative Policy Studies.

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To my parents.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AQAN	ASEAN Quality Assurance Network
APQN	Asia Pacific Quality Network
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUN	ASEAN University Network
CU	Chulalongkorn University
CUPT	Council of University Presidents of Thailand
CMU	Chiang Mai University
EC	European Community
EdPEX	Education Criteria for Performance Excellence
ENQA	European Network of Quality Assurance
EQA	External Quality Assessment
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GDA	General Department of Assessment and Accreditation
HEQA	Higher Education Quality Committee
IAAP	International Academic Advisory Panel
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INQAHEE	International Networks for Quality Assurance Agencies
IQA	Internal Quality Assessment
IRB	International Review Board
KCUE	Korea Council for University Education
KM	Knowledge Management
KMITT	King Mongkut's Institute of Technology
MOE	Ministry of Education
MQF	Malaysia Qualification Framework
MUA	Ministry of University Affairs
NEA	National Education Act
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
NIC	Newly Industrialized Country
NIDA	National Institute of Development Administration
NPM	New Public Management
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRU	National Research University
OEC	Office of Education Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education and Children's Services and Skills
OHEC	Office of Higher Education Commission
ONEC	Office of National Education Council
ONESQA	Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment
OPDC	Office of the Public Sector Commission

PMO	Prime Minister Office
PMQA	Public Management Quality Award
PSU	Prince of Songkla University
QA	Quality Assessment
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
REDPHE	Regional Educational Development Project including Higher Education
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAR	Self Assessment Report
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SEAMEO-RIHED	SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development
SUB	Bureau of States University
SUT	Suranaree University of Technology
TQA	Thailand's Quality Award
TQF	Thailand Qualification Framework
TU	Thammasat University
UGC	University Grant Committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VNU-H	Vietnam National University in Hanoi

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Higher education across the globe has undergone enormous pressure to reform. With increasing global economic competition and emphasis on international ranking, states are now pressed with unprecedented to-do lists to ensure that their higher education systems maintain their quality, efficiency, and competitiveness in the global marketplace. The quest for quality is not a new concept in higher education. However, current discussions on Quality Assessment (QA hereafter) differ from the traditional norm. QA accentuates the need to establish an external organization to monitor and manage higher education. The main purposes of external evaluation agency are to ameliorate institutional effectiveness in terms of teaching, learning, and researching and to ensure efficiency and accountability in the use of resources (Brown, 2004; Harman, 1998). Brennan and Shah (2000) argue that quality assessment describes the “processes of evaluation, review, audit, monitoring” (p. 5). Another related term, quality assurance, puts more emphasis on the “regulatory and control” mechanism (p. 5), and it often involves follow-up processes after the assessment has been conducted (Harman, 1998). Despite the nuanced differences, the two terms have been used interchangeably. Based on a survey of QA in five countries in North America and Western Europe, Van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) argue that the discussion on QA includes five features: Meta-Level Organization to conduct external evaluation, Self-Evaluation, Peer Review (site visits), Published Reports, and No direct link to public findings.

Based on an international survey on QA, Billing (2004) argued that the purposes of QA include five interchangeable benefits: improvement of quality; publicly available information on quality and standards; accreditation (i.e., legitimization of certification of students); public accountability: for standards achieved, and for use of money; and lastly contribution to the higher education sector planning process (p. 115). According to a survey of 24 European countries, Frazer (1997, cited in Billing, 2004) argued that the purposes of QA can be understood within the spectrum of accountability to educational improvement.

An introduction of this policy does not only lead to the establishment of new institutions and bureaucracy for QA, but it also refers to the emergence of a new mode of thinking in public sector and higher education policy. Guy Neave (1988) coined the term “Evaluative State,” which highlights the changing role of the state in higher education from centralized control to evaluation of outputs in higher education systems, to encapsulate the new phenomenon. The concept of the Evaluative State argues that the rise of QA has been tightly coined with concepts such as accountability, efficiency, and enterprise. These terms have become “the New Theology,” mandating policy change in higher education (p. 7). Undoubtedly, the global march for QA has marked the dawn of a new era for New Public Management (NPM). NPM attempts to remove the barriers between public and private sectors and instill private values and practices of auditing and assessing the quality of the practice based on the achieved outcomes (Brown, 2004). In this changing landscape, the market rationale dominates the policy discourse. Universities become enterprises, faculties become entrepreneurs, and students become customers (Mok & Lee, 2003).

The review of the literature on international experiences of QA suggests that the global quest for QA policy can be differentiated into three main periods. Beginning in the early 1980s, only a few countries had adopted the policy. Countries such as France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Finland are considered the early adopters of the

policy (van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994). In the 1990s and 2000s, the expansion of QA reached an explosive growth period, whereby multiple countries, especially from Western and Eastern Europe, joined the process. By the end of the 1990s, many Asian countries had begun to formally introduce QA as a part of their national evaluation system. Bigalke and Neubauer (2009) succinctly argue: “Throughout the region questions of quality and the search for methods of quality assurance are gaining a central place in higher education policy discussions” (p. 2).

In the case of Thailand, the national discussion on QA began as early as 1994. It was initiated by the Council of University Presidents in Thailand (CUPT). During that time, there were numerous seminars and conferences related to quality issues hosted by CUPT in conjunction with the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA). In 1996, MUA issued a policy statement that recommended and encouraged all Thai universities to introduce QA in their institutions. Despite various policy talks and recommendations in 1994 and 1996, it was not until the promulgation of the National Education Act of 1999 that the implementation of QA policy in Thailand was officially mandated. Chapter 6 of the 1999 Act is devoted to a discussion of quality. It is entitled “Educational Standards and Quality Assurance” (NEA, 1999). Within this legal framework, differing sections discuss the need for internal quality assurance and external quality assessment at length. Section 47 calls for “a system of educational quality assurance to ensure improvement of educational quality and standards at all level” (Muangkeow, 2009, p. 166). While Section 48 mandates internal QA annually from institutions to be submitted to the Parent Organizations (such as the Office of Higher Education Commission), Section 49 stipulates establishment of a new organization, the Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA hereafter), to conduct an external quality assessment every five years.

Under this new legal framework, every educational institution is mandated to conduct IQA and EQA. The Bureau of Standards and Evaluation under the umbrella of

the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) is responsible for IQA. The Bureau's¹ main responsibilities include: (1) Creating policy recommendations on standards of higher education; (2) Creating an accreditation system to ensure the quality and standards of higher education institutions as well as facilitating credit transfers; (3) Supporting the system of Quality Assessment and developing the information system to collect related data on QA; (4) Following up and monitoring the management of higher education; and (5) Coordinating with other responsible organizations on quality and QA. The Bureau has created an ad hoc committee on IQA to create appropriate QA system and indicators for the universities to follow as well as provided training for interested academics to become certified IQA assessors. Although the name "Internal Quality Assessment" suggests that this task should be an internal responsibility of the university, each university is mandated to compose an IQA committee within its institution, conduct self-assessment reports following the rubric of the IQA indicators created by the Bureau, and subsequently submit the reports to the Bureau for data collection. This is an annual responsibility for the university.

ONESQA is responsible for the process of EQA. Influenced by the New Public Management concept, ONESQA was established as a public organization, which refers to an organization that receives public funding while trying to imitate private sector organizations in terms of flexibility and management. ONESQA has been granted approximately 400 million baht annually from the government. While it reports to the Prime Minister's Office, ONESQA attempts to be exempted from the centralized control of the Ministry of Education or the Commission of Higher Education (Pittiyauwat, 2009). As a public organization, the agency claims to have autonomy and neutrality from the Ministry of Education. The responsibilities of ONESQA² include developing the

¹Accessed on the 19th of October, 2012 <http://www.mua.go.th/users/bhes/suggest.htm>

²Accessed the 19th of October, 2012 <http://www.onesqa.or.th/en/about/functions.php>

method, systems, and indicators to assess the External Quality Assessment as well as providing the training to certify external assessors. Although the ONESQA staff does not conduct assessment and evaluation, the organization is required to commission different academics to be external assessors and conduct assessment at the university level. The staff of ONESQA will sit on these commissions as the secretariats and provide administrative assistance. In policy papers, the IQA and EQA are intended to work hand in hand to continuously monitor and improve higher education institutions. Detailed discussion of the process and indicators of the EQA system will be discussed in Chapter VI.

Since the early days of policy discussion on QA in 1994, QA policy in Thailand higher education has undergone enormous changes and shifts in terms of its legal obligation, methodology, and purposes. From being an voluntary option for higher education institutions, the policy became a legal obligation for every university and educational institution to comply with. Furthermore, Thailand's policy elites' attention to quality and quality assessment have created enormous policy papers, bureaucracy, and conferences related to such issues. Given the prominent position of QA in the sector, this dissertation intended to understand why QA has resonated in Thailand, and how it has been introduced, implemented, and interpreted by differing actors in Thai higher education.

This dissertation is entitled the Logic of the Thai Higher Education Sector on Quality Assessment Policy. It is interested in the historical, contextual, and local policy context in Thailand's higher education sector to understand more deeply how historical legacies, political structures, and policy elites continue to play roles in influencing the face and features of the policy. Through an intensive nine months of fieldwork in Thailand, this dissertation is a qualitative case study driven by two main research questions:

1. Why did a "global education policy" such QA resonate in Thailand?
2. How was QA introduced, implemented, and interpreted within Thailand's higher education sector?

The two research questions are complementary to fully comprehend the QA policy in Thailand. While the first research question is the focus and primary interest of this dissertation, the second research question is necessary to explore the complexity of Thailand's higher education sector in depth. These two research questions are relevant to the theoretical advancement and the practical benefit for higher education reform.

Theoretically speaking, this research is situated in the established field of the study of globalization in education and more specifically policy borrowing and lending in education. Steiner-Khamsi (2012) defines policy borrowing and lending in education as an attempt to “describe, analyze and understand ... traveling reforms that surface in every part of the world” (p. 1). The rapid proliferation of QA globally within the past two decades has created a contentious theoretical debate whether such a phenomenon results in increasing global convergence of education policy. While van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) have argued that there exists a general model of QA, many argue that significant variations in terms of the models, functions, and purposes of QA persist (Billing, 2004; Brennan & Shah, 1997; Harman, 1998). Historical legacy, political structures, and the socio-logic of the borrowing countries continuously challenge the global reform and modify ready-made packages (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004). The analysis of historical context, political structures, and the roles and belief systems of policy actors within the Thai higher education sub-system provided a fertile ground to acquire a complete understanding of the meaning and implication of QA at multiple levels.

Practically speaking, the diversity of viewpoints from differing policy actors involved in Thailand's higher education sector provided useful reflection on the benefits and limitations of the policy. After nearly two decades of QA talk in Thailand and one full decade of national implementation, the fieldwork aims to shed light on the disparity

between policy expectations and their intended and unintended consequences. The experiences and voices of QA advocates and its critics are necessary to understand what the policy has achieved, its shortcomings, and potential areas for improvement.

A qualitative case study was the appropriate methodology to investigate these issues. A triangulation of three methods was carried out to collect the data, including document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and a three-month observation at the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). In order to understand why QA has resonated in Thailand, the research design aimed to encapsulate the differing viewpoints of policy actors ranging across various levels of analysis. Eighty policy elites, QA practitioners, and academics were interviewed. The research fieldwork began by interviewing key policymakers at the center level of policymaking. These individuals included bureaucrats, senior policy advisors, and academics involved in the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC), Ministry of Education (MOE), and ONESQA. Subsequently I visited eight public universities in four regions of Thailand to gain the perspectives of QA practitioners and academics at the university and faculty levels. The fieldwork was carried out between 2010-2011, which marked ten years since the introduction of QA in Thailand. Therefore, the disparity between policy expectations vis-à-vis policy perceptions from QA practitioners and QA users will be illustrated and discussed in depth.

1.1 Brief Background on Thailand's Higher Education Sector

This section briefly introduces Thailand's higher education sector. The in-depth discussion of the historical development of the sector will be highlighted in Chapter IV, while Chapter V will feature a detailed discussion on the trajectory of QA and other quality-related policies in Thailand.

Since the first university, Chulalongkorn, was established in 1916, Thailand's higher education sector has undergone enormous transformations in terms of access, purposes, and characteristics. In the early days, European higher education was the model for the Thai higher education system. It was characterized as elitist, and the sole purpose of higher education was to educate the ruling elite to serve in modern bureaucracy (Wyatt, 1960). Evidently, the creation of earlier universities was heavily linked to bureaucratic and ministerial demands. Thammasat University was founded in 1934 to specialize in political science and law. In 1943, two universities were founded: Kasertsart University aimed to focus on agriculture, while Silapakorn University was intended to focus on fine arts. In 1969, Mahidol University was founded to specialize in medicine (World Bank, 2010). Until the end of the 1960s, there were only eight higher education institutions in Thailand, five of which were located in Bangkok, the capital city, with limited access and purpose. Students had to undergo an extremely competitive national entrance examination in order to secure a seat in one of these institutions. Through American economic assistance after the Second World War, access was expanded, and the American model of higher education became the prototype for Thai higher education. Three more public universities were established in three regions of the country: Chiang Mai University in the North, Khon Kean University in the Northeast, and Prince Songkla University in the South. Prior to the promulgation of the 1969 Private Education Act, the state was the sole provider of higher education in Thailand. As of 2010, there are a total of 166 higher education institutions in Thailand: 78 public and 68 private higher education institutions established throughout the country (CHE, 2010). Table 1.1 provides an overview of Thai higher education. It differentiates public from private institutions, introduces the sub-categories of institutions, and provides insights into the quantitative aspect of each type of the institution over time.

Table 1.1: Different Types of Higher Education Institutions under the Supervision of OHEC

Type of Institution	2004	2005	2006	2008
Public Institution	67	78	78	78
Limited Admission Universities	61	72	72	63
Open Admissions	2	2	2	2
Autonomous University	4	4	4	11
Community Colleges		12	18	19
Private Institutions	56	59	65	69
Universities	29	30	32	40
Colleges	27	29	33	29
Total	123	149	161	166

Source: The Office of Higher Education Commission cited in World Bank 2010 There are also variety of higher education institutions that fall under public institution category.

According to the OHEC differentiation, these include: limited admission universities, open admissions, autonomous university, and community colleges. The majority of universities in Thailand are limited admission, requiring students to sit for entrance examinations. It must be noted that prior to 2004, there were only 23 limited admission universities. Similar to the global phenomenon, mass expansion of higher education occurred in Thailand. One of the government strategies was to upgrade traditional polytechnics or semi-colleges to university status. This involved upgrading 40 of the Rajabhat teachers' colleges under the supervision of the Ministry of Education to become full-fledged universities under the auspices of the Office of Higher Education Council. In 2004, the Rajabhat University Act was promulgated. Subsequently, the 40 Rajabhat colleges, which were founded to be teachers' training institutes, became 40 public universities. Similarly, the Rajamangala institutes, which were founded to be technical and commercial training colleges, were upgraded to be Rajamangala universities (World Bank, 2010). Due to this upgrade of the Rajabhat and Rajamangala universities, the number of Thai public universities proliferated substantially.

Open admission universities refer to Ramkhamheang and Sukothai Thammatirat Universities. These two institutions were established in the early 1970s as a response to the democratization process and demand for more access to higher education in Thailand (Fry, 2002b). Unlike most institutions, the two universities do not require students to take an entrance examination. Rather, they accept students based on their own requirements. Most of the students are the unsuccessful applicants to the limited admission universities. Records in 2004 demonstrated that these two institutions enroll more than 40% of the total number of students in Thai public universities in Thailand (World Bank, 2010).

Autonomous universities refer to the longstanding policy effort of the Ministry of University Affairs/Office of Higher Education Commission, which attempts to restructure the legal framework of public institutions to have more institutional autonomy, flexibility, and self-management. Instead of being controlled by OHEC regulations, autonomous universities are governed by university councils with their own institutional legal framework (World Bank, 2010). There are two types of autonomous universities in Thailand. Seven of the current autonomous universities were originally limited admission public universities, which have undergone the restructuring process in terms of administration structure, legal requirements, and finances toward more market-driven management. There is an exception. Three universities: Suranaree University of Technology, Mae Fah Luang, and Walailuck, were founded as autonomous universities since their inception in the early 1990s (World Bank, 2010).

The establishment of community colleges is a recent policy development in Thailand. Community colleges were established in 2001 with the objectives of expanding higher education access across the nation and upgrading the skills of the existing labor supply. These colleges include a two-year associate degree and short courses in areas such as Early Childhood, the Tourism Industry, and Community Development (World Bank, 2010).

The diversity of the Thai sector provides a useful context to analyze how QA has been introduced, implemented, and interpreted by different actors. Since QA has been discussed as early as 1994 and the fieldwork was in 2010, this provided a longitudinal perspective to understand the life of the policy.

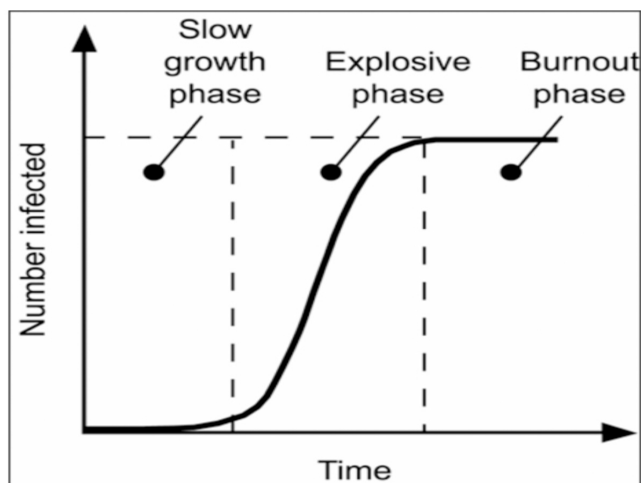
1.2 The Purpose of The Study: Thailand as a Case to Understand Globalization

This research is situated in the established field of policy borrowing and lending in comparative education, which attempts to “describe, analyze and understand ... traveling reforms that surface in every part of the world” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012, p. 1). There are several theoretical responses to address what is considered a "global education policy." This precise term was coined by Verger, Novelli, and Altinyelken (2012). Global education policy is defined as “similar education reforms and a common set of education policy jargon [that] are being applied in many parts of the world, in locations that are incredibly diverse both culturally and in terms of economic development” (p. 1). These policies include “child-centred pedagogies, school-based management, teachers' accountability, public private partnership or conditional cash transfer schemes” (p. 1).

Influenced by the diffusion theory, Steiner-Khamsi (2004a) uses the S-Shape Curve to explicate the trajectory of a global policy. Diffusion theorists use this curve to draw the pattern of policy adoption (Meseguer, 2009; Weyland, 1997). Accordingly, there are three periods of policy diffusion: early adopters, explosive growth, and late adopters (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). In the beginning, there are infrequent adopters of any particular policy. This period is categorized as early adopters (ibid). Once the policy has taken off, the rate of adoption proliferates substantially. This period is called explosive growth. When a policy reaches the explosive growth period and massive numbers of countries implement the policy, that policy is considered a global policy (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). The third period is characterized as late adopters of global policy. At this stage, the origins of the

policy are blurred, decontextualized, and deterritorialized (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000). To exemplify, outcome-based education was first labeled as the New Zealand policy, while lifelong learning was related to the Swedish model and a voucher policy was associated with the Chilean success story. After these policies reach the burnout period of late adopters, the origin of the policy is replaced by and referred to as international or global standard. When the origin of the policy disappears, the policy becomes “everybody and nobody’s reform” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006, p. 666). The graph below illustrates the SShape curve.

Figure 1.1: S-Shape Curve and Policy Diffusion



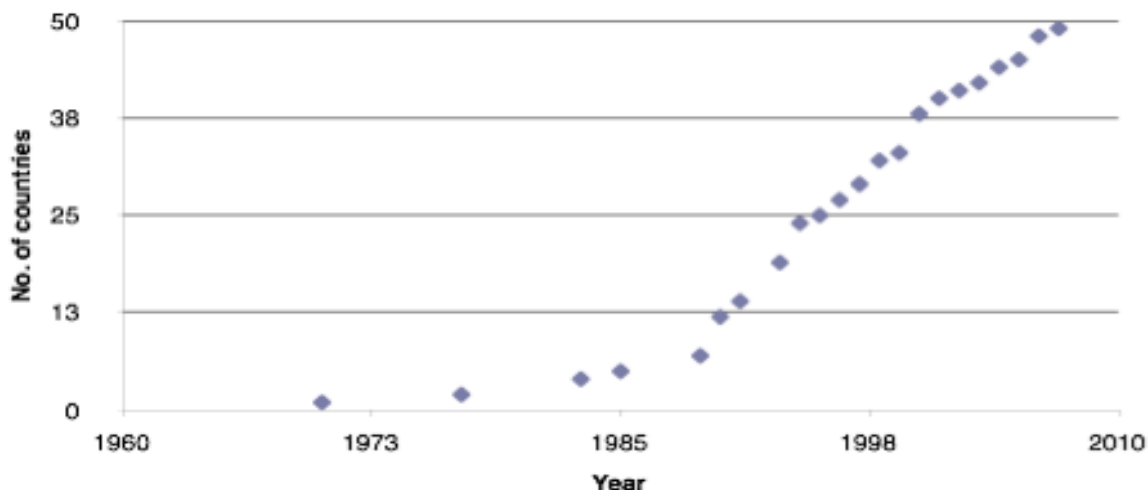
Source: Steiner-Khamsi (2010)

The policy pattern of an S-Shape Curve provides lucid insight to evaluate whether a policy has become global. In order to ascertain that QA has reached the status of being a global education policy, I conducted a systematic review of international literature on QA through a collection of the *Journal of Quality Higher Education*. Given that the main objective of the journal is to analyze and encapsulate the increasing importance of quality, especially the emergence of quality assessment mechanisms, a systematic analysis of this journal provides a lucid space to understand the trend, trajectory, and significance of the QA policy across spaces, cultures, and contexts. The aims and scopes of the journal are:

Quality in Higher Education is an international refereed journal aimed at those interested in the theory, practice and policies relating to the control, management and improvement of quality in higher education. The editor especially wishes to encourage papers on: reported research results, especially where these assess the impact of quality assurance systems, procedures and methodologies; theoretical analyses of quality and quality initiatives in higher education; comparative evaluation and international aspects of practice and policy with a view to identifying transportable methods, systems and good practice.³

I conducted a review of the literature published in the Journal of Quality in Higher Education between 1995 to 2010 as well as analyzed reports and policy papers published by OECD and UNESCO on this subject. The objectives were to understand whether the institutionalization of QA has reached the point of becoming a global education policy. Methodologically speaking, the resonance of QA in these countries is measured by the institutionalization of a meta-organization to be responsible to QA-related tasks.

Figure 1.2: Longitudinal Perspective on the Global Expansion for Quality Assessment



Source: Author

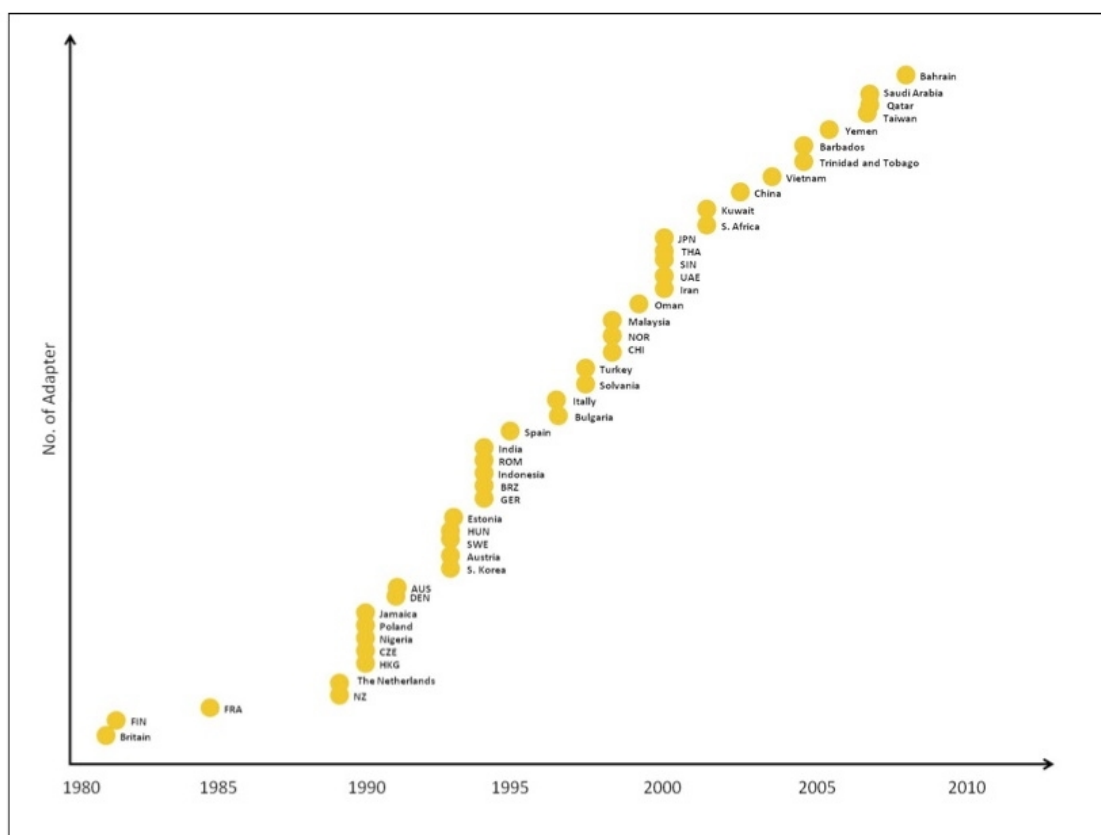
The review of the literature elucidated that between 1983 and 2010, at least 48 countries established a meta organization to conduct quality assurance and assessment.⁴

³Accessed 24th of October, 2012, from <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/aboutThisJournal?show=aimsScope&journalCode=cqhe20>

⁴See Appendix A for the list of countries that adopted QA by year.

The pattern of global expansion of QA indeed fits the S-Shape curve (Figure 1.2) of global policy diffusion. Not only does this finding substantiate the argument that QA has become a global education policy, but it also provides an insightful analysis of the timing of global policy policy adoption. According to Steiner-Khamsi (2006), the trajectory of global policy diffusion can be divided into the early adopters, explosive growth, and late adopters. The graph below demonstrates QA adoption in different periods.

Figure 1.3: Global Expansion for Quality Assessment by Countries



Source: Author.

Figure 1.3 is telling for the study of global expansion of QA. Firstly, the experiences of 48 countries being reviewed fit the S-Shape curve of diffusion theory. The pattern illustrates that the quest for QA has become a global phenomenon and can be considered a global education policy. Regardless of economic status, industrial

development, or labor background of the country, quality reform has presented itself in higher education discussions at the global level (Bleiklie, 2007, p. 101). Secondly, the pattern of the S-Shape curve reveals significant details about the timing of policy adoption. The experiences of 48 countries can be categorized as early adopters, explosive growth, and late adopter periods. During the early adopter period from 1983 to the 1990s, only a few countries, such as Britain, France, Finland, New Zealand, and the Netherlands, institutionalized QA.

The policy received explosive growth between 1990 and 2000, whereby countries in Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and Asia became interested in QA. During this period, countries such as Poland, Australia, Austria, Spain, Italy, and Turkey began to institutionalize QA agency. From the year 2000 onward, QA has reached a burnout period. Countries that joined the global bandwagon after 2000 can be considered the late adopters of QA. During this period, countries from Asia, Africa, and the Arab Emirates began to introduce QA agency. These included Japan, Thailand, Iran, Kuwait, and Yemen. Interestingly, Gertel and Jacobo (2011) also argue that the timing of QA adoption fits with the global trajectory of national development. Countries that are the producers of technology are often the first to develop QA, while late-comers of technology are the followers. The S-Shape curve supports this point. Western European countries introduced QA before Eastern European counterparts, while the Western world in general introduced QA prior to Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Given that the first research question aims to measure the policy resonance of QA in Thailand, a clarification is needed as to how this dissertation measures resonance methodologically. On the one hand, resonance can be understood as the institutionalization of the policy. Through this perspective, the range of resonance begins from the policy (1) being lip service amongst policymakers, (2) receiving political support to become legislation, and (3) receiving financial support to establish an institution. The findings from Figures 1.3 and 1.4 illustrate that the institutionalization of

QA has resonated globally. The global expansion of QA also provides a rationale to select Thailand as a case study. According to Steiner-Khamsi (2006), the study of a late adopter of global policy is the equivalent of a study of globalization. Given that Thailand institutionalized QA in 2000 and is a late adopter in the global landscape, the case of Thailand epitomizes a study of globalization in education policy.

On the other hand, this dissertation aims to explore the semantics of resonance. This includes what the policymakers and stakeholders think of the policy, what the policy expectations and objectives are, and how they anticipated what the new policy will resolve. An in-depth analysis of Thailand's higher education sector aims to explore how differing stakeholders understand, anticipate, and interpret QA. Therefore, the semantics of QA from multiple stakeholders supplement the macro perspective on the institutionalization of the policy.

Since QA is an equivalent of globalization in higher education, the international literature on QA is situated within the broader theoretical debate on globalization within the realm of comparative education and higher education policy studies. Has the globalization of QA resulted in global convergence or divergence? On the one hand, van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) argued that there is a general model of QA across countries, cultures, and contexts. The general model includes the establishment of a meta-organization for QA, self-assessment reports, site visits/peer review, published reports, and no direct funding of the results (van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994). On the other hand, Herman (1998), Billing (2004), and others have contested the notion of the global convergence of QA. It is argued that these five characters have provided a useful framework to analyze the diversity and variations of the international practices and procedures of QA.

Based on the theoretical debate on policy convergence and divergence, it is argued that the Thai case presents a strong case to study the global convergence of the policy. Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe (2006) created the typology of comparative case study and the

study of globalization to justify the selection of case studies. A strong case to study the global convergence is referred to as “systems from which one would not expect a convergence toward an international model” (p. 3). The table below summarizes Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe's conceptual framework on case selection for comparative education.

Table 1.2 Comparative Case Study Analyses and the Study of Globalization

	Same Outcomes	Different Outcomes
Most Similar Systems	I. Weak case for studying convergence	II. Strong case for studying divergence
Most Different Systems	IV. Strong case for studying convergence	III. Weak case for studying divergence

Source: Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe (2006)

The Thai state fits this criterion. Historically speaking, Thailand differs from other Southeast Asian countries as it remained independent during the colonization period. The country has proudly presented itself as the one and only country in Southeast Asia that was not colonized by the Western powers. Despite this idiosyncratic feature, contemporary studies on Thailand's political, economic, and social policies document the country's thirst for modernization and selective emulation of foreign models, concepts, and images (Anderson, 1978; Peleggi, 2002). Thailand has embraced external and Western policies throughout the process of nation building and modernization. In the case of QA, Thai policy elites visited many countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, and France, during the policy formulation. However, Fry (2000) argues, “The idea is not for the Thais to imitate these reforms but to critically examine their experiences and related strategies” (p. 246). This paradoxical logic of the Thai policy elites to adopt global reform with heavy emphasis on the maintenance of local characteristic is a prevailing argument throughout the analysis. The historical legacy and contemporary adoption of various global models makes Thailand an appropriate case for exploring interwoven

relationships between external/global factors vis-à-vis internal/local dimensions. A detailed case study of Thailand's adoption of QA is therefore positioned within this theoretical discussion.

1.3 The Research Contributions

This dissertation uses Thailand's QA policy in the higher education sector to understand how a global education policy has infiltrated and influenced national education reform. It attempts to understand and analyze how QA has traveled across national boundaries and who is involved in the process. This interest reflects the growing debate and interest in globalization in education policy. Furthermore, this dissertation is an interdisciplinary research that draws on multiple concepts and frameworks in order to clarify and sharpen the analyses of globalization in the Thai higher education sector. It has drawn upon concepts and frameworks from comparative policy studies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012), policy borrowing and lending (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012), higher education policy (Billing, 2004; Clark, 1983; van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994), and Thai studies (Anderson 1978; Winitchaikul, 2000). The literature in these fields has enormous influence on the framing and positioning of this dissertation. The literature in comparative policy studies provides an overall framework to understand globalization and the process and timing of national policymaking (Kingdon, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012), while policy borrowing and lending in education have provided policy context in which global policy travels across space, time, and sectors. Higher education policy studies offer literature on the international rationale for QA, and its intended and unintended consequences in various countries. It also helps in understanding how and why QA has become a new policy tool in differing countries, who the main actors are, and what the policy processes are. The literature of comparative politics, especially state-society relations in Thailand, has offered an analytical lens to investigate policy

negotiations and asymmetrical relationships between differing actors (Anderson, 1978; Mitchell, 1991; Skocpol, 1985). The strength of each field strengthens the overall research and its findings.

Based on the rich theoretical foundations that helped guide the interpretive framework of this dissertation research, the empirical findings and theoretical discussion of the Logic of the Thai Higher Education Sector on Quality Assessment Policy contributes to the advancement of four types of literature: comparative policy studies, policy borrowing and lending, higher education, and Thai studies. This section aims to outline the contributions to these literatures respectively.

1.3.1 Comparative Policy Studies

Steiner-Khamsi (2012) coined the term “comparative policy studies” to define a study grounded in “a cross fertilization” between comparative education, sociology, and political science literature, especially comparative politics and policy studies in order, to understand how and why traveling policy has resonated in other countries. Indeed, the main objective of this strand of literature attempts to understand the process and impact of globalization in the realm of education policy.

It is necessary to clarify how globalization is used in this research and how it links with QA. On the one hand, globalization is defined as a context. Globalization acts as the background and socio-economic context, which calls for a new a regulatory framework in higher education. Peck et al. (2010, cited in Verger et al., 2012, p. 7) called globalization a "context of contexts" of education policy. Not only does it define what problems must be addressed, but it also proffers what solutions are preferred. In the realm of higher education, globalization and its handmaiden, knowledge economy, have intensified the pressure on postsecondary education to expand as well as improve its quality to ensure national economic competitiveness in the global marketplace (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). In this policy environment, QA becomes a policy tool to ensure educational

quality at a time of institutional expansion. The review of the literature suggests that globalization is the main impetus that calls for a reconfiguration of higher education institutions and the institutionalization of QA (Harman, 1998; Marginson & Van Der Wende, 2007; UNESCO, 2006).

Secondly, this dissertation analyzed QA as an equivalent of global education policy itself. The S-Shape curve substantiates that QA has indeed become a global education policy and provides the timing in which each country introduced the policy. It provides further insight into which countries are early adopters or late adopters of this global education policy. This global mapping illustrates that Thailand is considered a late adopter in the global quest for QA. As Steiner-Khamsi (2006) has argued, the study of the late adopter in global policy is in fact a study of globalization in education itself.

While myriad research has acknowledged that the emergence of QA is the result of globalization in higher education, no research has plotted the trajectory of the global quest for QA in the longitudinal analysis to exemplify such a claim. Therefore, this very important first finding of the dissertation not only encapsulates a global landscape of the quest for QA, but also provides the essential rationale for studying Thailand's higher education sector as an important step in the study of globalization in higher education.

1.3.2 Policy Borrowing and Lending

Grounded in the policy borrowing and lending literature, a qualitative case study of Thailand highlighted three factors that facilitated the borrowing and lending process. These include the socio-logic of Thailand as an active policy borrower, policy timing, and the policy belief of the policy actors. Historical analyses elucidated that Thailand has always been receptive to the foreign model, external pressure, and in this case, globalization, which enabled the process of borrowing QA from abroad. The historically rooted legacy of Thailand as a selective borrower from the West created a fertile ground for policy borrowing and lending in education. It is argued that policy borrowing and

lending is a historical tactic Thai policy elites have used to justify much needed or much contested reforms. External factors have often been selectively borrowed and subsequently “scandalized” to justify reform efforts. From the threat of colonization in the 19th century, American economic assistance in the mid 20th century, and globalization in the 21st century, selective borrowing for political, economic, and social reasons is one of the most important policy strategies employed by Thai policy elites. Hence the borrowing of QA provides an insight into a longstanding policy strategy of the Thai state. That emphasis on the historical development of the Thai state enabled the researcher to re-examine the narrative of the history of the Thai education system, which overtly emphasizes policy borrowing as a normatively good thing. The normative argument often claimed that Thai strength and uniqueness as the only uncolonized Southeast Asian nation left it free to pick and choose Western influences to serve Thai needs and fit Thai culture. The argument goes as follows: since its inception, Thai elites (beginning with Rama IV and V) have selectively borrowed bits and pieces of external influences in order to initiate their preferred reforms at the local levels or adapt reform efforts to meet the local culture (Fry, 2002b; Jungck & Kajornsini 2003; Watson, 1989; Welch, 2011). By re-examining the historical development of Thai higher education, this research moves beyond the normative and naive explanation of successful selective borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012, p. 5). Instead, it highlights how borrowing has been used to justify the political, economic, and social need for reforms.

Policy timing is also an interesting indicator that facilitated the implementation of QA in Thailand's higher education. Influenced by Kingdon's (2003) multiple stream theory, agenda setting is a function of three streams coming together: problems, politics, and policies to create a “policy window” or “window of opportunity” for reform. Although QA had been discussed since 1994, it was not until 1999 that passage of the National Education Act legitimized, legally enforced, and officially gave birth to the introduction of QA in Thailand's higher education. An in-depth study of the policy

context of how higher education issues were problematized, how QA was legitimized, and when it was introduced highlights the significance of a policy window in the implementation of the new and foreign-based policy of QA. Although Kingdon's multiple stream theory has been credited for the agenda setting process, the case of QA in Thailand illustrates that this is a useful framework to understand policy change.

The research also highlights how personal and professional experiences of the key policy elites are significant elements of the formation of the Thai logic and rationale for QA in the higher education sector. Many of the key policy elites, active policy entrepreneurs, and influential policy advisors in the Thai higher education sector come from science, applied science, and health backgrounds. Many also represent private sector positions. Given that QA is a normal and acceptable practice in science as well as in the business sector, replete examples illustrate how these individuals' belief systems could be transferred to the education sector. This dissertation argues that the coalition formed between education bureaucrats, scientists/medical doctors, and the private sector has helped to sustain the need for QA in Thai higher education.

Not only does this research contribute to the advancement of comparative policy studies, it also argues that the findings are considered the third generation of policy borrowing and lending in education. According to Steiner-Khamsi (2012), the burgeoning research on policy borrowing and lending in education can be differentiated into three generations. Each generation differs in terms of research focus, theoretical assumptions, and unit of analysis. The first generation of researchers⁵ is interested in traveling reforms across the Atlantic or within Europe, while the second generation of policy borrowing and lending explores the roles of agencies, impacts of traveling reforms, and roles of international agencies in the process of borrowing reforms.⁶ The third generation of policy borrowing and lending deals with (1) the shift from bilateral to international

⁵Such as Brian Holmes, Jurgen Schriewer, and David Phillips (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012).

reference frames, (2) understanding the logic of system or cases, (3) methodological repercussions of "policyscapes," and (4) deciphering projections in cross-national policy attractions (p. 9). Throughout the analyses, policy elites frequently refer to globalization, global competition, and global trends instead of identifying any one particular country as the frame of reference. Global references, international league tables, and international organizations become convenient references that are flexible and elusive, which slowly replaces bilateral policy borrowing. The case of QA in Thailand provides a lucid study of this shift from a bilateral to an international reference frame.

1.3.3 Higher Education Policy

Under the umbrella of Higher Education Policy, this research draws upon two strands of literature to guide and structure the fieldwork, analyses, and findings. Literature includes QA and its relationship to globalization (Bleiklie, 2004; Mok, 2000; Tomusk, 1995; Vidovich, 2002) and Clark's (1983) Triangle of Coordination. The detailed and in-depth case study of how QA was introduced, implemented, and interpreted in Thailand provides an empirical contribution to this body of literature. The patterns, similarities, and differences of QA in Thailand add to the richness of the international literature on the global convergence vis-à-vis the divergence of QA.

The identification of key actors involved in the Thai higher education sector provides a theoretical clarification of Clark's (1983) theoretical framework on the Triangle of Coordination. The Triangle identifies the three most important factors that influenced higher education policy change: the state, academic oligarchs, and the market. Extant research on higher education studies has been influenced by Clark's Triangle, as well as Burke (2005), Nilphan (2005), and Shi and Neubauer (2009).

⁶Prominent researches in the field, such as Steiner-Khamsi, Ozga, Dale and Robertson, and Chisholm.

In the case of Thailand's QA policy, it is evident that the state is the most important actor in pushing for the introduction and implementation of QA. However, a closer scrutiny reveals an interesting insight into the state's strategy in achieving their preferred policy agenda and silencing academic or social discontent. The state has created multiple policy spaces and channels to recruit like-minded individuals to enter the policy circles. In the case of higher education policy making in general, the Thai state mimicked private sector strategies, structures, and values. For example, the Office of Higher Education Commission and the Office of Educational Standards and Quality Assessments are supervised by board members. Not only are the structures imitating private or company sectors, but they are outwardly preaching concepts such as participation, involvement, accountability, and transparency as the driving forces to legitimize these new actors in higher education policy circles. Despite the rhetoric of participation, the detailed case study elucidates how they recruited and involved only like-minded individuals who shared their policy beliefs and preferred solutions. These include the push for greater institutional autonomy and a more market-driven policy of cost-sharing and quality audits. As Dougherty, Natow, Hare Bork, Jones, and Vega (2013, forthcoming) point out, the business or market sector does not have to be directly present in the policymaking process because civil servants and elected officials are already actively promoting their values in policymaking. An in-depth analysis of Thai higher education also points out that there is a close link between the state and academic oligarchs (academic administrators) in public policymaking. These so-called "academic oligarchs" are mostly administrators of higher education institutions. The research reveals that these individuals view problems and solutions of higher education through their management perspective and are based on their scientific academic backgrounds. Not only does their presence enable the state to propagate that Thai higher education policymaking is based on a participatory approach, but this coalition also helped to exclude and silence the voices of academic discontents in the processes, policy, and procedures of QA.

In contrast to Clark 's model (1983), which anticipates the result of higher education policymaking as a function of competing interests and negotiations between the state, market, and academic oligarchs, the case of Thailand reveals a complexity of such a model in the context of a middle-income developing country. The existing hierarchy, historical legacies, and policy beliefs of key actors complicate the pristine picture of Clark's model. The case of Thailand contributes to the clarity of this framework.

1.3.4 Thai Studies

By analyzing how QA as a global education policy interacts and is interpreted by local policy actors in Thailand's higher education sector, this dissertation also contributes to the literature on comparative politics, especially on the state-society relationship in Thailand and on Thai studies (Anderson, 1978). Most of the research on state-society relations focuses on economic policy or public administration reforms (Bowornwathana, 2000; Hewinson, 1997). Little has been explored in the education sector to understand such relationships (Watson, 1980, 1989; Wyatt, 1969). While the recent dissertation by Tan (2007) provides new insight on the relationship between the Thai state and other interest groups, the analysis shows that Tan's dissertation focuses on the basic education sector. There is a void in the systematic analysis of the politics and policymaking in the higher education sector.

A detailed case study of the origin, sector's logic for QA in Thailand's higher education also contributes to what has been a dearth of systematic research studies of Thai higher education. Concurrently, two significant studies on Thai higher education preceded this research, providing insightful understanding of Thailand's higher education sector. These two dissertations are *Internationalizing Thai Higher Education: Examining Policy Implementation* by Pad Nilphan (2005) from Leeds University in the United Kingdom and *Research Universities in Thailand: Challenges to Governance* by

Krengchai Rungfamai (2011) from the University of Hong Kong. The detailed analysis of this research strengthens and deepens the knowledge of Thai higher education studies. Furthermore, it is hoped that this detailed socio-logic account of Thai policy elites in the higher education sector will illustrate the ebb and flow of policy contestation within this understudied, yet increasingly prominent sector. As Watson (1980), the well-known historian of Thai education, aptly argued, “No study of the Thai educational scene would be complete without studying the growing importance of higher education in the political and economic spectrum of the country” (p. 193). This dissertation offers another insight into the studies of the Thai state, its changing political-economic landscape, and the growing importance of quality higher education.

Within the studies of QA in Thailand, this qualitative case study is theoretically grounded in comparative policy studies, higher education policy, and the theory of the state providing fresh understanding of the dearth of such studies in the country. In Thailand, the issues of QA have been the territory of educators who favor quantitative studies and deploy statistics as their mode of inquiry. To substantiate how quantitative methodology has dominated the research on QA in Thailand, I conducted a document research to find out (1) how much research has related to QA, (2) how many are related to higher education, and (3) how many are quantitative. Using “quality assurance” as the keyword, 409 items appeared as master dissertations and 100 as doctoral theses. When using the term “quality assessment,” there were 434 items of which 85 were masters dissertations and doctoral theses.⁷ In both instances, only 27 items were related to the higher education sector. Analyzing the methodology of those 27 relating to QA and higher education showed the following composition: 15 used quantitative methodology, 8 used qualitative methodology, and 4 were uncertain. Not only was research on QA in Thailand dominated by quantitative methodology; most was driven by problem solving

⁷Document search at the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University Library Information Center, September 1st, 2011.

and a motivation to address normative questions. For example, the research aimed at creating better quality indicators or models for Thai higher education rather than critically analyzing the logic or structures of the policy. An in-depth investigation of how the global education policy of quality assessment has been introduced, implemented, and interpreted in Thailand promises to offer greater understanding of the country's response to globalization in the higher education sector as well as an in-depth discussion of the implications of QA in practice.

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

This section outlines the organization of the research, which is differentiated into eight chapters.

Chapter I has provided an introduction to this dissertation. It introduced the emergence of QA as a new policy tool in higher education and mapped out the global landscape of the policy. Based on the S-Shape curve (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010), this chapter presents the first important finding of the dissertation, which is to illustrate that the expansion of QA has reached the point of becoming a global education policy. The extensive document analysis offers an international perspective on QA as well as provides the rationale to select Thailand for a case study to investigate this global phenomenon in depth. The expected theoretical and practical contributions of this dissertation have also been outlined.

Chapter II reviews multiple areas of literature as the basis for analysis of the dissertation. Firstly, a brief theoretical debate on globalization within the field of comparative education is introduced. Secondly, a detailed discussion of policy borrowing and lending theory provides a theoretical framework for the review of the literature and the dissertation at large. Three main concepts--socio-logic, policy window, and policy

belief systems--will be highlighted as the key factors that facilitate the policy borrowing and lending process.

Thirdly, this chapter reviews the experiences of different Asian countries with the institutionalization of QA. An insight into Asian cases serves to illustrate how historical legacies, local structures, and politics determine the shapes and shades of the QA system in the respective countries. Based on policy borrowing and lending theory, the fourth part of this chapter discusses differing possibilities and logic as to why countries have introduced QA. Further discussion of higher education implementation theory (Burke, 2005; Clark, 1983) provides heuristic devices to identify the key actors and forces for policy change. Not only does the review of the international literature on QA illustrate how the institutionalization of QA has resonated in differing countries, but it also provides a macro-perspective for the following in-depth analysis on how the semantics of QA resonated in the case of Thailand.

Chapter III discusses the rationale for choosing qualitative case study as the methodology to study how QA resonated in Thailand. The chapter provides reflections on the benefits and limitations of conducting document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and a three-month observation at the Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). These include detailed discussions of how the case was selected and what sampling strategy was used. The processes of Thematic Analysis (Bruan & Clark, 2006) are highlighted to exemplify how the data were analyzed and presented.

Chapter IV traces the trajectory of Thailand's higher education sector through the policy borrowing and lending framework. The historical legacies demonstrate how the Thai state has always sought external pressures to legitimize and implement new reforms. Subsequently, the chapter outlines the changing role of the Thai state in relation to higher education policy and its implementation. While the Thai state has been known for its centralized bureaucracy, this chapter introduces the concept of the elusive state as a new way to understand the actors in the Thai higher education sector. Based on the concept of

the elusive state, this chapter introduces a quality coalition between the senior bureaucrats and academic executives who believe in the concept of quality assessment. The concept of an elusive state provides a useful understanding for identifying the multiple identities of the key actors from differing sectors.

Chapter V begins with basic information about Thai higher education and differing organizations relating to Quality Assessment. The chapter then focuses on the rationale supporting the emergence of differing quality policies in Thailand. The discussion is differentiated into globalization, regionalization, and national contexts. Furthermore, this chapter highlights different ways in which Thai policy elites have referred to globalization, global trends, or international league tables as sources of justification to support their policy. While globalization and regionalization are essential factors, the chapter also emphasizes how national contexts are significant in the process. The data from this chapter are mainly based on interviews with policy elites and making sense of their logic.

Chapter VI provides an insight into the logic of the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). The discussion in this chapter is based on the interviews of ONESQA advocates and the three-month internship within the organization. While the previous chapters discussed historical analyses and macro perspectives, this chapter focuses on the organizational logic of ONESQA, how it was created, and its intended expectation from the creators. The expectation and response from QA policymakers will be highlighted.

Chapter VII addresses the second research question in length: How QA was introduced, implemented, and interpreted in Thailand. The chapter focuses on policy implementation and perception at the university level. Comparative case studies of Prince of Songkla University and Suranaree University of Technology are introduced to demonstrate how QA is implemented in practice. The complex process of data collection and data interpretation is outlined. This chapter also provides the space to highlight the

voices of the QA practitioners and the differing disciplines of academics. The disparity between QA as a regulatory work vis-à-vis academic works is discussed.

Chapter VIII illustrates how globalization and global reference have been used throughout the introduction and implementation of QA policy. As the concluding chapter, it highlights the complex interplay between globalization, historical legacies, and political structures in Thailand. Furthermore, it discusses the disparity of voices and views between academic executives and other academics on the issues of QA. The theoretical contributions of the dissertation as well as potential limitations will be thoroughly discussed, as well as areas for future research.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW: GLOBALIZATION, POLICY BORROWING AND LENDING, AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT

This chapter attempts to review relevant literature on globalization, policy borrowing and lending, and quality assessment in higher education. The chapter begins by introducing the globalization debate in comparative education and how policy borrowing and lending is an established theoretical framework within the field. The review of globalization and policy borrowing and lending literature provides a useful theoretical umbrella to review and analyze the global phenomenon of QA. Subsequently, the literature review maps out the global landscape of QA and the experiences of the Asian countries.

Despite the global quest for a quality policy, a closer scrutiny sheds light on how regional, national, and institutional idiosyncrasies shape the outlook and character of quality policy. Specifically, it argues that the historical legacy, institutional and bureaucratic structures, as well as the logic of the policymakers in each country act as important forces to shape the introduction and implementation of these policies. After outlining the descriptive character of QA policy in selected countries, the second section synthesizes the rationale and logic of why quality policy resonates in so many countries. Although the free market ideology of efficiency, effectiveness, and competition provides eminent discourses on so many levels, this section analyzes the logic of agency at the global, regional, and local levels to support the rise of quality policy. The politics of

policy borrowing will be highlighted. Beyond normative explanation of best practices, the politics of policy borrowing enable one to analyze the relationship between the global discourse of quality and local policy agenda, policy processes, and embedded problems. The summary highlights the importance of understanding historical legacy, institutional structures, and individual policymaker logics in importing and implementing quality policy.

2.1 The Globalization Debate in Comparative and International Education

Myriad authors from all social science disciplines have provided multiple definitions and scopes of what globalization entails. Globalization is understood as a phenomenon as well as a theoretical perspective. From political science, anthropology, and economics, scholars strive to explain what globalization is, its significance, and its potential implications on regional, national, and local levels. Although the discussion of globalization is replete, there remains a lack of agreed definition and implication of globalization. Green and Little (2007) provide a useful working definition of globalization. Accordingly, globalization is defined as “the rapid acceleration of cross-border movements of capital, labour, goods, knowledge and ideas. The flows of each have increased exponentially in volume and also in speed” (p. 8). According to Verger et al. (2012), “globalization is a very convenient concept for social scientists due to its euphemistic character and due to all the meanings it subsumes within it” (p. 5). The literature on globalization and its relationship to education and development deserves an entire volume in its own right (Green & Little, 2007).

Held and McGrew (2005) succinctly differentiate differing views on the globalization debate into three main perspectives: the hyper-globalist, the skeptic, and the transformationalist. These terms provide a useful framework to understand and analyze the abundant literature on globalization, higher education, and quality policy. Even

though the space here would not be sufficient to exhaustively review the literature on this very contested debate, it is important to outline the key arguments put forward by the three camps. This discussion helps to situate the subsequent analysis of the global expansion of QA.

2.1.1 The Hyper-Globalists and Neo-Institutionalism

The hyper-globalists assert that globalization is an inevitable and irreversible force that can profoundly change every aspect of life. The globalists' argument rests on the premise that the multinational companies can transcend their financial assets across countries and therefore erode national borders (Ohmae, 1990). Global forces are eminent; therefore, all nation states and local companies are struggling when faced with the new dynamics to survive. According to Castells (1996), the proliferation of information technology, which happens at an unprecedented rate, has enabled global connection to happen in real time. From a sociological viewpoint, Giddens (1990) argues that globalization creates a sea change in the social order. Hence, globalization creates a new phenomenon, which is unmatched anytime in the historical era (Giddens, 1990).

In the realm of education, the sociologists from Stanford University share a similar worldview with the hyper-globalists. This theoretical movement is termed neo-institutionalism, which argues that there is a singular meta-narrative of global culture, scripts, and standards in which all countries uphold and hence aspire to emulate. In the case of education policy, they believe a single model of schooling permeates globally: the expansion of education for all, mass higher education, increasing attention to gender equity, and the promotion of education as human rights all signify the convergence of education policy and the global expansion of shared norms (Meyer, Ramirez, Frank, & Schofer, 2007). From the perspective of neo-institutionalism, the global expansion of mass schooling and mass higher education is the function of a strong dependency on globally shared values and norms. Regardless of the socio-economic development of each

country, neo-institutionalism theorists strongly believe that globally shared values, models, and meanings will always determine the introduction of new policy or establishment of a new organization. Accordingly, it is argued: "Local organizations arise in good measure independent of local circumstances—deriving from wider socio-cultural environments that support and even require local structuration around exogenous models and meanings" (p. 190).

Most importantly, nation states emulate global norms not only to undergo the nation-building process, but also to become recognized as modern. Furthermore, they argue that the maintenance of such global isomorphism is the result of institutionalized rules of professionalism and scientific knowledge practiced and promoted through formal organizations and conferences. While neo-institutionalism acknowledge the diversity of forms and implementations at the local level, they argue that such a gap between the “legitimated model” vis-à-vis “immediate enactment” is simply the result of “loose-coupling” or “de-coupling.” The unit of analysis lies in the macro-perspective of policy emulation rather than the complexity of local meaning making.

2.1.2 The Skeptics

The skeptics argue against the hyper-globalists and neo-institutionalism on several grounds. Hirst and Thompson (1996) argue that the current debate on globalization is at best mythical and at worst exaggerated. From a historical viewpoint, the internationalization of trade and commerce prior to 1914 was unprecedented and unmatched, even to the present-day economic integration. A group of scholars, known as the Dependency school, have taken this perspective one step further. Not only is global integration nothing new, but they argue that it is also asymmetrical and detrimental to the development of the Third World. Relying on historical evidence, they argue that the backwardness and underdevelopment of many developing countries are the direct consequences of an unequal integration in the world economy.

This perspective has been persuasive with many theorists in comparative and international education. They argue that the global convergence in education policy is a function of unequal access to financial, information, and human capital resources between borrowing and lending countries or organizations (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000). This phenomenon occurred during colonization and modernization, as well as globalization. For example, given the unequal relationships between countries during colonization, many scholars argue that the colonial legacies of the colonizers left unintended consequences for the educational development of the colonized (Arnové, 1980). Similar to colonization, the current phenomenon of aid-dependency also creates unequal partnerships between donors and recipients. Samoff (1999, 2009) argues that educational policies in African countries are becoming increasingly similar due to their dependency on foreign aid, especially on the World Bank. Accordingly, foreign aid from international organizations is used as “a tool, or sets of tools” to facilitate educational transfers or exchanges in developing countries (Samoff, 2009, p. 125). Undoubtedly, the conflict theorists equate educational borrowing and transfers as “Americanization or Westernization” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000, p. 161).

The crux of the debate between these two camps rests on three grounds. Firstly, they disagree on the origin and extent of global forces. The hyper-globalists believe globalization is new and unprecedented, while the skeptics believe it to be a historical development with a new name. Secondly, they disagree on the capacity of local factors to withstand global forces. While the former believes in the unequivocal power of global influence over national characteristics, the latter contests the globalization thesis and argues that national capacity continues to be an influential factor. Thirdly, the two perspectives clash on the motivations of various actors to join global policies, cultures, and values. The hyper-globalists believe that differing actors voluntarily aspire to become "modern" and therefore join globalization. In contrast, critical theorists or the

Dependency theorists underscore the asymmetricality of power and uneven resources between various actors as the rationale for global convergence.

2.1.3 The Transformationalists

A nuanced perspective is more useful to understand the globalization phenomenon (Held & McGrew, 2005). The transformationalists argue that present-day globalization is significantly different from the historical development. The proliferation of multinational corporations and the innovation of information technology present significant paradigm shifts in global policymaking. Globalization presents an entrenched and enduring pattern of growing interconnectedness. According to Bigalke and Neubauer (2009), present-day globalization differs from the historical account; its influences are fluid and multifaceted. Accordingly, globalization has permeated differing levels and layers to the point that one can hardly identify a singular ingredient that creates global force. Although these scholars accept that global forces are omnipotent, they reject the hyper-globalist meta narrative of global convergence. Dale (1998) argues that the impact of globalization is not identical in all countries. The influences of global forces on national policymaking are varied depending on five mechanisms: policy harmonization, policy dissemination, policy standardization, installing interdependence and policy imposition (Dale, 1998). The most important point of departure between the hyper-globalists and transformationalists is that the latter strongly believe global forces do not impinge on every country in the same way (Dale, 1998; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Nation states and national characteristics continue to mediate and mitigate global forces in the local contexts (Ball, 1998). From this vantage point, the roles and responsibility of local policy elites to weather global forces should not be silenced.

In *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, Roland Robertson (1992) coined the term glocalization to encapsulate the integral relationship between various forces. Influenced by the glocalization perspective, Lingard (2000) recontextualized the

concept and coined it vernacular globalization to explain how global policies influence national education policy. In his own words:

Vernacular globalization in this sense carries resonances with the idea of glocalization: the way local, national, and global interrelationships are being reconstituted, but mediated by the history of the local and the national and by politics, as well as by hybridization, an important resulting cultural features of the multidirectional flows of cultural globalization and the tension between homogenization and heterogenization. (p. 81)

In similar vein, Ball (2008) captured this phenomenon as follows:

Generic global policies are polyvalent, they are translated into practice in complex ways. They interact with, interrupt or conflict with other policies in play in national and local settings and with the longstanding indigenous policy traditions to produce particular versions or mediations of policy. (p. 28)

The passages above elucidate varied ways of explaining the interwoven relationship between globalization and national education policy. While all of them negate the overt domination of global forces upon local policies, each proffers new and innovative ways to understand, analyze, and explain how globalization influences policy agendas and its implementation at the national and local levels.

The points of departure between hyper-globalists/neo-institutionalism vis-à-vis the transformationalists/vernacular globalization/glocalization scholars are the units of analysis and areas of focus. While the former focuses on the longitudinal perspective of policy adoption, the latter ones pay closer attention to policy changes within each policy context. Although both sides acknowledge the diversity of policy patterns, the former dismissed it as as “loose-coupling” or “decoupling,” while the latter purposefully seek to understand and explain the varied patterns, idiosyncrasies, and uniqueness of the process. This is especially the case for policy borrowing theorists, who are interested in exploring the patterns that local policymakers and local bureaucrats resist, modify, and indigenize in international and global education model (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000, pp. 156, 162). The subsequent discussion on the global quest for QA and its political origins in Thailand

should be understood in light of this complex debate on globalization within the field of comparative and international education. Specifically, the subsequent discussion will apply differing conceptual tools of policy borrowing and lending in order to better understand it in the context of quality assessment.

2.2 Policy Borrowing and Lending and the Studies of Globalization in Education

The study of how a reform or an idea travels across time and space has attracted enormous interest from scholars in various disciplines, albeit framed in differing names and frameworks. From the political scientist's perspective, the study of how one country learns about or emulates policy or ideas from another country has been called lesson-drawing (Rose, 1991), policy learning (Hall, 1993; Meseguer, 2009), policy transfers (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996, 2000), and policy diffusion (Weyland, 2005). Within the realm of education policy, terms such as policy borrowing and lending (Halpin & Troyna, 1994; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, 2010), policy attraction (Philips, 2004), and policy tourism (Whitty, 2012) have been used interchangeably to explicate this centuries-long phenomenon of how similar reforms traverse across continents, countries, and sectors (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). It must be noted that each term contains nuanced differences and interpretations of the process and factors that facilitate the transfers. For example, diffusion theory focuses on the temporal, geographical, and spatial aspects of policy (Weyland, 2005). In contrast, policy borrowing and lending highlights the roles of agencies, historical legacies, and timing of the policy process and how these factors influence the transfer, translation, and transformation of the borrowed policy (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000, 2004a, 2004b; Cowen, 2006). While these scholars are interested in

exploring the growing policy convergence, each scholar differs on how the process of globalization influences or impacts the outcome.⁸

Traditionally, policy borrowing and lending happened between two countries: the borrower and the lender. Phillips's (1989) substantial work on the British interest in German education as well as Halpin and Troyna's (1995) work on the Transatlantic assimilation between the British and American education systems illustrate this point. Undoubtedly, globalization has indeed blurred the origins of where the policy has been borrowed from. It has created “new imaginative regimes” or an “imagined international community” whereby international discourses and policy packages have traveled globally to replace bilateral borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). When policy reaches the status of becoming a global or international policy, countries can selectively borrow differing aspects of the policy they want to implement (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004a). They are free to borrow the wholesale package or bits and pieces of the policy. Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) outline eight possible categories of a policy that can be borrowed: policy goals, structure and content, policy instruments, policy programs, institutions, ideologies, ideas and attitudes, and negative lessons (p. 12). Moreover, countries can also refer to international discourse rather than policy practices (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000, p. 158). Currently, the international discourses include quality, efficiency, and accountability (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010). Discursive borrowing has been evident in the emergence of QA, as the proponents repeatedly underscore the needs for the education sector to have quality, accountability, and transparency.

Advocates of the policy borrowing and lending framework encourage readers to question the normative assumption and move beyond naïve explanation (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Policy borrowing and lending in education aim to reveal the complexity and contradictions that arise when global forces meet local factors (Phillips, 1989; Steiner-

⁸Held and McGrew (2003) aptly differentiated and simplified the extant literature on globalization into three groups: hyper-globalists, skeptics, and transformationalists.

Khamsi, 2004). Given that policymakers can selectively borrow bits and pieces, or sometimes a wholesale package, to fit their political and economic agenda, policy borrowing and lending offers the framework to question what, why, when, who, and how global reform is introduced. Similarly, it is also interesting to understand the process by which these references are dropped and replaced (Spren, 2004). In short, policy borrowing and lending explores the process of “de-territorialization,” “externalization,” and “re-contextualization” of global reform (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000).

In the World Year Book of Education 2012, the most recent compilation of cutting-edge research in policy borrowing and lending, Gita Steiner-Khamsi and Florian Waldow (2012) presented the work of 21 researchers who deployed this framework to investigate differing educational issues. All highlight how a reform travels from one place to another. The four major issues highlighted by this research are the importance of the agencies of transfer, externalization, the politics of policy borrowing and lending, selective borrowing and local adaptation of imported reforms, and diffusion and traveling reforms and policyscapes. From basic education, vocational education, and higher education in Europe, South America, and Africa, the research reiterates that policy borrowing and lending is a useful heuristic tool to understand traveling reform, why, what, and how it is lent and borrowed. Within the past two decades, this strand of research has received enormous attention in comparative and international education (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004b, 2010, 2012). To outline the rationale of the policy borrowing framework for further discussion, the following sections are organized as follows: the rationale to borrow global policy, the process of policy borrowing, and the factors facilitating policy borrowing and lending.

2.2.1 The Politics and Economics of Policy Borrowing and Lending

Although scholars share a common interest in exploring the rationale of why so many countries decide to adopt a particular policy in their context, their explanations rest

on differing epistemological assumptions and hence result in various outcomes.

Traditionally, Noah and Eckstein's (1969) argument that "one could gain useful lessons from abroad" dominated the early interest in comparative education (p. 15). In fact, the normative belief of learning from "best practices" still provides the commonsense explanation for the process of borrowing and policy transfers.

In contrast, policy borrowing theorists argue that a multiplicity of cultures, belief-systems, and preferences among various actors and competing interest groups within a nation, especially in the realm of education policymaking, exist and are important factors in determining the process and product of policy borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2000, p. 162). The framework is interested in exploring the patterns that local policymakers and local bureaucrats resist, modify, and indigenize from the international model (pp. 156, 162). Within the umbrella of policy borrowing and lending, the extant empirical research in the field can be differentiated into the politics and economics of policy borrowing and lending in education (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012).

The politics of borrowing and lending has been well documented by a myriad of empirical research across countries and contexts both within the education field and in political science literature (Halpin & Troyna, 1995; Philips, 1989; Robertson, 1991; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004a, 2004b, 2010, 2012; Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000). This research, in a variety of contexts and purposes, illustrates how the international model of global policy is used as a political tool to legitimize politically contested reform. Robertson (1991) argues that when borrowing takes place, it is never politically neutral. The value of a foreign example lies in its bias to support or legitimize a preferred policy (as cited in Stone, 1996, p. 53). Therefore, it is expected that these actors can strategically import and borrow any foreign model to legitimize their preferred agenda or contested reforms in their country. In *The Case of Achimota in British Ghana*, Steiner-Khamsi and Quist (2000) reexamined the transfer of the Hampton-Tuskegee model of industrial education from the South of the United States to implement in Achimota College, Gold

Coast for political purposes. Although there existed different forms of adapted education in Africa, borrowing from the United States was more politically convenient to the local policymakers than borrowing from the missionaries.

Similarly, Halpin and Troyna (1995) argue that policy borrowing has much less to do with the success of any particular policy. Rather, political rationale often drives the process. The transatlantic borrowing of vouchers and choice programs is a case in point. Although vouchers and choice were subjects of heated debate in the United States, policymakers in the United Kingdom continued to cite the US case to simply legitimize the New Right movements at home (Halpin & Troyna, 1995).

The economics of policy borrowing and lending offer a significant perspective on understanding the proliferation of global reforms. This is an especially telling phenomenon in developing countries as they are subjected to comply to “direct coercion” in exchange for economic assistance (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). In these cases, international standards and models acted as a “stamp of approval” from international organizations to reform the educational sector in the recipient countries. To understand the economics of borrowing, Steiner-Khamsi (2006) urged readers to consider how the logic of donor organizations, such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), has played an influential role in accelerating the rate of global reform or policy packages. In Mongolia and the Kyrgyz Republic, outcome-based education reform was introduced as a part of the broader financial assistance given to those countries. According to Samoff (1999), the economics of policy borrowing can be understood as aid-dependency. Despite the increasing rhetoric for local participation, empowerment, and ownership, Samoff illustrated how the asymmetrical relationship of the donors and recipient countries reinforced “the strikingly similar” outcomes of policy reform in African countries. There is a strong relationship between financial funding and policy borrowing. While the availability of funding provides the genesis for reform, a lack of funding can halt the reform process (Steiner-

Khamsi, 2006). The economics of policy borrowing is a useful framework for understanding how the financial power of the international organization can instigate pressure for recipient countries to borrow, refer, and implement international models.

These selected examples demonstrate how a reference to education policy or models in another country has been used for a diversity of purposes. Within the politics and economics of borrowing, there are also multiple ways actors in each locale can use, manipulate, or scandalize education models and standards from elsewhere to serve a multitude of purposes. The next section discusses differing factors that help facilitate the process of the politics and economics of borrowing.

2.2.2 Three Major Concepts Facilitating the Borrowing and Lending

Three main concepts have guided the analysis of this dissertation. These are socio-logic or local contexts (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004), the window of opportunity (Kingdon, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2006), and the beliefs and perceptions of policy elites (Grindle & Thomas, 1991; Sabatier, Jenkins-Smith, 1993). While the socio-logic and local context is the fundamental focus of this research, the window of opportunity and policy beliefs provided interpretative frameworks to analyze the data and guided the research. It must be noted that each of these elements is based on differing theoretical assumptions. Hence, they underscore differing elements as a factor of policy change. The socio-logical perspective is based on the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann, while the window of opportunity is based on the multiple streams theory of John Kingdon (2003). The roles of policy elites have been highlighted by several theorists of policy change, including Grindle and Thomas (1991), Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993), and Sabatier and Weible (2007). Each theoretical perspective has its strengths and deserves thorough attention on its own; however, this section attempts to highlight the aspects in which they help explain the process of borrowing and lending.

The socio-logic of the borrowing country is an important factor influencing the selection process. Schriewer and Martinez (2004) coined the term socio-logic to refer to the historical legacy, political context, and administrative structures of the borrowing countries, which influence the decision to borrow and what to borrow. The socio-logic of the borrowing countries is an important factor in understanding selective borrowing, in particular why certain parts of education reforms from elsewhere “resonate” within the context of the host countries. In other words, the choice of what to borrow, from where to borrow, and how that borrowing takes place reflects the context of the reception countries/systems (Waldow, 2012). Furthermore, Schriewer and Martinez (2004) argue that since each country is situated in various “world-systems,” the choice of reference society differs substantially depending on each borrowing country's context. For example, the British preference to borrow from the American system or from Germany illustrates how the socio-logic of Britain and its view of these two countries compares to competitors/colleagues (Halpin & Troyna, 1995; Phillips, 1989).

According to the multiple streams theory, Kingdon (2003) argues that agenda setting or decision making is a function of three streams coming together: problems, policies, and politics. At a critical moment, or what is known as a “policy window” or “window of opportunity,” these three streams would come together and result in agenda setting or policy change. A window of opportunity can be caused by both external and internal factors. Conditions such as political change, economic crisis, and internal dissatisfaction with the education systems create such critical moments, signaling a systematic failure of the country, and act as an impetus for policy change. The role of the “policy entrepreneurs,” who are actively looking for opportunities to push for their preferred policy, is also highlighted. According to Zahariadis (2007), policy entrepreneurs are “individuals or corporate actors who attempt to couple three streams ... they are power brokers and manipulators of problematic preferences” (p. 74). Dougherty et al. (2013, forthcoming) used the multiple streams theory to analyze the political origins of

performance funding in higher education. It is argued that “policy window” is an essential factor for pushing performance funding into the state's agenda. While the recession of the 1990s provided fertile ground for policy change in Florida and Washington, the election in 1991 pushed performance funding into the policy agenda in Illinois. Unlike the conventional belief that policymaking goes through different stages, multiple stream theorists argue that “solutions may antedate problems” (Dougherty et al., 2013, forthcoming). To illustrate this, performance funding was supported by various policy actors in the three states for differing reasons. In contrast to the traditional arguments that performance funding is used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education management, community college leaders supported performance funding for securing new funds and increasing the college’s legitimacy (Dougherty et al., 2013, forthcoming).

Steiner-Khamsi (2012) integrated the multiple streams theory with that of policy borrowing. In this scenario, borrowing begins where there is an impulse for change. During economic crisis (which has been a systematic occurrence during globalization), many developing countries are induced to borrow from international organizations. Subsequently, this enables international organizations to actively and legitimately lend their preferred policy. In the absence of political or economic crisis, a crisis can be generated. International reference or globalization can act as a cause of problems or a catalyst for solutions. Global referencing can scandalize local efforts for the need for change as well as it can be the perfect solution for a policy alternative. Steiner-Khamsi (2004a) points out that countries can selectively borrow and refer to international standards in order to “glorify” the models elsewhere or “scandalize” the poor performance at home. *A Nation at Risk* (1973), a well-known report that compares the United States educational performance with other countries, is a case in point. The report purposefully highlights how high school students in the United States are doing considerably worse than their counterparts in order to generate political reform pressure

for education. The political use of international references to create “scandalization” has been intensified with the global obsession for educational league tables, economic competitiveness, and national productivity. The “below average” ranking of German students in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) substantiates this. Policymakers use the results to denounce the failure of German systems (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004a). These international league tables present “indirect coercive” pressure for policy transfers (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996) or are used to create a “window of opportunity” for policy borrowing.

The roles and perceptions of policy elites are considered monumental factors influencing policy change. Grindle and Thomas (1991) define policy elites as “those who have official positions in government and whose responsibilities include making or participating in making and implementing authoritative decisions for society,” such as heads of states and ministries, executive bureaucrats, legislators, and social interests (p. 58). Furthermore, the structure of each country will determine the levels of influence each group has in the policy process. Stone (1999) argues that policy elites at the national and local levels are the real actors who set, legitimate, and endorse the adaptation of new discourse and programs (p. 55). Marginson and Rhoades (2002) differentiate the agency into organizations and individuals; one should not assume that all the policy elites who work in the same organization will share a consensus view on the policy. Steiner-Khamsi (2004a) supports this. Since education is a complex and contested reform, agents within the country or organization might not necessarily share similar viewpoints. Therefore, the more significant an individual is in the policy process, the more essential it is to understand their views of the policy as well as their backgrounds and experiences. A systematic understanding of the role policy elites play in these processes is essential in the study of policy borrowing.

The identification of policy elites leads one to the question: where do these policy elites receive their influence or viewpoints? In contrast to a class-based explanation,

Grindle and Thomas (1991) argue that decisions of policy elites are not based on the interests of social classes, organized groups, or international organizations. Rather, policy elites form their perspectives based on their individual educational and work experiences as well as the policy options available to them at each particular point in the policy process. The example of Maris O'Rourke is a case in point (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004a). Maris O'Rourke was a prominent New Zealand bureaucrat who became a senior policymaker at the World Bank. Having successfully introduced New Public Management in New Zealand, she brought with her the experience and conviction in outcome-based education policymaking to the World Bank. Subsequently, she became a significant player in the global education policy landscape who must be accredited for the global spread of outcome-based education policymaking.

The advocacy coalition framework (ACF) is another important policy theory, which highlights the roles of policy beliefs as the main factors for policy change. ACF believes that the changing belief systems of differing competing coalitions within the sub-systems are the determining factors in policy change (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1993; Sabatier & Weibel, 2007). Influenced by this framework, Dougherty et al. (2013, forthcoming) identified at least three differing coalitions leading to performance funding in three states—Illinois, Washington, and Florida—these being governors, state officials, and leaders in higher education institutions. Each coalition supported the policy for divergent beliefs. While the state officials believed the policy would result in greater effectiveness and efficiency, community college leaders supported it in order to gain more resources and legitimacy. Bleiklie (2004) studied that trajectory of higher education policy in Europe and argued that the changing belief systems of the policy elites contribute significantly to the policy change. Given that state authorities and senior bureaucrats of higher education institutions remain the main actors within the sub-system over a long period, it is their changing perspective of what to do and how to govern higher education that contributes to the change. In this case, the key actors in higher

education began to accept and justify the rhetoric of New Public Management (NPM) and performance-based policymaking as a panacea to rectify such problems as massification, privatization, and diversification of institutions.

This perspective suggests that policy elites can continue to change their perceptions of the problems or solutions. Globalization or global policies can act as a panacea by providing a new option for policymakers and relevant stakeholders to change their perspectives on what is right. Combining the politics of the policy borrowing framework with the literature on policy change, Steiner-Khamsi (2010) argues that policymakers can use global policy not only to change their belief systems, but also as a new alternative to form alliances and coalitions for policy change. If adopted, this perspective means that policy change is a function of the changing belief systems of the policymakers.

The diversity of roles, unequal resources, and asymmetry of power of each of the policy elites explains how they refer to international models for multiple reasons (Stone, 1999). Given time pressure, politicians can use international models as a perfect panacea to address longstanding problems (Halpin & Troyna, 1995). The logic of borrowing is different for bureaucrats and government officials. Besides politicians and bureaucrats, there many other actors, such as academics, think tanks, and the media (Grindle & Thomas, 1991; Stone, 1999).

This section has illustrated the role of globalization and global reference in relation to the three factors that facilitate borrowing and lending: socio-logic, window of opportunity, and belief systems/perceptions of policy elites. These concepts are influential in the analysis and understanding of the logic of the Thai higher education sector in borrowing QA policy.

2.3 Globalization and Quality Assessment

While the previous sections discussed the literature on globalization in comparative education and policy borrowing and lending, this section reviews relevant literature on globalization in higher education and the emergence of quality policy. It is differentiated into two sub-sections. Firstly, the review of literature illustrates the global expansion of quality assessment. Subsequently, a regional perspective on the idiosyncrasy and politics of QA will be discussed.

2.3.1 Quality Assessment as a Global Education Policy

Although myriad quality mechanisms have been introduced in multiple organizations in various sectors within the past three decades (Bigalke & Neubauer, 2009), quality remains an elusive concept. The definitions, meanings, and implications vary depending on stakeholders, their epistemology, and the policy contexts. Furthermore, it is argued that the meaning of quality evolves over time (GUNI, 2007, p. 5). Several authors have attempted to scope down the working definition of quality. When the discussion of QA became more prevalent at the international level during the 1980s, Ball (1985) defined the quality of higher education as fitness of purpose. For higher education to obtain quality, the institution must achieve its stated mission and purpose to the students. As the concept of quality continued to be a contested issue, Sanyal and Martin (2007) expanded the notion of fitness of purpose and aptly identified ten definitions relating to quality and higher education (p. 5):

- providing excellence,
- being exceptional,
- providing value for money,
- conforming to specifications,
- getting things right the first time,
- meeting customers' needs,
- having zero defects
- providing added values
- exhibiting fitness of purposes,
- exhibiting fitness for purposes

The introduction of quality policy shares one thing in common: an obsession with market-based reform. Neave (1988) argues that the rise of QA has been tightly coined with such concepts as accountability, efficiency and enterprise. These terms have become “the New Theology” mandating policy change in higher education (p. 7). Similarly, one can argue that the global march for QA and a National Qualification Framework (NQF) marks the dawn of a new era for New Public Management (NPM), which attempts to remove the barriers between public and private sectors. NPM tries to instill private values and practices of auditing and assessing the quality of the practice based on the achieved outcomes (Brown, 2004). Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) identify this changing landscape as academic capitalism whereby the market rationale dominates the policy discourse, universities become enterprises, faculties become entrepreneurs, and students become customers. Even though the concept of quality remains elusive, complex, and contested, Ozga, Dahler-Larsen, Segerholm, and Simola (2011) persuasively argue that quality is shorthand for something “measurable, statistical and standard-based” (p. 3). Given the current discourse on quality as a measurable and manageable thing, it contests the traditional concept that links quality with academic discipline. The contest between what quality is, who controls it, and how to manage therefore becomes a politicized process. In this vein, Sanyal and Martin (2007) argue, “The definition of quality is in itself a political process” (p. 14). Despite the potential clash between differing stakeholders on the perception of quality policy, Neave (2004) persuasively argues that partisan politics and its relationship to the institutionalization of quality has been “strangely ignored” as a “taken for granted” factor (p. 213). The politics of quality is one of the major aspects of the literature review.

The recent talk of QA only began in the 1980s. Neave (2004) points out that the creation of the National Evaluation Committee in France in 1985 marked the beginning of the modern “hype” on quality policy in higher education (p. 212). During this time, which can be classified as an early adoption period, a few countries in Western Europe,

such as France, Finland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, as well as New Zealand (van Vaught & Westerheijden, 1994) institutionalized the policy. By the mid 1990s, QA experienced an explosive growth. During this period, many countries, especially those in Eastern and Central Europe, began to introduce QA (Brennan & Shah, 1997; Tomusk, 1995). By the 2000s, the impetus for QA became global (Billing, 2004). As of the summer of 2002, Neave (2004) reported that at least 30 national governments have established QA-related agencies. Throughout the decade, many more countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America have jumped on this global bandwagon (Billing, 2004; Harman, 1998; Mok, 2000). Vidovich (2002) aptly argues the explosive growth of quality assessment during the 1990s to the 2000s as “one of the key globalizing practices ... in both developed and developing countries” (p. 391). Unequivocally, QA became a new facet of higher education regulation across the globe.

Parallel to the QA trend, many countries have actively introduced the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Sinlarat, Thirapichitra, and Chaodamrong (2009) explain that NQF is a standardized or internationally recognized framework, aiming to correlate the level of educational attainment to that of students’ learning outcomes. It can also be understood as a credit system based on students’ academic attainment (p. 11). Funded by the Thailand Office of Education Council, Sinlarat et al. review the NQF of England, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. Similar to the QA movement, there have been three major waves in the global march for NQF. The early adopters began to implement NQF between 1990 and 1999. During this period, at least eight countries and the European Union introduced NQF in their countries. The second wave of NQF took place between 2000 to 2004. Countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, France, Germany, and Latvia introduced the framework. Many more countries have jumped onto this global bandwagon since 2005. The late adopters include Ukraine, Iceland, the Netherlands, Austria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, Russia, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, and Thailand (pp. 12-13).

Interestingly, Thailand is considered to be a late adopter of both the QA and NQF movements. As the discussion will illustrate, Thailand only formally introduced QA in 1999 as part of overall education reform, while the research on NQF only began to take place in 2005. The implication of Thailand being a late adopter in the global model provides an interesting case to understand globalization.

2.3.2 The Asian Quest for Quality

As Figure 1.4 illustrates that the expansion of QA has become a global phenomenon spread across at least 48 countries, it is questionable whether the models and meanings of QA have resulted in the global convergence of the policy. Similar to the globalization debate in comparative education, this question has received divided responses by authors researching QA issues across the globe. Van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) argued that there is a general model of QA, which is comprised of five main features: meta-level organization, self-assessment, external peer review, published reports, and no link with public funding. In contrast, empirical evidence in various countries argues against the existence of one general model of QA. It is argued that the re-contextualization and implementation of QA differ substantively depending on the political context and historical structure of higher education in each country (Brenen & Shah, 2002; Harman, 1998). This section aims to highlight how the implementation of QA differs substantively in the context of selected Asian countries.

Due to international, regional, and national pressures, the institutionalization of QA and other quality-related policies has become the reality in the Asian region. On the global scale, Asian countries are considered late adopters of QA policy. Most Asian countries began to formalize QA agencies in the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, while most Western European countries began to introduce QA in the 1980s and early 1990s. Despite being latecomers, the Asian quest for quality has been a dominant phenomenon. According to Bigalke and Neubauer (2009), “throughout the region

questions of quality and the search for methods of quality assurance are gaining a central place in higher education policy discussions” (p. 2). Education consultants at UNESCO Asia-Pacific supported this observation. It is argued that countries in the region have been excited about implementing QA: “For the past ten to fifteen years, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and all other Asian countries are trying hard to set up QA” (Interview, 27 August, 2010). Despite the regional effort to institutionalize QA, it is argued that the diversity of each country continues to influence how QA is structured. While a detailed discussion of the region is beyond the space of this research, it is important to flesh out the main character of quality policy in selected countries of Asia-Pacific. The purpose of the review aims to address whether a general model of QA exists. A regional specific seems to offer a probable solution to validate this claim. To review, I relied on van Vught and Westerheijden’s (1994) claim of a general model of quality assessment. The table below summarizes the QA characters in selected East and Southeast Asian countries based on the van Vught and Westerheijden's five criteria.

Table 2.1. An Overview of Quality Assessment Regimes in Selected Countries in East and Southeast Asia

	A meta-level agency	Self-assessment	External peer review	Published reports	No link with public funding
Hong Kong	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Indonesia	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
Malaysia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Philippines	-	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
South Korea	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes
Singapore	-	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
Thailand	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vietnam	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes

Source: Author

The table is illustrative for several reasons. Firstly, it summarizes the character of QA in the selected countries in comparison to other countries. Secondly, the table supports van Vught and Westerheijden's (1994) argument that most of the countries share common features regarding their QA policy. Although the table suggests that the general thesis of QA applies in Asia-Pacific, the table only presents a checklist and captures an overview of the policy feature. Most importantly, significant variation in terms of responsibility, function, and ownership of QA policy continues to persist in various countries (Harman, 1998). The discussion below attempts to encapsulate the main features of QA in the selected countries.

Hong Kong: Hong Kong was the first country in East Asia to institutionalize an external quality assessment policy (Mok, 2000). Influenced by the British Council for National Academic Awards, the government established the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation in 1990. This panel is relatively autonomous from government direct control, and it is comprised of local and foreign experts to evaluate and accredit higher education institutions (Harman, 1996). In recent years, the University Grants Committee of Hong Kong (UGC) has become the responsible organization for providing standards and criteria for external and internal quality assessment (Mok, 2000). The UGC has introduced differing assessment measures, such as the Research Assessment Exercise, Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review, Management Review, and University Governance Review (Mok, 2006).

Indonesia: In 1994, the government established the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education in order to assess and accredit academic departments. In the beginning, only private universities were subject to quality assessment and accreditation. There was a general assumption that public universities outperformed private institutions in quality (Buchori & Malik, 2004). The trend started to change in 1998 when quality assessment became compulsory for all academic departments in public and private universities. By 2002, the agency had assessed and accredited more than 60% of

academic programs in Indonesia. While the government attempts to extend the process to include institutional assessment, many established universities have begun to institutionalize their own internal quality assessment policy (Nizam, 2006).

Malaysia: The government has introduced two separate agencies to assess the quality of its private and public higher education institutions. In 1996, the government established the National Accreditation Board to monitor private institutions (Lee, 2004). In 2001, the Quality Assurance Division was established under the auspices of the Ministry of Education in order to conduct external quality assessment in public universities every five years (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2006). These two external quality assessment mechanisms are carried out parallel to internal assessment policy at the institutional level. In recent years, the government introduced the Malaysia Qualification Framework (MQF), which aims to be a comprehensive set of standards to evaluate both private and public institutions for internal and external quality assessment (Sirat, 2006).

The Philippines: There are two quality assessment mechanisms in the Philippines. On the one hand, there are specialist broad examinations administered by the associations of different disciplines, such as medicine, nursing, law, and engineering (Gonzalez, 2004). On the other hand, there is a volunteer accrediting organization to manage the quality of private universities. The Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities was established in 1957 (Gonzalez, 2006). In the beginning, the Association only accredited members who were mostly private universities. In recent years, the system has expanded to include public universities and colleges (Harman, 1998). The accreditation system includes four main levels, and the government grants more institutional autonomy to the accredited institution as an incentive to encourage both public and private universities to participate in this process (Gonzalez, 2006).

South Korea: The South Korea government initiated internal quality assessment policy for the first time in 1982 (Young, 2002). The concern for quality assessment was a

shared responsibility between the Ministry of Education and the Korea Council for University Education (KCUE). The 1984 KCUE Act empowered the KCUE to evaluate its institutional members every five years cycle. Subsequently, external quality assessment became more institutionalized in 1993 with establishment of the Council for University Accreditation. Recently, government has attempted to elevate the quality assessment system to become a national-wide approach committed to allocate KRW 100 annually to establish the “Higher Education Assessment Institute.” This is a national attempt to institutionalize the quality assessment of higher education institutions, determine financial supports for reforms, and publish necessary information to the public (KEDI, 2007).

Singapore: Unlike other countries in the region, Singapore does not have a meta-agency to conduct external quality assessment in higher education institutions. Instead, there are two mechanisms that the government uses as a proxy for quality assessment policy. On the one hand, the government established the International Academic Advisory Panel (IAAP), an ad hoc senior advisory panel comprised of leading academics and eminent leaders from prestigious universities in Japan, United States, and Europe who visit Singapore and provide recommendations to reform higher education institutions (Mok & Lee, 2003; Tan 2006). On the other hand, the government urges institutions to establish rigorous internal quality assessment policies to evaluate and assess their performance (Lee & Healy 2006; Mok, 2000).

Thailand: Internal quality assessment has been discussed in Thailand since 1996. Then the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) established guidelines for all universities to begin internal assessment. After the enactment of the National Education Act of 1999, the Office of National Educational Quality and Assessment Agency was established in 2000 to conduct external quality assessment for public and private universities every five years. The Thai quality assessment policy is driven by the “amicable assessment” principle, which argues that assessment is conducted in the “spirit of care and concern”

(Bovornsiri, 2006). While an overview report is published and available upon public request, a more detailed analysis of the assessment is sent directly to the university council. The assessment does not attempt to accredit or rank the universities.

Vietnam: Quality assessment policy is a recent development in Vietnam. It takes the form of institutional accreditation. Beginning in 1999, the Centre for Education Quality Assurance and Research Development of Vietnam National University in Hanoi (VNU-H) was responsible for state-level accreditation of higher education. After several consultations and piecemeal changes, the government established the General Department of Assessment and Accreditation (GDAA) in 2003. The Provisional Regulations on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions were promulgated in 2004 to guide institutional self-evaluation and external evaluation (Dai, 2006).

From the experiences of these eight countries, it is evident that QA has been institutionalized in East and Southeast Asia. Although many European countries began to introduce some form of QA in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was only in the mid-1990s to 2000s that Asian governments began to formally institutionalize QA policy and establish new institutions mandated to be responsible for QA. The review of the literature supports the argument that QA has become a global education policy and common features of QA exist amongst many Asian countries, such as establishment of a new organization. However, two points deserve further discussion. Firstly, Thune (2002) argues that it is important to differentiate between procedural aspects of QA and the political discourse of QA. The table above only illustrates that the selected countries discussed here share the procedural aspects. Secondly, the data in Table 2.1 and the Figure 1.4 S-Shape curve are only useful to capture the longitudinal perspective or summarize the macro trend. They are limited in terms of explaining many important questions, such as the origins of the policy and the rationale. A careful scrutiny of case studies in a few countries has demonstrated the diversity of national purpose, political agenda, and organizational functions of quality assessment policy in the region (Bigalke

& Neubauer, 2009; Mok, 2000, 2003, 2006). The review of the literature in the next section attempts to address the remaining question: Why does the global education policy resonate in so many countries?

2.4 The Socio-Logic of Borrowing QA

The previous section provided a macro perspective on the institutionalization of QA. This section attempts to analyze why global quality policy resonates in many countries. It maps out the prevailing organizations involved in the promotion of QA, the socio-logic of the actors, and the embedded rationale behind the global quest for QA. It is argued that a confluence of factors at the global, regional, and national levels contributes to the institutionalization of QA. It must be noted that the weight that each factor plays in each nation state is conditional based on several factors: the prevailing political discourse, institutional structure, historical legacy, and most importantly, the perspectives of the policy elites in each context.

As previously mentioned, the reference to globalization and the knowledge economy as the impetus to institutionalize QA is replete in policy texts and academic literature. In nearly every policy paper and academic journal, rationales such as globalization, massification, and diversification of higher education present as the most urgent needs to justify an institutionalization of QA and other policies related to the concerns of quality (Bigalke & Neubauer, 2009; GUNI; 2007; Marginson & Van Der Wende, 2007; Portnoi, Rust, & Bagley, 2010; Vidovich, 2002). Undoubtedly, these factors present new challenges for higher education institutions to consider. However, the linear explanation is dubious. It is questionable to what extent globalization and all of the abovementioned factors are in fact the causes calling for a new regulatory framework in higher education. Is it possible that globalization as a phenomenon has become a taken-for-granted factor that all scholars and policymakers feel obliged to mention without it

necessarily being a real problem calling for a solution? The predominant explanation of why countries implemented quality policy as a global reform often focuses on environmental pressure and functional needs (Bleiklie, 2007). In this case, globalization and the rise of the knowledge economy are considered to be the external and functional pressures for higher education institutions across the globe. Based on historical evidence, however, Bleiklie is doubtful about the linear and functional explanation of globalization as the de facto cause of the emergence of QA.

Although the argument is questionable that globalization is a cause and global quality is a perfect panacea, this line of reasoning is the most prevailing explanation used by international organizations and regional development banks. The review of the literature substantiates how international and regional organizations, such as the European Union, the OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank, are active promoters of QA (Billing & Thomas, 2000; Lemaitre, 2004; Tomusk, 1997, 2000, 2004; Vidovich, 2002). Why do these organizations believe in this argumentation? It is convenient. This line of logic fits perfectly well with the overall thinking of these development agencies. On the one hand, these organizations promote economic liberalization and support cross-borders in trade and services, education included. At the global level, the World Trade Organization promotes the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which includes education as one of the service sectors. At the regional level, the European Union pushes for the Bologna Agreement, which encourages if not enforces cross-border education amongst all its members (Ozga et al., 2011). In the case of Asia-Pacific, the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 also provides a telling justification for cross-border education and cross-border policy regulation. Given that these organizations support new forms of higher education management that goes beyond national control, QA is a perfect solution in a new environment (Strydom & Strydom, 2004; Vidovich, 2002).

How do these organizations promote their belief systems in other nation states? These organizations can exert direct and indirect preferences for QA. On the one hand, the asymmetric relationship between international organizations as donors and developing countries as recipients plays an influential role in instilling this conviction. The economics of policy borrowing and lending explicate this interwoven relationship between aid donors and recipient countries (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006). The development agencies can create a condition that development assistance can only be transferred to developing countries contingent upon the latter acceptance of the imported policy, the perfect package. According to Steiner-Khamsi (2010), the imported policy in the education sector is an equivalent of the structural adjustment policy, Poverty Reduction Strategy, or the Good Governance agenda in the public sector (p. 324). They are considered to be the one-size-fits-all that must be prescribed by all recipient countries. Samoff (1999, 2009) persuasively argues that the asymmetrical relationship between donors-recipients explains the wholesale introduction of the standardized and one-size-fits-all policy in developing countries.

Amongst all, the European Union is the most active promoter of QA. Rhoades and Sporn (2002) argue that the European Commission (EC) has vigorously promoted the establishment of external QA in all its member countries. In 1991, EC funded the European Pilot Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education in order to increase the member states' awareness of QA and transfer experiences of the earlier adopters to other members (p. 364). Accordingly, it is reported that between November 1994 and June 1995, 17 countries and 46 institutions across Europe participated in the Pilot Project to strengthen or establish QA (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). The numbers proliferated within a short time. By 2002, more than 30 national systems established the QA system and became members in the European Network of Quality Assurance (Neave, 2004). Furthermore, it is estimated that 34 agencies in Europe were directly responsible for evaluation and accreditation (p. 212). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the EU

policy on education and its commitment to QA began to penetrate into many Central and Eastern European countries, such as Romania, Estonia, and Hungary. This was considered part of the Europeanization of higher education reform (Tomusk, 2004). This continent-wide project to establish QA aimed to prepare the member countries for the Bologna process, that is, the harmonization of higher education institutions in Europe (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). To a lesser extent, the World Bank has provided loans for many developing countries to institutionalize QA (Billing & Thomas, 2000). This is especially true in Asia. Many countries, such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand, have received financial assistance to reform and restructure their higher education sector from the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank (Dai, 2004; Fry, 2002; Nizam, 2004). These reforms emphasize institutional restructuring toward greater efficiency and accountability of higher education institutions. Undoubtedly, the establishment of QA agency falls into this rubric.

However, the influence of these international development agencies is not as simple as aid to donors and recipient relationships. These organizations promote QA or other quality-related policy through the creation of international and regional conferences and the funding of major publications. Through publications and conferences, the international and regional organizations have indirect influence on instilling the normative benefits to support QA (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). Steiner-Khamsi (2000) has argued that these international organizations create necessary policy space for policy elites to interact and enable the transfer of “academic and professional discourse” (p. 162). On the one hand, the international and regional institutions have hosted numerous regional and international conferences on higher education reforms in the past several decades. They invite policymakers, university administrators, and academics to attend and exchange their views on the concurrent problems and how to solve them. In the case of Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) also played a role by bringing 48 university administrators from the region together to discuss quality

protocol (Strydom & Strydom, 2004). While the OECD and the European Union funded a variety of works on these issues in Europe (Billing, 2004; Brennan & Shah, 1997; Van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994), in the Asian region research funding came from UNESCO Asia and the Pacific Bureau for Education (Harman, 1998; UNESCO, 2006; Varghese, 2004). These policy studies attempt to reform and restructure higher education institutions toward a greater use of resources and more competitiveness. On the other hand, these publications become powerful policy tools to disseminate ideas and influence policy at the national level. As Samoff (1999) illustrates, the donors are also able to influence the way the reports or policy research are conducted, written, and offer solutions. In the case of higher education research, this view holds true. All the policy papers or journal articles funded by these agencies organize their findings in a similar way in order to be synchronized and enhance their clarity. Therefore, it makes sense why there is a linear discourse in presenting globalization as a cause and quality policy as the way to manage higher education.

Alternative to the environmental pressures and functional needs for policy, the politics of policy borrowing offer another viewpoint to explain the global quest for quality regime. Given that the education sector is comprised of a multitude of stakeholders at differing levels to defend and present their ideas and agendas, any reform is prone to be questioned and contested (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010). Influenced by the Triangle of Coordination presented earlier, the states, the market, and the academic oligarchs continuously negotiate for their preferred policy representing their values and rationales. Against this contested policy environment, Steiner-Khamsi argues that the global model or international standard contains “salutary effects.” It offers a neutral solution to policymakers. In her own words:

Borrowing has a salutary effect on protracted policy conflict: it is a coalition builder. It enables opposed advocacy groups to combine resources to support a third, supposedly more neutral, policy option borrowed from elsewhere.

”International standards” have become an increasingly common point of reference in such decisions. (p. 324)

Although international standards or best practices offer policy solutions for the borrowing countries, it is argued that the socio-logic, historical legacy, and perspectives of all stakeholders on the ground will continue to influence decisions of what to borrow, how to justify, or how to implement it. Historical and political contexts will determine what is borrowed and from where. For example, due to its colonial relationship, the UK is “the major education selling country” for South Africa (Strydom & Strydom, 2004, p. 102). This also holds true for Hong Kong and Australia (Mok, 2000; Vidovich, 2002).

Neave (2004) conducted a comparative analysis of four European countries, namely France, the Netherlands, Britain, and Sweden. Accordingly, the rationale for institutionalizing QA can be differentiated into two divergent strands of thought: one is economics and another is political. While political arguments and the Europeanization of higher education policy predominates in the QA rationales in France and Sweden, market-based ideology is the driver of policy change in the UK and the Netherlands (Neave, 2004, cited in Amaral, 2007). The political ideology and socio-economic contexts embedded in these countries and their national politics provide a predetermined argument for the emergence of QA. From these analyses, QA is indeed “a political construct [that] has been debated within very different rhetorical settings” (Neave, 2004, p. 213).

On the one hand, the origins of QA policy in France, Sweden, Eastern and Central Europe, South Africa, and Singapore are dominated by the political discourse and structured based on the embedded political paradigms of each country (Mok, 2000; Neave, 2004; Strydom & Strydom, 2004). On the other hand, the origins of QA in the Netherlands, Hong Kong, and the United Kingdom are coined in the economic rationales (Mok, 2000; Neave, 2004). It must be noted that this figure only serves to be a heuristic device in the comparative analysis of higher education reforms. Realistically, multiple

influences continue to influence the discourse and characterization of QA and the quality regime in each country.

Politics vis-à-vis economic differentiation provides a useful framework to investigate the political origins of QA in other countries. The establishment of QA in South Africa and in many countries in Eastern Europe provides lucid cases to substantiate this. Strydom and Strydom (2004) argue that QA in South Africa was established in the politically volatile context of the post-Apartheid regime. Although traditional universities and technikons were highly segregated by race, ethnicity, and class, the government aimed to upgrade the technikons into universities of technology (p. 106). Against the context of highly segregated, unequal, and fragmented higher education institutions, the South African government established a meta-level agency, called the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), in 2000 to conduct external QA and restructure the sector. In a comparative study of Hong Kong and Singapore QA, Mok (2000) argues that QA has been used in Hong Kong as a policy tool to encourage more institutional accountability, whereas the Singapore government introduced QA to increase national educational competitiveness. It is argued that financial stringency is the impetus driving QA in HK, whereas it is not a problem for Singapore. In the Philippines, QA was introduced to counterbalance the politics of private university expansion (Gonzalez, 2004). In contrast, QA is a direct response to the erosion of quality in public universities in Indonesia because their private higher education has also been assessed and evaluated (Nizam, 2004).

Tomusk (1997) revealed the complex interplay between the international model and local politics during the institutionalization of QA in Central and Eastern Europe. On the one hand, QA was introduced in Post-Soviet Estonia as a political project of the Europeanization of its higher education institutions. The Western European ready-made packages of higher education management were thought to instill the holy principles of quality, accountability, and autonomy. Tomusk argues that QA has been used as a coated

language to disguise the insufficient quality of higher education inherited from the Soviet system. Accordingly, talking about QA is politically more convenient than “initiating an open discussion on the problems faced by higher education” (p. 179). On the other hand, QA is used as a political tool to limit the establishment of new institutions and the expansion of vocational education. By viewing QA as a new global policy and quality as a new global discourse that can be contested at the local level, one can begin to look into the patterns of policy change and plausibility of conflicts.

2.5 The State, Market, and Academics in Quality Assessment

To address the second research question, how QA was introduced, implemented, and interpreted, it is important first to identify the key actors in the process of QA policymaking. This section maps out the main actors involving in QA policy. Clark’s (1983) Triangle of Coordination is useful in identifying the key actors in the making of QA policy. Clark identified three sources of influence that impact higher education: the state, the academic, and the market. Burke (2005) applies Clark’s Triangle to explain the increasing attention in the global movement for quality and accountability policy. Burke argued that the patterns and characters of quality implementation depend on the negotiation between these three actors (pp. 21-22). More often than not, the values and logic of each actor are conflicting and contradictory (p. 22). Therefore, to systematically understand the patterns and process of policy change, identification of the actors and their priorities is necessary. First, the state is composed of two components: the bureaucratic cadre and the political authorities. Supposedly, they prioritize social needs and public desires. Second are the academic oligarchs—the eminent professors. Their priorities involve the benefit of academic disciplines and administrative functions. The third component is the markets, including the demands of the students, teachers, and businesses communities on the universities (Burke, 2005; Clark, 1983). It is important to

note that even though Clark identifies these elements as essential in all national higher education policies, he acknowledges that each system of higher education differs in how these three elements relate to one another. For example, each system can develop different relationships and linkages between each element, which results in varied patterns of controls and hence diverse characters of the policy. Clark's Triangulation of Coordination has been used to explain higher education policy change in many countries (Burke, 2005; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002; Nilpan, 2007; Shi & Neubauer, 2009).

Influenced by this framework, Shi and Neubauer (2009) added the divergent values of each stakeholder to illustrate how QA is the product of these negotiations. Shi and Neubauer argue that the QA system will uphold five key values: the academic system, efficiency, productivity, excellence, and accountability (p. 223). Although Burke (2005) argues that each factor would prefer differing types and create different accountability policies, such as political, academic, and market accountability, this view is challenged. In the current climate of academic capitalism, which treats knowledge as a commodity, students as customers, and professors as service providers, it is likely the market perspectives and its preferences would be the most influential factors in determining the structure and values of QA (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

In studies on the political origins of performance funding, Dougherty et al. (2013, forthcoming) further elaborate on this point. Although members of the business sector might not be actively involved in higher education policymaking, their ideology, values, and interests are known to the public. Therefore, state officials are able to mimic business values in higher education policymaking without the presence of business actors in the policy circle. Accordingly, Dougherty et al. argue that "officials feel pressure – even if it is never stated or even intended by business – to make sure that government programs serve business interests" (p. 6). Similarly, Mitchell (1991) argued that the boundary between what constitutes "state," "academics," and "market" is elusive. In response to the political science debate on the role of the state vis-à-vis society, Mitchell persuasively

argues against the separation between the state and the society. The multiple identities of each policymaker and their diverse backgrounds count enormously in the policy change. As the analysis unfolds, this research stands against an overt simplification that the states, academics, and market are distinct from one another.

While the review of the literature suggests that QA is mostly driven by public officials with business interests, it is also evident that the policy is often contested and challenged by academic sectors in various countries. Why? One plausible explanation is that there is a clash of values between differing stakeholders. An introduction of QA has overtly emphasized accountability. This potentially threatens institutional autonomy and academic freedom. To understand the clash between accountability, autonomy, and academic freedom, it is important to identify what each term means and how their demands differ. According to Schmidlein and Berdahl (2005), being accountable is about explaining themselves, defending their essential character, and demonstrating that their services are cost-effective. Burke (2005) further elaborates that accountability in higher education has six dimensions: (1) using power appropriately, (2) working to achieve the missions, (3) reporting their performance, (4) accounting for its efficiency and effectiveness, (5) ensuring the quality of the programs and services, and (6) serving public needs (p. 2). From these expectations, the crux of being accountable is being transparent to the public, efficiently using given resources, and effectively delivering the institution's stated mission. Given these criteria, it is explicable why the major characteristics of QA are about meta-agency, self-assessment, external peer reviews, and published reports (van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994). These procedures emphasize reflection, public reports, and external reviews, which open the academic community or individual faculty to scrutiny. This causes discontent amongst the academics.

One explanation relies on the structure of the academic community. While other organizational structures emphasize hierarchical and vertical decision-making processes, the academics differentiate their territory as different. On the one hand, Cerych and

Sabatier (1986) characterizes academic community to be ambiguous, with a multitude of actors continuing to negotiate their conflicting goals (p. 285). On the other hand, Schmidlein and Berdahl (2005) argue that the academic community is largely autonomous and cannot be ordered from superior or external demands (p. 72). The community is composed of professional individuals who can make individual decisions. Hence, an externally imposed mechanism to scrutinize academic activities can cause discontent amongst faculty, especially on the grounds that it breaches academic freedom. The tensions between the states' quest for accountability, the market emphasis on effectiveness and efficiency, and the academics' protection of academic freedom proliferate in a policy environment that promotes massification of higher education and privatization of public institutions. The state institutionalizes a myriad of quality mechanisms to instill market ideologies of accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness, while preaching institutional autonomy. It continuously demands that institutions illustrate how their input is used and if their stated objectives and outcomes are reached, while the academics complain about the loss of autonomy and freedom. This debate stands at the crux of many discussions on higher education.

Tensions increase when governments link academic output and outcome to the funding strategy. The case of the United Kingdom illustrates this (Brennan, 2007). In the UK, Brown (2004) aptly argues that public debate on QA results in continuing disagreements between the government, the Funding Council, and higher education institutions regarding “purposes, coverage, form and ownership” (p. 151). Amongst the various conflicts, Brown argues that the dichotomy between QA’s goals for efficiency and effectiveness, and university autonomy and academic freedom, is the most eminent one. These conflicts between the stakeholders continue to change the shape of QA policy in the UK. Since the establishment of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in 1992, Brown argues the UK has undergone three major changes, while Parry (2002) estimates that there were as many as ten major modifications within the regime. Changes happen in the

realm of policy goals, implementation, and organizational restructuring. QAA went through constant changes: initiating new functions while abolishing old ones. In the UK, a survey of vice-chancellors illustrated that 82% of respondents argued that the new regulatory regime of external QA was “too bureaucratic” (Brown, 2004, p. 101). Amann (as cited in Brown, 2004) further argues that the introduction of QA in the UK resembles the Soviet Union's style of centralized control: “It is, of course, tempting, when viewing the British professions under siege today to see parallels with the unfortunate Soviet ‘bourgeois specialists’ of the 1920s” (p. 17). The strong resistance of UK academics to the QA regime is made possible by the existing strength of the academic community in the country.

From a review of the literature, it appears the case of academic resistance in the UK is unique. Although there is a clash between the state rationale for QA and academic values, it is argued that most academic resistance is passive and often unaccountable for in the process of QA implementation. Why is this the case? How is it possible that the academic community, comprised of autonomous and professional individuals, embraces a new coercive mechanism such as QA or other related quality mechanisms without a fight? Worthington and Hodgson (2005) provide four main explanations for this phenomenon. Firstly, many academics view their work as “vocational” and do not critically reflect on the changing modes of their work environments. Secondly, academics are able to continue working independently from micromanagement and control. Despite an introduction of QA and other quality regimes, it is argued that self-regulatory and disciplinary-based peer reviews continue to be more influential to their work than government regulations. Thirdly, academics are not active in a trade union. There is a lack of class consciousness in their work. Fourthly, the academics’ form of resistance is through writing. Even though some academics are politically attentive and aware, they express that resistance in the form of academic writing. Hence, that does not inhibit the state from imposing its preferred agenda and policy on the community (pp. 106-107).

This latter point is prevailing. Although there are numerous scholarly articles reflecting on QA regulations as surveillance, micro-management, and coercive accountability, the resistance is presented in academic journals and coined in heavy theoretical reflection (Shore & Wright, 2000).

Even through this framework, identifying key actors in higher education policymaking in states, markets, and academics, the values of each differs dependent on the policy context and the socio-logic of the country. In his comparative study, Neave (2004) argues that each system of higher education presents diverse rationales to justify the establishment of a national evaluation system. According to Neave, the diversity is determined by the cultural, social, and political values of each higher education system (p. 212). This view fits with the socio-logic argument. Schriewer and Martinez (2004) illustrate that each country is working within differing socio-logics: the historical legacy, institutional structure, and frame of reference. Therefore, when reference is made to another model, it often refers to the countries they are most related to. At the same time, when each country differs in its political persuasion, it would translate the global model to fit its existing political discourse. Neave (2004) supports this point. The doctrines of QA differ substantively across European countries. For example, Liberalism predominated in Britain, Neo-liberalism influenced the Netherlands and Germany, while Ultra-liberalism is an important facet of French reform. Similarly, the strength of the academic communities differs substantially across contexts.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on globalization, higher education, and quality policy. The first part mapped out the globalization debate and linked it with the concurrent discussions in comparative and international education. Influenced by Held and McGrew (2005), the discussion was differentiated into hyper-globalists, skeptics, and

transformationalists. Each perspective differs in how they view the emergence of globalization as a phenomenon and the capacity of local policymakers to respond to global forces. Throughout this chapter, the transformationalist view provided the most compelling analysis for understanding the interwoven relationships between external factors such as globalization at the national and local levels. It is argued that globalization has indeed created a phenomenal change in social settings. However, global forces and their universal trends are conditioned by history, institutions, and policymakers at the national level. To systematically analyze policy patterns at the national level, the policy borrowing and lending theory has been introduced. The politics and economics of borrowing provide useful theoretical devices to analytically understand how the global model and international trends resonated in various countries.

Furthermore, Clark's (1983) Triangle was introduced. It is argued that policy process and its outcome are the products of contentious negotiations between the state, the market, and the academic community in that country (Burke, 2005). An integrated framework between the transformationalist and triangle of coordination provides an analytical umbrella to review the abundant literature on these issues. Furthermore, the discussion has illustrated that policy timing and its characteristics are conditioned by the structures and agencies within each nation state. The experiences of the eight Asian countries discussed in this chapter serve as a reminder that the discussion on QA must distinguish between the procedural and political origins of the policy (Thune, 2002). The existing political discourse, historical legacy, and institutional structure of each country provide predetermined contexts and arguments for the emergence of and resistance to QA. The review of the literature on QA in this chapter provides a macro perspective as to why the institutionalization of QA resonated in so many countries. It also identifies the gap in the literature on the actors' perspectives and semantics of QA. This is an important rationale to conduct an in-depth analysis of the case of Thailand.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation investigates how a global policy phenomenon such as Quality Assessment (QA hereafter) has resonated in Thailand. Furthermore, it is interested in understanding how the policy has been introduced, implemented, and interpreted within the contexts of Thailand's higher education sector. It explores the relationship between globalization, higher education, and quality assessment in Thailand. To do so, the research deployed qualitative case study as the methodology to address the two main research questions:

1. Why did the "global education policy" of quality assessment resonate in Thailand?
2. How was QA introduced, implemented, and interpreted in Thailand's higher education sector?

To address these questions, qualitative case study was the chosen methodology. It provided ample space to select multiple methods of inquiry. During nine months of fieldwork in Thailand, document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations were carried out. This chapter discusses the main rationale, the strengths, and the limitations of the research design. In addition, an in-depth discussion on data analysis is mapped out. The chapter is composed of eight sub-sections: introduction, research rationale for qualitative case study, document analysis, semi-structured

interviews, observation, data analysis, reflection on the limitations of the research design, and conclusion.

3.1 The Rationale for Qualitative Case Study

This dissertation explores how a global education policy such as quality assessment has resonated in Thailand. It analyzes how such a policy was introduced, interpreted, and implemented in Thailand's higher education sector. To understand how differing actors, ranging from bureaucrats and policy advisors in central Bangkok to policy implementors and policy users at various state universities, perceive and interpret quality policy, qualitative case study was the most appropriate methodology. George and Bennett (2005) define qualitative case study as a "detailed examination" of a historical event or issue in order to test, refine, or reject existing theoretical explanations (p. 22). According to Yin (1994), there are three criteria to justify what research is suited to a qualitative case study. They are (1) the type of research question; (2) the extent of control the researcher has on an event; and (3) whether the research is contemporary or historical. This research fits Yin's case study criteria for the following reasons. Firstly, the research questions require a holistic understanding of the context, actors, and institutions in Thailand. Multiple research methods were necessary to obtain information and data. Secondly, the researcher did not have direct control over the context and actors in this research. Unlike experimental research, questions of logic, perception, and responses create ample room for the respondents to share their opinions and worldviews. Thirdly, the research questions were based on contemporary and historical events. To acquire a comprehensive understanding of the current quality policy, it is important to trace the historical trajectory of Thailand's higher education. For these reasons, qualitative case study methodology is suitable for this dissertation research.

The strength of a qualitative case study is due to its high conceptual validity. Unlike the quantitative method, qualitative case study enables the researcher to identify the political, social, and historical contextual factors (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 17). The call for a qualitative case study on QA is also context sensitive. As noted in the introduction, the review of the literature sheds light on the domination of quantitative research on QA in Thailand. A detailed qualitative case study promises a more in-depth understanding of Thailand and its higher education sector.

Metaphorically, this journey of conducting qualitative case study is best characterized as a bricolage (Ball 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Similar to a bricolage, which needs to improvise and bridge differing pieces together, it was necessary to collect differing parts and parcels of data from multiple sources and sites to obtain a holistic understanding of a policy and program. Furthermore, the nature of the research questions provoked a “process-tracing” of the policy process; thus, my journey of data collection and fieldwork was less than linear (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 46). Although this chapter lays out a systematic procedure of data collection and analysis, there were constant shifts and changes throughout the fieldwork necessitating ad hoc decision-making. The line of reasoning in this chapter should not lure the reader to imagine a linear and neat process of data collection. Rather, it was a complex and untidy journey. The next sub-sections will address the rationale of the research design and sampling strategy.

3.1.1 Multiple Layers of Comparison and Maximum Variation Strategy

Kogan (1978) argued that education policy is “a product of conflicting claims, painfully and painstakingly resolved” (cited in Whitty & Edwards, 1994, p. 15). Therefore, it is essential to understand differing voices of individuals holding a diversity of responsibilities and power in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the policy. Bray and Thomas (1995) persuasively argued that one way to avoid having “an incomplete and unbalanced perspective on educational studies” (p. 473) is to incorporate

differing levels of comparison into a case study. One does not necessarily always have to compare across nation states. Rather, it is possible to compare across seven levels of analysis, including world, regional, country, state/province/district, school, classroom, and individual levels. Furthermore, Bray and Thomas urged researchers to take into account the broader socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts in which education policy is situated. In recent methodological discussion in comparative and international education, Vavrus and Bartlett (2006) called this “vertical case study.” These levels are heuristically useful to identify different actors involved in education policy and how such diversity contributes to the dynamics of the politics of policymaking from multiple levels and viewpoints.

This dissertation strives to comprehend the complex picture of quality assessment policy in the Thai higher education sector. In so doing, I identified and included different levels of individuals and institutions involved in different periods of the introduction and implementation of the QA process in this research. Data collection acknowledged these different units of analysis. The sampling strategy of this research relied on the “maximum variation sampling” (Tagg, 1985, cited in Seidman, 2006), which strategy worked well with the concept of multiple layers of comparison, as they both seek to include the diversity of individuals and institutions involved in various points of the education policy process.

3.1.2 Applying Selection Strategy to Understand Higher Education in Thailand

This section explicitly demonstrates how multiple layers of comparison and maximum sampling strategy were applied in this research. An introduction to the higher education landscape in Thailand is necessary to illustrate how the selection of individuals and institutions encapsulates the broad picture of the sector.

At the national level of policymaking, there are two organizations directly involved with the introduction and implementation of QA in Thailand: the Office of the Higher

Education Commission (OHEC) and the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). There are other organizations involved in QA policy in Thailand including UNESCO Asia Pacific, Bangkok Office; the World Bank, Bangkok Office; and Southeast Asia Ministry of Education Organization - Regional Center for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED). The latter organizations have a smaller role and indirect involvement in setting the policy, but are also necessary to supplement the understanding of differing issues from international and regional perspectives on QA.

To understand why and how QA concepts resonated and were introduced in Thailand, it is essential and necessary to gather information from policy documents, policymakers, and the policy environment of these organizations. Specifically in terms of the semi-structured interview, it is essential to meet with and talk to policymakers and policy advisors directly involved in these organizations in different capacities. In this dissertation, the term policymakers refers to politicians, civil servants, and retired officers whose primary responsibility is involvement in policymaking at OHEC and ONESQA, while policy advisors include board members in the OHEC and ONESQA. Under the concept of “participatory” that the National Education Act propagated, these individuals are selected representatives from various sectors of the society. I included representatives of UNESCO Asia Pacific and SEAMEO-RIHED as policy advisors due to the nature of their commissioned research studies and policy strategies on QA. The subsequent section will provide insight into the quantitative numbers of individuals from each position and institution.

Collecting data at the university level is essential to understand how QA is implemented and interpreted. Under the supervision of OHEC, there are 168 higher education institutions in Thailand, two of which are Buddhist universities. The other 166 institutions are differentiated as 78 Public Institutions and 69 Private Institutions. In this research, I chose to focus on public universities rather than private universities. The

rationale behind this decision was based on the diversity of historical developments of the two types of universities and the role of public institutions in Thai higher education. Historically speaking, the establishment of public universities in Thailand has been directly linked with public policy borrowing from the West. The historical development of the public university began in the early days of the 20th century, while private universities were only founded through the 1969 Private College Act. Hence, an understanding of these long-standing institutions of Thai higher education is essential to comprehend the longitudinal development of the sector in relation to policy borrowing and lending. Although the role of private higher education has become increasingly important in the Thai higher education landscape (Welch, 2011), it is argued that public institutions continue to play essential and center role, as they enroll at least 80% of the total enrollment in higher education in Thailand (World Bank, 2010).

The focus of this dissertation was on limited admission/public universities, as these institutions shared similar historical development and have been driven by the similar goals of attaining the status of “world-class universities,” especially being highly ranked in international league tables. As the review of the literature suggested that the global quest for QA has been understood as a byproduct of increasing global obsession for quantitative measures, global competitiveness, and global ranking (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002; Mok, 2002), choosing research universities is appropriate in terms of policy context. As it will be illustrated in Chapter V, the term “research university” is another official policy tool to increase selected universities in Thailand to become globally competitive in international league tables. Two other criteria were important in selecting the institutions: administration type and location. Given that QA has been tightly promoted as an essential tool to prepare Thai higher education institutions to be autonomous, I am interested to see whether there are different responses between them. Location also mattered. The research selected institutions that represent every region. Table 3.1 outlines the profiles of the selected universities.

Table 3.1: Profiles of Selected Universities Differentiated by Administration, Goals, and Location

Selected Universities	Administration Types	University Goals	Location
Thammasat	Public	Research	Bangkok, Capital
Prince Songkla	Public	Research	Songkla, South
Suranaree University of Technology	Autonomous	Research	Nakornratchasima, Northeast
Chulalongkorn	Autonomous	Research	Bangkok, Capital
Chiang Mai	Autonomous	Research	Chiang Mai, Capital
Rajabhat Suan Dusit	Public	Teaching	Bangkok, Capital City
Rajabhat Chiang Mai	Public	Teaching	Chiang Mai, North
Rajabhat Songkla	Public	Teaching	Songkla, South

Source: Author

It must be noted that the decision to include Rajabhat universities was made in the field and they were not the focus of the research. Given that interviewees constantly made reference to the upgrading of Rajabhat universities as one of the rationales to have QA for the purpose of controlling quality, I was interested in understanding the perception of individuals in these institutions in response to the narrative. Their responses are included in the analysis of the academics' perception of QA.

Out of the five universities that were the main focuses of the research, two universities were featured in case studies to demonstrate how QA was implemented at the institutional level. These universities were Prince Songkla University and Suranaree University of Technology. During the analysis, the responses from all universities and individuals were analyzed and taken into the account to get the full picture of QA in Thai higher education. However, the selection of the two institutions was based on what each case represents and the nature of the data gathered. Prince Songkla University represents a traditional limited admission university, while Suranaree University of Technology represents an Autonomous University. Although Chulalongkorn and Chiang Mai can also be considered Autonomous Universities by the legal term, the existing structures of the

institutions still very much represent traditional universities, as both of them only recently changed the legal setting. Given the nature of the individuals interviewed in Chiang Mai, Chulalongkorn, and Thammasat University who were constantly involved in the policymaking process or parts of the academic movement against QA, their responses were extensively used in other parts of the analysis.

At the university level, I collected data from two groups of actors: QA practitioners and QA users. QA practitioners are directly responsible for QA-related matters at the university level. The important aspect of the formalization and implementation of QA was the establishment of QA divisions or departments with individuals mandated to do everything related to QA matters. They have direct experiences with QA, such as collecting data and writing reports.

QA users are university executives and academic professionals. This differentiation enabled me to conceptualize differing actors involved in the process of QA. Not only did each level of actor provide diverse information on the implementation of QA, but their interests relating to QA also differed significantly. For example, the government executives were interested in the overall benefits of QA and its relationship to the higher education sector. The QA practitioners were mostly interested in the specific procedural details, such as QA indicators and how to improve the information system for collecting QA. It must be noted that even though university executives and academics were considered the users of QA, they did not agree on the benefits and limitations of the policy. The university executives focused on the university's overall performance in QA in comparison to other universities, while the academics paid more attention to how QA affected their work and professions. Although these views simplified the in-depth and diverse responses from all the actors, it highlighted the vertical view of the policy analysis and differentiated a multitude of actors according to their responsibilities and positions.

3.1.3 Measuring Policy Resonance

It is important to clarify how resonance is methodologically measured in this dissertation. As mentioned in Chapter I, two areas of policy resonance are measured and highlighted. On the one hand, resonance is measured through the institutionalization of QA. Through this perspective, it is important to investigate how the policy was given lip service amongst policy actors, then received political support and became legislation, subsequently receiving sufficient financial support to establish an institution or organization. On the other hand, the semantics of resonance is highlighted. This perspective explores how differing policy actors view QA. Questions such as policy expectations, objectives, and policy discontents are discussed.

Through extensive analysis of policy documents and elite interviews, the institutionalization of QA resonated in Thailand differently depending on the timing of the policy. At the beginning, between 1994 to 1996, only the discourse of QA resonated within a small group of policy actors in the Thai higher education sector. This included university presidents and senior bureaucrats at the Ministry of University Affairs who were responsible for issues of standards of higher education. By 1997, QA began to resonate in official policy papers published by the Ministry of University Affairs to circulate among higher education institutions. The promulgation of the National Education Act of 1999 elevated the level of policy resonance to a level of national legislation, which mandated QA as a legal obligation to every institution. By this point, QA began to resonate more widely than the higher education sector. The National Education Act enlarged the space of policy resonance beyond the higher education sub-sector to include the primary, secondary, and vocational education sub-sectors. When ONESQA was established and received 400 million baht annually to operate, the resonance of QA indeed moved from the stage of policy discourse, discussion, and legislation to the policy implementation. The establishment of ONESQA is the case in point.

Beyond the institutionalization of QA, it is important to understand how differing policy actors analyze, understand, and interpret the policy. In this case, the semantics of QA is the focus of the dissertation. The Findings chapters will highlight how differing stakeholders—bureaucrats, senior advisors, university administrators, QA practitioners, and academics—view the policy. The disparity between policy objectives and policy outcomes is one of the most important themes running through the discussion. Furthermore, the discussion will illustrate how policy expectations gradually became minimized over time.

In order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of different aspects of the QA policy, three types of data were collected: QA on official policy papers, the experiences and viewpoints of QA gathered from interviews with key stakeholders, and the observation of how QA is practiced at the institutional level. It is argued that dividing QA policy into these aspects made it easier to obtain a holistic viewpoint of how the policy resonated. The subsequent section discuss the process, benefits, and limitations of these three data collection procedures in detail.

3.2 Data Collection

While most of the data collection took place in Bangkok, I went to interview QA practitioners and users in three other provinces of Thailand, namely, Chiang Mai, Songkla, and Nakornratchasrima. There are educational centers located in the North, the South, and the Northeast of Thailand, respectively. Although the Thai state is the main case of this research, the multiple sub-cases embedded within the design help to strengthen the analysis and understanding of how quality policies differ in each type of institution.

This research was an ongoing project starting in the summer of 2009 when I received the Weatherhead Summer Research Grant from the Weatherhead East Asia

Institute to conduct exploratory research in Thailand. The grant provided me with the opportunity to conduct pilot interviews with key policymakers in Thailand. These were essential to understanding the ongoing tensions and debates surrounding quality policies. Furthermore, I was also able to establish connections necessary for the subsequent fieldwork. The fieldwork began after my proposal defense and lasted nine months from June 2010 to February 2011. During this period, I conducted semi-structured interviews with policy elites, visiting nine higher education institutions in the four regions of Thailand. Subsequently, I conducted participant observation at the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) for three months. After a preliminary analysis, I did a few follow-up interviews with key policymakers during May to June 2011 to and ascertain and elaborate on the arising themes. It must be noted that the process of doing qualitative research was less organized than is being presented here. For example, document analysis was an ongoing process throughout the fieldwork, and there were many more informal conversations than the number of the formal interviewees suggest. The timeline below provides an overview of the working process of the fieldwork.

Table 3.2: Research Timeline

Timeline	Activities
June 2009 and December 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Literature review - Pilot interviews with 10 policymakers who are Board members of the Office of Higher Education Commission and the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA)
June to July 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document Search - Identify key policy elites for interviews - Send the request letters for semi-structured interviews
August - September 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducted semi-structured interviews with key policy elites in Bangkok - Visited Chiang Mai university and conducted semi-structured interviews with its executives, QA administrators and academics (Northern Region)
October- December 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interned and conducted participant observation at the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) - Informally interviewed officials working for ONESQA
November 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attended a national conference on quality and Thai higher education organized by the Office of Higher Education Council (OHEC) -Visited three universities in Bangkok and interviewed their executives, QA administrators and academics (Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University and Ratchaphat Suan Dusit) -Visited two universities in Chiang Mai (Chiang Mai University and Ratchaphat Chiang Mai)
December 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attended the 10th year anniversary of the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA)
January 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visited two universities in the Southern region and interviewed their executives, QA administrators and academics (Prince Songkla University and Ratchaphat Songkla university) - Visited one university in the Northeastern region (Suranaree Technology University)
February 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interviewed officers at the Office of Higher Education Commission
February - May 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transcribed and preliminary analysis
May - June 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Followed up interviews with key policymakers and QA administrators - Conducted second round of document analysis with a particular focus on the newspapers articles

Source: Author

3.2.1 Document Analysis

Documents are significant data sources in this dissertation. The benefits of using documents are enormous. Firstly, they provide historical records of the policy. This was

particularly useful in tracing the origins of the QA policy, which started more than a decade ago in Thailand. Secondly, documents helped to identify the institutions and individuals who have been involved in the making of the policy. The bulk of policy documents helped me map out the key policymakers in Thailand who have been actively involved in QA policy and Thai higher education. Not only have the individuals been identified, but I was able to understand their initial perspectives. The third benefit of document analysis was that it provided direct quotations and increased the clarity. Given the IRB requirement that prohibits referencing the sources, document analysis provided necessary quotes from key participants and helped to enhance the accountability and credibility of the research. Unlike interviews or surveys, documents exist prior to the requests of the researchers. Lastly, the researcher did not have to intrude or influence the creation of the documents (Bryman, 2004).

It is important to ascertain the quality of varied documents being used in this research. For social research, there are various types of documents to work with. Accordingly, Scott (1990) differentiates documents into personal versus official documents. For the latter, he further distinguishes them into state versus private documents. Scott argues that four criteria must be met to ascertain the quality of the documents: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning. Authenticity refers to the genesis and origin of a document. Credibility questions whether the document is free from error and distortion. Representativeness is the extent to which the document is typical of its kind. Meaning refers to the readability, clarity, and comprehensiveness of the document. These four criteria were very useful in judging the quality of documents that I dealt with during the fieldwork. Using Scott's criteria, most of the documents were public and official documents rather than personal ones. Even within the public documents, the level of officialdom varied, ranging from the royal decrees, such as the National Education Act of 1999, to organizational/ institutional records and policy

leaflets. University reports and PowerPoint presentations were also used to aid the analysis.

The sampling of the documents was organized into primary and secondary documents. Primary sources refer to the government laws, policy papers, and meeting minutes on QA and higher education. Similarly, the university reports on its QA performance, and university leaflets were significant. Secondary sources included newspapers articles and masters/PhD research on QA. The strategy for selecting these documents was based on purposive sampling for both primary and secondary sources. Similar to the category of policymakers, QA practitioners, and QA users, I differentiated the documents into national policy papers, institutional policymakers, and individual opinion.

In terms of primary sources at the national level, I selected government laws and regulations directly responsible for the emergence of QA. Furthermore, I spent countless hours at the information section at the Office of Higher Education Council and the library of the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) to obtain necessary documents. The key criteria for selection of each document were (1) their relevance to QA and higher education in Thailand, and (2) inclusion of key policymakers' interviews.

At the institutional level, I requested self-assessment reports from all the universities being studied. Given that most of the universities had uploaded their self-assessment reports on their websites, these were convenient to access. Masters theses and PhD dissertations were important sources for this research. In fact, these theses and dissertations helped enormously in identifying necessary documents. Firstly, I selected the theses and dissertations based on the keywords of (1) quality assessment/assurance in Thailand, and (2) higher education. Secondly, I reviewed their bibliographies to see what types of documents were used in their research. Thirdly, based on the titles included in the bibliographies, I searched for these documents and made photocopies for further

analysis. Numerous documents were thoroughly selected, coded, and analyzed to address the two research questions. These documents included:

- The National Education Act 1999
- Office of Higher Education Commissions Royal Decree on Internal Quality Assurance
- Office of National Educational Standard and Quality Assessment (ONESQA Royal Decree on External Quality Assessment
- Newspaper articles
- Policy PowerPoints from key policymakers
- Speeches from key policymakers
- Government-funded research reports
- PhD research on QA in Thailand (Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University)
- University self-assessment reports & policy leaflets
- Articles on websites by academics regarding their responses on the QA/TQF policies
- Newspaper articles and opinion editorials
- Academic PowerPoints

Newspapers articles were used extensively in this research. Siriyuwasak (2005, cited in Salathong, 2011) differentiates types of newspapers into five categories: content, readership, publication, geography, and size.⁹ Since not all newspaper represent identical views, political standpoints, or perspectives (Bryman, 2004), I designed the newspaper search as follows. Firstly, I selected three newspapers: Matichon, The Nation, and Daily News. The selection of these three newspapers aimed at encapsulating various types of

⁹Siriyawasak (2005) differentiates Thai newspapers into five categories. Content: popular VS quality, readership: mass VS elite, publication: daily VS weekly, geography: National, Local VS community, Size: boardsheets VS tabloid.

audiences and readers in Thailand. While Matichon is comprised of critical editorials, Daily News is a broadsheet. In terms of educational issues, Matichon provides the most analytical view against the autonomous university movement in Thailand, while Daily News is mostly descriptive in nature. The Nation is the largest English circulation newspaper in the country and often discusses Thai educational policy in relationship to other countries in the region. Table 3.3 summarizes the characteristics of these three newspapers.

Table 3.3: Characteristics and Circulations of Three Newspapers¹⁰

Newspapers	Circulation	Characteristics
Matichon	830,000	-Quality, elite, daily and weekly, national and broadsheet
Daily News	850,000	-Popular, mass, daily, national and broadsheet
The Nation	68,200	- Quality, elite, daily, national/ regional, broadsheet

Source: Author

Secondly, I scoped down keywords and typed them into the search engines. These keywords, which encapsulate the issues of higher education reform and quality policies in Thailand, are:

1. Quality assessment/ assurance
2. Autonomous university policy, privatization
3. International ranking
4. International standards, ASEAN Economic community,
5. Thailand Qualification Frameworks,
6. Quality, Excellent.

Thirdly, I focused on lengthy and opinion-editorial articles. These articles often contained basic information as well as editors' viewpoints on the policy. In terms of

¹⁰Author adapted from Siriyawasak (2005, cited in Salathong, 2011).

language, I did these in both Thai and English. I targeted weekday articles as well as weekend editorials. While the weekday articles were more descriptive, the weekend articles provided more editorial perspective. These articles were essential to the overall analysis of QA policy in Thailand. Fourthly, I scoped the timing of the searching process between 1990 and 2010, a period in which the issue of quality and internationalization of Thai higher education became an important policy debate. Newspaper analysis was essential to encapsulating longitudinal perspectives on the trajectory of quality policies in Thailand.

3.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with policymakers and other stakeholders were necessary and strategic to this research. This method provided ample freedom to ask and probe relevant questions with the interviewees, who were considered the experts on QA policy in Thailand. Interviewing policy experts has also been called "elite interviewing." Two major characteristics are associated with elite interviewing. On the one hand, elite interviewing rests on the assumption that the interviewees are policy experts who have more knowledge and information on an issue than the interviewer. In his pioneer work on Elite Interviewing, Dexter (2006) argues that the selection of elite interviewees depends on the fact that "they are the only expert on; and often they are the only person to know specific information on a particular issue or topic" (p. 5). On the other hand, elite interviewing is associated with people with power in the policy process. Walford (1994) described elite interviewing as a process of researching up, which attempts to "investigate the ways of working of those with power" in educational situations (p. 3). However, it is worthy to note that there are a multitude of people in the policy process. Hence, there are differing actors with unequal power, resources, and knowledge on a given policy.

Selecting semi-structured interviews had four benefits. Firstly, interviewing key policymakers provides an in-depth information that might not otherwise be available in

print. Secondly, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to ascertain or refute existing literature and theory. Thirdly, interviewing policy elites reveals the existence of policy networks, how they interact and maintain their power. Fourthly, it is a gateway to exploring the belief systems and values of the powerful who govern education policy.

3.2.2.1 Sampling Strategy for the Interviewees. The sampling strategy in selecting policy experts is based on maximum variation sampling (Tagg, 1985, cited in Seidman, 2006). According to Seidman (2006), the objective of this sampling strategy encapsulates a comprehensive and total understanding of the issues. Each individual was also selected based on their direct responsibility and experiences. This research categorized the interviewees into three broad categories: policymakers and advisors, QA practitioners, and QA users. Each category has been involved in QA from differing levels of power and the decision-making process. Hence, they provided differing insights into QA policy in Thailand. Based on their power in the policy, policymakers and advisors refer to senior bureaucrats, policymakers, and advisors who have been responsible for visiting other countries, introducing the policy in Thailand, and drafting QA-related laws and regulations. Based on longitudinal analysis, these people have been involved with QA policy since its inception. The second group are QA practitioners—individuals who have direct responsibility to conduct, monitor, and write QA reports. Most of these individuals are working at universities. While the selection of the first group of interviewees was purposive and based on their individual involvement in the policy formulation of QA, the selection of the second group was based on their official titles at the university level. The third group of interviewees were QA users such as university executives and academics. The sampling strategy for each individual is a combination of purposively sampling and snowballing. As mentioned, most of the individuals were identified by their direct involvement in the policy through official titles, based on document analysis and exploratory review of websites. Many others were chosen based on introduction by the insiders of the policy circle.

Table 3.4 The Interviewees into Three Categories.

Positions	Numbers
Policymakers and Advisors	33
QA Practitioners	14
QA Users	32
Total	80

Source: Author

Most have been involved with the two important organizations: Office of Higher Education Commission and ONESQA. Two experts working in international and regional organizations were also interviewed. Their offices were based in Bangkok. The QA practitioners and QA users were working within the selected universities in both Bangkok and the other three provinces. Table 3.5 further differentiates policymakers and advisors based on their organizations and positions.

Table 3.5: Overview of the Government Executives and High Level Advisers

Positions	Numbers
Politicians	1
High level bureaucrats and board members of the Office of Higher Education Commission	7
Mid level officials at the Office of Higher Education Commission, Office of Education Council Ministry of Education	4
Retired officials	9
Officials from the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA)	8
Representatives from International Organizations (UNESCO and SEMEAO)	4
Total	33

Source Author

While Table 3.4 outlines the overview of the participants involved in policymaking processes, Table 3.5 differentiates the interviewees by their institutional positions.

Despite the exponential growth of private higher education institutions in Thailand (Welch, 2011), public institutions have been and remain at the center of higher education development in Thailand. Therefore, this research focuses on differing types of public institutions in Thailand. They can be identified as three different types: the traditional public university, the autonomous university and the newly upgraded Rajaphat.

Table 3.6: Interviewees from Various Public Institutions

Public Universities	Executives	Administrators	Academics	Total
Thammasat University	1	2	3	6
Prince Songkla	2	2	6	10
Autonomous University				
Suranaree	1	2	1	4
Chulalongkorn	1	1	3	5
Chiang Mai	2	3	5	10
Rajaphat University				
Suan Dusit	1	1	1	3
Chiang Mai	1	1	1	3
Songkla	1	1	1	3
Total	10	14	23	46

Source: Author

The three tables above illustrate differing levels of actors interviewed in this research. Although they were categorized into discrete identities, each of them held multiple roles across institutions. These tables are only intended to provide overall information.

Differing interviewing questions and techniques were deployed during the fieldwork. Semi-structured interviews provided ample room for freedom and flexibility to probe with questions that were appropriate to each interviewee. Interviews with senior bureaucrats and policy elites were more conversation-driven. I tailored the interview guidelines to probe into their personal contribution, involvement, and views on QA policy

in Thailand. Since the interviewees were purposefully chosen, it was essential to let the interviewees share their beliefs and personal experiences. On the other hand, the interviews with the university administrators and academics were more standardized. At these levels, three sets of questions were asked. Firstly, I probed the origin of QA policy in their institutions by asking questions about how, when, and why QA policy entered their universities. Secondly, I was interested in the descriptive processes of QA, its implementation and difficulties. Thirdly, interview questions were asked about how the interviewees perceived and responded to an introduction of QA policy in their workplace.

Table 3.7: Interview Guides

Research Questions	Selected Sample of the Interviewees	Interview Guides
Research Question 1: Why did a global quality policy resonate in Thailand?	Policymakers and Advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When did you hear about QA? - Which countries were used as the model for Thailand? - When did the term begin to circulate in policy circles in Thailand? - Who were the main advocates of QA? Were there any opponents? What was their rationale? - What problems in Thai Higher Education necessitated QA? - What has been your involvement in the policy? - What were the quality mechanisms for introducing QA in Thailand? - What are the similarities and differences between QA model from elsewhere and QA model in Thailand? • What are your thoughts about QA? What are the benefits and limitations? • How have you evaluated the success of the policy? Has QA in Thailand met the stated objectives? Why?

Table 3.7 (continued)

Research Questions	Selected Sample of the Interviewees	Interview Guides
Research Question 2: How was QA introduced, implemented and interpreted in Thailand's higher education sector?	QA Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the objectives of doing QA? - When did your university begin implementing QA? - What were the academic responses to QA? - Was there any resistance or objections? - How did you try to introduce and implement QA in your university? - What were the differences between QA and the previous quality mechanism?
	QA Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you think of QA policy? - What do you think are the objectives of the policy? - Have the objectives been met? - What are the benefits and limitations of QA?

Source: Author

3.2.2.2 Access, Hierarchy, and Formality. Several important issues arose during the interviewing process. The major problem with elite interviewing was gaining access to the interviewee who has a high profile and a tight schedule. This was even more problematic in Thailand where its hierarchical structure and senior-based society create a structural bottleneck. The standard procedure of sending formal letters to the organization and waiting for their response often took a long period of time. To exemplify the bureaucratic structure that inhibits access to the interviewees, it took approximately one to three months to secure some interviews. In one instance, a senior bureaucrat from the Office of Higher Education Commission postponed the meeting a several times. On the day of the interview, I waited more than an hour before she arrived. Another example that elucidates this structural impediment was when I had to overlook regular procedures and resort to asking a senior politician to hand-carry my request to my potential interviewee.

A conceptualization of the strategies used to gain access to potential interviewees provides an insightful perspective into the hierarchal and closed structure of Thai society. Three important criteria ascertained successful access to Thai policy elites. Firstly,

personal connections were needed. Even though I did not know most of the interviewees myself, I needed to find a middle person, someone on the inside of that organization or network, to open the doors for me. Given that I had established contacts with a few individuals during the exploratory phase of the research, these individuals introduced me to their colleagues. While some called and scheduled the interviews for me right after our interviews, others provided me with the contact information, such as mobile numbers and email addresses, of the potential interviewees. They also allowed me to use their names to establish initial contact with the interviewees. Not only did this personal and informal way of communicating help me with the bureaucratic apparatus, but it also helped to create trust and rapport with the interviewees when the appointments were secured.

Secondly, the relationship between the referee and the interviewee. If the referee was more senior than the potential interviewee or they were colleagues of close ranks, the access was much more straightforward. When senior policymakers introduced me to potential interviewees, I was able to obtain access promptly and more conveniently. Some policymakers were flexible, allowing interviews between their important meetings, in hotel lobbies or at their homes. There were many instances where I began interviewing the superior in the organization and they then introduced me to others in their line of command. Given that the structure is heavily hierarchical, many mid-level and junior policymakers in the Office of Commission of Higher Education (OHEC) and the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) even refused to be interviewed without the permission of their superiors. They were anxious about the interviews. At one time, I was having lunch with a group of individuals from the OHEC responsible for QA. When I asked them to informally share their experiences in QA policy, they were very nervous. They refused to answer and deferred to their superiors as a better source of information. One person told me in confidence: "We are just junior officials. We do whatever we are told and what we think of the policy does not matter. If

you want to understand the policy or big picture, you should ask senior bureaucrat, our boss" (personal conversation February 4, 2011).

The importance of personal relationships and social ranking elucidated the differences between policy research in Western countries and in Thailand. Based on his experience in a Western setting, Seidman (2006) argues that it is more preferable to establish access with one's "peers" rather than contacting "people above or below ... in the hierarchy" (p.46). Although top-down access is not advised in Western settings, it is essential in Thailand. Given that many interviews were conveniently confirmed by personal phone, it would be difficult to interview as many senior policymakers as I did had I not had these personal connections.

A third important feature in gaining access to expert interviews is the researcher's credentials. Although different referees helped me acquire access to potential policymakers, there is a striking similarity in how they introduced me. Similar to the letter of introduction I sent to the organizations and individuals, all my referees referred to my position as (1) a PhD candidate at Columbia University, and (2) a recipient of the Anandamahidol scholarship. These two facts were mentioned by all referees, introducing me rather than my research. Given that the Anandamahidol scholarship is under the royal patronage of King Bhumibol, the scholarship is deemed highly privileged and often receives public coverage. The scholarship became an essential aspect of discussion at the beginning of many of the interviews. I was constantly praised or questioned by the interviewees based on this identity alone, reinforcing how Thai society functions based on hierarchy and personal connections.

3.2.2.3 Interviewees vs Informants. Even though I gained access to senior policymakers, it can be argued that many of those interviews were coated with high-level formality and official discourse. As will be discussed, the limitation of elite interviewing is that the interviewees are well aware of their public positions and "well versed in controlling any information they provide" (Walford, 1994, p. 5). It was evident in many

interviews that the interviewees were self-censoring and rejected honest responses to the interview questions and guides. In the case of Thailand, Nilphan (2005) argues that the protection of self-image and the fear of losing face were the main features characterizing the policy setting. Based on these structural bottlenecks, the role of key informants must be stressed. They provided critical insights into the process, policy, and the people involved. Dexter (2006) differentiates informants from interviewees because of two factors: participation and timing (p. 20). Unlike interviewees, an informant is able to spend more time with the researcher and provide more information. According to Dexter, informants can be defined as follows:

individuals who have not only proved themselves well informed and well connected, have demonstrated a capacity to adopt the standpoint of the investigator. Informing him of rumors and coming events, suggesting secondary informants, preparing the way, advising on tactics and tact, securing additional data on their own. (p. 20)

Fortunately, I worked closely with eight eminent informants throughout data collection and data analysis. Each was an expert and insightful actor in the realm of Thai higher education. The eight informants included: (1) a former rector of a public university, (2) an ex-officio of the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC), (3) a mid-level bureaucrat from the Office of National Education Council, (4) a science professor from an autonomous university, (5) a humanities professor from an autonomous university, (6) a social science professor from a public university, (7) a midlevel official from the regional organization responsible for QA in the Asia-Pacific region, and (8) a mid-level official in ONESQA.

The benefits of having trustworthy informants during data collection as well as data analysis were enormous. During data collection, each informant provided ample time for the interviews. In fact, the time spent with the informants is best characterized as conversation rather than interview. It was more flexible, critical, and longer than standard interviews. As well as spending several hours with some informants, I returned to them

more than once for information and clarification. Not only did they clarify the “norms, attitudes, expectations and evaluations” of the situation being studied (Dexter, 1970, p. 20), but their positions as the insiders to differing institutions helped secure the interviewees from various actors. These eight informants were in fact my referees. They felt comfortable with my research and were confident introducing me to their colleagues and networks. Given that each of the eight worked at different organizations and in diverse roles, their personal connections helped obtain varying interviewees. The role of the ex-officio of the OHEC was eminent in this research and should be noted. Not only did she allow me to follow her to observe QA workshops; she personally introduced me to other officials inside the Commission. Given that she has played a key role in introducing, implementing, and critiquing QA policy in Thailand, having her support was enormously helpful throughout the process. Informants were also essential in identifying emergent patterns and themes.

I consulted with the informants throughout the fieldwork and data analysis. By discussing the emergent themes with them, I was able to validate my viewpoints and form early arguments. The informants helped me interpret the data from their viewpoints, hence increasing the conceptual validity on the interpretation of the data. The roles of the informants were critical to clarify and provide an honest perspective on the topics. This issue will be further discussed in the data analysis section. Developing a close relationship with the key informants has been invaluable to the data analysis and write-up. This reinforces Walford's (1994) perspective on the beneficial role of key informants in policy research, especially when the topic is controversial and "fiercely contested" (p. 4). Such is the case of the quality policies in Thailand.

3.2.3 Observation at ONESQA

During nine months of fieldwork in Thailand, I spent three months as an intern at ONESQA. The internship took place from October to December 2010. The objective of

the internship was to understand the processes of how QA policy is developed. I also aimed to acquire an inside perspective into the organization, explore the voices of the policymakers, and observe their policy routines in order to develop a holistic understanding. According to Fitz and Halpin (1994), a request to observe policymakers in their workplace is rare. They argue: "It would be unlikely they would agree to any intensive or long-term observationally based investigation. It was unlikely, we believed, that any request to observe policy-makers at work over an extended of time would be granted. We know of no studies of this kind" (p. 35).

Being aware of the potential difficulties of an extended research, I kindly requested my informant from the Office of National Education Council to contact the Director of ONESQA and informally introduce me. Subsequently, the Director requested a formal letter stating my research interest be sent by my supervisor, Professor Gita Steiner-Khamsi, to ascertain my research questions and intention to intern. Although the Director informally agreed to an internship, it took more than three months for the formal decision to accept my request. Then I was placed at the Higher Education Task Force. There were five people on this task force, whose main responsibilities were to: (1) create indicators for the external assessment, (2) prepare the meeting agenda for the Higher Education Board members, which meets once every month, and (3) communicate with the higher education institutions across the country.

3.2.3.1 Access and Sensitivity. The timing of the internship was timely and yet highly political. Given that ONESQA was preparing for the Third Round of External Quality Assessments as well as the Ten-Year Anniversary of its establishment, the internship was happening at the right time. Interning there enabled me to observe the working processes of ONESQA and how the organization and its staff prepared for the event. Since ONESQA invited all the stakeholders to attend the nation-wide academic conference to commemorate its anniversary, I was able to listen, learn, and reflect on how

the organization and others perceived its decade-long experiences. I was given a pass to all the meetings. From this vantage point, it was an advantage to be an intern.

My internship was not as smooth as anticipated. In fact, it was politically volatile. After eight years of directorship, the former director finished his term at ONESQA and the new director had only recently succeeded. The changing of power at the executive level of the organization created not only a power vacuum, but internal political struggles. The internal politics of ONESQA were hot issues in the national newspapers, and court cases against both the old and new directors abounded. This ongoing conflict intensified the pressure and tension in conducting qualitative research. In the beginning, all the people inside the organization were very sensitive, secretive, and protective of how they responded to my informal questions and even my presence. Although the Higher Education Task Force presented a working plan for my three-month internship, the plan did not materialize. I was not given any responsibilities. Furthermore, it was bureaucratically difficult to attend the Higher Education Board meetings that took place once a month. Although I was informed that other interns were granted access to these meetings, it took a lot of time for my request to be granted. I needed to write a formal letter requesting the Director's permission. When I asked other policymakers why it was such an issue, one of them expressed her concerns: "Even though there are many problems in this organization, you are an outsider and we have to be aware of what we say to you. We do not have the power to control what you see and will write" (informal conversation, November, 17 2010).

While some people warmly welcomed me and were open to being interviewed, the overall ambience and internal resistance to the new director made it a difficult three months experience. Furthermore, the organization was heavily divisive depending on people's opinion of the directorship. Any questions regarding policy and policy change were perceived as an evaluation of the old and new director. It became more about personal opinions of individuals rather than the overall organization. I did gain more trust

toward the end and felt more comfortable with others. When I reflect on this difficult time, it can be argued that my experience was not unique. Whitty and Edwards (1994) show that the advocates of a policy can feel threatened by research and hence resist any type of scrutiny, which might not sit comfortably with their side.

3.3 Thematic Analysis

Nine months of fieldwork generated an enormous amount of qualitative data to analyze. These data included primary and secondary documents, interviews, and field notes. I deployed thematic analysis as a method to analyze differing qualitative data for this dissertation. Braun and Clark (2006) define thematic analysis “as a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 6). It is a useful analytical lens, allowing flexibility and freedom for data analysis. At the same time, it allows the researcher to encapsulate the richness, depth, and complexity of the data in full range. According to Braun and Clark, thematic analysis is based on six phases: familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Although the reality of data analysis was less than the linear process identified by the six stages, these six steps to thematic analysis did provide a useful and systematic way to encapsulate the messiness and dynamics of the process. The paragraphs below illustrated differing analytic activities that occurred throughout the six steps of thematic analysis.

3.3.1 Familiarizing Yourself with the Data

The first step to data analysis was to familiarize myself with the large amount of data. I began to re-organize the documents into different subject files, transcribe the interviews, and type up the field notes. This process allowed me to prepare clearer and cleaner texts for subsequent data analysis. Furthermore, data filing and data organization

provided opportunities for me to familiarize myself with the data and capture the preliminary trends and overviews. The process of data organization differed amongst documents, interview transcripts, and field notes. The passages below capture this process in greater depth.

Documents: I differentiated and labeled all the documents into different groups and organized them in different folders based on their hierarchy: national policy, institutional, and individual. The national policies include laws, regulations, and newspaper articles. Institutional documents refer to self-assessment reports and university papers regarding QA. The individual documents include academic responses to QA. The documents were grouped, then read and highlighted using differing colored post-it notes. Newspaper articles were grouped into differing issues, such as QA, privatization, Higher Education reform, National Education Reform. By doing a preliminary cataloguing, I was able to grasp differing themes and topics in various types of documents. This stage was useful for further analysis of the research.

Interview transcriptions: Key interviews from the state-level players, QA practitioners, and QA users were transcribed to get the breadth and depth of the conversation. I fully transcribed 45 interviews. The interviews were typed in Thai in order to maintain the voices of the interviewees. Although it is preferred to have a verbatim transcription, I was not able to do it for every interview due to time constraints. For every one hour of interview, it took more than 6 to 8 hours to fully transcribe the verbatim interviews. Each interview covered approximately 15-20 pages. Given the limitations of time, I only transcribed the key concepts and quotes. Furthermore, I relied on extensive note-taking to summarize the key concepts of each interview.

Field notes: There were 12 notebooks in total. These field notes were comprised of descriptions of the events or interviews, my reflections and preliminary analysis of the interviews, or the observations taken throughout data collection. Taking extensive notes was not optional; rather Lofland (1971) purports that field notes are the “raison d’être” for

being in the field. If the researcher does not take extensive notes, he/she “might as well not be in the setting” (p. 102). Notes, including my summary of each interview and its key themes, were typed up as the first step in data analysis. Producing clean texts was more useful than scribbles in field note books, and it allowed me to go back and forth, and cut and paste these texts during differing stages of the analysis. Other notes were highlighted and color coded for future reference.

3.3.2 Generating Initial Codes

The process of generating initial codes happened right after each interview concluded from the extensive notes I had taken. This process of listing key codes from each interview enabled me to identify potential areas of focus for the next interviews. It also served as a process of summary prior to the full transcription of the interviews. This process of generating initial coding happened again once I had transcribed the interviews. This time the coding became more extensive, thorough, and detailed. I coded manually by putting key words in the margin next to the transcription. The line-by-line coding allowed me to further familiarize myself with the transcriptions as well as identify the contexts, topics, and setting of each interview. The benefit of conducting line-by-line coding also includes the opportunity to capture the essence of each data source in their own voice. The codes came from the data itself. Another way of looking at line-by-line coding was data indexing. At this stage, I was able to list out all of the codes that emerged from the data. I created a list of codes for each interview. This helped to summarize the content of each interview as well as aid in the comparison across interviews and data sources. Each data source, i.e., document, field note, or interview transcript, was coded separately. The process of initial coding was extensive. I had to work closely with the interviews’ transcripts in order to elicit the essential messages from differing voices.

3.3.3 Searching for Themes

The lists of codes generated from the initial coding stage helped enormously in identifying the themes and patterns in the interviews and documents. All the individual codes that were created in the first stage of open coding were re-organized. I identified broad themes and concepts that would capture the essence of the concurrent codes and patterns of thoughts from the data. For example, themes such as policy objectives, policy context, and policy actors were identified. I used these themes as headings in the Word file and cut all the relevant quotes that were related to each code into the same pages. A two-dimensional matrix was created in Microsoft Word to map out all the codes, broad themes, and the initials of the interviewees. Similar codes were grouped for constant comparison and data organization.

3.3.4 Reviewing the Themes

The themes were reviewed and re-organized as the data analysis progressed. At this stage, it became more apparent that some themes were more prominent than others. After sorting all the interview data according to each thematic matrix, I grouped all similar viewpoints with one another. Simultaneously divergent viewpoints were identified and acknowledged in a different matrix for further analysis. Again this matrix was enormously useful for the constant comparison of voices and viewpoints from differing stakeholders in the thesis. It must be noted that while the codes came from the data, the themes were both the products of the data as much as theoretical concepts. For example, under the main theme of policy rationale, I used concepts such as globalization, regionalization, and national contexts to organize the relevant quotes and codes to them. This process enabled me to re-organize and re-structure the codes into a hierarchy. This stage helped me understand the similarities and differences between the official policy documents vis-à-vis individual responses or participant observations. I was able to compare responses from elites at the center of government to those voices at the institutional levels. Constant comparison also encourages the comparison between codes

and theory (Olesen, Drose, Chico, & Schatzman , 1994). The constant comparative method is useful to highlight multiple levels and perspectives from a multitude of actors and data sources.

3.3.5 Defining and Naming the Themes

During the data analysis, Professor Gita Steiner-Khamsi guided me in selecting the 10 most eminent themes emerging from the data and writing a two-page synopsis of their content. While working with the codes and re-organizing the themes into the matrix was helpful in understanding the overview of the data, writing the two-page synopsis pushed me to articulate the data in a significant way. This process required me to re-read the themes thoroughly and create short paragraphs to encapsulate each theme. I sent the synopsis to the informants to validate the analysis and selection of the themes. By selecting the 10 most eminent themes emerging from the data, many themes were dropped as a result. This process enabled me to sharpen the analysis and re-prioritize issues.

3.3.6 Producing the Report

The production of the report was essential in enabling me to understand the data more clearly and more comprehensively. The ten themes emerging from the data were then re-organized into chapters, which then became the titles of each section. This reorganization helped me develop a deeper understanding of the subjects and their relationship to one another. Once the first draft of the report was completed, I received significant insights and comments from Professor Steiner-Khamsi and Professor Kevin Dougherty. The comments and questions raised by my supervisor and second reader provided helpful guidance to think through each theme, argument, and theoretical contribution of the dissertation. The revision process lasted more than six months from the moment the first draft was completed until the present manuscript.

3.3.7 Data Validation

Data validation was not included in Braun and Clark's (2006) six steps to thematic analysis. However, it is a significant process in data analysis. Throughout the data analysis, I had numerous opportunities to share my thoughts and the emergent themes with the informants. They provided invaluable insight into my interpretation of the themes and enabled me to validate the initial findings of the research. Furthermore, I had two opportunities to present my initial findings to groups of interviewees involved in the research. The first one was at an International Conference on Thai Higher Education, on the 24th of August 2011. The conference was attended by more than a hundred academics from all of the major institutions in Thailand. More than ten of the participants had been my interviewees. Hence, the presentation enabled me to share my initial findings and arguments with the research participants. Both proponents and discontents of the policy were there. It was an ideal opportunity to present the research findings and receive their insight and feedback. During this conference, I focused on the main question of the research, which was why the global education policy resonated in Thailand as well as the logic of the Thai states in implementing these policies. This was an invaluable experience to be able to validate my analysis with the interviewees as well as other stakeholders in Thai higher education.

The second opportunity was a policy workshop organized at the Thailand Development Research Institute. At this workshop, I focused on the question of intended and unintended consequences of the quality policies in Thai higher education. The key informant of this research also participated in the workshop, as did other researchers from the Ministry of Education. During the two-hour workshop, I was able to discuss in depth with the group the emerging themes from the interviews. Their questions and reflections were well noted and included in the research analysis. These opportunities were enormously helpful in ascertaining and validating my findings.

This research relied on Denzin and Lincoln's (2003) concept of “data triangulation” in order to ascertain the internal validity of the analysis. As a qualitative case study enables the researcher to collect different types of data, in this research, I collected data from documents, interviews, and observation notes. Methodologically speaking, this was designed to maximize the strength of the case study by incorporating multiple observations and data sources (Yin, 1994). The strength of each was helpful in rectifying any weakness of the other. Therefore, by combining the three, I was able obtain necessary data to address the research questions. For example, document analysis was an effective method to trace the policy from its inception without the data intruding. Bryman (2004) argues that documents, unlike interviews and surveys, are not created upon request of the researcher. More importantly, documents such as official policies or newspapers helped to encapsulate policy contexts and identify key policy elites in the process, while semi-structured interviews allowed more flexibility and freedom to direct questions to relevant policymakers or those who are involved. This enabled me to capture individual/organizational perspectives and contrast them with the official discourse. By combining these three methods, I was able to maximize the benefits of each data source and mitigate overall limitations that each method yielded. A detailed discussion on the rationale and sampling strategy of each method will be further outlined under the data collection subsection.

In terms of external validity, the selection of the individuals and institutions involved in the data collection process was purposeful in encapsulating a complex picture of the Thai higher education system. The individuals were selected to encompass different levels of policy process from the introduction and implementation of QA. According to Clark's (1983) Triangle of Coordination, the selection of the 80 interviewees also aimed to include all important voices of higher education policymaking: the state, the market, and the academics. While no students or parents were included, newspaper articles have been used to represent the general market views

of QA. Furthermore, the selection of institutions studied in this research was also intended to capture differing dynamics and diversity within public higher education institutions in Thailand. Hence, they are representative of research-driven public higher education institutions in Thailand.

3.4 Reflection and Limitations

Having reflected on the experience of the field work, several patterns, clashes, and conflicts deserve further explanation. Amongst these I identified the clash between paradigms, conflicting purposes, and structural hierarchy as the major issues to be discussed for qualitative policy research in Thailand.

The experience in the field reveals that quantitative methodology dominated the research scene in Thailand, especially in the field of education. As aforementioned, major researchers on QA and higher education in Thailand have been using quantitative methodology. Furthermore, the personnel responsible for QA policy are mostly trained in quantitative methodology and hence favor this over qualitative methods. Throughout the nine months in the field, I was constantly questioned by senior policymakers, academics, and QA practitioners about my methodology. Not only were they doubtful about my research; they also tried to persuade me to include quantitative methodology in my design. To exemplify, the most frequent questions asked of me during my fieldwork were: What are your hypotheses? What is your contribution to QA policy in Thailand? What is your methodology? What is your model?

Similar resistance was found during my internship at ONESQA. I was not given any responsibilities while interning at the Higher Education Task Force. The few temporary tasks given to me were related to translation and the English language. When I asked the team leader what I could do for them, one of the seniors said: “It is very hard to give you any responsibilities. You are not familiar with quantitative and database” (personal comment during the internship, November 2010). The domination of

quantitative was overwhelming. The educational background of these individuals explained their bias. When analyzing the profiles of the policymakers in ONESQA, many received BA and MA degrees from the Research Department of the Education Faculty, Chulalongkorn University, where quantitative and statistical methodologies were prioritized. Furthermore, a lot of the academics and administrators responsible for QA have been trained in the engineering and scientific fields. Given that QA requires an expertise on data management or information systems, they viewed quantitative data as useful for them.

This issue of methodological differences were problematic throughout the interview process. Four academics resisted interviews based on this issue. They are professors of education and have been represented on the boards of ONESQA since its inception. Given their influential participation in the policy, I sent several requests for interviews to hear their insights on the issues. The formal requests were ignored. Worse, informal contacts from the informant in the field were also rejected. When I approached them personally, one replied: "I am really sorry, this is not my area of expertise" (personal comment, November 2010). The answer is dubious, since the professor has not only been a board member of ONESQA, but she has also advised various research projects related to QA. Another professor furiously responded: "I am not wasting my time in this type of research. You're not really doing scientific research, this is more like you're writing a story or a tale" (personal comment, October 30, 2010). Despite their extensive experiences in the QA field in Thailand, it was obvious that methodological differences were why they avoided this research. These different worldviews between myself and them can be understood as a clash of paradigms. This clash of paradigms continued to be a barrier to research throughout my fieldwork.

Another frequently asked question throughout the fieldwork was "How would your research help to improve the QA system in Thailand?" Although some people doubted my research methodology, I should not undermine the enormous help I received throughout

the fieldwork. I was welcomed by many policymakers, QA practitioners, and academics. However, there was an overt expectation from the interviewees that this research would contribute to improving the QA system. Many people were enthusiastic about my research and willing to share their experiences. Furthermore, they wanted to share with me the problems, mostly technical, of the system. A lot of QA practitioners encouraged me to come up with a new QA model for Thailand. One said, "I am very happy someone is doing this project! There are so many problems about our system. Your research must help us to improve!" (Interview, December 2010). They believed that the findings of this research would help reconcile the mechanical problems of QA policy in Thailand.

Unlike the main objective of this research, which is to analyze the logic of Thai state and academic voices, many hopeful interviewees perceived this research to be another problem-solving type. Although their enthusiasm was useful, their expectation called for some analysis. Research culture and donor logic in Thailand contributed to this clash of expectations and objectives. Given that government agencies play an eminent role in funding research in Thailand, it is argued most people are used to that perspective. Ozga (2008) argues that policy research, which is driven by policymakers, will likely be preoccupied by implementation studies. Therefore, researchers were interested in problem-solving and the implementation of policies rather than critically questioning the nature, philosophy, and logics of the policy.

Thailand is a highly hierarchical society, and the culture of seniority is embedded in the country. While there were many instances where I would have liked to debate with or reject a senior's opinions, I remained quiet in order to appear polite. Sometimes, I felt I was overtly submissive and did not know how to respond to their questions or requests. When I was humiliated, I decided to remain silent rather than defend my research design and rationale. The culture of hierarchy and seniority was most problematic during the interviews. In Thailand, we are taught not to interrupt our elders. Most of the senior policymakers took the liberty of controlling the interviews. Although I had prepared

guideline questions, I failed to follow them on many occasions. I did try to raise my hand and ask them to come back to the issues, however the seniors controlled the tone and direction of the interviews. This created a huge problem for data collection. In many interviews with the most powerful seniors in Thailand, I ended up not getting necessary data but rather sat listening to their achievements.

Although the Thai culture of seniority plays an influential role in this asymmetrical relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, Kogan (1994) points out that such awkwardness is not cultural specific. John Furlong calls this “a ritual humiliation of researcher,” referring to how interviewers in elite settings need to be more modest and pretend to know less than we do in order to avoid conflict with the interviewees (cited in Kogan, 1994, p. 74). Similarly, Ball (1994) argues that the researcher is required to strike a balance between knowledgeable and naïveté during their interviews with the powerful. In my case, the decision to withdraw and remain silent was as much methodological as cultural.

One of the most troubling ethical issues occurred when interviewees constantly questioned my opinion on my research topics. Walford (1994) faced similar problems when he researched the Christian Schools Campaign. Throughout the fieldwork, he was constantly questioned about his religious beliefs. He found it difficult to admit that he did not share similar religious views and maintain trust and rapport with the interviewees. When I had just started, I had the luxury of telling them that I had just begun and was still learning about the topic. It was more difficult to escape the opinion-type questions when I was almost at the end of the fieldwork. I tried to share my opinion without giving away too much by saying something along the line of: “This is a complex issue, I am still trying to make sense of it.” In many instances, the interviewees wanted to know whom I had previously interviewed and what others thought of the topic. While I had to respect the confidentiality of others, I struggled to maintain trust with the present interviewee. At one time, one of the academics really pushed me hard to share my opinion of what other

people thought; I tried my best to keep the balance by responding: "Your question is very difficult. It would be really unethical to share with you his opinion on this and it would make me an action-researcher" (my response during personal interview, December 5, 2010). She persisted and joked that I should make this an action research. I tried not to share my opinion on the issues or that of other interviewees. When I was probed, I responded that there are diverse perspectives on the topic in order to avoid sharing direct information and causing more conflict among the actors.

3.5. Summary

The nine months of fieldwork in Thailand allowed me to realize the interlocking intersections between the research context, cultures, and researcher's identity. Having been educated and influenced by research methodology from Western academics, I constantly questioned my research rationale and sought to identify the discrepancy between theory vs reality on the ground. I argue that the personal experience of researching powerful and personal struggles should be highlighted more than hidden from the readers. The anecdotes are not complaints. Rather, they are critical reflections on the integral relationships between personal relationships, culture, and theory (McPherson & Raab, 1998; Ozga, 1990; Whitty & Edwards, 1994). Whitty (2002) purports that such an awareness is essential in the quest for a quality qualitative research. Influenced by C. Wright Mills's (1961) concept of "sociological imagination," Whitty (2002) aptly argues that it is important to critically create "(an) intersection between biography and history, between identity and structure and between personal troubles and public issues" (p. 15). To be sure, this chapter has been carefully written to link the research experiences, quality policies, and broader context of Thailand. Carnoy (2006) warned against an overt emphasis on the roles and reflection of the qualitative researcher, which can potentially divert attention and focus of the readers from the issues being researched.

Chapter IV

THE TRAJECTORY OF THAI HIGHER EDUCATION: STATE, STRUCTURES, AND SYSTEM

The Tai [Thai] knows how to pick and choose. When they saw some good feature in the culture of other peoples, if it was not in conflict with their own interests, they did not hesitate to borrow it and adapt it to their own requirements. (Prince Damrong Rachanuphat, cited in Peleggi, 2002, p. 12)

The quotation from Prince Damrong, one of Thailand's renowned 19th century historians, reflects how selective borrowing of foreign concepts, cultures, and policy has been an integral part of the formation, evolution, and development of the Thai state. Despite the country's receptiveness to borrowing from external sources or influences, such borrowing must not be “in conflict with their own interests” (Prince Damrong cited in Peleggi, 2002). This is illustrative of how the choice of borrowing often synchronizes with the socio-logic of the borrowing country or sub-system. Although existing literature in studies of the history of Thailand's education system has acknowledged selective borrowing as an integral part of the country's modernization and development. However, they have often viewed the selective borrowing through a normative lens and portrayed it as a successful strategy of Thai elites to weather external imposition, in this case colonization (Fry, 2002a, 2002b; Jungck & Kajornsinsin, 2003; Watson, 1980, 1989; Wyatt, 1969). Even though being the only Southeast Asia country that has not been directly colonized by foreign powers merits some points of celebration (Anderson, 1973; Welch,

2011), more often than not, the normative account of Thai education history has been coated with much historical nationalism.

This chapter attempts to move beyond the normative explanation of selective borrowing as a successful historical maneuver. Rather, it will trace the trajectory of Thai higher education through the analytic lens of policy borrowing and lending. It argues that the selective borrowing of external forces has been used as a political and economic strategy for the survival of the Thai state and the development of Thai higher education. The threat of colonization, American economic assistance, and scandalization of globalization forces are cases in point. By re-examining the historical development of the Thai higher education system, this chapter serves as a foundation that selective borrowing is a historically rooted political and economic strategy of the Thai state. The recent emergence of QA must be understood in conjunction with these other historical developments. This chapter is structured as follows. The first part is an introduction. Secondly, the historical development of the Thai state and its relationship to external forces are discussed. The third part traces the trajectory of Thai higher education through the lens of policy borrowing and lending. The fourth part outlines the current structures of the Thai higher education system.

4.1 Thai State and External Forces

Since its inception, external factors have contributed significantly to the formation and evolution of the Thai state (Kaewmanee, 2007). The literature shows that the formation of Thai bureaucracy was a response to the external threat of that time, colonization. Fearful of being colonized by foreign powers, Thailand began the modernization process in the mid-19th century in the reign of King Rama the Fourth (Kaewmanee, 2007). Harrison (2010) argued that the modernization process in Thailand was considered to be “enforced self-modernization,” with the sole purpose of “appeasing

the west” (p. 13). In fact, it has been argued that Thailand was able to escape direct colonial rule by the West, conditioned upon Thailand’s obligation to undertake the modernization process “in accordance with western standards” (p. 13). These standard reforms included education policy, centralized administration, transportation, and communication systems. Undoubtedly, the implementation of these reforms signifies “an index of progress and, indeed of nation-building” (Peleggi, 2002, p. 5).

In Thailand, modernization has always been equivalent to Westernization. The aspiration of Thailand to become modern or Westernized is a compelling theme throughout the reading of Thai studies. During the height of this period, the Thai court began to hire foreign advisors and send princes to be educated abroad. By 1897, there were as many as 54 British, 20 Danes, 18 Germans, 9 Belgians, and 7 Italians working as the King’s supervisors (Peterson, 2000, cited in Kaewmanee, 2007). These strategies were perceived as the only way for traditional Thailand to be recognized and respected as a civilized nation in the eyes of the Western powers (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009). Not only did administrative reforms resemble Western standards, but Peleggi (2002) also argued that the development of the Thai state paid much attention to a rebranding of aesthetic images, cultures, and especially education. The Thai ruling elites engaged in “emulation-driven acts,” which aimed at imitating Western consumption, culture, and tastes, such as creating Western-style palaces, patronizing Western arts, and adopting Western tastes.

In terms of education, there were dual approaches promoting Westernization and instilling the quest for progress by the ruling elites. On the one hand, the Thai king saw the significance of enrolling royal princes in colleges in the West, mainly the United Kingdom (Peleggi, 2002). On the other hand, there was a movement in Thailand to promote Western-style education. A special modern school was established in the palace. The first modern school in Thailand was called the Civil Service School and was renamed the Royal Pages School in 1899. The investment in Western education is a

significant signifier of Thailand's quest for modernization (Watson, 1980). Several educational initiatives illustrate the relationship between Westernization and Thai education reform.

Throughout the process of modernization, Thai ruling elites overtly highlighted their ability to selectively borrow and promote Western culture (Peleggi, 2002, p. 16). Thai policymakers have highlighted the flexibility of the policy agents to "pick and choose" Western elements to fit their own (Harrison, 2010, p. 15). In fact, selective borrowing and local adaptation have been extensively used in public policies to exemplify the uniqueness of Thai policy elites to become modern while maintaining Thai and Buddhist traditions. It is questionable whether this twin paradox represents a Thai uniqueness or is rather a survival strategy for any adopted policy. Given the lack of manpower and sufficient resources to introduce full-scale Western education and Western policies, selective borrowing has thus provided a convenient argument to justify a halfway adoption.

Modern education became an amalgam of the existing structure with centralized control. For example, although the first school in Thailand resembled the English public school model with the sole objective of training the Thai elites to be equipped with modern ideas (Wyatt, 2003, p. 181), there was a self-conscious decision to create an outer facade and infrastructure that maintained the Thai architectural style (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009). The mixture of Westernization while strengthening Thai traditions was carried out in popular education. Buddhist monks soon became teachers and temples schools for modern education. From an ad hoc process conducted freely by local temples, education became much more formalized and centralized. Temple schools became places for propagating mass education, while all the textbooks and syllabi were developed by the centralized Ministry in Bangkok (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009, p. 202). The compromised and negotiated version of Western perpetuation and Thai values was acknowledged by the reformers. However, the process of adaptation was not

straightforward. In the words of an expert on Thai education, Watson (1980) encapsulated the mixture of the Thai and Western elements in the education system:

A Western, Protestant, urban, competitive, materialistic school system was grafted onto the existing monastic system without any clean attempt being made to define its objectives, either internal or external, nor to consider carefully whether the stated and hidden objectives of the new system were consistent with the needs. (p. 135)

This passage illustrates a conflicting combination of Western culture and Thai structure from the beginning of the modern education system. This unclear plan created a persistent clash and conflicting goals in the Thai education system. Not only have the Thais strived to pick and choose modern cultures, but it is the country's highest aspiration to strike a balance between becoming "modern" and maintaining its Thai-ness. While King Rama the Fourth welcomed American missionaries into Thailand to initiate schooling but rejected conforming with the Christian religion (Watson, 1980, p. 81). During the reign of King Rama the Fifth, he revealed his vision of the future of the country, upholding the highest ideals of Buddhism and Thai values while striving to "measure up with the expectations and standards of the west" (Wyatt, 2003, p. 178). It is during the time of modernization/Westernization that Thailand began reviving and intensifying traditional rituals and convictions in order to express Thailand's cultural identity amidst the aggressive colonization in the region (Peleggi, 2002). The amalgam of Western and Thai values became the foundation of Thailand's strategy to modernize. Peleggi (2002) argued that this characteristic of adopting and adapting foreign influences has been internalized as a "leitmotif" of the Thais' discursive self-image and self-perception (p. 12).

The paradoxical logic of the Thai state is based on its actively and selectively borrowing Western qualities, while trying to reinvigorate "Thai-ness." This paradox is in fact the official national narrative of Thailand's historical development and a recurrent theme throughout discussions on the formation and evolution of the Thai state. On the

one hand, this paradoxical logic is perceived as a positive and successful development policy of the country. It is a convenient and uncritical explanation of Thailand's modernization process, which elevated the roles of agencies to be flexible enough to adopt various modern mechanisms and structures to maintain national identity and independence amidst the growing colonization pressure in the region (Anderson, 1978). Accordingly, Loos (2006) argues that the relationships between Thailand and other imperialist countries were not direct subordination to Western powers; rather it was through mimicry and assimilation with an emphasis on the roles of the agencies to withstand external forces. This has been perceived almost as an axiom and a main narrative of modern Thai discourse (Anderson, 1978).

On the other hand, one can interpret this logic as a weakness of Thailand's development strategy. It can be seen as shorthand for a rushed-through adaptation of Western bureaucracy on top of the traditional society that Thailand was during the 19th century (Wyatt, 2003). Instead of seeing the semi-adoption of the Western model and policies in the traditional society as a failure to develop modern bureaucracy, the Thai elites and intellectuals have created the discourse of Thai-ness, which refers to a unique consolidation of Western models and the maintenance of Thai characteristics, to reconcile the gaps between policy aspiration versus the reality on the ground. One should critically question whether the dominant logic of Thai-ness is a result of unreadiness and a rush to adapt or a triumph of the Thai agencies to respond to modernization and later globalization forces. The argument that Thailand has obtained a unique position, culture, and logic is replete in any discussion on Thailand and its public policymaking. This argument dominates education policymaking to the present day, as will be illustrated.

4.2 Historical Development of Thai Higher Education

This section provides an outline of the key milestones in the Thai higher education system. According to Fry (2002b), there are four phases that signify Thai education reform: the modernization period of Rama the V, the student uprising of the 1970s, globalization and internationalization of the early 1990s, and the National Education Act of 1999. Influenced by Fry's differentiation, the table below encapsulates significant signposts in Thailand's higher education.

Table 4.1: The Trajectory of Thailand's Higher Education

Time	Important Reforms
The Modernization Period (the end of 19th Century -1970s)	1917: Chulalongkorn University established 1930s: Four Specialized Universities in Bangkok established 1950s: The College of Education
Educational Expansion and Equity (1970s onwards)	1960s: Regional Expansion 1969: Private College Act 1970s: Two Open Universities established
Globalization and Internationalization (1990-1996)	1990: First Long Range Plan on Higher Education (Funded by USAID) 1996: Conference on Thai Education in the Era of Globalization 1997: The Asian Economic Crisis (IMF and ADB loans)
The National Education Act (1999 to present)	1999: National Education Reform of 1999 2000: Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) 2003: Autonomous University Act 2005: Second Long Range Plan on Higher Education

Source: Fry (2002b) and Author

These four discrete timeframes provide a useful overview of major changes in Thailand's education sector. However, there is a danger of differentiating education reform by discrete stages. The linearity of the language suggests a continuation and

progress and oversimplifies the process of education policy, which is often complex, continuously contested, and conflicting (Ozga, 2008). Two points will be highlighted in this section. Firstly, the trajectory of Thai higher education continues to face the dilemma of quantitative vs qualitative expansion (Watson, 1980). It will be illustrated that the Thai state struggles to expand quantitative access to higher education, while employing multiple methods to ensure the level of educational quality. Secondly, this section highlights policy interaction between various foreign models and Thai-style adaptation. These issues will be thoroughly discussed to provide a foundation for understanding the development of the system, the role of differing actors, and the key logic of the state in selective borrowing for political and economic purposes.

Although Thailand was not colonized by foreign powers, Altbach (1989) argued that Thai universities were founded upon a variety of foreign influences. From the historical period to the contemporary world, Thai leaders have always “used, adapted and modified foreign ideas” to its existing structure (Watson, 1989, p. 64). Furthermore, Watson persuasively argued that “the Thai have shown themselves to be cultural borrowers par excellence” (p. 64). During the early days of development, French influence was profound. In later days, the United Kingdom and the United States have also had enormous influence on the construction of Thai higher education. Influenced by the UK's administration structure, the university is comprised of differing faculties and a dean is the head of each faculty, thus assimilating the power structure of British higher education. The influence of the US credit system is also the basis of Thai higher education.

Even though foreign models from Western Europe and North America have been influential in the development of Thai higher education, there has been constant adaptation and selective borrowing (Altbach, 1989; Watson, 1989). The Thai higher education system is not isolated from the external pressures of the Thai political economy. Respected civil servants from other departments have also acted as deans,

rectors, and members of university councils (Watson, 1989). Not only have the faculties in Thai higher education been considered civil servants, the student-teacher relationships have also been based on Thai traditional hierarchy and seniority. Watson (1989) argued that it is difficult to clearly distinguish the influences of those countries in discrete categories. The following selections will discuss the trajectory of Thai higher education following Fry's (2002b) four periodic differentiations.

4.2.1 Modernization, Nation Building, and Elitism

Higher education in Thailand has been modeled after Western models and values. During the early days, French and British values dominated the perspective of Thailand's political elites in how to create and structure higher education. Given the dominant role European influence and advisors played in Thailand, Peleggi (2002) persuasively argued that the early period of modernization was the equivalent of "European Periodization." For example, Chulalongkorn, the first university in Thailand, was established in 1917 and was heavily influenced by the French concept of *la grande école* or the great school (Watson, 1980). Unlike other public universities, *la grande école* was founded on the basis of elitism and intended to train high ranking civil servants to serve nation-building (Watson, 1980).

The French concept of the great school went through local interpretation and adaptation by Thai ruling elites. The lack of resources, national politics, and hierarchical structure had significant impact on translating the concept of *la grande école* in Thailand. Firstly, Chulalongkorn University was developed by integrating three existing educational structures into one. These three institutions included the Medical School, the Law School, and the Royal Pages' School founded in 1889, 1897, and 1902, respectively (Watson, 1980). By integrating these three schools into one higher education institution, the Thai ruling elite envisioned a School of Science modeled after the French and German concepts of higher education (Osatharom, 1990). Secondly, the number of seats

available was limited by insufficient resources and determined by the demands of each newly established ministry (Osatharom, 1990). Manpower planning was the key factor determining the number of students being accepted to each faculty. Due to the lack of resources and educated personnel, the exchange of faculties and bureaucrats was common in Thailand. Many bureaucrats from the ministries acted as guest lecturers in many courses. This close-knit relationship between faculties and bureaucratic ministries dominated Thailand's early higher education sector (Osatharom, 1990) and subsequently instilled bureaucratic norms and attitudes inside the university (Nilphan, 2005). The repercussion of such a close relationship between the ministries and the university was that academic values were not prioritized and hence were underdeveloped (Nilphan, 2005).

Political and economic changes were also significant for the higher education sector. In 1932, Thailand went through a regime change from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy. Hence, a second university was established in Bangkok founded on differing ideals and principles. Thammasat University was established in 1934 by the leader of the coup, Pridi Panomyong. The establishment of Thammasat University illustrated the politics of borrowing from a foreign model to serve the political purposes in Thailand. On one hand, the structure of Thammasat imitated the University of London in terms of open access with specializations in Law, Political Science, and Economics (Watson, 1980) and emulated the French idea of having a university council, which is a governing body made up of senior chair holders (Osatharom, 1990). On the other hand, the purposes were driven purely by local political needs. The prime objectives in creating this second university were to create greater access to higher education for the masses and to train a new type of bureaucracy that would favor service to the state rather than to the monarchy (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009, p. 164). Unlike Chulalongkorn, the rationale for creating Thammasat University was to "train a new kind of bureaucrat for the post-absolutist age" (p. 123). Higher education policy has never been isolated from ongoing

political-economic pressures at the national level. Eminent political figures and military leaders became rectors of both Chulalongkorn and Thammasat University as they intended to use higher education to serve political needs, nation building, and modernization, rather than the pursuit of academic excellence. Kedutat (1972) argued the role of Thai universities was to serve as professional schools, training young students for civil service jobs, rather than for research or joining with intellectual communities.

The foreign models, political-economic pressures, and the development of higher education in Thailand were closely linked. These factors featured in the creation of three new universities. After Thammasat was established, specialized universities were created in the Bangkok metropolitan area: Silapakorn (Fine Arts), Mahidol (Medicine), and Kasertsart (Agriculture). The College of Education was opened in 1954. Despite the expansion, the access to and purpose of higher education remained very limited, primarily meant to train the bureaucratic cadre (Sinlarat, 2004). Government education focused on the expansion of primary and secondary education. Hence, budgets available for higher education were limited, resulting in limited spaces for students to access higher learning. By the end of 1960s, approximately 2% of students of university age had access to higher education (UNESCO, 2006). It was also highly inequitable. Only 30% of the applicants successfully passed the competitive entrance examination (Watson, 1980). Undoubtedly successful applicants were required to have extensive educational preparation for the exams. The centralization of education opportunities and limitation of access reinforced the regional and economic disparity of Thailand's national development.

The bureaucratic norms and attitudes were heavily embedded in Thai higher education institutions, and the bureaucracy continued to be the most powerful employer of graduates. Watson (1980) reported that the public sector accounted for 60% employment for university graduates in the mid-1970s. Higher education was the engine behind the creation of this "civil service mystique" (p. 136). The domination of the

bureaucracy reinforced the limited purpose and mission of higher education in Thailand – that is, to serve the bureaucratic apparatus rather than pursue research and development. While Thai elites emulated foreign concepts of higher education, significant variation from the original idea persisted, and ongoing political and economic pressures heavily influenced the formation and implementation of policy. Although six universities were created before 1950, all of them were located in the Bangkok metropolitan area. Access to higher education was limited, centralized, and elitist. Therefore, what constituted quality higher education during this period was driven by bureaucratic rationale rather than by academic excellence.

Phenpinant (2007) argued that “higher education is, for Thai people, utilitarian” (p. 1). It was meant to impart practical skills for the bureaucratic apparatus, professional careers, and a ladder to gain social status. Given the overt utilitarianism principles, there have been several repercussions in the development of the sector up to the present. Furthermore, Phenpinant argued that the utilitarianism principles discouraged the establishment of a Liberal Arts education in Thailand, while others have pointed out that these embedded values within Thai higher education discouraged the pursuit of pure scientific research and theoretically orientated research in social science (Kirtikara, 2004; Wongyannawa, 2010). These exemplify how Western models of higher education were selectively chosen to serve the political purpose of nation-building in Thailand.

4.2.2 National Development and Mass Higher Education

Thailand began to be more receptive to American influences after World War II. The adoption of an American model of higher education epitomized the economics of policy borrowing in Thailand. Between 1966 and 1971, United States military assistance and World Bank development loans accounted for one-third of Thailand’s total public expenditure (Bowie & Unger, 1997, p. 139). During the two decades of American involvement in Thailand, it was estimated that at least 2 billion USD were poured into the

country (Pasuk & Baker, 1998). Not only did loans help to improve military hardware, but US cash and technology also helped expand the Thai bureaucracy. During this period, the total size of Thailand's bureaucracy expanded from 75,000 personnel in 1944 to 250,000 individuals by 1965. According to Harrison (2010), there was "a radical reorientation and reconfiguration of Thai political, economic and cultural relations from Europe to North America" (p. 10). The rationale behind America's increasing involvement in Thailand was based on the proliferation of American power after World War II, increasing attention to preventing the spread of communism and the growing conflict in Vietnam.

The integration of American influences into Thailand's political economy resulted in a significant sea change in Thai public policy since the 1960s onward. Higher education policy was no exception. Between 1960 and 1980, higher education policy in Thailand was an amalgam of American influence, Thailand's socio-political changes, and an increasing openness to international economy. Four factors can be pointed out. First was the coming to power of military dictatorships and the initiation of the five-year National Economic and Social Development Plan (Osatharom, 1990). Those five-year plans began to dictate changes in higher education to serve national development. Secondly, the student and urban middle class quest for democratization resulted in the student uprising of October 1974, begging for more democratic expansion of the system (Fry, 2002b). Thirdly, the increasing American influence in all aspects of the Thai domain was especially evident in the direction of higher education (Osatarom, 1990). Fourthly, the changing political economy in Thailand toward a more open economy by the end of the 1970s to the 1980s required a reconfiguration of higher education to serve the new economy (Kaewmanee, 2007). From being dominated by a military dictator, Thailand from the mid-1970s onward opened doors for other interest groups to enter politics, namely, businessmen, intellectuals, and social activists (Kaewmanee, 2007). The purpose of higher education began to shift from a "bureaucratic mystique" to the fulfillment of a

modern economy. However, the principle of utilitarianism still dominated Thai higher education.

During this period, rapid expansion of higher education was the key feature of Thai higher education. In October 1958, the Regional Educational Development Project including Higher Education (REDPHE) was established, and the expansion of higher education was included in the agenda (Watson, 1980. p. 137). The plan stipulated the need to increase educational opportunities beyond Bangkok. The Thai state deployed multiple policies to expand quantitative access. Firstly, there was an expansion of higher education into differing regional hubs. Up until this period, all five universities were located in Bangkok, and none was located in the provinces. This policy saw a direct integral between external assistance and pressure from the political economy of Thailand. Unlike the specialized universities to fill bureaucratic and ministerial needs in the first period of higher education, new universities were founded on the American concept of a comprehensive university. Three more universities expanded into three different provinces in three regions to accommodate the growing demands for higher education. Chiang Mai, Khon Kean and Prince of Song Kla universities were founded in 1964, 1965, and 1968, respectively (Watson, 1980). At the end of 1972, the number of public higher education institutions rose to ten: six limited admission universities in Bangkok, one Open University in Bangkok, and three comprehensive universities in the regions (Nilphan, 2005). The numbers of tertiary students rose substantially. Between 1961 and 1972, tertiary students were estimated to increase from 18,000 to over 100,000 (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009, p. 185).

The second strategy to increase access to higher education was to welcome in the private sector. Prior to 1969, higher education was limited to state control, and there were only public universities. The Private College Act was promulgated in 1969, enabling private institutions to provide educational services (Watson, 1980). Nevertheless, the government imposed rigid requirements and enforced strict control over all aspects of

private higher education. The third strategy to expand access was to establish Open Universities. Two Open Universities were established: Ramkhamheang and Sukothai Thammatirat. Unlike other higher education institutions, the Open Universities welcomed high school graduates without their having to pass competitive entrance examinations. Modeled after the Open University in the United Kingdom, these two universities were created to respond to the rapid increase in demand for higher education (Watson, 1980). Due to the expansion to regional centers, establishment of Open Universities, and promulgation of Private Education Acts, the numbers in tertiary education in Thailand rose by 20 times (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009). The table below provides the gross enrollment ratio of university students.

Table 4.2: Expansion of Higher Education as Measured by Gross Enrollment Ratios (%)

Country	1965	1975	1985	1995	2000
Thailand	2	4	20	20	32

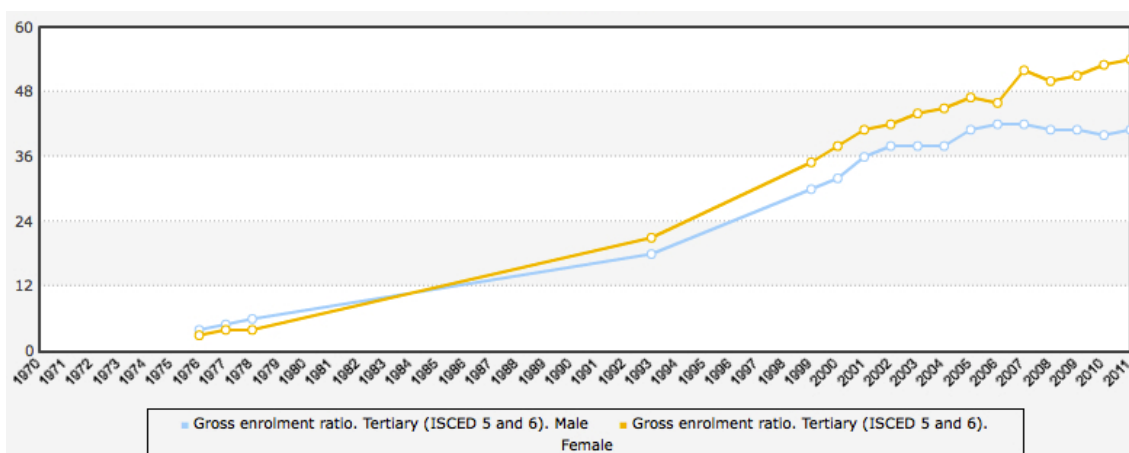
Source: UNESCO, 2006.

The graph in Figure 4.1 (see following page) illustrates the longitudinal pattern of gross enrollment ratios of Thai students to tertiary education by gender.

Beyond expansion of access, the second major change in higher education policy during this period was the move away from bureaucratic structure to the rising needs of the markets. Phongpaichit and Baker (1998) aptly painted the political economy of Thailand during this time: “the ethos of the civil servant has been overwhelmed by the spirit of the marketplace” (p. 6). The expansion of the bureaucracy, which had absorbed the graduates of higher education, ended by the 1980s. It was reported that the annual growth of the bureaucracy plummeted from 10% to only 2%. In contrast, the demand for

white collar workers, engineers, and businessmen grew exponentially. The changing economic landscape of the country contributed significantly to the changing mission of

Figure 4.1: Gross Enrollment Ratio in Higher Education by Gender from 1970 to 2011



Source: Edstats, 2012¹¹

the Thai university. Watson (1989) argued that between 1965 and 1980, the labor force in the industrial sector doubled from 5% to 10%. New industrial sectors began to gain influence in Thailand, including petrochemicals, car assembly plants, engineering, construction, and gas industries (p. 67). The opening of new sectors necessitated new skills for modern industries. Accordingly, new universities and new programs mushroomed. The report from the Office of National Education Commission (1977) outlined the emergence of specific institutes to serve the economy. For example, the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) was the first graduate program in the country. King Mongkut's Institute of Technology had three campuses specializing in architecture, engineering, vocational education, and related sciences. Furthermore, the Institute of Agricultural Technology was established to provide training in the field of agriculture (ONEC, 1977, p. 13).

¹¹Accessed 12th of April, 2012 from: [http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/ TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/EXTDATASTATISTICS/EXTEDSTATS/0,,menuPK:3232818 ~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:3232764,00.html](http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/EXTDATASTATISTICS/EXTEDSTATS/0,,menuPK:3232818~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:3232764,00.html)

Nilphan (2005) argued that this period witnessed a significant shift from state-directed higher education policy to market-directed reform. The role of market demand on Thai higher education can be understood from two strands. On the one hand, the market represents the external demands resulting from the socio-economic change of the country. The change was felt in terms of quantitative expansion and the establishment of new universities and new programs to accommodate the rising needs of the business sector. On the other hand, the market force is understood through increasing internal demands to reform the administrative structure of Thai universities. Since the government promulgated the Private Education Act of 1969, this new legal framework allowed the establishment of privately funded higher education institutions, triggering the state to begin re-thinking its own internal administrative strategies, such as encouraging public universities to seek external funding, increasing internal efficiency and flexibility, and creating self-supporting programs within public universities. Given that most of the universities during that time were founded by state-directed policy, Phongpaichit and Baker (1998) argued the transition of mission and purpose from the demand of the state to that of the market was “ill-prepared” (p. 146). Higher education to train engineers, mechanics, and scientists was not the same as training social scientists. It required well-equipped laboratories and expensive equipment, which were not available to the country overnight. It was imperative to change the mission of Thai higher education to fit economic demands. The domination of the economic principles of Thai educational reform was well captured by Watson (1980):

Whatever specific programs have been outlined there have always been two underlying assumptions on the part of the government authorities about the purpose of education in Thailand, namely that it should perpetuate Thai culture and that it should at the same time provide necessary knowledge and skills to understand and meet the present and future demands of the economy. (p. 139)

The influence of the French and the British became the legacy of things past. Rather than sending students to Europe, the state and private households began to send more to

receive education from the United States. Between 1951 and 1985, at least 1,500 Thai students went to the United States under the Fulbright, Ford Foundation, and other scholarships (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009). The numbers proliferated substantially, and by the 1980s, there were at least 7,000 Thai students in the United States for higher education (Bakere & Phongpaichit, 2009). Given that the Thai elites had been trained for the most part in the Old World, as in Britain and France, sending a new cadre to the United States was seen as a significant shift in both Thai international relations and changing perceptions of the upcoming elites. According to Wongyannava (2010, p .156), not only have the majority of social scientists in Thailand been trained in the United States, but its educational system and social science model have permeated and dominated Thai academics.

As argued earlier, the personal experiences of the policy elites had an enormous impact on policy choice and preference. Based on document analysis and interviews, major educators in Thailand received their higher education from the United States, for example, Dr. Sipanondha Kedutat, Vichit Srisa-An, and Dr. Rung Keawdeang. These men have been prominent bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education and also the Ministry of University Affairs since the early 1970s. Given their educational experiences in the United States, various US education principles and policies were instilled in them. These include lessening the role of the state, increasing private involvement in higher education, and pushing for greater institutional autonomy. In a personal interview with one of the key educators, he recalled his educational experience in the United States as the background of his policy worldview:

Luckily I received such a prestigious scholarship, I was able to do an internship and witness the working process in many of the American schools and regional administrations. Even in a powerful country like the United States, it was obvious that the government cannot do everything. Education has to be decentralized and power for the local and regional offices needs to increase. Look at today, the government still promotes the Charter school so that schools have more quality. (Interview, September 5, 2009)

Two observations emerge from these interviews. Firstly, the key policymakers in Thailand looked to the United States and referred to its educational experiences as a benchmark and a rationale to promote policies. In this case, privatization and decentralization of education were the major mantras of education policy in Thailand. Secondly, they mentioned selectively the positive benefits of these reforms. Either by intent or coincidence, they did not mention how these reforms were resisted in the United States. The selected references to United States policy created an image that educational administration there is stellar and must be emulated. A French educator in Thailand observed the domination of American logic in governing Thai education policy:

All the major educators in Thailand have been educated in the States and they view the roles of the state as detrimental factors to public policies. In fact, it is the contrary. If you view the state from the French principle, the states are supposed to be the defenders of individual rights and quality of education. If the problem with the Thai state is inefficiency, the solution is to improve the state not to delineate it out of the equation. (Personal interview, September 10, 2010)

Their personal experiences became the foundation and reference point for their vision of the Thai education system to be. As Grindle and Thomas (1991) point out, the personal experiences of the policy elites provided fertile ground for their logic, rationale, and policy preferences. Two observations deserve clarification. On the one hand, the embedded logic of the Thai state continues to persist from the early modernization era to this period of National Development and American involvement. The logic is about the preservation of Thai-ness and the struggle to become modernized. On the other hand, the need to become modern or Westernized was replaced with the demands of the economy or more neutral terms such as national development. It is no coincidence that American style capitalism was gaining its currency. The four objectives of the Thailand's First National Education Development Plan were in sync with American ideas and advocacy of the human capital theory (Schultz, 1960). These four objectives included improving and

expanding primary and secondary education, producing qualified teachers, and expanding higher education to be more relevant to the nation's manpower needs (Watson, 1980).

4.2.3 Globalization, Internationalization, and Higher Education

The 1990s were the “international/globalization” period in Thai history (Fry, 2002b). It must be noted, however, that the influences of international/globalization have multiple meanings for Thailand. On the one hand, globalization was equivalent to increasing private and foreign involvement in the Thai economy. From 1987 onward, foreign direct investment flooded into the country. Subsequently, export-led growth reached its peak. Total corporate investment accounted for 25% of the total GDP (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1998). In 1988, the Thai economy experienced exceptional economic growth of 13.2%, and the growth remained in double digits for several years (Kaewmanee, 2007). In the World Bank report, *The East Asia Miracle* (1993), Thailand was praised as an exemplar of a successful newly industrialized country, while its rapid expansion of primary and secondary education was heralded as an indicator of successful development priorities. Given the rate of growth, *The Economist* projected in 1995 that the country would become the world’s eighth biggest economy by 2020 (cited in Pongpaichit & Baker, 1998, p. 5). The country was anticipating joining with Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in becoming a newly industrialized country (NIC) (Kaewmanee, 2007, p. 170).

In conjunction with economic growth, Thai politics began to change from a military-dominated parliament to what has become known as one of “money-politics.” Major General Chartichai Choonhavan won the general election in 1988 and formed a new government, considered to be the first civilian government in Thailand since the coup of 1976. Unlike the previous era where the military and the technocrats dominated public policy, the new government represented a new consolidation of power between mega-capitalists, local business powers, and existing technocrats. Chai-anan (1995, cited

in Kaewmanee, 2007) argued that out of 45 cabinet positions, 33 were occupied by powerful businessmen.

On the other hand, globalization was framed as a threat to the development of Thailand. There were calls for social and political reforms to prepare Thailand to curtail the increasing threat imposed by external and global forces. The call for reform came from two broad coalitions (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009). Firstly, there were the localists and communities. Social activists were calling for a strengthening of local wisdom, Buddhism, and spiritual empowerment. Secondly, there were the liberal groups, who believed in the strengthening civil society and protecting local communities from money politics and corruption. Although the two groups came from diverse backgrounds, they shared a common goal against the omnipotent and centralized bureaucracy. A new coalition was formed between the liberals and the localists, and they were able to gain greater legitimacy. Senior technocrats, businessmen, the media, and academics began to join forces calling for social reform (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009).

Educational reform rose to the forefront of policy attention. Thailand was caught in a development paradox. The country struggled to maintain the comparative advantage of low-cost labor, while lacking the necessary human capital to move up the supply chain (Montesano, 2001). Its labor wages were no longer competitive at \$6 US a day compared to China or Vietnam; hence it began to lose the benefit of the low-skilled manufacturing sector offering cheap textiles, shoes, and toys (King, 1997). At the same time, exports of automobiles and electronics did not grow fast enough (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1998, p. 94). Thailand did not have a pool of highly trained engineers, chemists, or scientists to compete with other newly industrialized countries such as South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1998). Although there had been a call for increasing the numbers of science and technology graduates since the 1970s, the country had not produced enough scientists and engineers to boost its industrial competitiveness.

Recognizing the human resource bottleneck, the 1990s witnessed myriad reform efforts in education. Numerous conferences took place, and a variety of policy papers were published. Education began increasingly to receive policy attention from all sectors, including international development organizations, the Thai state, the private sector, and civil society. The call for reform was loud and clear. The passage below encapsulates these reform efforts in greater details.

Firstly, there was the First Long Range Plan for Higher Education (Ministry of University Affairs, 1990). Funded by USAID, the Ministry of University Affairs organized the policy consultation to outline 15 years of higher education reform. The discussion focused on restructuring higher education administrations to be more market-oriented in terms of their administration and financial autonomy. The plan stipulated two main reforms: existing public universities should be incorporated within 10 years and any new publicly funded university must be established under the principle of an autonomous university (Kirtikara, 2002). Three new universities were established under this principle: Suranaree University, Wailaluck University, and Mae Fah Luang University. The First Long Range Education Plan sent a clear signal to all public universities that an overhaul was inevitable. In 1992, Professor Kasem Suwannkul, the Minister, and Dr. Vichit Srisaarn, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Universities Affairs, were determined to overhaul 16 public universities as autonomous universities (Suwantragul, 2009). The marketing of public universities was in line with the overall policy of Anand Panyarachun's cabinet to liberalize the Thai economy (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1997). Soon after the plan was announced, resistance amongst many academics and university administrators proliferated (Kirtikara, 2002). Although the plan to marketize public universities did not materialize, it sent a clear signal to the higher education sector. Debureaucratization and increasing marketization were seen as a panacea for ensuring institutional autonomy and improved economic competitiveness in the country.

The second important conference during the reform decade happened in 1994. The Ministry of University Affairs and the Council of University Presidents of Thailand (CUPT) called for a quality assessment of Thailand's higher education institutions. It was not until July 8, 1996 that the Ministry of University Affairs announced guidelines for all universities to conduct self-evaluation to enhance instruction and improve the academic learning environment (Muangkeow, 2009). Except for those guidelines, no major policy implementation took place regarding quality assessment.

Thirdly, a public conference on Thai Education in the Globalization Era was hosted by Bantoon Lamsan, Chief Executive Officer of the Thai Farmers Bank (1996). The conference welcomed leading academics, public intellectuals, and business figures to rethink a systemwide reform in education. Analysis of documents shows that the forum expressed similar concerns, such as rigid bureaucratization, centralized planning, and the lack of social participation. The state and its bureaucracy were framed as obstacles to education quality. The conference called for decentralization, de-bureaucratization, and greater autonomy of education management at every education level, especially higher education (Ketudat, 1996). Many leading academics and public figures outwardly criticized the state and called for empowerment of the people. The conference documents reiterated the need to delegate, decentralize, and privatize the public sector toward greater efficiency and accountability. Undoubtedly, the conference document reinforced the policy conviction of making public universities become more like privately run companies in order to improve the quality of the institutions. Despite various demands for reform, no implementation was enacted. Resistance to the university autonomy policy, the inaction regarding quality assessment, and the ongoing talks for reform reflect the difficulties of turning policy talks into policy implementation.

This historical overview of Thai higher education illustrates the historical logic of the country and how differing aspects of selective policy borrowing have been part of the policy structure and process. The country used the external threat of colonization to push

for internal reforms in terms of creating a centralized administration and promoting modern forms of education. While European influences dominated Thai thinking during the nation-building era, American influences became the cornerstones of Thai education policy after the end of the Second World War. Since the 1990, there has been an increasing policy attention to “globalization and internationalization” rather than any specific countries as sources of influence and policy aspirations. While much of the literature on the studies of Thai education romanticize the the power of Thai elites to always be able to pick and choose foreign power (Fry, 2002b; Jungck & Kajornsin, 2003), a policy borrowing and lending perspective warns against the normative aspect of foreign borrowing. Rather, the studies should unpack and analyze these differing strategies and strive to understand the strategies of the policy elites in relation to policy studies and the implementation process.

4.3 The Thai State and Higher Education

This section focuses on the relationship between the state and the higher education administration. Osatharom (1990) differentiated four phases of administrative reforms in higher education. Between 1916 and 1990, the relationships between the state and higher education were constantly shifting and changing. Universities went through various changes, starting under the Ministry of Education, differing Ministries, the Prime Minister's Office, and finally establishing the Ministry of University Affairs. Nilphan's (2005) clear theoretical framework helped to strengthen an understanding of the state's relationship with the higher education sector. Nilphan traced the trajectory of the Thai state in relation to Clark's Triangle of Coordination. Accordingly, the relationship between the Thai state and higher education policy has been differentiated into two main phases. On the one hand, it is argued that the state played a dominant role in Thai higher education between 1916 and the 1970s. In this period, the state dominated policy

planning, agendas, and resource allocation of Thai higher education. On the other hand, Nilphan (2005) argued that there was a significant shift of power from the state to academic oligarchs from the 1980s onward. Unlike the earlier days when the Thai state outwardly resisted market forces in higher education, there has been a growing influence of market mechanisms on Thai higher education.

This section maps out the changing relationships between the Thai state and higher education administration. Firstly, it provides a chronology of state-higher education relations. The second half analyzes the changing relationship of the state and higher education. While the first section views the state as a potent bureaucracy, the second part deploys Mitchell's (1991) elusive state framework to analyze the changing role of the Thai state. In order to understand the complex relationship between the state and higher education, the issue of institutional autonomy and the quest to implement the Autonomous University policy provides a logical place to study this phenomenon.

4.3.1. Centralized Bureaucracy

From the late 19th century to the 1970s, the state has played the most eminent role in the implementation of higher education policy in Thailand, while the academic oligarchs and market mechanisms played minimal roles. The Ministry of Education (MOE) was established in 1887, with the Ministry playing an influential role in setting the agenda, resource management, and decision making at all levels of the education system. When Chulalongkorn University was established in 1916, it was subjected to MOE control. This system of management lasted until 1932.

When the People's Party staged a political coup and changed the political system in Thailand from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, there was a call for greater educational opportunities. Thammasat University was built in 1934 with the objective of extending educational access to the broader populace and to train more individuals to serve the modern bureaucracy. Unlike Chulalongkorn, which was under the

strict control of MOE, Thammasat University was considered a separate entity functioning under MOE supervision. Osatharom (1990) argued, given the diversity of institutional histories, its purposes, and missions, that the level of institutional freedom from state control between Chulalongkorn and Thammasat Universities was significantly different. Nevertheless, the two universities did not escape external political pressures. Thai political figures controlled the policy of the two institutions. While Pridi Panomyong, the civilian leader of the People's Party, was the founder of Thammasat University, Marshall Phibun became the rector of Chulalongkorn (Osatharom, 1990).

State-university relations began to change as more universities were established in Metropolitan Bangkok. In 1937, three more universities were established, and each was under the control of its respective ministry. For example, Kasertsart University belonged to the Ministry of Agriculture, while Mahidol University was under the supervision of the Ministry of Health (Watson, 1980). Each university was established with the sole purpose of educating personnel to serve nation building and strengthen the newly created bureaucracy. The relationship between universities and ministers included the exchange of personnel from the ministries to the universities as part-time faculty, budget allocation, and manpower planning (Osatharom, 1990). The number of seats available in each university depended on the manpower needs of that respective ministry. This system of management was problematic. When Thailand welcomed UNESCO educational experts to the country, Sir Charles Darwin (1954) produced significant policy recommendations for amending this system. The Darwin Report argued that the status quo of Thai higher education was fragmented, under-funded, and below international standards of higher institutional learning. Accordingly, Sir Darwin offered two policy recommendations. One advocated an integration of all existing five universities into one University of Bangkok, imitating the University of London. Secondly, he recommended a central agency along the line of the University Grant Commission (UGC) to integrate policy plans and handle university funding. Darwin's recommendations were timely. They were integrated with

the ongoing political agenda of the dictator Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat to centralize all political decisions at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC) was created in 1959 as part of the PMO. It aimed to centralize educational strategies and planning. The objectives were to increase universities' negotiation power for resources and consolidate the clear vision and mission of the institutions (Osatharom, 1990).

The creation of ONEC resulted in standardized academic policies and requirements, a centralized system for university entrance examinations, and unified missions between the universities and national development (Watson, 1980). It was during this time that the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) was created under the arm of the PMO to oversee long-term development. Policy developments during this period reinforced the importance of centralization and long-term national development. Two points should be highlighted. Firstly, it was evident that the external recommendations of Sir Charles Darwin were selectively chosen by Thai political leaders and adapted to fit the overarching national agenda of centralized control. Secondly, higher education policy change happened at a time that coincided with the broader political economy of the country. Given that the country was undergoing a rigid military dictatorship, university-state relationships followed that trend. Nilphan (2005) argued that the centralized system of education planning during this period enabled the state to intervene in internal university affairs. Field Marshal Thanom became the president of Thammasat University, while Field Marshal Praphas was the president of Chulalongkorn for nine years. By subjecting the universities' policies to the ONEC, the Prime Minister's Office was able to scrutinize the students' activism (Nilphan, 2005).

Along with massive expansion of the sector, the Bureau of State University (SUB) was created under the Ministry of Education to oversee higher education management. The Bureau was in charge of the central national entrance examination, curriculum approval, and national higher education policy. In 1972, SUB became an independent

organization, later developing into the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA). MUA exercised centralized control over higher education policy, finances, and management. Similar to ONEC, MUA controlled the appointment of rectors and deans for each state university. Not only did MUA approve curriculum and oversee general admission in higher education institutions, it was also responsible for more than 80% of the university's income. According to Watson (1980), the Prime Minister's political patronage interfered with higher education management and inhibited flexibility.

Between 1916 and the 1970s, this period witnessed the strengthening of the centralized state, beginning with the Ministry of Education, the National Education Council, and the Ministry of University Affairs. The bureaucracy in Thailand slowly progressed and became more defined for its specific tasks. The centralization of policy planning, budget allocation, and entrance examinations illustrated a close-knit relationship between the state and higher education institutions. Based on historical evidence, the centralization of the system and personnel characterizes the major feature of the Thai education system. Furthermore, it is supported by a cadre of educated bureaucrats. In studying the background of the bureaucratic elite in Thailand, Kaewmanee (1977) argued that the Ministry of University Affairs and the Ministry of Education ranked in first and third position in having the most educated staff in the entire bureaucracy. Fry (2002) captured this phenomenon:

Too much of the Thai budget is spent on a highly centralized bureaucracy. The Thai Ministry in Bangkok is significantly larger than Monbusho in Tokyo or China's central education agency, even though it is serving far fewer students. There are over 400 individuals with doctorates working in the Ministry in Bangkok. (p. 23)

This statement reinforces the state-centered perspective and bureaucratic polity model. In a panel discussion on Thai education, Professor Gerald Fry (Conversation, 2010), an expert on Thai education, emphasized that bureaucrats continue to be the driving force of policy change in Thailand: "Riggs and Siffin's account of the bureaucratic polity is still

relevant in explaining the influence of the Ministry of Education as a driver of change in Thailand.” Given the consolidation of power and centralization of personnel, it is nearly impossible to imagine a counter-organization, extra bureaucratic or interest group to compete with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University Affairs. Although the society-centered approach might not fit neatly into the mode of the Thai Ministry of Education, it would also be mistaken to assume that a centralized ministry with more than 400 PhD holders and more than 30,000 civil servants is monolithic and uniform. Indeed, it is far from it. The subsequent discussion offers an alternative view on the Ministry of Education and the Office of Higher Education Commission.

4.3.2. The Elusive State

This section outlines factors that have influenced the decision-making of the Thai state. It discusses how the creation of various ad hoc committees led to education reforms as an exemplar of an elusive state in Thailand. Specifically, the advocacy for autonomous university policy is used to illustrate an elusiveness between what should be considered state or society.

Without a doubt, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University Affairs stand at the apex of educational policymaking in Thailand. The state-centered approach suggests a clear distinction between the insiders and the outsiders. However, this dichotomy provides a false binary in the world of power and the politics of policymaking. In a response to the state-society debate, Mitchell (1991) argued against such a clear distinction. Despite the theoretical attempts to draw a sharp boundary, the edges between what counts as state and society remain “elusive, porous, mobile” (p. 77). Even an advocate of the strength of the Thai state, Siffin (1966), offered a caveat against the assumption that the Ministry or Bureaucracy in Thailand is monolithic and consensual. In his words, Siffin argued, “The bureaucracy itself has never functioned systematically as a self-conscious pressure group or political interest, and empire building

within it commonly – though not always – has been linked with external advice and aid" (p. 246). As aforementioned, the Thai state has been perceptive regarding external influences and has received foreign assistance since its inception. Not only did the Thai ruling elites receive their education from Western countries, myriad European advisors also contributed to the formation of the Thai state. This was even more compelling after the end of World War II when the United States, the World Bank, and UNESCO began to pay greater attention to Thailand (Osatharom, 1990). In the 1950s, under the influence of UNESCO, Sir Darwin provided comprehensive policy recommendations, which the Thai state later selectively adopted. Paradoxically, external influence has helped to strengthen the centralization of the Thai state, especially in the case of educational policy.

While the picture of a draconian state has dominated much of the discussion of Thai political science (Riggs, 1996; Siffins, 1966; Wyatt, 1969), this image was questioned in the 1970s. After the student uprising of 1973, which toppled the prolonged military regime of the Field Marshall Thanom Kittikajorn, the new government of Mr. Sanya Thammasak initiated a system-wide education reform in 1974. His reforms resulted in the National Education Act of 1977, entitled Education for Life and Society. In fact, the 1977 reform was significant in several ways. Firstly, it was regarded as politically liberal at the time. For educational policy in general, the reform called for the decentralization of education. It outwardly called for the decentralization of education in official policy. For higher education, the reform called for an autonomous university policy, which aimed to strengthen university administrative freedom from the state. The 1977 reform proposal envisioned a changing role for the Ministry of Education (Tan, 2007). It preferred the Ministry to limit its role to policy and planning, goal setting and budgeting. Furthermore, it called for more decentralized education. An administrative committee was established (Tan, 2007).

Secondly, the reformers on the committee became pertinent bureaucrats and respectable education policymakers in the country. The reform committee was led by

Dr. Sippanonda Kedutat, Deputy Secretary General of the National Education Council, and was comprised of highly educated young bureaucrats, many of whom have dominated the education scene in Thailand to this day. While Osatharom (1990) regarded the composition of this reform committee to be a progressive move of the government to challenge the status quo of the ruling elite, Tan (2007) disputed that and argued that the “reform movement was initiated by academics and other technocratic elites – it was far from being a broad-based social movement” (p. 47). In fact, the creation of an ad hoc committee to oversee reforms has become a prevalent feature of Thailand since the 1970s. The state has relied on this type of committee, which often is comprised of respected academics and technocrats, to justify the need for reform plans. These include the First and Second Long Range Plan for Higher Education Reform in 1900 and 2007, the Thai Education in the Globalization Committee in 1996, and the National Education Act of 1999.

The most compelling policy recommendation for higher education throughout the past several decades has been the push for state universities to become autonomous universities. Autonomous universities promised to have greater institutional autonomy, administrative management, and financial flexibility. In short, the policy aims to instill elements of the private sector into public universities in the hope that universities will become more efficient, effective, and of better quality. The Commission of Higher Education outlined its explanation on the autonomous university policy as:

An innovative way university administration has been introduced to promote flexibility of university operation. Such universities have their own administrative structure and budgeting system for self-governance and full autonomy, allowing decision making on administrative and management matters of the university to be handled by the university itself. (CHE, 2007, cited in Rungfamai, 2008)

In contrast to the picture of better run and more efficient autonomous universities, public universities are painted as being ossified and resistant to change. Bureaucratic bottlenecks occur, including line item budgets, procurement regulations, and limitations

in salary policy. Given that the universities were part of the bureaucratic structures of differing ministers, the lecturers were considered to be part of the civil service cadre, receiving similar salaries and being required to follow bureaucratic systems. Various policymakers have argued that the bureaucratic norms embedded within the university structure and culture created conditions not conducive for universities to excel. The dark view of public universities and bureaucratic norms as hurdles and bottlenecks for the development of Thai higher education is evident in all major policy papers (Kedutat, 1996; Kirtikara, 2004; MUA, 1990; Osatharom, 1990).

An interesting observation is that advocacy of this policy revealed a complex network of academics and technocrats. Kaewdeng's (cited in Kirtikara, 2004, p. A) call for public universities to be taken out of the Civil Service was recognized right after the first university, Chulalongkorn, was established, and continuous policy efforts have pushed this reform forward for more than 40 years. Kirtikara (2004) outlined the members of the Working Committee on the Long Range Plan and argued that the "members were drawn from the academic world" (p. 12). Other members included leading university executives from major public universities in Thailand.¹² These individuals have played pertinent roles in various ad hoc committees and become board members of various government institutions in the education sector. Their continuous commitment and shared conviction in transforming Thai public universities to become more privately run are the important factors that link them together.

While the Working Committee illustrated an amalgam of leading Thai academics and technocrats, the list probes the question of what is considered a state or a society. On the one hand, these individuals were working as executives and key administrators in

¹²Professor Chetana Nagavachara, Professor Paibool Ingkasuwan, Professor Tong-In Wongsotorn, Dr. Harit Sutabutr, Dr. Wiwat Mungkarndee, Dr. Methee Krongkeaw, Dr. Jira Hongsladarom, Dr. Suchart Prasert-rattasindhu, Dr. Yongyuth Yuthawongs, Dr. Wiwatchai Attakara, Dr. Niphon Puapongsakorn, Dr. Waraporn Borwornsiri, Dr. Kanok Wongtra-ngarn, Dr. Sriwong Sumitr, and Dr. Krissanaphong Kirtikara.

Thai public institutions. Kirtikara (2001) inferred that the call for public university transformation represented the voice of the “academic world,” the university people. On the other hand, these individuals were still civil servants and working for the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) project. The multiple identities of the reformers on the state-directed working committee make it difficult to clearly differentiate the state from society. Even though they are considered to be representatives of the academic world, they are academics with university executive positions who are concerned with management and an administrative agenda. Their views of the world might not resonate with other academics who do not hold executive positions. These differentiations do not exist in Clark's Triangle of Coordination (1983), as all academics are grouped into the category of “academic-oligarchs.” The differentiations are significant in the case of Thailand. Reformers call themselves the representatives of the academic world while disregarding other viewpoints as conservative. The passage below encapsulates the complexity and multiple identities of one of the key reformers, who argued:

University policy must be carried out by university people, not the bureaucracy. I have been pushing for the autonomous university policy since the first reform in the 1970s but it was not received very well then. Higher education during that time was still dominated by conservative thinking and people were not welcoming changes. (Interview, August 8, 2009)

The framing of us versus them appears as one of the major themes throughout the analysis. However, “us” and “them” mean differing things in different contexts. In this case, the “us” is the academics with executive power who advocate autonomous university policy with the support of senior bureaucrats, while the “them” is the other academics who resist change. An amalgam of academics, executives, and technocrats created a new coalition of policy entrepreneurs who share similar policy beliefs on autonomous university policy, and they become the advocates of quality policy in Thailand's higher education. It must be noted that these state-directed ad hoc committees of socially respectable individuals in fact served to strengthen the state itself. The

creation of these committees created new policy spaces within the state structure to strengthen the state's preferred policy. The fact that prominent academic executives speak on behalf of the state helps to create a “ghost-like effect,” to paraphrase Mitchell (1991, p. 91), for the state. The elusiveness between these actors fits what Hewison (1997) calls the “ebb and flow” of policymaking. While the strength of this ad hoc coalition helped them to push for autonomous university policy and later quality policy in higher education, the coalition has also disregarded opinions from the academic community and dismissed their life experiences. This framework is critical to understanding the implementation and resistance of QA/TQF policy in Thailand.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter, three main points were made. Firstly, the historical legacies of the Thai state were discussed to provide a background understanding on differing values and factors that have influenced decision-making and public policy in Thailand. As was illustrated, Western influences and models have always served as aspirations for the Thai policy elites to emulate. Without doubt, the modernization process in Thailand has been equivalent to Westernization. However, the state has not always been able to participate in a wholesale emulation of Western ideas and policies. While policy elites always argued that selective borrowing is a unique trait of Thai development, a lack of resources, inadequate personnel, and uneven development in the Thai political economy provide an explanation for the rushed-through adaptation and policy emulation. Furthermore, it has been outlined that the quest for modernity, to be more Westernized and to become more civilized, has always been the major reason for policy formulation and implementation in Thailand. Secondly, the role of the state and its changing relationship with Thai higher education was outlined. Although the state has been the omnipotent player in the sector since inception, it is argued that the changing political and economic landscape has

resulted in changing the composition of what is considered state and society in Thailand. The binary between what is the state versus society has been blurred. The elusiveness of the state in Thailand begged for closer scrutiny. A new coalition between civil servants, academic executives, and other social players had been formed. Thirdly, this new coalition shared a policy consensus regarding the transformation of Thai public universities from bureaucratic control into autonomous universities. They strongly believed that it was the only way for Thai higher education to improve quality, efficiency, and competitiveness. This framework will be useful in understanding the main actors and policy advocates in the quality assessment policy in Thailand. Furthermore, it is argued that acknowledgment of the elusiveness of the state in Thailand will help shed light on the differing actors involved in the case of the quality policy.

Chapter V

QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN THAILAND: ORGANIZATIONS, COALITIONS, AND CONTEXTS

There are three objectives to achieve in Chapter V. Firstly, the chapter attempts to map out differing quality organizations in Thailand. Having described the key organizations, the second objective is to analyze the actors involved in the policymaking process. Influenced by the concept of the elusive state already discussed in Chapter IV, this section argues that there exists a quality coalition in Thailand's higher education sector. These actors work across multiple organizations and hold multiple identities. However, what they share in common is the belief that bureaucratic structures are bottlenecks and not conducive to the quality of higher education. They are the proponents of quality policies in Thailand. Thirdly, this chapter outlines the policy contexts of Thailand that support the emergence of QA. Differing rationales that supported QA in Thailand's higher education include global, regional, and national rationales.

Although Thai policymakers perceive QA as an equivalent of globalization/global trend, it will be illustrated that the introduction of QA into the Thai higher education sector fits the socio-logic of the country. QA has been coined as a policy panacea to overcome longstanding problems rooted in Thai higher education. These issues include the representation of QA as a policy tool to (1) serve the decentralization of higher education for increasing institutional autonomy; and (2) the qualitative-quantitative paradox. Coinciding with the historical development of Thailand's public policy in

general and higher education policy in particular, the key policymakers in the sector have felt compelled to introduce QA and coat it with the language of policy necessity.

5.1 QA Organizations and Quality Coalitions

This section provides an overview of QA and other quality policies in the Thai higher education sector. The first section describes differing organizations that are involved in the quality policies of the Thai higher education sector. Secondly, the trajectory of quality policies in Thailand's higher education sector is introduced. It is argued that quality policy has undergone three major transformations. From being a voluntary option in the 1990s, the 2000s witnessed the emergence of the quality regime as a legal obligation for all universities to enforce. During the fieldwork in 2010-2011, the quality policies entered the third phase and were driven by universities' aspiration to become more competitive both at the national and international levels. The third subsection introduces the concept of quality coalition.

5.1.1 The Quality Organizations

This section maps out differing organizations that are officially involved with QA policy in Thai higher education. Four key organizations are actively involved in this process: the Council of University Presidents of Thailand (CUPT), the Office of Higher Education Commission, the Office of National Educational Standards (OHEC) and Quality Assessment (ONESQA), and the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC). This section does not discuss the historical development of these institutions, but rather it identifies key organizational players in the QA process. This background is important to serve the subsequent discussion on the trajectory of the policy.

The first organization, the Council of University Presidents of Thailand (CUPT), is comprised of the rectors and presidents of public universities. In the beginning, membership included 12 public universities. Currently, 27 public and autonomous universities form the membership. Founded in 1972, this forum was created in the context of a broader restructuring of the Thai public sector. The creation of CUPT aimed to generate policy space for public university rectors and presidents to come together and exchange their ideas for higher education management. Although CUPT is an independent policy body separate from the state apparatus, it has occasionally received funding support from the Ministry of University Affairs. Meetings are convened once every two months and often provide public opinion supporting or criticizing the government's policies on higher education. It is within the circle of CUPT that the national-level policy discussion about quality assessment/assurance began in 1994. Since then, CUPT has created a QA working group comprised of representatives from all public universities. The members meet on a monthly basis in order to discuss the latest trends of QA, critique the indicators, and report their responses back to the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) or ONESQA.

The second organization is the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC), which was the Ministry of University Affairs before the National Education Act of 1999. OHEC is the responsible organization for setting national policy agenda, goals, and the objectives of higher education. As aforementioned, MUA/OHEC has worked closely with CUPT on various fronts including QA policy. During its inception, the working group within CUPT and the MUA worked closely together on QA-related issues. The Bureau is mandated to come up with IQA indicators as well as send a group of peer reviewers to conduct IQA at the university level, while the universities are required to submit IQA reports back to the Bureau every year. Unlike the EQA, universities are able to select the peer review groups, based on lists given by the Bureau of Standards and Evaluation.

The third and most important organization is the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). ONESQA was created from the mandate of the National Education Act to be a meta-organization conducting external quality assessment once every five years. The creation of ONESQA illustrates Thailand's commitment to quality assessment. As discussed in Chapter II, the global model of quality assessment illustrates the necessity to establish a meta-organization solely responsible for these tasks. Given the dominant role ONESQA plays in quality assessment policy in Thailand, the subsequent chapter will devote attention to discussing the creation and trajectory of ONESQA in depth.

The fourth organization is the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC), which was established in October 2003 to monitor and evaluate the performance of the public sector in Thailand. Policymakers believed that through a rigorous monitoring and evaluation, OPDC would be able to help other government agencies increase their performance and become more efficient and effective. Similar to other NPM-related policy, the language for OPDC revolves around achieving good governance, assuring results-based management and effectiveness and value for the money.¹³ Furthermore, in order to incentivize public agencies to perform better, OPDC also provided financial incentives for successful organizations during its early days of operation. Given that public universities receive financial support from the state, they are ultimately subjected to evaluation by OPDC.

This section outlines differing organizations that are officially involved with and responsible to the quality assessment policy. These are the key institutional players in the QA scene in Thailand; however, each of them has a different legal status and relationships with the state and higher education. The Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) is part of the Ministry of Education; hence it represents the official position of

¹³Accessed 20th January, 2012 from: http://www.opdc.go.th/english/main/content_view.php?cat_id=3

the Thai state on this policy. ONESQA and OPDC are public organizations that receive public funding without necessarily being subjected to a string of state regulations like formal and official state agencies. The CUPT is an independent organization that coordinates between the presidents of Thai public universities.

Each of the organizations has different roles in the quality policy scene in Thailand. However, they all share the same policy conviction on the need for differing forms of QA in the management of Thai universities.

5.1.2 Quality Policy in Three Waves

In order to understand how QA resonated in Thailand, it is also important to trace the policy trajectory. This will illustrate that during different periods of policy process, QA resonated on differing levels with different groups of policy actors. Between 1994 and 1999, quality assessment was a voluntary option in Thailand. The official birth of QA in Thailand happened in 1994 within the policy circle at the Council of University Presidents of Thailand (CUPT). A consensus was reached that a more systematic regulation to maintain and assure quality in higher education was needed. Therefore a QA working group within CUPT was created to conceptualize the QA guidelines and standards. During its inception, the working group within CUPT and the Ministry of University Affairs worked closely together on QA-related issues. On the 8th of July, 1996, the MUA issued the policy statement encouraging all public universities to introduce QA in their institutions. This policy statement is considered to be the official birthplace of QA policy in Thailand. Two features worth noting are that the statement did not force all the universities to institute QA, and secondly, the statement introduced nine areas of quality criteria without rigidly imposing strict sets of indicators for each category. These nine quality criteria include mission/objectives/planning, teaching and

learning, student support, research, public service, cultural preservation, administration, budgeting, and quality assurance and enhancement system (Wongsothorn, 1999, p. 94).¹⁴

After the policy statement was issued, there were increasing QA-related activities at both the national and institutional levels. At the national level, the Ministry of University Affairs began various activities to promote QA, such as a pilot project in 22 faculties, including Education, Science, Engineering, Medicine and Nursing (Wongsothorn, 1999). Similarly, there were various training programs for interested faculty members to become QA assessors (Interview, August 2, 2010). At the institutional level, various universities began to introduce QA (Interview, August 1, 2010). It must be noted, however, that the initial process of QA in Thailand was quite simple and there were no rigid indicators to follow. Many reported that this initial process was more like a checklist rather than quality assessment. It is argued:

The system was very easy comparing to the status quo. There were simple indicators asking whether universities do this and that. If the university had any program or projects related to the question, they could say yes and that is it. Every question was meant to answer yes or no. Since the indicators were very easy, most of the universities got 100 points. If some universities did not reach 90, that was very odd. Most of the faculties got full marks and this happened in all universities. (Interview, September 6, 2010)

In contrast to subsequent developments, the QA during this period did not require much work or preparation for the universities. Hence, QA was another responsibility embedded within the existing administration. Interviews with QA practitioners illustrate that during this period, there was no creation of QA offices or QA departments.

Since 1999, QA has become compulsory for all educational institutions. The National Education Act was promulgated and mandated a legal commitment to QA. The reformers strongly believed that making education reform a legal commitment was necessary for the continuation of the implementation process. There is one chapter

¹⁴Quality Assurance for Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific, 1999: SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development, Bangkok.

allocated to discuss policy requirements for QA in all levels of Thai education system. Chapter 6 of the 1999 Act, entitled “Educational Standards and Quality Assurance” (NEA, 1999), has five specific clauses regarding quality assessment and assurance. The space specifically allocated to discuss issues related to QA exemplifies the policymakers’ efforts to highlight the emergence of new educational management in Thailand. One of the creators of the National Education Act argued:

Never before in Thai history was the issue of quality highlighted like that of the Act. Prior to this, quality assessment was a fragmented issue embedded within educational tests. Differing departments and agencies were responsible for this as little communication happened across the board. Before the QA law, no one used the results for policy purposes. (Interview, August 11, 2009)

Although many universities began to introduce some kind of QA in their system prior to the enactment of the law, many policymakers still strongly believed that the legal requirement was essential for successful implementation: “Without the legal enforcement, people would not be committed to the policy” (Interview, August 5, 2009). The conviction that the legal requirement directly translated into practice on the ground is a pertinent theme throughout the interviews.

The emergence of the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) in October 2003 further obliged universities to introduce another quality mechanism. The intention of OPDC was to monitor and evaluate the performance of the public sector in Thailand. Unlike ONESQA and OHEC indicators, which were looking at the input, process, and output of higher education institutions, the focus of OPDC indicators attempted to evaluate universities as parts of a public institution. The center of OPDC attention then is on how the universities effectively and efficiently spend public money in their operation.

Beyond the QA and public sector monitoring process, the Office of Higher Education Commission also introduced another quality policy in 2010 to govern higher education institutions. The National Education Framework for Higher Education in

Thailand, better known as the Thailand Qualification Framework (TQF hereafter), was created as a guideline for universities to develop a new course syllabus specifically focused on five student learning outcomes: (1) Ethical and Moral Development, (2) Knowledge, (3) Cognitive Skills, (4) Interpersonal Skills and Responsibility, and (5) Analytical and Communication Skills.¹⁵ Furthermore, policymakers argued that the objectives of TQF also aimed to foster academic comparisons across differing higher education institutions both in Thailand and internationally. In order to illustrate that the given course would deliver these learning outcomes, TQF required faculty members to explain how their course and each class would meet the five learning outcomes. While TQF was approved by the Ministry of Education and did not receive a similar legal mandate as did ONESQA or OPDC, there was an explicit policy statement that any course that did not meet the TQF requirement would not be approved by the Civil Service Commission. Hence, significant legal imposition was in place to enforce policy implementation on the universities.

It is argued that since 2010, quality policy in Thailand entered a third phase – reputation-driven. Beyond ONESQA External Quality Assessment, OHEC Internal Quality Assessment, and OPDC monitoring, there are other optional quality policies. This includes Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (EdPEX), which adopted the Malcolm Baldrige criteria to assess the education sector. Initiated by the Bureau of Standards and Evaluation, the Malcolm Baldrige criteria have been adopted by the Thailand Productivity Institute as guidelines to select industries, companies, and different organizations to receive the Thailand’s Quality Award (TQA).¹⁶ According to the advocates of EdPEX or Malcolm Baldrige’s approach, it is argued that this system differs from other QA systems in Thailand. Firstly, this system is not based on legal

¹⁵Accessed January, 2012 from: <http://www.mua.go.th/users/tqf-hed/news/FilesNews/FilesNews8/NQF-HEd.pdf>

¹⁶Accessed January, 20, 2012 from: <http://www.tqa.or.th/th/tqa-history>

obligation. Rather, it uses award and recognition to incentivize universities to implement QA. Secondly, it is qualitative-based rather than quantitative-based. Unlike other QA systems, the Malcolm Baldrige assessment rests on the premise that universities need to reflect on seven of the key factors given in the guidelines. Since the award was initiated in the private sector, the criteria include how the universities listen to the voice of the customers or respond to customers' demands. The advocates of this system argue that the existing QA system is considered "minimum standards" for universities to achieve, while the Malcolm Baldrige approach is a more sophisticated and comprehensive approach for QA. During the fieldwork, there was an ongoing discussion that, should the university decide to adopt this approach, they should be waived from having to complete EQA for ONESQA and IQA for OHEC. However, there is as yet no formal agreement to exempt universities.

Additionally, various international league tables such as the Times-Higher Education Supplement as well as the Shiang Hai Jiao Tong also play a significant role in the Thai higher education education setting. For example, an observer at the Parliamentary hearing for university budgets observed that all university executives would cite their institutional standing in these international league tables as an indicator of their university's performance (Public Seminar, December 28, 2011). At the same time, international league tables also receive enormous media attention. When the league tables published their results, the media in Thailand paid close attention to reports on their performance and progress.

Although Thailand does not have a national league table, policymakers indirectly use the international ranking to influence policy decisions. The most obvious result is seen in the announcement of the National Research University (NRU) project. In tandem with the government's Financial Stimulus Package, the NRU project was announced in 2009 to select nine leading higher education institutions in Thailand to receive additional financial support to become "world class universities." The government promised to

provide up to 9,450 million baht for these institutions during the three-year period in order to develop their research capacity. This budget aims to strengthen the research capacity, provide research funds, as well as invest in researchers' development for the selected universities.¹⁷ One of the key criteria to select the universities was based on the institutional position in the international league table. The policy indicated that the university must be one of the 500 best universities according to the Times-QS, based on their publication results in the Scopus database. The decision to use Times-QS as an indicator to select the university was a political strategy, given that in 2007, the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) introduced the national league table and the policy was heavily criticized and rejected. The government hence selectively used the decision by the international league table to select universities in order to avoid internal conflict and questions regarding the selection of the nine universities.

From the promulgation of the National Education Act in 1999 until 2011, it is evident that the Thai state has introduced various policy tools and mechanisms related to the enhancement of quality higher education. These quality-related policies include external quality assessment (EQA), internal quality assurance (IQA), and OPDC monitoring, as well as the Thailand Qualification Framework (TQF). Under the name of quality, differing organizations are currently responsible for QA or quality-related policies. These organizations include the Bureau of Standards and Evaluation at the Office of Higher Education Commission, the Office of Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA), the Office of Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC), as well as the Thailand Productivity Institute. Ultimately, the universities are exposed to multiple pressures from various actors and external institutions. The figure below elucidates differing quality policies being imposed on higher education institutions in Thailand.

¹⁷Accessed January 21, 2012 from: http://www.nru.mua.go.th/main/page_pj_details.php?p=3

Figure 5.1: Differing Quality Mechanisms on Thai Higher Education



Source: Author

The mapping illustrates that higher education institutions in Thailand are exposed to multiple quality tools and mechanisms. It must be noted, however, that each policy has been introduced by various organizations with a diversity of rationales and purposes. At the same time, all of these quality mechanisms have not been influenced and/or perceived by all of the universities in the same way. Amongst all of the quality indicators and mechanisms, external quality assessment, internal quality assurance, Thailand Qualification's Framework, and the professoriate criteria are applicable to all institutions. Since the National Education Act of 1999 mandated all types of institutions to formally introduce internal quality assurance as well as external quality assessment, all the institutions being interviewed report that they implemented IQA and EQA as part of their system. Similarly, the policy announcement of TQF also applied to all universities, public and private alike. The table below maps out different quality mechanisms each of the public universities being interviewed has implemented.

Table 5.1: The Implementation of Different Quality Policies at the University Level

Universities	ONESQA: External Assessment	OHEC: Internal Assessment	OHEC: TQF	OPDC: Public Sector	Malcolm Baldrige	International Ranking
Public Universities						
Thammasat University	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Prince Songkla	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Pilot	Yes
Autonomous University						
Suranaree	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Chulalongkorn	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Pilot	Yes
Chiang Mai	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Pilot	Yes
Rajabhat University						
Suan Dusit	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Chiang Mai	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Songkla	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

Source: Author

This section has outlined the different quality organizations and mechanisms that exist in Thailand. It is questionable as to why policymakers introduced these mechanisms. The next section analyzes the main actors involved in the promotion of QA in Thailand. The concept of the quality coalition is introduced.

5.1.3 Policy Entrepreneurs and the Quality Coalition

This section sheds light on the roles and characteristics of the policy entrepreneurs who advocate for QA in Thailand. There are few technocrats within the Ministry of University Affairs who have actively promoted the introduction of QA in Thailand. Not only have these individuals participated in numerous international, regional, and national conferences on QA, but they also have the direct responsibility within the Ministry of University Affairs to make policy announcements or requirements. The integral

relationship between power and personal policy preference is illustrated by the following interview excerpt from the former Secretary General of the Ministry. He argued:

Please write down, on the 7th of July 1996, I announced the policy paper for universities to implement QA. Power is very important. Even if you had good idea, without power you wouldn't be able to push your idea through.
(Interview, August 3, 2010)

The interviewee confidently expressed the necessity for power and official positions to promote their preferred policy agenda for higher education. Based on an analysis on the elusiveness of the Thai state in the higher education sector, the technocrats are not the only actors in Thai higher educational policymaking. Many university executives, especially from public universities, shared the same policy belief on the transformation of Thai public universities. These individuals sit on committees, policy commissions, or governing boards. They allowed the viewpoints and policy preferences of these university executives to be heard at the national level. At the same time, the representation of university executives on differing policy spaces at the state level enabled the state to argue that they have incorporated “social voices” or “university people” in the policy process. Given the symbiotic and synergistic nature of the technocrats and university executives, it becomes difficult to identify and differentiate the clear roles of these policymakers. Nevertheless, their shared policy belief enables them to promote and maintain their policy preferences at the national as well as the institutional level.

A similar argument applied to the case of quality policy. I argue that there exists a “quality coalition” in Thai higher education. This coalition is comprised of leading technocrats in the higher education sector, university executives, and members of the private sector, including representatives from the media. This coalition is a significant factor in the emergence and maintenance of the quality regime in Thailand. Analysis of the policy documents, interviews, observations at ONESQA, and fieldwork experiences elucidates a closely-knit group of policymakers who have been involved in higher education reform in general and quality-related policies in particular. During many

interviews, the policymakers continued to cross-reference each other as the “experts” in quality policy in Thailand. When I asked the policymakers to reference other experts that I should interview, the same list of individuals was constantly mentioned. This group of quality advocate policymakers, or what I refer to as the quality coalition, is comprised of senior bureaucrats in the Office of Higher Education Commission and the Ministry of Education as well as university executives and some academics from the education faculty and science disciplines. Given numerous opportunities to meet and have exchanges with others in various national and international conferences, this group of policymakers has been able to establish networks of connections and strengthen their policy preferences.

Due to the multiple roles of each interviewee, it was problematic to differentiate or categorize each policymaker into discrete roles and positions. As mentioned in Chapter III, the differentiation of each interviewee to a certain position only serves as a heuristic device rather than absolute identities. In 18 interviews with high-level policymakers in Thailand, 13 of them sit and serve in both universities and OHEC or ONESQA, and 5 of them serve in all three organizations: universities, OHEC, and ONESQA. The multiple roles each policymaker plays make it difficult and almost impossible to identify whether they represent the state or the academy. However, this coalition between bureaucrats and university executives does make it easier to implement QA policy at both the national and institutional level. The inclusion of the university’s representatives as board members of OHEC and ONESQA enables the Thai state to argue that the policy process was participatory and inclusive of the university sector rather than being a top-down policy from the central government. In an interview with one of the former senior bureaucrats in Thai higher education who has observed the trajectory of QA policy in Thailand, it was argued that introduction and implementation of the policy has been a concerted effort between the Ministry of University Affairs and representatives from the university. She said:

We have been doing QA for nearly twenty years. Higher Education sector has taken this issue seriously. We mobilized the cream of the crops from universities to create one big team to help us envision how to assure quality of Thai education. We spent nearly three years to conceptualize the direction of QA. It was not just the Ministry of University Affairs who did it by ourselves, we asked many experts to help us think. We also received helps from the Council of University of Presidents of Thailand (CUPT), which is the network of the 20 university presidents from all Thai public universities.... They created their own working group about QA in order to provide feedbacks about QA for the MUA. (Interview, January 12, 2010)

This interview explicitly acknowledges the inclusion of representatives from Thai public universities as a part of the MUA QA policy process. In many instances, the interviewee tried to explain that QA was not a top-down process from the MUA but rather a joint effort between MUA and the academic community. By stressing the active participation of the “cream of the crop from universities,” the interviewee explicitly used the academics’ involvement as a point of justification for QA in Thailand. The quote above highlights the interviewee’s viewpoint that the implementation of QA policy went through a participatory process between the state and the academics. The academics are mostly presidents from public universities. The involvement of the university management executives in higher education policymaking is a prevalent phenomenon. In the realm of QA, there is a QA Forum within the CUPT, which continues to have a monthly meeting between university executives and QA administrators to discuss their opinion of new QA procedures, structures, and indicators. Although the QA Forum provided a policy space for QA implementors and policymakers across institutions to meet and share their opinions, it is noted that their reflections did not necessarily result in actual policy change. As one of the observers noted: "QA Forum acts as advisors on QA policy.... But we cannot force them to follow our suggestions" (Interview, November 23, 2010). This policymaker further pointed out that these policy forums from actors external to the bureaucracy are necessary in the higher education sector due to the lack of adequate qualified policymakers in the state apparatus. In his own words:

The bureaucrats do not have the real knowledge on education. They need to invite external actors to act as advisors and form working committees on QA indicators.... Within the past ten years, there are no actors or organizations in the system that have enough capacity to maintain the policy. The state needed to form working committee on QA to solve this problem. (Interview, November 23, 2010)

This excerpt illustrates how the Thai state has to outsource its function of policymaking to other actors. In this case, it is the university administration and a few active policy entrepreneurs. The inclusion of these actors has not only helped promote a participatory approach in policy making, but it is also a survival strategy for the state as they relied on the expertise of these external actors for technical support.

The inclusion of these actors in the policy process is mutually exclusive and beneficial to the state as well as the policy entrepreneurs. Many university executives also use the policy space available at the MUA/OHEC to promote their preferred agenda. In this case, the university executives use MUA to promote QA and other quality-related policy to ensure university management. As mentioned, university academics have been considered part of the civil service. Hence, many of the university executives have been appointed to leadership positions at the MUA/OHEC. The inclusion of university executives in the policymaking circle has been useful for both the bureaucrats and the executives. The former uses the inclusion to justify their policy, while the latter uses the state space to insert their policy beliefs and exercise influence. Given that the policymakers and university executives have interacted and shared their opinions in various situations prior to the official policy enforcement, the quality coalition ensured that the policy would be implemented by key stakeholders.

The integral relationship between university executives and the policymaking process at OHEC is also illustrated in the promotion of Thailand's Qualification Framework (TQF). TQF is comprised of detailed questionnaires requesting all the academics to file their lesson plans and expected student outcomes. Interviews with university executives shed light on their agreement that this policy is conducive to the

university's management. Since the board members of OHEC come from the university sector, the view of the university executives is represented at the OHEC decision-making. Given that OHEC board members are also board members of various university councils, there are different channels for the university executives to be heard and share their views. In fact, OHEC board members strategically use the opinion of the university executives as the justification to promote the policy. In an interview, one university executive argued:

TQF is a mechanism created to oversee the internal management of the university. University rector came to tell me that do not abolish it because it enabled the university management to assess and inspect the quality of academics and faculty members in the university. TQF is a system to ensure quality management, it is a tool to enforce quality and a foundation for development. Many of the university people told me that TQF is a dream tool to promote quality. (Interview, September 2, 2010)

The interviewee is a respected individual in the higher education sector. The account of his interview displays an integral relationship between university executives and the high-level decision-making at OHEC. It illustrates how OHEC board members use the voices of university executives to justify the policy, while the university executives use the OHEC policy space to push for their preferred agenda. Given that OHEC promotes TQF and other quality policies, university executives can also refer to the legal commitment and policy mandate from the state to ensure that academics within the university follow the contested policy inside their institution. The involvement of various voices from the universities enables OHEC to promote and justify quality policy as the need of the universities rather than a top-down approach imposed by OHEC. Undoubtedly, the quality coalition between technocrats and university executives has helped to maintain the promotion of quality policy in Thailand.

Although there is a policy consensus that QA was necessary, each group of policymakers and university executives supports QA from differing vantage points, and

they are not always in agreement with each other as to why QA is necessary. This section maps out differing groups within the QA coalition and discusses their points of view.

The first group of QA advocates comprises senior technocrats in the education sector. They promoted QA in relation to the massification of higher education, and the decentralization and restructuring of education management. Decentralization and QA have been seen as an integral policy globally, as is the case in Thailand. Although the argument that scores gained in the QA results are not equivalent to quality higher education remains debatable, advocates for a decentralized autonomous university policy have undoubtedly used the QA results to signify the success of new university management and structure. A former Minister of Education and senior policymaker who was actively involved in the making of the Act argued:

With decentralization, schools will become more responsible in their management, allocation of resources and other things. Therefore, it is important to have some kind of standards to measure and evaluate the performance. If we decentralize without following up the quality and standards of the institutions, how would we succeed in reforming Thai education for better quality? (Interview, August 11, 2010)

This interview excerpt provides an insight into the rationale of the Thai senior policymaker. Although decentralization has been a contested policy of the National Education Act from multiple actors and levels (Tan, 2007), it is used here as an uncontested concept and a rationale to justify another set of policies, which is that of quality assessment. The integral links between decentralization, assessment, and accountability are presented as uncontested and policy common sense. In another interview, a senior policymaker involved in the implementation of ONESQA argued that the role of ONESQA is essential in the context of decentralization and deregulation of power in Thai education in general and the higher education setting in particular. ONESQA quality indicators are meant to perform regulatory power over the maintenance of institutional quality. It is argued:

The decentralization process to Education Service Areas or University Councils required quality assessment to ensure that the educational institutions will not exploit the power in the wrong way. The role of ONESQA is to evaluate that the institutions meet the standards. If you met the given standards, then you are entitled to the right to control your institutions. If you did not meet the standards, you should not be given the autonomy. We need more quality competition. (Interview, January 18, 2010)

University executives are the second group in the quality coalition. This group refers to university executives such as university rectors, vice rectors, or board members. Their main argument in supporting QA is that it enables them to properly manage higher education institutions. The data created and collected for QA and the management procedure enable them to properly understand what their institutions need in order to improve. Many of them refer to the concept of a “mirror” to indicate their advocacy for QA. In an interview, the senior administrator of Prince Songkla University said: “QA provided useful evidence for us to know what is going inside the faculty and university. It mirrored the reality and helped us to improve ourselves” (Interview, January 18, 2011).

Another common policy belief that connected these university executives with the senior bureaucrats in the Thai higher education setting is their conviction that Autonomous University policy is the appropriate way to manage higher education. Given that Autonomous University policy stresses and highlights the importance of institutional autonomy, self-finance, and self-regulation, it is another form of decentralization of education management. University executives from King Mongkut Technology Institute, the first public university to undergo administrative transformation, assured the success of autonomous university policy by using QA performance to support this case:

There are several indicators that demonstrate why the university has performed better under Autonomous University policy. First, we look at the performance of the students. We look at the output not only in terms of employment, but the amount of salary they received. It is considered very high. This is an obvious indicator. Second evidence is the income restructuring of the university. Previously, the state might give us 2 baht, while we earn just 1 baht. Within the past nine years, it is a reverse outcome. We now earn 2 and receive 1 from the state. This is the only public university that is able to self-finance in such scale.... We do a lot of projects

and consultant works. This illustrates our quality. The third part is the academic standing has been much better. In terms of publication, we are the top tier of Thai university per capita. Based on the revision of OHEC and even Thailand Research Fund, it reassured us that we are the top in terms technology, engineering. There are so many indicators that support the university has performed significantly well. It is an evidence-based policymaking. (Interview, January 5, 2010)

This interview passage illustrates how the university administrator and a strong advocate of Autonomous University policy used different QA indicators to substantiate their policy preferences. While senior bureaucrats argued that QA is a necessary mechanism to manage higher education in the setting and context of decentralization, this interview also actively used QA quantitative measures and QA evidence as the indicators of a "successful" Autonomous University. Given that this university focuses on science, technology, and engineering, which favor quantitative measures and methods, it is understandable as to how the quantitative nature of QA results are praised.

The third group of quality advocates is academics from the Education Faculty, especially those specializing in Assessment. The roles of these specialists and faculty members in reinforcing QA and other quality policies are threefold. Firstly, they have served in key positions at the Ministry of Education as well as the Office of Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). The first director of ONESQA, Dr. Somwang Pittiyanuwat, who stayed in the directorship for nearly 9 years, was the former dean of the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University. He is a nationally acclaimed researcher specializing in assessment. Besides Dr. Pittiyanuwat, there have been many other assessment specialists serving as board members as well as advisors to the Ministry of Education and ONESQA. Undoubtedly, they have been able to exert their policy preference and conviction on QA and performance-based indicators through their leadership positions. Secondly, education faculty members have been commissioned to write about QA and other quality policies from elsewhere. Policy visits have been translated into policy documents, and they have been extensively used and referred to as

the sources of policy inspiration and rationale. Thirdly, these academics can maintain a dominant role in QA by supervising masters and PhD theses about differing facets of QA issues. A document analysis shows 409 masters theses and 100 doctoral dissertations. Using the search term “quality assessment” retrieved 434 items, of which 85 were masters theses and doctoral dissertations.¹⁸ Of these two searches, 27 items related to the higher education sector. When I analyzed the methodology of the 27 searches relating to QA and higher education, they were comprised of 15 that used quantitative methodology, 8 that used qualitative methodology, and 4 that were uncertain. Most focused on improving the QA indicators at various levels of education. By supervising research students to write about QA issues, education academics can maintain their supremacy and strengthen the QA coalition.

Representatives from the business sector also played a role in supporting QA. Given that the National Education Act of 1999 embraced the concept of participation and attempted to incorporate representatives from all sectors into education, a significant number of businessmen and women have been included as board members and advisors to the Ministry of Education as well as ONESQA. Since outcome-based policymaking and performance indicators have been used widely in the private sector, these individuals reinforced the necessity of goal-setting, evaluation, and benchmarking in the education sector. During the fieldwork, I had the opportunity to interview board members of both the Office of Higher Education Commission and ONESQA who represented the private sector. One board member from ONESQA actively referred to his involvement and experience in the business sector as a helpful perspective to push for "appropriate" quality assessment policy:

I am coming from the private sector. I am a board member of so many key organizations and companies in Thailand. At least four to five of those are in

¹⁸Document search at the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University Library Information Center, September 1, 2011.

the stock market exchange and have worked with many key educators for the past thirty years.... If I could re-arrange QA according to my will, I will only have 5 indicators. Just like in private sector, we only focus on 5 important things as the bottom line of our decision. These include outcome mapping and impacts of education. As a representative of the private sector, who is the employer of the graduates, the quality of the graduates now is problematic. I always talk to another board member who comes from private sector, a CEO of Toshiba Thailand; we both are dissatisfied with the quality of graduates.... Another area is cost-benefit analysis. It is also very important to private sector management. If we invest, we must get profits, a lot of profits. Although I don't want to talk about profit in education, I must admit that the return to investment of Thai education is also dissatisfying. We can compete with our neighboring country, Vietnam. (Public conference, December 13, 2010)

This excerpt is insightful in understanding the logic of this policy advisor, who is a representative from the private sector. Not only did he outwardly use his working experiences in the private sector to support his credentials, but he also actively used lessons learned and values of the business world to guide what QA should be. According to him, successful QA policy and indicators should only underscore the key values of outcomes, impacts, efficiency, and most importantly, cost-effectiveness and return of investment. Furthermore, he also emphasized that, based on his experience as an employer of these graduates (who are considered the outcomes of education), he is dissatisfied with the quality and skills they possess. It is evident that the personal experience and viewpoint of the policy advisors, in this case from business sector, are influential in how they view and guide QA policy.

Not only does this quality coalition share policy beliefs regarding the necessity of implementing quality policies in the higher education sector, but they also share fundamental beliefs on the scientific-cum-positivism paradigm and prefer a quantitative methodology to qualitative ones. Beyond their shared conviction about policy solutions, closer scrutiny of the professional profiles and educational experiences of the key policy entrepreneurs in Thailand's higher education sector elucidate that scientific disciplines dominated the policy scene. Higher education executives promoted QA based on their

professional experiences and educational backgrounds. Given that most of the senior executives in Thai universities are medical doctors, engineers, or scientists, the use of performance indicators has been a familiar approach in their respective disciplines. For example, medical doctors compared QA in education to that of quality assurance in the health sector, while engineers were used to following QA guidelines in the industrial sector. Since many of the health and engineering academics who became leading university executives were familiar with QA and other performance-based indicators in their respective disciplines, it was very convenient for them to borrow similar techniques and apply them to the education sector. A former bureaucrat who has been involved with QA since its inception argued that the QA movement in Thailand is pushed and maintained by medical doctors from various higher education institutions (Interview, August 2, 2010). Observations during QA workshops supported this point. The majority of QA assessors came from medicine faculties and science backgrounds from many universities in Thailand.

In the case of Thai higher education in general, the scientists argued that the major challenges to quality education are always structural. To overcome structural bottlenecks, it is essential to reform the entire structure and system. Accordingly, the transformation from public universities to autonomous universities has been offered as a policy solution. The influence of the scientists and scientific method also dominated quality policy in particular. The key policymakers who formulated the quality indicators at the national and institutional levels also came from medical and engineering backgrounds. Given that quality assessment had been an acceptable practice in the health and industrial sector, it was logical and rational for these policymakers to introduce it in the education sector. During the interviews with medical doctors involved in educational policymaking, reference to the practice at hospitals was mentioned, while the engineers often quoted their experiences from the industrial sector.

QA for industry is not so different from QA for education. The only difference is that we don't call students customers but we call them service recipients or stakeholders. Well, it is the same thing. (Interview, November 23, 2010)

The increasing involvement of science academics from diverse disciplines in policymaking is evident both at the institutional and national levels. It was evident that the policy entrepreneurs in powerful positions at the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) and Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) have been educated in scientific disciplines. Based on the 33 interviews with policymakers and advisors to the Ministry of Education and ONESQA, 10 senior policymakers came from the science disciplines of medicine and engineering. Repeatedly, their personal experiences in health, science, and engineering were used to support the necessity of having QA policy in higher education. To illustrate, one former president of Chiang Mai University who has been involved with QA policy since its inception argued:

The community of the Faculty of Medicine is the leader in QA policy. When the concept was first introduced there, every member was interested.... We evaluated each other and formed the Consortium of Medical Schools. Everyone was in the same process and helped each other develop. Then the Ministry of University Affairs was interested in QA and wanted to push forward the policy. Our group of different Faculty of Medicine in Thailand then became the leaders of the group. We experimented the policy documents and we welcomed others to visit how we do things. Then MUA created a pilot project with five main faculties involved, including Medicine, Science, Engineering, Business Administration, and Education Faculties. (Interview, September 6, 2012)

The excerpt clearly illustrates how QA originated within the community of medical academics, engineering, and science faculties. It reinforces the concept of how QA is a standard practice in these fields and that the policy advocates relied on their expertise from their sectors in order to implement and justify QA in higher education. The selection of the five pilot projects to implement QA also provides an interesting insight, as they represent the sectors that led the QA movement. Another interview with an OHEC Board

member reiterated the cross-sectoral borrowing of QA: “QA began in [the] health sector. World Health Organization promoted something like this as well as the Ministry of Health in Thailand” (Interview, September 2, 2010).

In terms of advocates from the Faculty of Education, they mostly came from the quantitative research tradition rather than a qualitative one. Undoubtedly, their disciplinary backgrounds have had an enormous impact on the way they view the world and influenced how they perceive educational problems and offer policy solutions. As will be illustrated, the struggle to implement QA in Thailand was to clarify the division of labor between ONESQA and OHEC. While ONESQA was mandated to focus on the outputs and outcomes of education, OHEC strived to highlight the inputs and processes. The mode of thinking of education as a production line comprised of input, process, and output reinforced the dominant logic of the industries in education policy. Undoubtedly, the policymakers are the main carriers of the policy beliefs from one sector to another. Grindle and Thomas (1991) have highlighted personal and professional experiences as the major sources of influences that contribute to the strengthening of policy beliefs and result in the choice of policy options.

Interviews with the policymakers also illuminated a sense of superiority of the scientific discipline over other methods. In some instances, the interviewees outwardly expressed the necessity of having scientists in education policymaking. One senior policymaker, the former Secretary General of OHEC, confidently argued: “Education is too important to be left in the hands of educators” (Interview, January 5, 2010). While the expression reinforced the participatory rhetoric in education policymaking, it also displayed a sense of critique and discontent among educators. A different interview reinforced this discontent and scientific superiority. Another former Secretary General of the Ministry of University Affairs supported this point:

People from the science background see things in a systematic approach.
When people from science, medical and engineering backgrounds look at

education policy, they will think in a bigger picture. Educators only look at the pedagogy and teaching method. People who think of bigger picture will be more beneficial in the policy planning. (Interview, August 3, 2010)

The domination of the positivist cum scientific paradigm and preference for market-based policymaking among Thai policy elites has created a policy coalition to support QA and other quality policies in the higher education sector. Although they agree that QA is necessary to assure and control the quality of higher education, this section has illustrated that each group has differing opinions in terms of logic and rationale. The personal and professional experiences of key policymakers and senior university executives reinforced the importance of outcome-based quality control and performance indicators in higher education.

It must be noted that proponents and advocates of quality policy in Thailand do not always agree with each other regarding the credibility and functions of QA policy. For example, while some university executive believe in using the percentage of graduates who secure employment to indicate the quality of university outputs (Interview, January 5, 2010), other university executives believe such an indicator is simplistic and is not sufficient (Interview, September 2, 2010). The latter view is supported by the academics from the health sector. Although they generally agree and support the necessity of QA, they believe that QA in higher education, in comparison to QA in health, is relatively easy, simple, and inadequate (Interviews, September 2, 2010; September 6, 2010). As already mentioned, private sector representatives viewed that the current quality indicators do not provide a true reflection of the low skilled that Thai graduates possess (Public conference, December 13, 2010).

This section's primary objective has been to shed lights on the policy beliefs and profiles of QA advocates. The divergent views on QA from different actors, especially the national movement against QA of the academics from Humanities and Social Science disciplines, will be further elaborated in Chapter VII.

5.2 Global Contexts

The interviews revealed an intricate relationship between global factors and local actors in introducing and implementing quality policies in Thailand. Although globalization or global influences have become a convenient answer to policy context justifying the emergence of quality policies, they mean different things to Thai policymakers and have been used to serve at various stages of policy formulation and implementation. Similar to Koenig-Archibugi (2010), the influences of globalization on public policy can be differentiated into global competition, global communication, and global cooperation. These differentiations provide a heuristic lens for analyzing the variations of global influence on Thailand's higher education policy.

5.2.1 Global Competition

Global competition has been an influential factor in justifying the emergence of differing quality policies in Thailand. In Thailand, globalization has created an environment of increasing economic competitiveness, requiring the government to equip higher education institutions with better policy strategy. One informant argued: "If you don't have knowledge and skills, you will not survive in globalization" (Interview, August 6, 2010).

Undoubtedly, globalization created a new policy landscape for higher education institutions to prepare themselves. Thai policymakers believed that QA and various quality tools are the key policy instruments to help universities achieve. Globalization has been presented as an irresistible factor Thailand cannot escape; otherwise the country will not be able to catch up with neighboring countries or be at par with international standards. In fact, the emergence of international benchmarking in higher education illustrates how global competition has been embedded within the concerns of policymakers. Increasing attention paid to the international league table exemplifies how

the Thai state became much more aware of the growing competitiveness in higher education.

Although international rankings have existed in various forms, the specific university-ranking has created an unprecedented competitive policy landscape for higher education institutions. In fact, it has been a recent phenomenon. In the case of Thailand, the Asia Week International Ranking published in the early 1990s has been one of the most eminent factors pushing for policy change. Asia Week was a weekly magazine similar to Newsweek, Time, and The Economist. As it began to publish the ranking of differing Asian universities, Thai policymakers, especially senior bureaucrats and university executives, became more alert to the necessity of policy change. During that time, the Office of the National Education Council commissioned studies and reports to analyze the methods used by Asia Week and its implications for Thai universities. Similar to other countries, Thai policymakers used the low ranking of Thai universities from Asia Week as an indicator to “scandalize” education reform in the country (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

Although the problem of quality had been a topic of concern for many years, the league table provided concrete evidence and justification for the push for reform. The fact that the league table focused on Asia instigated greater pressure, being more politically sensitive and volatile in the eyes of Thai policymakers. One of the former Ministers of Education argued:

The major problem of Thai higher education is quality, the low ranking quality of our system. Overall, the Thai system is really backward and badly ranked in the international league tables. The quality of the students is also low. Very few of our institutions are ranked well in the international competitions world-wide. In short, we have problems of quality students, curriculum, teaching and learning. (Interview, September 13, 2010)

That passage encapsulates the politician’s world view and conviction of how Thailand’s low ranking in international comparisons is equivalent to the bad quality of every aspect of the system. In that view he is not alone. This view is typical in most Thai

policy papers, newspapers, and interviews. The public, policymakers, and politicians reiterated the low ranking of Thai universities as the pertinent ill that must be cured. During the fieldwork, interviewees constantly referred to the low ranking of Thai universities in these international comparisons to elucidate the lack of quality and the necessity for reform. Discontent toward Thai higher education increased each time a new publication was released. The media (both TV and press) would run stories about the worrisome state of higher learning in Thailand.

Throughout the past decade, various policy mechanisms and project initiatives have developed in the area of higher education, simply to boost the national universities' standing. A case in point is the National Research Universities (NRU) selection of the nine best universities in Thailand to receive extra funding to boost research and development. Given the global trend to create “world-class” universities, this rhetoric became prevalent in Thailand and became an issue of concern for policymakers and university executives alike.

The goal of achieving world-class university status is evident in all policy brochures and university advertisements. Another interview with a senior bureaucrat at the Office of Higher Education Commission encapsulated how the objectives of improving Thai higher education have been integrated to catch up with the global trend of establishing a world-class university. Undoubtedly, the definitions of having higher quality as well as reaching world-class status have simply translated into having a higher university ranking in the league table. In an observation of the policy workshop among quality assessors of the OHEC, the opening speech reiterated this point.

We have to upgrade the quality of Thai higher education to be globally recognized. By upgrading, we must push our universities to become World-Class. International ranking signifies international quality. (OHEC policy workshop, February 4, 2011)

Not only has the obsession for ranking resulted in various new policy initiatives, but many policymakers have also become interested in developing a national league table to evaluate the quality of Thai higher education themselves.

The rationales for publishing its own national league tables are threefold. Firstly, these policymakers strongly believe ranking is a global tool for assessing the quality of higher education institutions. Another interview encapsulated this point: “In the present situation of the world, we are inter-connected. Whether you like it or not, ranking is an important policy tool” (Interview, September 10, 2010). Secondly, it is believed that ranking will enable the state to better allocate resources. Politicians believe that with ranking and evaluation, the state will be able to better allocate resources and improve the overall quality of Thai higher education. Thirdly, the public has the right to know the quality of universities in order to make informed choices. The advocates believe that publishing the national league table will ultimately push for greater competitiveness, which will directly result in improvement of the sector as a whole.

Despite the seeming policy consensus around the merit of international ranking, creating a national league table was a different story. When the Office of Higher Education Commission, under the leadership of Dr. Pavich Thongroj, published the national league table in 2006, there was huge national resistance from various groups within the higher education sector, including the bureaucrats, university executives, and academics alike. Surprisingly, much of the resistance came from the policymakers who believed in international benchmarking. The resistance attacked the results, methodologies, and the rationale for the ranking itself.

When the OHEC did the ranking, it was rushed and many stakeholders did not agree with the indicators. They said that the indicators were copied from other places without adapting to the Thai contexts. The resistance was strongest from the universities that did not get high ranking. (Interview, January 24, 2012)

Paradoxically, although there seems to be a consensus among Thai policymakers and university executives on the use of league tables to identify strengths and weaknesses and push for policy change, there was a clear resistance against the OHEC published national league table. The critical questions then become: Why does the same group of policymakers embrace the international league table while rejecting national ranking? What are the differences between the two?

Plausibly, when the results came from external sources or organizations, it created a certain level of partiality and credibility. Some went as far as to argue that the national league table inflicted conflicts and aggravated the divide between different institutions within the country. Hence the life of the national league table was short-lived. When there was a change in the leadership at OHEC, the new Secretary General and Minister of Education agreed to halt the program in the name of “national reconciliation” (Interview, August 5, 2010). Evidently, it was politically more convenient to refer to external results rather than creating an internal one.

The paradoxical relationship between Thai policymakers and use of the league table illustrates the flexibility to import policy from elsewhere when the policy is heavily contested locally. Given that most senior bureaucrats and policymakers in the realm of higher education are associated with universities either as board members, executives, or lecturers, the neutrality and impartiality of any league table are questioned. When the national league table was published, resistance from various groups also pointed to the potential bias that the methodology was intentionally favoring particular universities. Therefore, international results are more politically neutral and credible for pushing policy change.

Beyond the international league table, the emergence of QA in Thailand can also be attributed to growing global competition. Many policymakers indicate that the rationale behind introducing QA was because “other countries are doing it.” Responses such as “everybody has it” are common across the interviews. There is a sense of policy

competition and a necessity to keep up with international best practices in order to remain on a par with other countries. It was evident that the Thai policymakers felt compelled to introduce QA due to external pressure. Some argued that it was a self-imposed external pressure. When asked why Thailand implemented QA, many policymakers referred to globalization or global trends as the primary indicator. One particular senior bureaucrat at the Ministry of University Affairs argued:

It is a global trend. When we began talking about the need to have QA in Thailand, almost every developed country had already introduced the QA system. If Thailand does not have a QA system, how can we assure others that our higher education is in good quality? This is the essential reason that we needed to develop a QA system in Thailand. (Interview, August 3, 2010)

This interviewee was considered one of the key individuals supporting the implementation of QA in Thailand. Given that he was committed to the policy and strongly believed that Thailand needed to catch up with others, he was rather uncomfortable with the question, “Why did Thailand introduce this policy?” Immediately after he heard the question, he raised his voice and rushed to respond as quoted above. According to him, this was a commonsense thing to do and should not be questioned. Many policymakers also used “globalization” or “global trend” as their immediate answer to the origin of QA in Thailand. Some even argued that given that it is a global trend, Thailand would be at a disadvantage if they did not follow. One of the senior policy advisors of the MUA persuasively argued:

This is an international trend. If we don’t do it, we will be in trouble. Whether we like it or not, we need to have these policy tools too. If we are slow, it will be impossible to catch up. If our university is careless about these developments, surely we will be falling behind. (Interview, September 10, 2010)

In the policy environment where many countries began to implement QA, it was considered necessary for Thailand to catch up with others. The sense of policy competition was evident as the main rationale for QA in the country.

5.2.2 Global Communication

The emergence of QA and other quality policies is the result of increasing global communication among the higher education sector. Policymakers can learn from each other through increasing public policy spaces for policymakers to exchange ideas about the latest international trends. From the interviews, it is evident that Thai policymakers received external influence through both reading and attending international seminars.

Prior to the promulgation of the National Education Act of 1999, there were myriad commissions conducting institutional research on the best practices of various aspects of education reform. A literature review of other countries' experiences contributed to background knowledge of the policy, its structure, and its implications. In addition, there were study visits, which are a more traditional form of education policy learning. The government commissioned senior bureaucrats and academics to go to various countries and "learn from the best practices."

Many policymakers would cite their study visits to foreign countries as the origins of QA policy. During the policy formulation period, Thailand commissioned various study tours to learn about QA issues in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Undoubtedly, those three countries have been the pioneers in both the QA initiative as well as in New Public Management. Not only did Thailand send representatives to visit these countries, but the Office of National Education Council also invited their representatives to Thailand. These included the Chief Inspector of the Office of Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED hereafter) of UK, the British Council, and the Head of the Education Review Officer, New Zealand (Interview, December 7, 2009).

Undoubtedly, the 1990s witnessed a burgeoning of international publications and conferences regarding QA and other quality policies for higher education. Hence there were numerous policy channels for policymakers to learn of and be influenced by QA.

One of the policymakers at MUA captured her experience during the QA policy formulation and Thailand's aspiration to adopt the policy:

I am working in the International Affairs Department at the Ministry of University Affairs. During that time I had various opportunities to attend international conferences and all of them were talking about quality. Therefore if Thailand was to “play up in the international role,” we have to focus on quality of our higher education. (Interview, August 2, 2010)

This quotation illustrates two important points. On the one hand, it exemplifies how international conferences provided a policy space to reiterate the importance of QA. Since it was on the agenda of various conferences, QA received significant attention from the policymakers involved. On the other hand, it illustrates how QA has become the equivalent of modernity in the realm of higher education. In order to be perceived as at par with other countries, it was significant for countries to implement the policy on the agenda. The policymaker related how Thailand's aspiration to be respected in the international arena was based on the implementation of QA and quality issues in higher education. Furthermore, this reinforced the concept of self-imposed aspiration in the case of Thailand. There was no direct external pressure to emulate the policy. Rather, the policy was an aspiration among key bureaucrats and executives. The role of policy belief will be further elaborated on in the national context section.

5.2.3 Global Cooperation

There has been increasing global cooperation in the realm of QA. Cooperation has occurred from various aspects, including being aid-dependent and technical assistance. Although Thailand has not been an aid-dependent country in the traditional sense (with the exception of the Asian economic crisis of 1997), the country has received generous international support and technical assistance from various international donors. For example, USAID provided financial support to commission the First Long Range Plan for Higher Education in 1990. As aforementioned, the Plan reinforced the United States policy conviction of lessening the role of the state in the higher education sector to

nurture greater institutional autonomy, accountability, and academic freedom (Ministry of University Affairs, 1990).

Specifically for QA and global policy, international actors continued to play a role in fostering dialogue and cooperation across borders. Organizations involved include UNESCO ASIA-PACIFIC and the World Bank as well as a new global institution that dedicates itself to the QA purpose, called International Networks for Quality Assurance Agencies (INQAHEE). These international organizations created policy spaces for policymakers from various countries to meet and discuss the quality agenda. They also created policy opportunities to foster international or bilateral cooperation between countries on the higher education sector for various projects. Their involvement is particularly acute in countries that depend on their financial assistance to start a policy. In an interview conducted with a higher education expert at UNESCO-Asia Pacific, it was revealed that the working processes within UNESCO helped to push forward QA as a policy recommendation for countries in the region. In the name of “capacity building,” UNESCO-Asia Pacific funded projects in the region and nurtured policy co-operation. In the words of the interviewee:

We do many things that promote QA. We do capacity building. Give you an example. Vietnam wanted to set up a QA agency and we helped them. We commissioned this report and we bring in expertise. Laos also wanted to set up a QA agency, we sent them to visit Malaysia and Thailand. Bhutan wanted to set up a QA agency, and we consulted with them and told them how to go about it. (Interview, August 27, 2010)

This vividly illustrates how international organizations such as UNESCO-Asia Pacific provided support to promote QA in the region. By commissioning reports as well as organizing conferences, UNESCO Asia-Pacific has provided technical assistance for various countries in the region to learn about the policy and indirectly endorse it as the way forward for higher education. Although UNESCO does not directly fund the creation of QA agencies in Thailand, their involvement in nurturing international and bilateral cooperation among experts of higher education policy has been significant.

International organizations have continued to play a great role throughout the policy implementation process. I had the opportunity to meet with the World Bank consultants to Thailand, and they shared with me their upcoming QA project with the Thai government. After ten years of QA implementation in the country, the World Bank's new grant is meant to fund a pilot project within the Office of Higher Education Commission on the Malcolm Baldrige approach to QA. Although QA has been quite established in Thailand and the country did not need financial assistance in this area, a discussion with the key informant revealed that this project is meant to indirectly encourage/enforce civil servants within OHEC to push for the Malcolm Baldrige approach. This reinforces how Thai policymakers are able to bring in international/external influences to benefit their policy agenda. The responsible person for the Baldrige project argued:

The Bank consultant called me, said that they have extra funding to promote QA and asked what could be done in Thailand. I said we should spend it on a pilot project to promote new a QA system in universities. Well, people at the OHEC were not so happy about finding more work for them to do. But if we received the grant, they need to be committed to do it. (Interview, December 28, 2011)

Although Thailand does not require financial assistance from international organizations, their role has been significant in various aspects. International funding can increase policy attention to a particular project, in this case, the promotion of QA in higher education. Furthermore, as the interview indicates, the policymaker in Thailand has used the funding commitment as the instrument for convincing colleagues and other bureaucrats to support the project.

Bilateral cooperation has also been important. In this case, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia played pertinent roles during the policy formulation period. For the UK, the British Council and Office for Standards in Education, and Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) funded workshops for QA as well as sent their Chief

Inspector to Thailand during the early days of the QA process so that the Thai policymakers could learn from the UK system (Interview, December 7, 2010).

The policymaker indicated that Thailand continued to receive policy advice from the British Council and OFSTED during the critical days of promoting QA in the country (Interview, December 7, 2010). Not only has the historical relationship been a significant indicator of policy cooperation; it is argued that the sharing of policy belief in broader issues is also important. This is the case in point for New Zealand. Given that New Zealand has championed the decentralization process and been acclaimed for its New Public Management reform, Thai policymakers have visited the country and cited it as a crucial example for policy learning (Interviews, August 11, 2010; December 7, 2010). The shared policy belief between policymakers in Thailand and New Zealand in terms of increasing institutional autonomy and the need for accountability provided the necessary dialogue for learning, emulation, and exchange.

Another significant bilateral partner in the QA policy is Australia. Since Australia has been increasingly more aggressive in promoting their education services for Thais to study abroad as well as opening up their institutions in the country, it has an interest in expanding its policy influences to the Thai higher education sector. Australia has given 1 million Australian dollars to fund policy studies of the National Qualification Frameworks (NQF), which later became the Thailand Qualification's Framework (TQF). While the relationship between Thailand and each bilateral partner varies, historical legacies, institutional contexts, and national agendas continue to shape policy cooperation, emulation, and borrowing. The next section will focus on differing justifications at the regional level.

5.3 Regional Contexts

This section sheds light on the regional specific characters and factors that influenced the emergence of quality policies in Thailand. In relation to regionalization, two factors are highlighted. On the one hand, there is a burgeoning increase in regional organizations in Asia and the Pacific, focusing on higher education. On the other hand, the promotion of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 created a policy landscape for greater mobilization of personnel and exchange of ideas between countries in the region. Education is no exception. Given that most of the Asian countries have institutionalized some kind of QA mechanism since the late 1990s, this created an environment of policy pressure for others in the region to emulate.

5.3.1 Regional Organizations and Leadership

The relationship between Thailand and regional organizations can be understood from two perspectives. Firstly, similar to the argument made in globalization, regional organizations create pressure to harmonize QA policies. Secondly, Thailand has strategically used various regional outlets and policy spaces to exert their regional leadership in the realm of higher education. Through the promotion of QA in the region, Thailand has posited regional leadership in QA by initiating projects for regional integration as well as hosting regional seminars and conferences. Subsequently, Thai policymakers have strategically used regional agreements or regional frameworks to push for necessary policy change in the country. The dialectical and dynamic relationship between regional pressure and national policy change is well illustrated in the following passage of the regional policy document. It argues:

QA consciousness has been rapidly implanted at institutional, national and international levels. Collective movements are active since quality achievement requires a comparative approach, not only to understand the

thinking patterns and practices of one's peer but also to create "peer pressure" for self-improvement. (AUN, 2004, p. 1)¹⁹

Evidently, regional peer pressure has been intentionally created and used by the policymakers to push for policy change and ensure its implementation. In Southeast Asia, there are several regional organizations that engage in QA issues to heighten peer pressure. It must be noted that each organization functions under different legal frameworks, engaging with each other through different levels of policy implementation and resulting in differing abilities to push for change.

Many of these regional organizations are under the rubric of the Association of South East Asia Nations or ASEAN. For example, ASEAN Quality Assurance Networks or AQAN has been created to strengthen regional integration within Southeast Asian countries (Interview, September 10, 2010), while the ASEAN University Network aimed to create regional cooperation at the university level. There are also organizations that have been created under global organization such as the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN). Founded in 2004, APQN has been the regional hub of the INQAHEE global outreach. The discussion below highlights some of the key regional organizations in QA and quality-related issues.

One of the most active regional organizations promoting regional harmonization in higher education is the South East Asia Ministry of Education Organization – Regional Center for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED hereafter). With its headquarters in Bangkok, SEAMEO-RIHED has a significant role to play in the harmonization of QA and other policies for higher education. The organization has been responsible for several activities. For example, SEAMEO-RIHED hosted and funded a regional seminar on Quality Assurance in Southeast Asian countries in Bangkok in September 2010. The organization also supports publications on higher education issues in the region as well as organizing study tours. Study tours have visited the United States,

¹⁹Accessed 29th of January, 2012 from: http://www.aunsec.org/site/upload/qa/AUNQA_Guideline_bluebook.pdf

the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. During these tours, SEAMEO-RIHED welcomed the participation of bureaucrats from the Office of Higher Education Commission as well as university executives and academics. Under SEAMEO-RIHED leadership, there have been myriad regional seminars for all levels of stakeholders. There were regional seminars for the Secretary Generals of Higher Education Commissions, regional seminars for university presidents, and regional seminars for university administrators on different issues pertaining to higher education. Issues discussed included mobility and internationalization of higher education in the region, university governance, regional research clusters, and restructuring of higher education systems. Undoubtedly, these opportunities created space for policy engagement and exchange, which reinforced the global and regional trend of having QA and other quality policies in the country and institutions. At the same time, the representatives from SEAMEO-RIHED sit on the boards of both national and regional organizations of higher education to push the agenda of regional harmonization in higher education in other institutional arenas.

Together with the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA), SEAMEO-RIHED pushed for the inauguration of another regional organization to be responsible for harmonizing QA issues in the region. On the 8th of July 2008, the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network was created after sessions of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Agencies Roundtable Meeting, hosted by MQA and SEAMEO-RIHED.

AQAN was created to enhance regional opportunities for differing QA agencies to network, exchange best practices, and develop capacity building amongst the ten member countries of ASEAN.²⁰ In the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, it was stated that the goal of AQAN was to create “an active movement towards the development of the ASEAN

²⁰The 10 member countries are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Economic Community”²¹ as well as push for the creation of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework. Similar to the goals of SEAMEO-RIHED, the policy statement clearly outlined the objectives of AQAN, which are to harmonize QA practices in the region as well as promote the mobility of students and academics within the higher education sector of the member countries.

During the three years since its inception, AQAN has organized various networking events at various levels. From the senior executives to young accessors' meetings, the organization has been active in promoting regional exchanges in the hope of achieving an ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework as well as an ASEAN Qualification Framework. While high-level policy meetings happen once a year, or every two years, working committees on specific issues meet regularly many times a year to consolidate the issues and draft agenda for regional meetings (Interview, September 10, 2010). These meetings have facilitated cross-border engagement between policymakers of differing ASEAN countries and have reinforced policy trends between one another. Interviews with key policymakers in Thailand illustrate a policy initiative for cross-border assessment. One policymaker was invited to assess universities in Malaysia as a pilot project to push for regional assessment (Interview, January 11, 2010).

While AQAN and APQN established networks and collaborations between differing QA agencies in the region, there is another organization that works at the level of higher education institutions. The ASEAN University Network (AUN) has been active in promoting QA and harmonizing QA guidelines at the regional level. The Bangkok Accord, which was initiated by Thai senior bureaucrat Dr. Vanchai Sirichana, who advocated QA in Thailand, was agreed on in 1998.

The purpose of the Bangkok Accord was to strengthen institutional partnerships between AUN member universities. Not only did the AUN Board of Trustees agree to

²¹Accessed 31st of January, 2012 from: <http://www.mqa.gov.my/aqan/declaration/KualaLumpurDeclaration.pdf>

recognize 1999 as the “AUN Year of Quality Education,” but the organization also stipulated an AUN-QA Network to encourage university administrators responsible for QA to work together. Since April 2001, it has been reported that the Chief Quality Officers (CQO) of each member university have been meeting every six months to exchange knowledge and trends on QA-related issues. It must be noticed that the creation of the Bangkok Accord in 1998 was only one year after Ministry of University Affairs in Thailand published the policy paper to encourage universities to develop QA structure in their universities. Although Thailand was still at the infant stage in implementing QA in the country, there was a clear attempt by the policy elites to become the regional leader on the issue.

Undoubtedly, there are numerous global and regional organizations that promote the creation of QA and its harmonization. Each year, policymakers and responsible organizations are able to meet several times to push for their preferred agenda. Not only do these organizations push for a regional QA framework, but they also encourage each member country to share their experiences.

An observer of regional QA policy has witnessed that these meetings have been more ritual than anything else. At each meeting there is limited policy innovation because many representatives continue to repeat the same factual details (Interview, October 18, 2010). Nevertheless, these regional meetings created a certain level of peer pressure for every country in the region to implement QA. One observer argued:

When you are at the ASEAN meetings, every country has to volunteer to do something. I felt compelled that we also have to initiate something so I volunteered to host regional training in Thailand.” (Interview, August 2, 2010)

Not only do international and regional conferences create space for policy communication and exchange, they are also perfect places to reinforce peer-pressure for policy adoption. As has been illustrated, Thai policymakers have also used the existing regional structures as well as created new organizations to exert Thailand's leadership in

the realm of QA and other quality policies. The Thai leadership has clearly been the organizers and host country of SEAMEO-RIHED, AUN, and founder of the AQAN.

5.3.2 Regional Harmonization

The regional political and economic context toward the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 has been used as an important policy factor reinforcing the harmonization movement in the higher education sector and implementing new initiatives. Following the blueprint of the European Union, AEC 2015 attempted to become an integrated economic zone in order to facilitate the free movement of goods, services, and people.²² Undoubtedly, the higher education sector cannot escape the pressure. Through freer mobilization and regional migration, policymakers argue that students and academic staff will be able to travel freely across countries. Therefore, it is important to create acceptable frameworks and comparable standards for higher education institutions in the region. While the policymakers acknowledged the diversity of contexts and uneven development across the region, there is a shared belief that it is necessary to begin the regional project with greater policy convergence.

From 2008 onward, the creation of AEC 2015 and its mobilization argument have frequently been cited as putting significant pressure on reforming higher education. Various quality measures have been introduced to strengthen the sector. During the fieldwork, I attended various workshops and public hearings to discuss potential policies to prepare Thai education for the creation of AEC: “ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 to strengthen regional trade and mobility. Thai education must quickly be improved to keep up with this change” (Public Seminar, February 4, 2011).

Similar to the arguments supporting international ranking and world class universities, the Thai policy elite perceived AEC as another external pressure that

²²Accessed 31st January, 2012 from: http://www.aseansec.org/publications/ASEAN_AECFactBook.pdf

required education reform or policy preparedness. The timing of 2015 gave a sense of urgency. The emergence of the Thailand Qualification Framework (TQF) is a case in point. The objective of TQF required faculties to outline a teaching plan and syllabus for a five-year plan in order to ensure quality at the teaching level as well as learning outcomes of the students. Although policy research and preparation for TQF was done prior to policy agreement on AEC, AEC rhetoric has been used to justify the promulgation of TQF. In an interview with the senior board member at OHEC, the AEC rhetoric to support the case for TQF was reiterated:

TQF is one of the mechanisms that drive quality. It allowed Thailand to communicate with others. Especially we are moving towards ASEAN Economic Community in 2015.... I think the slower we implement, the worse off it is for the country. When ASEAN is all integrated, there will be more mobility and quality is important. Regional mobility and globalization are the key factors to implement TQF. (Interview, September 2, 2010)

The interview highlighted the urgency of promoting a new qualification framework in Thailand and cited the AEC as exerting policy pressure. As the resistance toward TQF built up, policymakers sang in unison that the policy was needed because of regional integration. As has been shown, it is typical of Thai policymakers to use external factors and influences to justify a contested reform in the country. There is also an element of regional competition at play. Policymakers referred to the case of Malaysia to support the need for TQF. They argue that Malaysia had recently implemented this policy and hence it is important for Thailand to keep up with the neighboring country. Similar to the arguments for QA, Thai policymakers are on constant watch for what other countries are doing, especially neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Singapore. Since the three countries have expressed their aspiration to become the “regional education hub,” policy competition in the region is inevitable.

The TQF will be in sync with Malaysian Qualification Framework. Singapore also did it and the UK as well. This tool will enable us to compare with others. (Interview, September 10, 2010)

Despite the compelling rhetoric that AEC called for TQF, the link between regional integration and the new qualification framework is dubious. Firstly, TQF required institutional research prior to its policy promulgation, while AEC 2015 only became a public issue in 2009. Secondly, the argument for regional comparability or international catch-up existed before the emergence of the AEC discourse. Therefore, it was a matter of policy timing rather than actual policy rationale.

Research on TQF was finished during the time that the public, especially the media, began to talk about regional integration of AEC 2015. This created a window of opportunity for TQF advocates to couple policy solutions with the political context. An interview with the policymaker who in fact initiated the TQF project at OHEC supported this point. When TQF was first introduced in Thailand, the rationale was to keep up with international trends: “Everywhere I went they talked about Qualification Framework. I thought it was important for Thailand so we could compare with other countries about our standard” (Interview, August 2, 2010).

Undoubtedly, policy rationale shifts and changes in order to fit the policy context. Regardless of the original intent, successful policy implementation requires a sense of urgency and necessity. At the regional level, it is argued that QA and other quality-related policies have dual roles. On the one hand, they are used by policymakers as a response to the pressure for regional integration. On the other hand, the talks about QA create policy opportunities to strengthen regional integration and communication in the higher education sector. The next section focuses on the national context in Thailand that supported the emergence of the QA ensemble.

5.4 National Contexts

While the previous two sections focused on differing factors at the global and regional level, this section highlights differing factors at the national level. Three factors

contributed to the emergence of QA policy in Thailand. Firstly, the Asian Economic Crisis created a window of opportunity for differing reform efforts to materialize. Furthermore, the involvement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Thai public policy created space for market-based reform in all realms. Higher education was no exception. Secondly, the promulgation of the National Education Act of 1999 embraced decentralization and devolution, hence supporting the introduction of New Public Management (NPM). The creation of the Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) is in fact the legacy of the 1999 Act. Thirdly and most importantly, there was a shared policy belief amongst leading policy elites, who supported the creation of QA and other quality policies. Undoubtedly, this policy conviction amongst technocrats and university executives was the most essential factor in supporting and ensuring the introduction and implementation of the new quality regime in Thai higher education.

5.4.1 The Asian Economic Crisis, IMF, and ADB

As mentioned in Chapter IV, the 1990s witnessed various calls for social, political, and economic reforms in Thailand. However, nothing materialized before the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997. Undoubtedly, the Asian Crisis caused Thailand to request economic assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and social packages from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). While the crisis reinforced the fact that Thailand's development pattern had been problematic and reforms were necessary, the IMF's and ADB's structural adjustment reforms justified market-based strategies to rectify all ills. The crisis, the IMF, and the ADB provided an essential policy window for Thai policy elites to push for change.

The glory of double-digit growth became the legacy of things past when Thailand experienced the Asian Economic Crisis in 1997. The crash was unexpected both by domestic economists and foreign investors and institutions. In contrast to the 1990 picture

of Thailand as the “Asian Miracle” (World Bank, 1993), the economic crash created new images of the country as "sick geese, trembling tigers and exhausted dragons" (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1998, p. 5). On July 2, 1997, the Thai government announced the devaluation of Thailand’s currency, the baht. Subsequently, the government requested financial assistance from the IMF in the sum of US\$17.2 billion.

The economic crisis had both economic and social ramifications. 1998 saw the end of Thailand’s development era with the economic declining by 11%. After a decade-long economic growth averaging 8% GNP per annum, the GNP plummeted to 0.6% in 1997 (Punyaratabandhu, 1998), and unemployment soared at an unprecedented rate. It was reported that over 2 million people became unemployed (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009). Not only were the IMF loans conditional on stringent macroeconomic requirements, the IMF also required Thailand to reform its social and economic structures. Phongpaichit and Baker (1998) persuasively argued that the end of Thailand’s economic boom boosted a rethinking of Thailand's development strategies, political structures, and socio-economic values. Most importantly, the economic crash of 1997 changed the Thai perception about globalization and open economy. From viewing globalization as “a catch-word, a fad, almost a religion” for late developers to catch up, the 1997 bust left a bitter taste. Globalization became “a dangerous game for a weak late-comer” (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1998, p. 323). Undoubtedly, the 1997 crisis painted the new vision of globalization as a threat and danger to the Thai economy and development. This reiterated and reinforced the view of various social groups that had long called for protection of national economic development, identity, and wisdom.

The crisis had an enormous impact on education, both directly and indirectly. The crisis lessened the financial ability of households to spend on education, which increased the dropout rates in schools and colleges. At the onset of the crisis, nearly 800,000 students “were forced to drop out of school for financial reasons” (Panyaratabandhu, 1999, p. 83). The crisis also negatively affected government expenditure on the education

sector. ADB reported that, due to the financial austerity program, the Thai government reduced its spending on the Ministry of Education from B166.3 billion to B148.6 billion. The government also cut its spending on the Ministry of University Affairs from B39.3 billion to B32.9 billion (ADB, 2002). In addition to IMF assistance, Thailand received \$500 million in loans from ADB to reform its social sector (ADB, 2002). Under the Loan-1611 (31606) THA: Social Sector Program, ADB set out three main conditions to mitigate short-term problems and restructure long-term development. Firstly, it aimed to mitigate the short-term impact of the crisis on the health and education sectors by providing social safety nets, programs, and scholarships. Secondly, ADB attempted to invest more in human resource development and initiate structural change to increase Thailand's competitiveness. Lastly, the loan urged Thailand to reduce inefficiency in the social sector (ADB, 2002). An observer pointed out that the influence of IMF-led reform is not just about borrowing financial assistance. But it also changed the entire policy paradigm (Interview, August 7, 2010).

The ADB conditions specifically stated that at least one public higher education institution must become autonomous by 1998, while all institutions must become autonomous by 2002 (ADB, 2002). Not only did the ADB conditions require Thailand to push the autonomous university agenda further; it also stated the need to "revamp the civil service and to accelerate privatization of enterprises" (ADB, 2002, p. 7). IMF structural adjustment policy and the ADB social safety nets embraced market-based policy recommendations to rectify socio-economic challenges in Thailand. The preference for businesslike management rather than bureaucratic option was evident. The IMF/ADB recommendation is an exemplar of how the Thai elites selectively used external pressure to implement their own preferred agenda. Many elements of the economics and politics of policy borrowing were evident. To exemplify, the ADB conditionality on autonomous university policy was similar to the longstanding policy conviction of Thai technocrats and academics executives. Furthermore, the policy

timeline and condition resembled the 1990 First Higher Education Long Range Plan (MUA, 1990), which required all public universities to become autonomous within one year of the loans being dispersed. This similarity was not accidental. Rather, it was well planned and intended to coincide with Thailand's national agenda. In a personal interview, an officer from the Office of National Education Council supported this point. He argued that "the policy conditionality to push Thai public universities to be autonomous did not come from IMF or ADB. It was our own agenda" (Interview, September 5, 2010). The strategy of Thai leading elites using the crisis as their opportunity was more evident in an in-depth interview with one of Thailand's leading technocrats. I asked whether the ADB conditionality was resisted or externally imposed on Thailand. He replied:

ADB came to ask the Ministry of Education to translate the First Long Range Plan from Thai to English. Subsequently, they relied on our recommendation in the 1990 plan as the blueprint for the conditions. (Interview, November 1, 2010)

Although the above elucidates how Thai policymakers strategically used IMF and ADB presence to push forward the Autonomous University Act, it is questionable whether these policymakers would admit how they influenced the policy's conditionality at the time of the crisis. Given that the interviews were held (or took place) more than a decade after the 1997 crisis, it is plausible that the interviewees felt less social pressure and were able to be more open about their involvement. Similar to other countries' experiences with the IMF and structural adjustment reforms, the conditional packages faced enormous social resistance and were criticized as being externally imposed. Given that autonomous university policy had always been politically contested in Thailand, it was more politically convenient to blame the outsider for the contested reform rather than admitting it was internally driven. Under the IMF and ADB coalition, Thai public policy was moving toward greater accountability, governance, and effectiveness as the main objectives. One of the university executives argued:

QA is the private sector policy and it is a global movement. It is about how to ensure effective use of capital and resources. The economic downturn of 1997 created the need for a new quality management. It is all about creating better governance. (Interview, September 2, 2010)

At the same time, the crisis reinvigorated the need for political, socio-economic, and educational reforms. As illustrated, there were numerous conferences, publications, and calls for reforms throughout the 1990s. In political terms, 1995 witnessed formation of the Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA) led by Dr. Prawase Wasi and Anand Panyarachun (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009). The constitutional reform called for a change in the electoral system as well as strengthening the role of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Myriad new organizations were created under the PMO, including the Election Commission, National Counter Corruption Commission, and Constitutional Court.

In terms of education reform, the 1996 conference on Globalization and Thai Education Reform urged a revamping of the education system by changing the bureaucratic bottlenecks, decentralizing all levels of education, and moving toward child-centered learning (Kedutat, 1996). Despite the seeds for reform, nothing concrete took place prior to the 1997 crisis.

5.4.2 The National Education Act of 1999

The economic crisis provided a window of opportunity for reform-minded groups to bring back their reform agenda. This included both constitutional and education reforms (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009; Fry, 2002a, 2002b; Witte, 2002). With the failure of the economy in 1997, there was an increasing demand for revamping its administrative system to more efficiently withstand globalization forces (Keawmanee, 2007, p. 219).

In September 1997, the new National Constitution was enacted. Even though the constitution was entitled "the People's Constitution," Somchai (2002, cited in Nilphan, 2005) argued it was still an elite-led process. The reform was a result of broad coalitions among politicians, bureaucrats, technocrats, businessmen, intellectuals, and social

activists (Somchai, 2002, cited in Nilphan, 2005). Nevertheless, the constitution provided political legitimacy for an education law. Similar to the constitution reform, the National Education Act of 1999 (and edited in 2002) was infamous for being elite-led, involving nine prominent technocrats and education academics in the process (Tan, 2007). The National Education Act of 1999/2002 is known for being a system-wide reform. There were nine clauses involving various aspects of education reform, including administrative restructuring, expansion of compulsory education, decentralization of educational services, and introduction of outcome-based education policymaking (ONEC, 1999). While the advocates attempted to make the 1999 Act the most comprehensive education reform law in Thailand, the Act is trapped in a reform paradox that Watson (1980) describes as too broad and too vague.

Three specific sets of reform promoted by the National Education Act 1999/2002 have direct repercussions for QA policy. Firstly, the National Education Act 1999/2002 operated under legal obligation. In contrast to the previous attempts for education reform, the 1999/2002 Act mandated legal commitment for educational institutions to follow. A former Minister of Education and senior policymaker in education policy argued:

During the reform process, it was agreed that the education reform must be made into legal commitment. Prior to this, reform initiatives were based on the cabinet's decision. Since Thailand lacks political stability, there is a problem within the continuity of the reform. If it is an Act, every government is required to do it. (Interview, August 11, 2010)

The reformers strongly believed that legal commitment was necessary for any successful implementation of education reform. Given that QA was mandated in this legal document, institutions in Thailand have been obliged to follow. Second was the administrative restructuring at the Ministry of Education. In the name of “policy integration,” the policymakers abolished the Ministry of University Affairs and the National Education Councils and instead created the Office of Higher Education Commission and the Office of Education Council, which were mandated to function

under the Ministry of Education. Policymakers argued that the intent of the re-structuring of the Ministry of Education was to incorporate all agencies relating to education policymaking under one umbrella of the Ministry of Education with one Minister of Education. It was hoped that through the re-structuring of the MOE, education policymaking in Thailand would be more integrated.

Thirdly, the National Education Act promulgated in 1999 promoted decentralization, and QA was presented as a necessary policy tool to ensure accountability of the system. As mentioned, the Thai education system and its administration were known for centralized control. The Act signaled the changing role of the state from absolute control to one of setting goals, standards, and evaluation criteria for the newly decentralized system. The language of market-based reforms (efficiency, accountability, and effectiveness) was replete in the National Education Act. This has already been introduced in the quality coalition discussion.

5.4.3 Higher Education Contexts

Beyond globalization, regionalization, and the economic crisis, policymakers also identified higher education expansion as one of the factors that justified the emergence of quality assessment in Thai higher education. On the one hand, policymakers argued that the pressure for quantitative expansion was lessened. Subsequently, there was increasing policy attention to quality. The former Director of the Bureau of Standards and Evaluation at the OHEC argued:

We were at the edge of quantitative and qualitative issues. The discussion on quality intensified as we began to talk less about quantitative expansion. We realized that it was important to uplift quality of Thai higher education. (Interview, August 2, 2010).

On the other hand, many argued that the quantitative expansion was still an important issue and QA was a necessary tool to ensure the quality of mass expansion. The problem of mass expansion is linked to the declining quality of education. Furthermore,

the issues of quantitative expansion are intertwined with the delegation of power and commercialization of the sector. The Office of Higher Education Commission has incrementally delegated more decision-making rights to the university governance to approve new courses or programs. This has led to the proliferation of new programs in public and private institutions alike. These programs come in the form of short-courses, evening programs, or international programs. The commercialization of higher education access also became a policy concern that necessitated a new form of regulation and control. QA presented that policy solution. Policymakers expressed their concerns regarding these issues and presented QA as a policy solution. According to the Former Secretary General of the Ministry of University Affairs, "Between 1992 and 1996, there were substantial increases in higher education institutions in Thailand. Each of them followed their own missions and legal obligation for quality" (Interview, August 3, 2010).

The policy concerns are related to both the increasing numbers of institutions involved in the delivery of higher education and the diversity of its forms. Under the supervision of OHEC, there are 168 higher education institutions in Thailand, two of which are Buddhist universities. The other 166 institutions are differentiated as Public Institutions and Private Institutions. The four types of public institutions can be categorized as: Limited Admission Universities, Autonomous Universities, Open Admissions, and Community Colleges. The definitions of these different terms were included in Chapter I.

As illustrated previously, student enrollment has increased substantially since the 1970s. This is due to an increase in high school graduates as well as increasing access to different types of institutions. The Ministry of Education forecasts the number of high school graduates will increase from 0.7 million in 2000 to 1.8 million in 2016 (MOE, 2007, cited in World Bank, 2010). Currently, there are as many as 2,112,917 students enrolled in tertiary education in Thailand. The table below provides an overview of student composition by types as well as by degrees.

Table 5.2: Composition of Students Differentiated by Degrees and Types of Institutions

Types of Universities	Diploma	Under-graduates	Graduate Certificate	Masters Degree	PhD	Other Degree	Total
Public Limited Universities	250	267,913	479	53,143	7,341	84	329,473
Rajamangala University	13,658	135,617	206	2,226	58		151,765
Autonomous Universities	2,237	213,330	210	45,009	8,189		269,965
Open Universities		445,151	2,212	55,586	1,480	1,684	506,113
Rajabhat Universities	16,156	528,383	9,681	16,654	1,447	118	572,517
Private Universities		220,885	48	13,082	1,710		235,725
Private Colleges	151	24,792	464	712			26,119
Other HE outside OHEC		21,294					21,294
Total	32,552	1,857,365	13,300	186,412	20,225	1,886	2,112,971

Source: The Office of Higher Education Commission, 2012²³

Not only does each type of university have a diversity of purpose and legal origin, but they also differ in terms of the composition of their academic staff. The Autonomous Universities as well as traditional limited universities possess significantly higher numbers of academic staff compared to the newly upgraded Rajabhat and Rajamangala universities, which were founded on different purposes and principles. The Rajabhat universities were founded as teacher training institutes, and the Rajamangala universities were established as technical and hands-on institutions. There were as many as 332 professors in Autonomous Universities and 162 professors in Public Limited Universities. In contrast, there are only 9 professors in the 41 Rajabhat Universities together, while there are no professors at the Rajamangala universities. This disparity of academic staff

²³Accessed 8th of April 2012 from: <http://www.info.mua.go.th/information/index.php>

became one of the main issues in the implementation of higher education policy in general and QA issues in particular. The table below provides an overview of academic staff based on different types of institutions as of 2012.

Table 5.3: Academic Staff Profiles Differentiated by Types of Universities

Types of Universities	Assistant Professors	Associate Professors	Professors	Lecturers	Total
Public Limited Universities	3,480	2,256	162	9,810	15,708
The Rajamangala University	1,367	116		4,453	5,936
Autonomous Universities	3,211	2,715	332	6,044	12,302
Open Universities	239	569	5	547	1,360
Rajabhat Universities	2,343	376	9	7,038	9,766
Private Universities	579	180	48	5,157	5,964
Private Colleges	5	4		150	159
Total	11,224	6,216	556	33,199	51,195

Source: The Office of Higher Education Commission, 2012²⁴

This immediate transformation of Rajabhat colleges to become universities cast doubts for many policymakers and experts involved in the process. Given that Rajabhat universities' objectives were training teachers rather than producing research, there were enormous concerns whether these newly upgraded institutions could follow the standards and expectations of what a university should be. One foreign expert on Asian higher education observed this phenomenon in Thailand, arguing:

The most important thing to study Thai HEIs is the upgrading of Rajabhat University. The government has expanded the number of institutions without ensuring the educational quality. (Interview, September 13, 2010)

²⁴Accessed 8th of April 2012 from: <http://www.info.mua.go.th/information/index.php>

Although the transformation of Rajabhat universities came in 2004, after the promulgation of ONESQA in 2001, the diversity of Rajabhat universities presented challenges in the making of QA indicators that will incorporate differing forms of higher education in Thailand. This issue will be addressed in the subsequent chapter regarding the factors contributed to the making of EQA indicators at ONESQA.

Given the increasing autonomy of the university councils, expansion of higher education, and transformation of Rajabhat universities, the need for public accountability becomes a key issue of concern. UNESCO higher education policymakers encapsulated these integral processes and cast doubts on whether the emergence of QA would respond to the changing demands and structures of higher education system:

Yes, I see it as a trend. When you talk about QA it is about public accountability. My skepticism is that, when you ... expand the system and the resources are not there to expand the system, that is in fact dumping the quality. But then you don't want to lose the credibility to the public to the parents. One way is that you set up an agency and see look we do have a quality but to what extent this QA agency is effective are questionable. Because for me the bottom line is that the quality of the institution and the quality of the program depends on the qualification and quality of the academic staffs. You can't run away from that. Of course it is also the facility of the universities. (Interview, August 27, 2010)

5.5 Summary

This section has analyzed the integral relationship among globalization, global models, and the role of Thai policymakers. It reiterated the importance of profiles, personal experiences, and disciplinary backgrounds as significant factors. The quality coalition is comprised of technocrats and university executives from various organizations and institutions, which helped to support the emergence of QA policy. The coalition is based on the shared belief in the scientific-cum-positivist paradigm. Furthermore, it was argued that their shared policy beliefs also created a barrier to understanding differing voices and responses to QA policy. The third point discussed how

this coalition limited the possibility of the voices of resisters to be heard. The detailed analyses of these points will be elaborated in the following sections.

A careful scrutiny of the 1999 Act illustrates the paradoxical logic of the Thai state. The complex interplay between following the global model and maintaining Thai culture is obvious throughout the text. While there was a concerted effort to revitalize Thai identity, local participation, and community development, decentralization and outcome-based education policymaking resonated with the global models for education reform. Despite multiple foreign country visits and advisors, the interviews with Thai technocrats reinforced the concept that the Act was a product of Thai thinking and adaptation. One persuasively rebutted the argument of policy copying. He argued: “The National Education Act was a Made in Thailand product” (Interview, November 11, 2010). The sense of policy nationalism was overtly emphasized during the interviews with key policymakers in the National Education Act. The sense of overt nationalism in education policymaking was obvious throughout the interviews. A foreign expert on Thai education, Gerald Fry (2000), reiterated this nationalistic sentiment in the realm of education policy. He argued: “The idea is not for the Thais to imitate these reforms but to critically examine their experiences and related strategies” (p. 246). Here again, Fry (2000) reinforced the main policy belief in Thailand that Thai policy elites are always able to learn from best practices and make necessary policy adaptation to meet local needs and contexts.

While the policymakers were well versed in how QA was a significant global policy trend, it was more difficult for them to respond to more specific questions, such as “What did we learn from these visits?” or “Which parts of the QA policy were adopted and which were not in Thailand?” Several explanations could be given for the policymakers’ inability to respond to these questions. On the one hand, it is argued that Thailand was late on the global bandwagon for QA. The country began to implement QA only when the policy reached exponential growth (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004); hence the policy lost its origin and it became “everybody or nobody

reforms.” On the other hand, the Thai logic of learning from others, only to pick and choose the best, continued to permeate their responses to policy origin. Many argued that there was extensive policy research prior to policy formulation in order to select the most applicable policy for the country. The emphasis on learning from others but selectively adapting to meet Thai contexts is a prevalent theme for the senior policymakers who were involved with the policy formulation. One such advocate of QA argued:

The rationale to introduce QA in Thailand came from many countries. Especially the study that I did. I learned from Australia, Europe and United States. I also did some research about Japan. However, when we actually planned for QA in Thailand, we had to develop a new system that met the Thai context. (Interview, August 6, 2010)

There is a meta-narrative running through the interviews, especially when discussing policy borrowing or policy learning. While policymakers are exposed to various examples from numerous countries, there is a strong consensus that Thailand did not do a wholesale borrowing of QA policy from other countries. One interviewee, in her own voice, said, “We reviewed all the systems such as Total Quality Management, Malcolm Baldrige and many other models. We wanted to see what is real and adapt it to the context of Thailand” (Interview, December 7, 2009). Another senior advisor shared her experience along the same line: “It took us three years to conceptualize and then we began to set the criteria and indicators. We sent teams to study in various countries such as UK, USA, Australia and Europe. We then adapted to local contexts” (Interview, January 12, 2009). These explanations are not unique to the QA process, however. As discussed in the Chapter IV, this is a dominant logic of the Thai state whenever it discusses external or foreign influence on Thai public policymaking. Thai policymakers have sung in unison with overt nationalism, whereas when external influences were there, the role of policy agents was strong enough to selectively and strategically decide what was appropriate for the country and context. Based on historical analysis and its

supposedly unique position of never having been colonized by foreign countries, this explanation has become the meta-narrative governing policy change.

In contrast to the dominant explanation that QA policy is an amalgam of foreign and local interaction, another academic encapsulated “QA in Thailand as being created by Thai people rather than coming from the West. All requirements were very Thai-specific and some cannot even be translated into English” (Interview, March 3, 2011). To illustrate the Thai-specific character, the QA requirement has one special section dedicated to the preservation of Thailand as the major mission of Thai universities. In the TQF requirement, there is strong impetus to push universities to evaluate how well they teach students to uphold morality and ethics. Although the policymakers also justify the need for QA due to increasing global pressure and the trend toward internationalization, all of the QA-related documents, indicators, and procedures have been conducted strictly in Thai. Hence, it is questionable as to what extent these policies are meant to serve “global” and “international” purposes. Furthermore, Thai policymakers have been able to use external support to strengthen their own policy agenda. The World Bank’s pilot project for Malcolm Baldrige and the Australian support for the NQF are two examples. Surely, education policy is a contested area, with differing groups at the local level competing to push their agenda. Hence, many policymakers have used external involvement to create political justification to gain greater support for their agenda as well as indirectly enforce other stakeholders in accordance with the policy. Thai policymakers have been able to strategically involve international organizations or bilateral agreements to serve their specific goals. One of the consultants to the Thai government on education policy shared his experience in working with the Thai bureaucrats:

Thai policymakers, especially senior bureaucrats, know exactly what they want to implement. When we came for a mission in Thailand, they told us what needed to be done and asked us to write that. If our recommendation

did not fit with their goals, they asked us to change it. (Interview, May 3, 2011)

Interviews with several key policymakers, who differed in their positions and experiences, reiterated the strategic relationship between international organizations and the Thai government. Thai bureaucrats have been able to maneuver the policy in their aspired direction. This section has illustrated how globalization and global references have been a pertinent facet of the policymakers' justification to introduce QA and other quality policies in Thailand. Through global competitions, communication and cooperation, Thai policymakers have been able to engage with and refer to globalization/global references for differing purposes throughout the formulation and implementation of quality policy. Evidently, Thai policymakers have been able to use global references to serve their own political agenda within that context. When the national league table was heavily contested in the country, the policymakers immediately gave up the policy and continued to rely on international benchmarking to scandalize the local quality issues.

Chapter VI

THE OFFICE OF NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT (ONESQA)

The Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) has played an omnipotent role in the quality landscape of Thailand. Hence a detailed analysis of the organization is necessary. The discussion and critique of ONESQA can be differentiated on two fronts. On the one hand, ONESQA must be understood as an organization. On the other hand, ONESQA can be analyzed as a policy, which is the External Quality Assessment policy, including quality indicators and methodology (EQA).

A study of ONESQA as a borrowed organization provides a lucid place to understand and analyze the logic of the Thai state, its receptiveness to global influence, and its response to local resistance at the organizational level. This chapter focuses on how a confluence of global and national factors is woven into the introduction and implementation of ONESQA. It will be illustrated how ONESQA was a product of the strategic and selective borrowing of the Thai policy elites. After ten years of operation, the changing policy and its implementation also shed light on how ONESQA has become a site of policy struggles, negotiations, and resistance. Furthermore, this chapter juxtaposes the anticipation and expectations of policymakers of ONESQA with the reflections and responses on the ground.

The analysis of this chapter has drawn on extensive documents, interviews with ONESQA stakeholders, and a three-month internship at the organization. While official policy documents enabled me to map out how the organization portrays itself to the public, interviews with its founders, officials, and board members enabled me to capture differing voices and viewpoints in greater depth. The three-month internship provided an opportunity to reflect, compare, and contrast differing accounts of the organization. It allowed me not only to see policy in the making, but also to capture the perspectives of ONESQA staff in a less formal and more dynamic way.

6.1 An Introduction to ONESQA

This section gives an overview of ONESQA as an organization as well as a policy. On the one hand, ONESQA must be understood as an organization. It is important to outline the background of the organization, its legal mandate, and its official objectives. On the other hand, ONESQA can be analyzed through its policy of quality assessment. Despite various policy talks and recommendations in 1994 and 1996 on QA, the National Education Act of 1999 officially mandated QA policy in Thailand. One of the nine chapters was delegated to the discussion of QA and was entitled “Educational Standards and Quality Assurance” (NEA, 2002). Five sub-sections discussed and justified the emergence of the new quality regime in Thailand’s education system. They include the following mandates. Section 47 calls for the emergence of an educational quality assurance system to ensure the standards and improvement of educational quality. The system must comprise internal and external quality assurance, while the QA standards and methods must be announced in the ministerial regulations. Section 48 mandates that the parent organizations must implement the system of QA in educational institutions. At the same time, every institution must submit a self-assessment report back to its parent organization annually. This section also suggests that the system and policies of QA must

be a continuous process and integrated into the daily life of the institutions. Section 49 stipulates establishment of a new organization to conduct an external QA every five years. Section 50 requires all educational institutions to cooperate with ONESQA and the QA process, while Section 51 discusses the policy measures for educational institutions that do not meet ONESQA standards. The legal system requires ONESQA to submit the assessment results to the parent organizations in order to ensure that corrective measures are implemented. If institutions cannot improve themselves within the given timeframe, the Act entrusts responsibility to the parent organization to implement necessary remedial actions.

Although differing forms of quality evaluation and assessment existed prior to the creation of ONESQA, it signified a new direction and more systematic approach to quality assessment. The new Act legally mandated all educational institutions to conduct self-assessment, followed by internal quality assurance and external quality assessment. Similar to the global pattern (Vidovich, 2004), quality assessment in Thailand was to focus on the concept of self-assessment and peer review by a meta-organization. Section 49 is specifically significant for ONESQA. The policy statement below encapsulates the essence of what the Act envisioned ONESQA to be.

An office of Educational Standards and Evaluation shall be established as a public organization, responsible for the development of criteria and methods of external evaluation, conducting evaluation of educational achievements in order to assess the quality of institutions. All educational institutions shall undergo an external quality evaluation at least once every five years and the results of the evaluation shall be submitted to the agencies concerned and made available to general public. (Office of National Education Council, 1999b, p. x)

ONESQA was officially announced in the Government Gazette, volume 117, Section 99A on the 3rd of November, 2000. ONESQA began to operate on the following day.²⁵ ONESQA was mandated to be a public organization with the main responsibility of

²⁵Accessed 7th of March, 2012 from: <http://www.onesqa.or.th/en/home/index.php>

creating quality criteria, conducting external evaluations, and focusing on the educational achievements or outcomes of the students as the means to assess the quality of each institution. Furthermore, the policy passage also outlined a new division of labor between ONESQA and the host organizations of educational institutions in Thailand. In the case of higher education, the “agencies concerned” refers to the Office of Higher Education Council (OHEC). While ONESQA will conduct external quality assessment with all institutions at least once every five years, each institution is required to submit a self-assessment report and invite representatives from OHEC to conduct an internal quality assessment annually. Furthermore, there is a clear mandate that ONESQA will publish the assessment results to the public. This was to ensure that QA results provide more information for the public as well as strengthen the accountability system in the education management.

The creation of ONESQA was influenced by the broader policy climate of establishing public organizations. These are semi-independent organizations that receive public funding but are not necessarily required to follow the rigid process of bureaucratic controls and procurements. This is the Thai policymakers’ attempt to reform the civil service in general. Hence ONESQA was established as a public organization, and it has been granted approximately 400 million baht annually from the government to operate. The agency claims to have autonomy and neutrality from the Ministry of Education. While it reports to the Prime Minister's Office, ONESQA attempts to be exempt from the centralized control of the Ministry of Education or the Commission of Higher Education (Pittiyauwat, 2009).

While excerpts from the policy document present ONESQA with objectives, structures, and a clear division of labor, a closer look reveals numerous questions that need greater clarity. For example, what is a public organization? Why is it necessary for QA? Who will control this organization? What would be the appropriate quality criteria for the Thai education system? What are the methods for EQA and IQA? Why is the

five-year cycle justified? What is the rationale behind this decision? What are the relationships between ONESQA and the agencies concerned? Would there be any conflict of interest or duplication of the line of labor? To what extent would the quality results be published? Who will decide all of these matters? Many of these questions derive from in-depth interviews with key experts on QA policy and those involved with the creation of ONESQA. The interview accounts illustrate that the creation of the new organization was not as clear as is presented in the policy text. It is evident that the policy document is embedded with differing and sometimes contradictory rationales. Rather, the introduction and implementation of ONESQA went through a series of contestation and political negotiation.

6.1.1. Three Rounds of Assessment: 2000-2012

Since its inception in 2000, ONESQA has undergone three rounds of quality assessment at the national level. Each round focused on different educational problems and possessed different characteristics. Throughout the decade, the changing policy and rationale of ONESQA are reflected through its changing quality indicators.

The first round of assessment happened between 2000 and 2005. It was mandated to last six years, as many policymakers envisioned that time was needed to establish ONESQA, revise the indicators, and promote the policy to all the educational institutions (Interview, 11th August 2010). During the first round of assessment, policymakers argued that the objective of the assessment was to explore the educational issues, reflect the reality, and create a baseline for educational situations in Thailand, rather than judging or accrediting the institutions (Interview, January 15, 2010). Furthermore, the first round of assessment attempted to underscore the main mantra of the National Education Act, which reiterates that education is a shared responsibility of all parties (ONESQA, 2011). The first round of assessment included 8 quality standards and 28 quality indicators. The unit of the analysis was the institution itself.

The second round of assessment occurred between 2006 and 2010. It differed from the first round in several aspects. Firstly, there were fewer quality standards and more indicators. There were 7 standards and 48 quality indicators in total. Secondly, universities were differentiated into groups – research intensive, teaching intensive, cultural preservation, and community universities. Subsequently, the calculation of the quality indicators was weighted depending on the type of institution. Thirdly, the unit of analysis differed. In this round, the unit of analysis focused on both the institution and on ten groups of disciplines. These grounds included (1) Health Science, (2) Physical Science, (3) Science, (4) Agriculture, (5) Management, Accounting, and Economics, (6) Education, (7) Humanities and Social Science, (8) Arts and Applied Arts, (9) Interdisciplinary, and (10) Academic Supports (ONESQA, 2008). In contrast to the first round of assessment, the second round of assessment provided accreditation to the institutions (ONESQA, 2008).

The third round of assessment began in 2011 and will last until 2015. After a decade of quality assessment, the third round attempts to differentiate the role of ONESQA from that of OHEC, which is responsible for internal quality assessment (IQA). While OHEC was mandated to focus on the input and process of QA, ONESQA was responsible for the output and outcome (Interview, September 10, 2010).

According to ONESQA's published manual on the Third Round of External Quality Assessment (ONESQA, 2012), the indicators were reduced to only 6 standards and 18 indicators. The first standard is about quality of the graduates. Four indicators were created to evaluate this, including (1) graduates who are employed within 1 year of graduation, (2) quality of the graduates according to Thailand's Qualification Framework, (3) published works of the masters degree students, (4) published works of the doctoral graduates. The second standard focuses on research and innovation. There are three indicators within this standard, which are: (1) research or innovations that are published, (2) research or innovations that became useful, (3) academic research that is qualified.

The third standard focuses on academic services. Two indicators evaluate this aspect:

(1) academic works that help to improve teaching quality, and (2) projects that strengthen the community services or external organizations.

The fourth quality standard is maintaining arts and culture, which is comprised of two indicators. These are (1) strengthening and supporting arts and culture, and (2) developing aesthetic appreciation of the arts and culture. The fifth quality standard is institutional management and improvement, which has three indicators: (1) fulfilling the roles of the university council, (2) fulfilling the roles of the university administrators, and (3) improvement of the academic staffs. The *sixth* quality standard looks at the system of Internal Quality Assessment. This includes: (1) results based on Internal Quality Assurance, (2) results based on the development of university characteristics, (3) results based on the development of the university's strength, and (4) results based on the attempt to address social problems. These indicators aimed to encapsulate differing aspects of quality that the organization expected higher education to cover.

The table below encapsulates the differing quality indicators and underlying rationale.

Table 6.1 The Compilation of Three Rounds of Assessment

	1st Round 2000-2005	2nd Round 2006-2010	3rd Round 2011-2015
Rationales	1.) Assess to develop without judging pass/ fail or punishment 2.) Evidence-based & accountability 3.) Amicable Assessment rather than control 4.) Encourage participatory approach to QA from all stakeholders 5.) Balance between institutional autonomy, ensure diversity of implementation	1.) Assess to develop without judging pass/ fail or punishment 2.) Evidence-based & accountability 3.) Amicable Assessment rather than control 4.) Encourage participatory approach to QA from all stakeholders 5.) Balance between institutional autonomy, ensure diversity of implementation	1.) Assess according to institutional uniqueness 2.) Assess educational outcomes according to 3.) Value the importance of Institutional committees & stakeholders 4.) Assess by using quantitative and qualitative measures 5.) Assess through the Self-Assessment Report to strengthen the IQA 6.) Reduce quality indicators

Table 6.1 (continued)

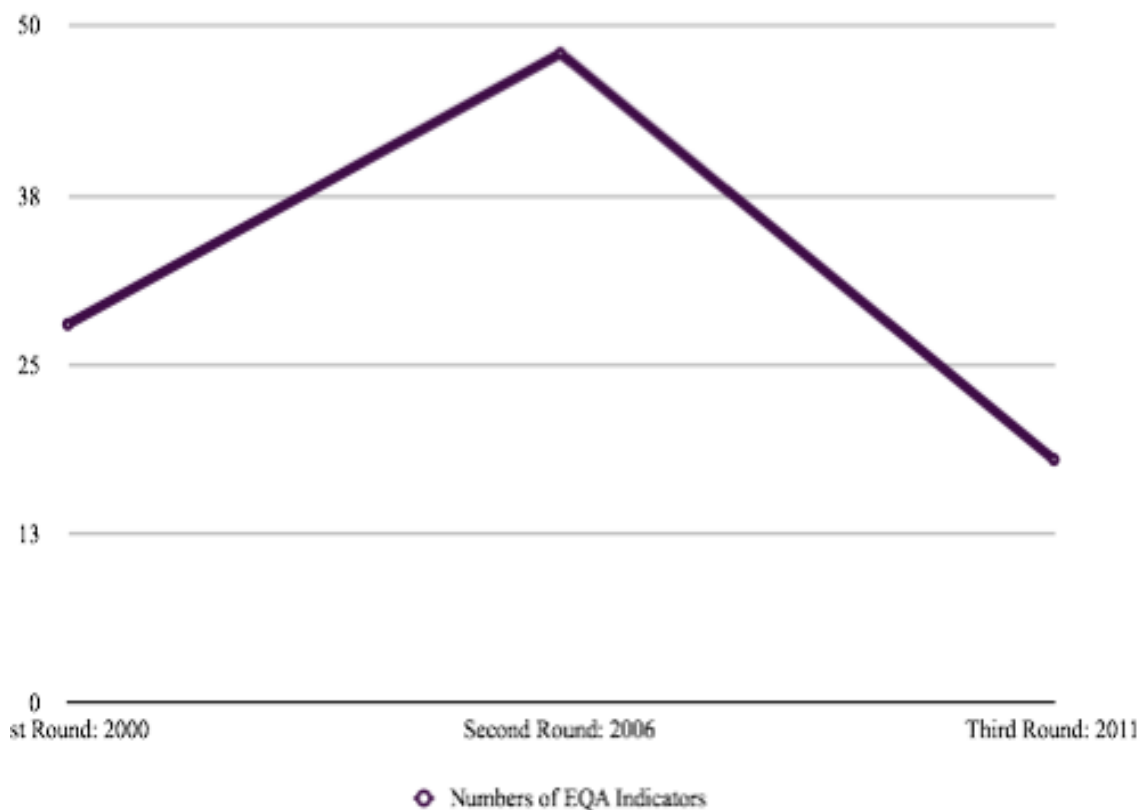
	1st Round 2000-2005	2nd Round 2006-2010	3rd Round 2011-2015
Objectives	1.) Assess the educational quality according to the standards given by the host agencies 2.) Obtain the information to reflect the strength and weakness of the institutions & Explore best practices 3.) Provide guidelines to improvement for the institutions and host agencies 4.) Encourage continuous improvement & develop IQA 5.) Provide Public information	1.) Assess the educational quality according to the standards given by the host agencies 2.) Obtain the information to reflect the strength and weakness of the institutions & Explore best practices 3.) Provide guidelines to improvement for the institutions and host agencies 4.) Encourage continuous improvement & develop IQA 5.) Provide Public information	1.) Assess the educational quality according to the standards given by the host agencies 2.) Obtain Information reflect institutional differences and identify institutional uniqueness 3.) Enhance educational quality and focus on outputs & outcomes 4.) Encourage Continuous improvement & develop IQA 5.) Direct Institutional Development 6.) Enhance institutional integration 7.) Report the results for public information
Unit of Analysis	Institution	Institution and Disciplinary Group	Institution
Quality Standards	8 Quality Standards 1.) Quality Graduates 2.) Learning Standards 3.) Learning Supports 4.) Research and Innovation 5.) Academic Service 6.) Cultural Preservation 7.) Institutional Management 8.) Internal Quality Assessment (IQA)	7 Indicators 1.) Quality Graduates 2.) Research and Innovation 3.) Academic service 4.) Cultural Preservation 5.) Institutional Management 6.) Learning and Curriculum 7.) Internal Quality Assessment (IQA)	6 Quality Standards 1.) Quality Graduates 2.) Research and Innovation 3.) Academic Service 4.) Cultural Preservation 5.) Institutional Management and Development 6.) Internal Quality Assessment (IQA)
Quality Indicators	28 Indicators Applied to All Institutions	48 Indicators 39 Basic Indicators & 9 Weighted indicators according to institutions	18 Indicators 15 Basic Indicators 2 Unique Indicators 1 Supportive Indicators

Source: Author

The descriptive explanation of the three rounds of quality assessment should not suggest a sense of linearity and neutrality in the decision-making process. This composite table only attempts to provide an outline and the main thrusts of each round. There have

been significant shifts and changes in terms of discourse, policy expectations, and numbers of quality indicators over the 10 years. The figure below illustrates the trajectory of the numbers of quality indicators from the first round of assessment until the third round of the assessment.

Figure 6.1 The Numbers of EQA Indicators from Three Rounds of Assessment



Source: Author.

Evidently, the numbers of quality indicators changed rapidly overtime. In the first round of assessment (2000-2005) there were only 28 indicators. The requirement for EQA increased substantively during the second round of assessment from 28 to 48 indicators. The trend changed in the third round of assessment, as mentioned. Higher education institutions are required to collect 18 indicators.

The subsequent discussion addresses the differing factors, both internal and external to the organizations, that influenced the changing quality indicators in Thailand. As will be illustrated, ONESQA's mandate, its indicators, and its methodology have been constantly challenged by multiple factors and actors in the process.

6.2 Globalization and Localization of ONESQA

While the previous discussion introduced the background of ONESQA as an organization as well as its external quality assessment policy, this section will analyze how globalization and reference to the global model were used throughout the process, from identifying educational problems to suggesting that ONESQA and its policy was the solution. The first section focuses on the references to globalization and the global model; the second identifies how policymakers attempt to adapt the language and policy of ONESQA to meet local culture and demands.

6.2.1 Globalization

The global model is referred to in order to scandalize educational problems, strategically used by local policy elites, and intentionally erased when it provokes local resistance (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). Interviews and policy documents illustrate that global trends were consistently used and referred to throughout the interviews with policymakers as the rationale for having a quality assessment policy in Thailand. This without exception applied to the creation of ONESQA. From the first paragraph in the preface of the ONESQA policy document, globalization was used as a justifying rationale, necessitating the new policy tool and new organization. Global competition and global cooperation were used as the main justifications. The preface stated:

The current trend of global development pushed all countries to compete and cooperate in different ways. The important factor and resource is quality human resources, which are essential assets for national development in all realms such as economic, socio-culture, politics and environment. Education

is an essential tool to develop human resources and educational management must be a quality one for all. (Office of National Education Council, 1999, p. a)

This statement makes an explicit connection to human capital theory as a justifying rationale to support new organization and new education reform in Thailand. What is striking about this policy statement is its unequivocal belief that global trends impact every country significantly in the same way. Furthermore, the generic conviction of globalization and education as a panacea to solve all problems illustrates how Thai policy elites have internalized these issues. In fact, the direct link between globalization and the need for education reform is presented as an uncontested justification for many policy elites across the globe. Thailand is no exception in this global trend. In an in-depth interview, one of the key policymakers of ONESQA referred to global trends as the rationale and linked the emergence of ONESQA with the experiences from policy visits to various countries.

The creation of ONESQA came from the concern of the lack of quality. There was an international ranking and none of the Thai universities ranked at the global level. We were thinking of how to upgrade the quality of our education. Hence, Office of National Education Council sent teams to study the experiences of UK and New Zealand for models. (Interview, January 18, 2010)

The above excerpt is telling in several significant ways. Firstly, international rankings played a significant role in indicating the low level of education in Thailand. As mentioned before, it is a standard practice amongst Thai policy elites to use results from international rankings to create social scandal and justify the need for reform (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). Secondly, the interview elucidated the policymakers' conviction that study tours to other countries provide the solution for education reform in Thailand. Not only has globalization as a broader phenomenon been used as a justification for education reform, but trends from international organizations and various countries have also been specifically referred to in order to support the emergence of ONESQA. The Office of National Education Council (1999) argued that the system of quality assessment,

comprised of Quality Control, Quality Audit, and Quality Assessment, is standard practice for internationally acclaimed industries and companies around the globe. Codes of conduct of the International Organization for Standardization, better known as ISO, are used to exemplify how the global quest for quality is an international best practice. Hence, the education sector should follow the global movement for quality.

Despite numerous references to global trends or the experiences of other countries, the overt nationalistic element of selective borrowing is pertinent. Interviews with policymakers demonstrated outward reluctance for Thailand to adopt the global policy of QA in its entirety without adapting it to meet Thai-specific contexts. Thai policymakers actively and strategically borrowed bits and pieces to fit the educational landscape in Thailand. Some interviewees went as far as to argue that Thailand learned the strengths and weaknesses of other countries and came up with a more appropriate model. In an interview with one of ONESQA's key policymakers, he argued that the establishment of ONESQA was intended to rectify all the plausible problems that existed in other models. ONESQA was meant to be more efficient and cost-effective than its policy counterparts in the UK as well as New Zealand. The excerpt below encapsulates the Thai policy elite's active engagement with various global models.

Other countries have quality organizations like ONESQA. However, most of the existing organizations were separated into different units in order to assess different levels education by sector. We went to the UK and New Zealand and realized that this kind of organizational structure was wasteful for the allocation of resources. More importantly, it created disconnection between different levels of the education system.... ONESQA was created to oversee all levels of education. From my knowledge, this is only one of the two organizations in the world that conducts assessment for all levels. Another organization is Denmark. (Interview, January 18, 2010)

This excerpt sheds light on the complex interplay between global models, educational policy borrowing, and selective adaptation. The policy elite portrayed himself not only as an educated and informed policymaker aware of educational models from elsewhere, but also as critical of the wholesale import of different organizational

structures. He suggested that Thailand has not only learned from various existing models, but that policymakers have realized the limitations and disadvantages of the existing model. The most important element illuminated by the interview is the clear sense of policy pride, nearly policy nationalism. At the end of the excerpt, the policymaker reported with pride that ONESQA is only one of two quality assessment organizations in the world that assess all levels of the education system. The overt sense of nationalism and policy pride that Thailand is always a unique case in the global landscape is rooted in part as an important aspect of the logic of the Thai state. Despite overwhelming the influence of global models, structure, and aspiration, Thai policymakers without fail felt compelled to highlight and underscore the country's unique position. An active engagement between international models and local adaptation is a pertinent facet of the relationship between the Thai state and globalization. Unlike the perception that globalization is an overt imposition from above, the passage illustrates a two-way interaction between global policy and local policymakers.

This section illustrates that Thai policy elites had the flexibility and freedom to use global references to serve their own political convenience. At the outset policymakers drew on globalization, economic competitiveness, and global trends to justify the emergence of a new organization to ensure the quality of Thai education. Global reference happened throughout the policy process. The next section highlights the process of selective borrowing that occurred in terms of the organizational structure of ONESQA. Advocates for Public Organization made reference to models from elsewhere to justify their policy preference.

6.2.2 Global Models

This section focuses on references made to global models as the justification for making ONESQA independent from the Ministry of Education. The referencing of global models became more pertinent during the policy process and political negotiation of the

structure of ONESQA. The main disagreement focused on where and which organizations would oversee the operation of ONESQA. On the one hand, a group of senior policymakers envisioned ONESQA to be under the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, policymakers and drafters of the ONESQA bill highlighted the importance of making ONESQA an independent and neutral organization without political influence or instability. One of the key policymakers recounted:

We believed that if ONESQA was created as a part of the Ministry of Education, the director of ONESQA would be just like another Director General of a Department that is subjected to political influence and constant change. Policy continuity would be absent. (Interview, September 4, 2010)

The resistance against making ONESQA a part of the Ministry of Education was based on arguments of political interference and the need for the neutrality of results. Given that the Ministry of Education is considered the major stakeholders, many policymakers were fearful that if ONESQA was under the umbrella of MOE, politicians and senior bureaucrats would be able to insert their power and hence influence the findings of the performance assessments. It was also argued that placing ONESQA under MOE would create a conflict of interest. Since MOE is the host organization of most of the educational institutions in Thailand, founders of ONESQA believed that senior bureaucrats from MOE would be incentivized to intervene with the results in order to improve the image of MOE performance. Those advocating that ONESQA be out of Ministry of Education control stressed the importance of independence and neutrality. To strengthen the argument supporting this policy option, advocates strategically highlighted the experiences of other countries as examples. In both interview and policy documents, Thai policymakers referred to their policy visits in the United Kingdom and New Zealand as examples of best practices. In the United Kingdom, the Office for Standards in Education: OFSTED was under the auspices of Her Majesty's Chief of Inspector or HMI, while the Education Review Office: ERO in New Zealand was directed by a separate Ministry. Evidently, references to the ongoing practices of other countries were used as

the justification for ONESQA not being subjected to Ministry of Education control. Models from UK and New Zealand were seen as just, fair, and neutral organizations, and thus became politically convenient to the advocates for an independent ONESQA. Citing examples from abroad provided strong leverage for the advocates to push for their preferred agenda.

While the founders of ONESQA were divided in their opinion about the structure, independence, and what would be the ONESQA host organization, references to the UK and New Zealand were strategically made in the policy document to justify ONESQA becoming a public organization outside Ministry of Education control. The next section illustrates the strategic decision to drop the global reference and replace it with an emphasis on Thai culture and values after local resistance occurred. Amicable assessment was promoted to mitigate the educators' resistance to the assessment policy.

6.2.3 Amicable Assessment

Not only was the establishment of ONESQA a product of policy borrowing from the UK and New Zealand, but the concept of external assessment itself was seen as the import of a foreign model into Thai culture. The establishment of ONESQA and the introduction of external quality assessment received social resistance from various groups, especially educators. In interviews with policymakers and QA users, the reason for resistance was framed as a clash of culture. A binary between foreign culture versus Thai culture was presented as a backlash and a struggle to overcome. In his public speech, former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, who was one of the key advocates of ONESQA, captured the social response to the new policy.

We knew it was difficult because in Thai culture, assessment is a contested concept amongst different groups. This is especially the case for external assessment. There is a culture that is fearful of assessment. People were anxious and aware that the assessment would mean a pass or a fail. We knew from the start that this is not an easy issue. Even in countries that have experienced educational quality assessment, they had to take time to

overcome the challenges and struggles. (Keynote speech, Abhisit Vejjajiva, December 20, 2010)

This statement explains that social resistance is a part of Thai culture. Although quality assessment was presented as a foreign idea and culture, the former Prime Minister acknowledged that resistance is also a part of the policy scenario in other countries. Hence the ongoing discontent is a shared phenomenon. Again, experiences from abroad were selectively and strategically used to highlight the agency, acknowledgement, and acceptance of the Thai policy elites. Thai culture as an obstacle and resistance to quality assessment was a recurrent theme from all ONESQA advocates. According to the policymakers, the public resistance and negative attitude toward ONESQA was termed "evaluation phobia." One interviewee stated: "Thai people have evaluation phobia. They are scared of being evaluated. They said if we already knew that Thai education lacks quality, what's the point of assessment?" (Interview, January 18, 2010).

This led to active adaptation of the policy language. An important aspect of selective borrowing is also evident through the changing discourse of quality assessment in Thailand. At the beginning, experiences from other countries were constantly used. These were soon dropped and replaced. If the problem of social resistance was framed as a cultural issue, an appropriate alternative would be to make the assessment more Thai. ONESQA's first director, Dr. Somwung Pittiyauwat, actively instilled Thai values and cultures into the language of QA. The concept of "Amicable Assessment" was announced and promoted as a guiding philosophy for ONESQA. Dr. Pittiyauwat expressed the objective of the principle. He said: "The model was specifically tailored to the Thais who cherish their strong social traditions" (Pittiyauwat, 2008, p. 1).²⁶ Evidently, there was a strong intention on the part of the policymakers to integrate this globally accepted standard of quality assessment program into the values and cultures on the ground. The emphasis on a tailor-made assessment policy to meet Thai social traditions reinforced the

²⁶Accessed on the 26th February 2012 from: http://www.onesqa.or.th/e%2Djournal/showdetail/?show_preview=T&art_id=4

main theme of policy nationalism in Thailand. In an interview, a senior policymaker at ONESQA further explained what Amicable Assessment is:

Amicable Assessment is an attempt to bring Buddhist principles and concepts into the modern policy tool. Venerable monks have preached that the best way to achieve truth is to remain neutral. Walking through the middle-path is the beginning of development. Therefore to achieve development, one must begin with neutral assessment. (Interview, January 18, 2010)

The amicable assessment aimed to present QA as a friendly policy tool, driven toward the development of the institutions being assessed. Not only does it illustrate how Thai policy elites attempted to merge global concepts with local values, but it was also a policy response to local resistance against QA. The interviews with policymakers revealed that significant resistance occurred after ONESQA was created and QA was officially mandated. Different forms of resistance happened at various levels – national and institutional.

6.3 Policy Objectives and Expectations

In this section, differing policy objectives and expectations of ONESQA will be discussed. Drawing on organizational documents and interviews with ONESQA's founders, I was able to elicit various expectations and ambitions ONESQA was set to achieve. The discussion sheds light on how market-based reforms and aspirations have been instilled and embedded within the structure of the organization, its objectives, and policies. This section elucidates how global concepts of quality, efficiency, and evidence-based policymaking have been instilled in creating ONESQA. It illustrates one way of using global influences to create new organization in Thailand.

6.3.1 Public Organization and Private Structure

The debate on the structure of ONESQA sheds light on the distaste that Thai policymakers have for traditional bureaucratic organization by favoring private sector structures. Throughout the discussion on the creation and intent of ONESQA, policymakers presented a binary picture of the state vs private sector organization. While the public sector organization is painted as being insufficient, hierarchical, and unstable, the private sector organization is presented as effective, flexible, and independent. Given the negative experiences and impressions of the traditional bureaucratic organization among the policymakers, the creation of ONESQA was filled with hopes of a new direction for reforming the Thai public sector. The creation of ONESQA as an Autonomous Public Organization was filled with excitement and expectation. By being a Public Organization, ONESQA intended to enjoy the benefits of the public purse without strict regulations. ONESQA received public funding, estimated to be 400 million baht annually, while being exempt from such stringent regulations imposed on bureaucratic organizations as decision-making processes, employment, and procurement (Pittiyauwat, 2008). Given that the movement to transform public sector organizations was underway, ONESQA was subjected to the control of the Autonomous Public Organization Act of 1999 rather than being treated like a typical bureaucratic organization. ONESQA, created in 2000, was one of the first organizations to be created and controlled by the Autonomous Public Organization Act.

Besides making ONESQA an Autonomous Public Organization, various attempts were made to make ONESQA more like a private sector organization or a quasi-company. Interviews with key founders of ONESQA plus an analysis of policy documents elucidated a high level of expectation for this newly established organization. These aspirations resulted in an organizational structure and governance system of ONESQA that strived to emulate private sector organizations. Three policy initiatives are evident: flat structure, governing board, and the outsourcing system.

In contrast to the hierarchical structure of the bureaucratic system, the creation of ONESQA was intended to become a “flat organization” (Office of National Education Council, 1999, p. 20). The organization would be composed of five sub-groups: basic education, higher education, information system, quality standards, and supporting group. Each group would report directly to the director in order to “lessen the chain of command and encourage teamwork between and within groups” (p. 20). The policy statement makes it clear that creating ONESQA as a flat organization would lessen the bureaucratic bottlenecks prevalent in a traditional bureaucratic structure. Unlike other public organizations, which consist of large numbers of officials, the creators of ONESQA envisioned this organization to be much more efficient in terms of its human resources. The draft of the ONESQA Act specified that only 64 personnel would be employed in ONESQA. Six would be in management positions, 43 would handle the main responsibilities of the organization, and 15 would be employed as support staff (Office of National Education Council, 1999, p. 31). Undoubtedly, having 64 personnel overseeing the entire assessment system illustrates an ambitious expectation on behalf of the policymakers.

However, the policymakers did not intend to have the permanent staff at ONESQA conduct assessments themselves; this was expected to be outsourced to private companies. With more than 40,000 basic education institutions in Thailand, policymakers argued that ONESQA should subcontract and outsource in order to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the assessment results. Here again, policymakers strongly believed that outsourcing the assessment process would ensure a better quality of results and would also be a solution to the potential cumbersome process of bureaucratic bottlenecks. The standard procedure would be for assessment companies to recruit, select, and train assessors and submit invoices to ONESQA. This is another feature of ONESQA that aspired to imitate the private sector. In the words of the founder of ONESQA, “We planned for ONESQA to subcontract to other companies in order to cultivate competitive

environment amongst the assessors. If the permanent staff was required to do all the assessment, they would become passive and routine assessors” (Interview, February 2, 2010).

However, the procedure is different for higher education assessment. Given that the Ministry of University Affairs, which later became the Office of Higher Education Commission, had already trained a number of administrators and academics for QA, ONESQA initially benefited from MUA/OHEC-trained assessors. ONESQA invited teams of experts from the universities to conduct the assessments by peer review. These experts included senior administrators and university executives as well as interested academics from various disciplinary backgrounds and universities. Depending on the size of the university being assessed, the team members varied between 4 and 8 people. Due to the seniority culture embedded in Thailand, most of the team leaders were required to be respected senior individuals in the field of higher education. The team leaders would provide feedback of the assessment results back to the university. This aspect again reiterates how ONESQA adapted differing policy strategies to mitigate social resistance.

The ONESQA governing system was created to imitate the private sector. It was intended that policy and decision-making at ONESQA would be decided by board members. Similar to the private sector, the board members of ONESQA aimed to be inclusive and participatory by inviting differing stakeholders, such as university executives, members of the press, and representatives from private sector. Given that ONESQA is mandated to conduct quality assessment at all levels of educational institutions, there were three separate boards overlooking each sector of education. These boards were Basic Education, Vocational Education, and Higher Education. Each board was not to exceed 11 members. Each board was expected to make decisions regarding the QA of the educational track. The board members were comprised of academics and administrators from the fields of Basic Education, Vocational Education, and Higher Education. At the same time, an executive board oversees the entire organization

structure and policy. The executive board is comprised of individuals from various fields of interest. The current board members are comprised of 3 from the public sector, 4 from the educational sector, and 3 from public sectors.²⁷ The Director sits on all of the boards in order to ensure the synchronization and consistency of the policy. The policy rhetoric of participation and private sector involvement reiterates the values emphasized by the National Education Act of 1999. In the policy document to mandate the establishment of ONESQA, the rhetoric of participation is evident throughout the text. As an example, the policy statement of ONESQA states:

The collaborative efforts of the state and private sectors will undoubtedly be most beneficial to the development of educational quality and the enhancement of Thailand's competitiveness in the global community.
(Pittiyanuwat, 2008)

This passage illustrates how the ONESQA founders emphasized the rhetoric of partnership and participation between public and private sectors as the cornerstone of education reform and the quality movement. At the same time, the quote weaves in very well with the broader policy landscape. Not only has the QA movement been representative of globalization and global reform, but it also works toward enhancing Thailand's competitiveness in the global marketplace. This passage also serves as a reminder that globalization acts as a trend or a phenomenon as well as a policy objective for Thai policymakers. Furthermore, it must be noted that the goals of creating a new organization that is independent, neutral, and effective were constantly emphasized throughout the interviews and policy documents. The private sector model of management was upheld as a perfect panacea to reform the education system in Thailand.

²⁷Accessed 27th of February 2012 from: <http://www.onesqa.or.th/onesqa/th/managecommittee/index.php?SystemMenuID=1&Key=>

6.3.2 Evidence-Based Policymaking

The creation of ONESQA came with an expectation that Thailand was moving toward evidence-based policymaking. In fact, Thailand's aspiration to nurture evidence-based policymaking resonates with the global trend of an outcome-based approach to education policy. In the case of ONESQA, policymakers envisioned that the QA results would become a new way of governing educational institutions as well as a justification for the allocation of resources in Thailand. Amongst all the policymakers involved, there was a strong consensus and conviction that the indicators-driven environment would eventually result in improvement and development at the national as well as institutional levels. The line of reasoning was that every university would be subjected to conduct the Self-Assessment Reports (SAR) annually, with the template of the report being guided by quality indicators from OHEC and ONESQA.

Through IQA and EQA, policymakers hope that universities will acquire a better information system to enable them to acknowledge their strengths and the weaknesses. Policymakers anticipated that when all these data are gathered at the national level, differing stakeholders such as OHEC, ONESQA, and the Ministry of Education will be able to identify the areas needing improvement. Hence, the state will be able to use QA results as a guided rationale justifying the allocation of resources to the needy institutions. At the same time, policymakers believe that the university executives will be able to use the QA data to guide their management policies. The conviction that ONESQA would provide a better information system and ensure evidence-based management was expressed by all of the senior policymakers. In fact, to many policymakers, this is the point of departure between ONESQA and previous quality policies. There is a strong policy belief that ONESQA results will guide Thailand's educational development. The policy statement supports this point.

Previously the Thai education system has not seriously prioritized education assessment. A systematic quality assessment was absent in the system. Numerous educational institutions lacked self-assessment for internal quality

assessment. For external quality assessment, the host organizations only assessed some part of the system, which mostly focused on following up rather than assessment for development. Consequently, Thailand's education management as a whole lacked quality. (Office of National Education Council, 1999, p. 1)

This excerpt from the policy statement is telling in several aspects. It justifies how QA and ONESQA would become a new initiative of education policy reform on two grounds. Firstly, the previous system lacked systematic quality assessment. The role of ONESQA was to ensure that self-assessment and external assessment would be taken more seriously. This goes hand in hand with the global movement for QA, which focuses on the systematic method of data collection, evaluation, and assessment. Secondly, it anticipated that ONESQA would bridge the gap between quality assessment and policy development. Throughout the paper and many key interviews, there was a strong anticipation that the results of ONESQA assessment would enable the state as well as the individual institutions to nurture educational development. Hence, the results from ONESQA are not only useful in their own right. It is expected that the results will be used to guide policymaking and the allocation of resources. A strong conviction of the scientific and rational method of policymaking is well captured by a response from the former Secretary General of OHEC, who aptly encapsulated the policy conviction about the creation of ONESQA as evidence-based policymaking: "These indicators are meant to be evidence-based, a factual based policymaking, not an emotional one" (Interview, January 5, 2010). By portraying the results from ONESQA in the binary between evidence versus emotion, it expresses strong conviction that results from ONESQA are objective and neutral.

Amongst ONESQA advocates, it is also believed that results from ONESQA would provide better information for students and parents in selecting higher education. It was intended to rectify the current perception and cultural practice that promotes only a few universities in Thailand. In this sense, ONESQA represents "a new culture in decision making that favors information based rather than perception, rumors or word of mouth.

Thai education will change and ONESQA will be the driver of this change” (Interview, January 18, 2010). With increasing information, the policymaker also expected that institutions will compare assessment results with each other, leading to competition and greater educational quality.

Evidently, the policymakers and founders of ONESQA strongly believed that ONESQA represented a new mode of governing and a new way of managing higher education that highlights the value of the markets. It is also evident that these policy aspirations resonated with general education reforms across the globe. As illustrated, the public sector’s aspiration to imitate the private sector is a global phenomenon. The emphasis on the role of market-based solutions for education reform, such as evidence-based policymaking or an outcome-based approach, is demonstrative of this role.

6.3.3 Decentralization and Recentralization

An analysis on the emergence and trajectory of ONESQA would not be complete without acknowledgment of the policy context regarding the decentralization of the education sector in Thailand. In fact, it is argued that decentralization and devolution of the education sector is the *raison d’être* for having ONESQA in the first place. All of the key policymakers and state advisors used decentralization to justify the need for having QA. Given that decentralization was the major component of the National Education Act of 1999 (Tan, 2007), it affected both basic and higher education levels. In Basic Education, the decentralization process attempted to delegate power, decision making, and resource allocation from the centralized Ministry of Education in Bangkok to Educational Services Areas across the country (Tan, 2007). In higher education, decentralization came in differing forms, including the transformation of public universities to become autonomous as well as giving the University Councils greater power, decisions, and rights to determine institutional management. While the implementation of these reforms provoked conflicts and contests and deserve further

scrutiny in their own rights (Tan, 2007), the interviewees simply referred to the decentralization policy as a given that required a new policy tool. Policymakers intended to use QA to ensure the quality, efficiency, and accountability of the institutions. The relationship between decentralization and quality assessment is well linked in the policy document of ONESQA. It reads:

Quality education is in fact a public service required by the state to provide for all people. The state, therefore, assigns the responsibilities of offering education responsive to the needs of direct beneficiaries, i.e. students and parents, as well as those of indirect beneficiaries, i.e. enterprises, the public and the society as a whole. For such provision, it is necessary that the state assess how far it complies with the national educational policy, and how well it serves the needs of the customers or both groups of beneficiaries. (Pittiyauwat, 2008, p. 1)

While this excerpt highlights the role of the state in providing quality education for all people, a close reading of the policy statement implies that the responsibilities of providing education in fact have been assigned, delegated, and decentralized to other agencies. The statement is indicative of the changing role of the state in Thailand. As the responsibilities to provide education have been assigned to other agencies, the state is left with the crucial role of ensuring that the services meet the quality and standards. The language of the market continues to dominate the policy discourse in Thailand. Students and parents are mentioned as the beneficiaries and customers. The policymakers strongly linked decentralization of education with the emergence of QA. From the centralization of all aspects of education policy, the state has now lessened its direct control while using quality indicators to maintain its influence over the direction of the institutions and the education sector as a whole.

Within the context of decentralization and the delegation of power, the policymakers hoped that ONESQA and its policy would regulate the quality of the institutions. The standards being imposed from ONESQA on other educational institutions exemplify the intention of the Thai state to use these indicators to direct

institutional change and improvement. The interviewee argued that ONESQA policy is expected to instill a sense of institutional competition and maintain the quality of education.

This closely-knit argument between decentralization and quality assessment is repeatedly used by policymakers and evident in policy documents. Responding to the criticism against the ineffectiveness of ONESQA, the current Director, Dr. Channarong Pornrunroj, asserted the necessary role ONESQA played in the context of decentralization policy. The response was published in various local newspapers in Thai. The excerpt below encapsulates his reasoning and the link between decentralization and the need for ONESQA.

Currently, the government has the policy to promote decentralization to the local communities in all levels of education sector, from basic education to higher education. We have seen the mushrooming of new universities and many of them are operated outside the main campuses. Students and customers will never know whether the institutions provide quality of education or not. Therefore it is essential to have central organization that reflects the quality of the education and its management to the public and private sector. So that the institutions will also be able to use the results to improve on their quality. (Matichon, February 20, 2012)

This newspaper article provides insight into how policymakers internalized the role of ONESQA in the changing context of Thai higher education. Quantitative expansion of higher education has been an issue, but the expansion of institutions outside the main campus has only surfaced as a policy problem in recent years. Despite changing educational problems and differing forms of decentralization, ONESQA is presented as a perfect panacea to address all the policy concerns. In this excerpt, ONESQA is presented as both the state actor who oversees the quality of education in decentralization and a provider of information for the state. The close relationship between decentralization and the need for quality assessment is not unique to Thailand. In fact, this partnership is presented as a policy package across the globe. While decentralization is a global policy phenomenon, the issues and problems presented here are still context-specific. This

reiterates the two-way processes and dialogues between global policy and local context. The interpretation of the local actors is included in the process.

6.4 The Paradox of ONESQA

Ten years on, has ONESQA achieved what it was intended to do and to be? This question provoked diverse responses from all the policymakers, QA practitioners, and QA users. The following discussion reflects on the trajectory of ONESQA, its performance, and the perceptions of policymakers and QA users. Given that the fieldwork was conducted during the ten-year anniversary of ONESQA, it was politically timely and also methodologically convenient to gather differing perceptions on the successes and weaknesses of ONESQA. A myriad of policy documents and newspaper articles were published reflecting on this particular issue. Furthermore, the ONESQA ten-year anniversary conference provided a convenient policy space to gather perceptions and perspectives from senior and key policy elites, who may not have been available or accessible otherwise. The speech of former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva regarding the successes and weaknesses of ONESQA at the conference is a case in point. The discussion below illustrates the diversity and paradoxical responses on what ONESQA is and has achieved.

6.4.1 ONESQA Advocates

The data generated divergent responses on the achievements of ONESQA over ten years as an organization as well as external quality assessment (EQA) as a policy. Advocates of ONESQA strongly believe that the organization has achieved what it was set to be. Former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva was one of the key advocates of ONESQA during drafting of the National Education Act 1999 (Interview, August 11, 2010). In his keynote speech at the conference, he shared his optimism on the successes

ONESQA has achieved and overcome. According to the former Prime Minister, the successes of ONESQA were based on its ability to establish an organization, fulfill its legal commitment to conduct two rounds of external assessment, and overcome resistance on the ground. In his own words:

I think ten years of ONESQA, it has had enormous responsibilities. I remember when we began with the law, Thailand had so many educational institutions. When we wrote the law, we wanted to have 7 to 8 years. But the parliament decreased the timeline. We were worried whether ONESQA would achieve the targets on time. We began with the creation of the organization, the process and the indicators. We must admit that ten years have passed, we have managed to overcome these problems and succeeded in evaluating all the educational institutions for two rounds. I have followed all the assessment results.... I must admit, we have achieved everything we set up for. (Keynote speech, Abhisit Vejjajiva, December 20, 2010)

This positive view of ONESQA success is shared by senior policymakers in the Ministry of Education, the Office of Education Council (OEC), and the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC), who all agreed on the benefits of ONESQA. The responses differ in degrees, however. The former Secretary General of OEC persuasively argued that ONESQA is a successful product of the National Education Act 1999. Accordingly, “ONESQA is a golden child of the National Education Act. With ONESQA policy, institutions are able to know their strength and weaknesses. ONESQA enabled them to mirror the reality. Without this reflection, it is impossible to move forward” (Interview, June 10, 2009). When probed about examples of ONESQA successes, he reported that “ONESQA has successfully assessed all the educational institutions on time as legally mandated by the Act.” A similar argument was made in published reports of ONESQA, which used quantitative measures of how many schools, institutions, and universities ONESQA assessed during the first and second rounds as an indication of success (ONESQA, 2009).

A comparison with other countries has also been used by various stakeholders to indicate ONESQA success. In the formal video presentation at the conference, the

message reiterated ONESQA success by making reference to international experiences. According to the presentation, “quality assessment is an essential process in the development of quality education that all the world has implemented. Even though Thailand has only had it for 10 years, we are progressing much faster than other countries” (ONESQA, December 20, 2010). The success of ONESQA is also compared in quantitative numbers. According to a ONESQA senior policymaker, “Within five years, ONESQA has assessed more than 60,00 institutions. This is double the size of the United Kingdom” (Interview, January 18, 2010). In these instances, the policymakers used the experiences of other countries as the baseline to indicate ONESQA’s achievement. The sense of policy nationalism was again being reinforced.

Similarly, the former Secretary General of OHEC and the Minister of Education agreed that ONESQA has achieved its objective. He argued: “ONESQA is the only one organization that has achieved what the National Education Act intended to do. Although the results from the first and second round of assessment have not been used effectively, the organization slowly develops in the right direction” (Interview, August 11, 2010). Although the interviewee acknowledged that the results of ONESQA have not been entirely linked with educational development or the improvement of the institutions, the senior policymakers continued to acknowledge that ONESQA has developed in the right direction. These statements reflect Thailand’s senior policy elites, who worked closely with the creation of ONESQA. Their statements are telling in two significant ways. On the one hand, they provide insight into the perceptions of the founders of the organization. Since they had negotiated, envisioned, and created ONESQA, their perspective provided a long-term trajectory on the development of the organization. On the other hand, they hold high stakes in the success of ONESQA since they were actively involved in the creation of this new organization. Official organizational documents also have a strong tendency to portray the organization in a positive light. Hence, these portrayals of ONESQA must be considered in the context of who is speaking.

In fact, the limited link between assessment results and educational development is a widely debatable issue regarding the success of ONESQA. Based on interviews about policy expectation as well as document analysis, the relationship between assessment results and institutional development was an intended policy outcome of ONESQA. While there is agreement across the interviews that the results from ONESQA have not been effectively used for institutional development or educational improvement, it is questionable whether this indicates a weakness of ONESQA. This is the point of departure amongst ONESQA enthusiasts and its critiques. Many interviewees acknowledged the lack of a link between assessment and development, yet that is not used to measure ONESQA's performance. In interviews with senior policymakers at ONESQA, they began to re-define the role and expectations of ONESQA. The founders of ONESQA responded that it is not ONESQA's responsibility or mandate to improve educational performance. Rather, it is the role of the host agencies to use the assessment results more effectively. One of the key founders of ONESQA argued, "Actually, to make education work is not the direct responsibility of ONESQA. It is the direct responsible of the host agencies. In the case of higher education, it is the responsibility of OHEC" (Interview, January 18, 2010). In spite of the rhetoric of participation and cooperation, many senior leaders of ONESQA highlighted the division of labor between ONESQA and responsible agencies. Ironically, all policy statements and policy expectations justifying the establishment of ONESQA overtly link quality assessment with quality education.

6.4.2 Questions and Criticisms

In contrast to the positive views painted by the founders of ONESQA, others have posted critical reflections and perceptions regarding the roles and successes of the organization, its methodology, and outcomes. Many critiques of ONESQA have gone as far as calling for closure of the organization. This resistance to ONESQA's performance and philosophy dates back as far as its inception (Interview, January 18, 2010).

Discussions on the successes and failures of ONESQA must clearly differentiate between ONESQA's external quality assessment policy and its methodology when criticizing ONESQA as an organization. The next section highlights differing issues and concerns raised by QA practitioners and users who have been involved in ONESQA's system. The interviews below encapsulate policy reflections on the role of ONESQA after ten years. Interestingly, many of these critical reflections came from the advocates of ONESQA and active promoters of QA policy in Thailand.

ONESQA's discontent came from disappointment with what the organization aspired to achieve versus its performance. The limited link between assessment and educational development was the most frequently quoted criticism. This is the significant point of a departure between supporters of ONESQA and its discontents. While the advocates perceive this to be the host agencies' responsibility, ONESQA critiques use it to question the credibility of the organization. In the annual academic conference of the Thailand Development Research Institute, researchers overtly criticized the performance of ONESQA, and the criticism was widely published in all the major newspapers. One of the articles encapsulated this: "The problem of Thai education is caused by the mismatched in the assessment results. While the assessment results continue to indicate positive improvement, quality of students and their academic outcomes continued to decline" (Matichon, February 21, 2012).

While the content of the article must be taken with caution because the assertion came without direct quotations, it is indicative of policy disappointment. This view is shared by one of the board members of OHEC, who aptly argued: "I have disagreement with ONESQA. It is a evaluation driven development. Perhaps, there is no development at all. The reality should be development led evaluation" (Interview, September 4, 2010). Although this policymaker was one of the participants in the policy studies in New Zealand, he refused to associate himself with the implementation.

Secondly, the issues can be summed up in terms of the methodology and QA indicators. Policy responses on the methodology of ONESQA cover a wide range of perspectives to varying degrees. The critics of ONESQA argued that the methodology is too simple and the indicators are too simplistic to capture the quality of the educational institutions and students' outcomes. If the organization's main mandate is to come up with quality indicators to guide policy change, ONESQA is expected to come up with dynamic indicators that would capture and reflect the quality of the institutions and students. According to one OHEC board member,

The role of ONESQA is not to produce static indicators. For example, to evaluate the quality of the graduates, ONESQA continues to count on the percentage of employment 6 months after graduation or employment's satisfaction. Ten years passed, ONESQA continues to come up with simplistic indicators. Time passes, ONESQA must evolve and be more precise. (Interview, September 4, 2010)

This view explains why the majority of the institutions are able to pass the quality thresholds set out by ONESQA. It is argued that the ONESQA system was based on a checklist rather than a thorough evaluation of quality. A longstanding policymaker in the realm of QA observed:

This system must change. I don't think it should be easy. When it is too easy, it does not help anyone on quality. Each university just wanted to get good grades. It is a pity because every system that the government has introduced is like this. All the governments have been very enthusiastic about the QA and they created more and more systems that imitated the easy style of check-list. (Interview, September 9, 2010)

While the policymaker indicated that the quality assessment system in Thailand is based on checklists, he further suggested that this is not conducive to the development of the universities. So far, the universities are driven to meet ONESQA criteria in order to get better grades rather than attaining the quality of the institutions and student outcomes. Regardless of the intrinsic rationale for universities to follow ONESQA's indicators, it does suggest ONESQA's ability to drive policy change at the university level through its indicators and regulations. This point will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

6.4.3 Ideals and Contexts

Through the three-month internship at ONESQA, it was evident the Director is the center of the organization and stands at the apex of decision making. While the creation of ONESQA intended to provide the director with decision-making power, the objective was to lessen bureaucratic bottlenecks and mitigate hierarchy in the organization. Several observations beg further consideration as to whether centralization of the Director's decision-making processes has enabled the organization to be flexible and flat, as was the intent.

From access to the organization to the questions of policy change, the role of the Director is dominant. In order to gain access to work as an intern, a respected informant in the field of education needed to make a personal phone call to introduce me to the Director. Subsequently, I needed to explain the research rationale for his approval. Although he approved the request, a letter of recommendation from the professor was needed to support my case. It took nearly three months for the official letter to travel within the organization and get signed and approved.

This lengthy process of centralized decision making was well illustrated during the internship. When I requested to attend the board meeting of the Higher Education Task Force, a letter of request was needed. It was signed by the head of the Task Force, went to the desk of the deputy director, and required the signature of the Director's advisor before it was approved by the Director himself. Although I was allowed to attend and observe the first meeting, the Director had to approve my attendance at every meeting. During the three months, I only attended one meeting. In another incident, the letter was approved but did not travel from the Director's office to the Head of the Task Force on time.

This process elucidates how a decision was made and the length any request travels within the organization. Several questions came from this process. Firstly, is the director's approval required for all decisions? Secondly, does this create more harm than good for ONESQA? Many activities are delayed, and some requests take longer than a

month to filter through this chain. Other officers in ONESQA confirmed that this is the pattern for the decision-making process within the organization. In an interview with a policymaker who is based at another higher education agency but needed to work with ONESQA, this lengthy process was mentioned as an obstacle to working with the organization. Although ONESQA supports the decentralization of education services in Thailand, experiences within the organization reinforced that there is really complete centralization of decision-making at ONESQA.

The role of the Director is also significant in determining the policy direction of the organization. When I questioned officials on how they viewed the trajectory of ONESQA's policy, this question raised differing tensions between myself and other staff. None of the responses focused on the changing trends of the indicators. Rather, they focused on the changing of the directorship as an indicator of policy change as well as a factor that contributes to it. The question that was intended to understand the organization's policy provoked contentious comparisons between personalities, and perceptions and experiences between the previous Director versus the current one. Given that my internship took place after the first Director had finished his 8-year and 9-month directorship, the issue on policy change was interpreted as a change in directorship more than anything else. It was also clear that policy is personal. The organization was divided between staff that favored the previous Director and those who supported the current Director. Their responses regarding policy change were determined by their personal relationships and opinions about the Director.

The role of the board members was also significant. The rationale for having governing boards to overlook ONESQA's policy was to promote the concept of policy participation of all sectors and imitation of private sector structure to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. A close scrutiny of the roles and relationships among ONESQA's board members and its staff begs the question whether the current structure serves to meet its founding purposes. This observation is based on two grounds. Firstly,

the ratio of board members and ONESQA's permanent staff is uneven. ONESQA is governed by four differing boards. An executive board oversees the overall organization, while three different boards are based on education sectors. These are basic education, vocational education, and higher education boards. Each board is comprised of 11 members, while the director represents the organization in every board room. Therefore, the organization consists of 64 permanent staff and 40 outside board members. Each board meets at least once a month to make decisions regarding quality indicators, approval of assessment results, and other policy issues. The main responsibilities for individuals within each task force are dedicated to transcribing the content of the board meetings, writing the minutes, and preparing materials for upcoming meetings. A few days before each meeting, preparation dominates all other work. In a conversation with one of the staff, she shared with me her responsibilities and workshops in relation to preparing board meetings, saying:

Every month, we have four board meetings. I have to work with all task forces to receive their summary of the previous month meetings and prepare the minutes for the upcoming ones. I then have to send all the documents to the 40 individuals who preside over the four boards. (Conversation, October 4, 2010)

The preparation for board meetings dominates ONESQA's everyday life. It became clear that the permanent staff function more as secretariats to the board meetings. While ONESQA aspired to become the leading institution for QA as well as a think-tank for education issues, that the division of labor favors outside experts more than valued permanent staff is questionable. Undoubtedly, the members of the boards are respectable individuals and experts from various fields and their social prestige has been a significant part of supporting ONESQA's credibility in the eyes of the public, but the current structure that favors the decision-making of the board members, who meet once a month, begs questions regarding policy commitment, consistency, and effectiveness.

6.5 Summary

As an organization, ONESQA was intended to signify a new wave of state organizations. As an Autonomous Public Organization, ONESQA continued to enjoy financial support from the state while exempt from stringent bureaucratic regulations. ONESQA was created with policy expectations that it would become an independent, flexible, and effective organization. As a policy actor, ONESQA was expected to oversee and ensure the quality of all educational institutions in Thailand. In the context of decentralization, ONESQA represents the changing role of the state in Thailand. Instead of being the provider of educational services, the state is intended to lessen its role and decentralize its power to the locals. In this scenario, ONESQA is expected to create quality indicators and oversee the external quality assessment every five years.

It is evident that the state envisioned changing its position and the quality indicators are expected to drive policymaking and management. This chapter has analyzed how a confluence of global, national, and institutional factors has influenced the creation and structure of ONESQA. The first part of the chapter focused on how policy elites actively used and borrowed global concepts of quality assessment and models of quality assessment organizations in order to justify the establishment of ONESQA. At the same time, it illustrated how Thai values and Buddhist concepts were featured in the language of QA practice in order to mitigate local resistance to this new organization. Secondly, the chapter has tried to trace the perspectives of the founders of the organization and understand what this is set to become. It is evident that market-based reforms, language, and solutions have been favored above public sector strategies. Through the interviews, policymakers developed a clear binary between public versus private sector structure. While the former is painted with negative impressions as being hierarchical, unstable, and cumbersome, the latter is believed to be more independent, flexible, and flat. The third objective of this chapter focused on the reflection from

various policymakers, QA users, and observation notes to analyze ONESQA after ten years in operation. As illustrated, perspectives on ONESQA performance and achievement differ substantially between ONESQA enthusiasts and its critiques.

Chapter VII

QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND THAI UNIVERSITIES: INTRODUCTION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND INTERPRETATION

While the previous chapters focused on the national and organizational contexts for QA, this chapter sheds light on how QA is performed at the university and individual academic levels. This chapter focuses on the second research question, which is “How was QA introduced, implemented, and interpreted in Thailand's higher education sector?”

During the field work, I visited eight public universities in Thailand in order to interview university executives, QA practitioners, and academics in an attempt to understand how differing actors interpret the implications of QA for their universities and their work. This chapter highlights the diversity of the institutions and how historically embedded structures at each university influence their implementation and interpretation of QA. A comparative case study between two universities will elucidate how QA is done and how a QA report was prepared. The last part of this chapter provides space to analyze how differing academics in Thailand interpret and perceive the implementation of these quality policies in relation to their academic work.

7.1 Implementing QA at the University Level

This section will discuss the detailed process of doing QA at the university level. The objectives are to illustrate how QA is implemented on the ground, how the information travels within and between institutions, and how data are collected. The

experience of two universities will be discussed in detail: Prince of Songkla University and Suranaree University of Technology. The two cases present contrasting strategies and structures for implementing QA at the university level. This section aims to provide insight into the translation, implementation, and interpretation of QA by differing actors at differing levels of the policy process. The general trends of policy implementation will first be introduced. Subsequently, the two cases of Prince of Songkla University (PSU) and Suranaree University of Technology (SUT) will be featured to deepen understanding of the implementation process.

7.1.1 QA Meetings, Documents, and People

This section provides a brushstroke on the implementation QA process in Thai public universities. Based on the interviews with QA practitioners, the process of doing QA is illustratively demanding, requiring enormous paperwork and creating enormous an QA bureaucracy. These demands come in the forms of meetings, report production, and data collection.

Firstly, extensive QA meetings are called for at all levels. QA practitioners are required to keep up-to date knowledge regarding QA indicators and requirements introduced by national organizations such as OHEC, ONESQA and OPDC. Although QA executives and practitioners may not be actively represented during the decision-making process in OHEC, ONESQA or OPDC, the fieldwork elicits that they are actively aware of policy changes at the center. Their engagements come in various forms, such as attending regular meetings organized by these organizations. The observation of the 10th Year Anniversary of ONESQA in the Queen Sirikit Convention Center in Bangkok in December 2010 illustrates how QA practitioners at all levels of education actively attend QA meetings to learn about the most up-to-date trends as well as to raise their voices. When ONESQA opened 4,000 vacancies for attendants, booking reached its capacity within three days. ONESQA needed to create more space for interested participants,

including assessors, QA practitioners, and academics at all levels: Basic, Vocational, and Higher Education. In the session of the Third Round of Assessment for the Higher Education Sector, the conference hall was crowded with QA practitioners and executives questioning and raising doubts about the preliminary indicators. Even though ONESQA had yet to formally announce the final indicators to be used in the Third Round of Assessment during the December 2010 conference, QA enthusiasts and practitioners came to the meetings with detailed questions, raising doubts and concerns.

Not only were there numerous national meetings and events QA practitioners attended; they were also actively involved in regional meetings and seminars. These seminars created learning spaces for QA practitioners from various institutions to learn about the new policy as well as share their experiences with each other. The fieldwork in both Chiang Mai University and Prince of Songkla University illustrated the regional networks among QA people. QA practitioners reported that they are constantly meeting with other QA practitioners from northern and southern universities to learn from each others' experiences, make sense of national indicators, and clarify issues.

Beyond attending meetings at the national and regional levels, QA practitioners are required to attend numerous meetings within the university in order to introduce, explain, and clarify the quality indicators to the university community, including representatives from all faculties and departments. Numerous meetings between QA-related committees are necessary to discuss, interpret, and translate the national demands for QA into what is relevant for each university. After the university has made the decision, necessary consultation and negotiation takes place between the university and differing faculties. According to the interviews, faculty executives need to make commitments as to how they anticipate their faculty or department to achieve their respective indicators. The case of Pring Songkla University illustrates a financial commitment between the university and the faculty, whereas Suranaree University of Technology does not tie QA performance to financial rewards. In interviews with other universities, financial

incentive seems not yet to be a predominant feature of QA works. QA practitioners reported that prior to the assessment, numerous meetings are called for between university executives, QA practitioners, and other potentially responsible individuals. A QA practitioner at PSU encapsulated her daily working schedule:

Throughout the whole year, there are so many meetings. When there are new indicators introduced, we need to have so many meetings to explain what the indicators mean and how we will collect data to support it. The most important thing is how to collect the same data. (Interview, January 19, 2011)

The interviewee illustrates a complex process to make every level of the university understand what QA requires of them. Given that QA practitioners are the interface between external demands by OHEC, ONESQA, and others, they also play significant roles in determining, discussing, and interpreting the meaning of each indicator and how to translate their understanding to other faculties, departments, and other units.

Secondly, much of QA work is related to documentation and report writing. As aforementioned, every faculty and department is required to create self-assessment reports and submit them to the university for internal and external assessment. Together with report writing, they are also mandated to support each of their achievements with documentation or written documents. These QA works are relied on as an accumulation of evidence substantiating that the university or faculty has accomplished each indicator. This process has created massive amounts of paperwork at all levels of the university. QA practitioners at every level are required to prepare at least nine huge folders to support each indicator. Under the QA system of PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act), the university must submit evidence from the first step to the finishing evaluation. For example, to illustrate that the university has conducted a cultural project, the university is required to submit evidence that illustrates the planning process, a description of the project, and evaluation responses from those involved, plus ways to improve it. Undoubtedly, QA work has demanded enormous bureaucracy and manpower to collect the data necessary to

answer the required indicators. The experiences of QA practitioners at every university reinforce the abundance of paperwork and reports required for both Internal and External Assessment (not including other quality evaluations that the universities implemented).

Thirdly, the demands for data collection and self-assessment reports ultimately embed QA works within many other aspects of university life. The responsibility for collecting necessary data is included and woven into almost, if not every, unit of university function. This point will be further exemplified in the case of Prince of Songkla University as well as Suranaree University of Technology. Although QA divisions or departments have been created in every university visited in this research, it has been illustrated that the data collection processes involve more than just the responsible officers or QA practitioners. Demands for data have been translated into unique templates and embedded in the works of many other officers at the faculty and department level. The staff at the Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology captured the integral relationship between the need for evidence and massive amounts of human resources spent in preparation of QA:

Everyone has to do it. The responsibilities of the staff are more than faculty members. But we still need the faculties to take part. We need to set up a group of faculty members to overlook QA issues. Sometimes we need at least the Vice Dean to chair the QA session. We lose a lot of human resources in the process. Every department has at least one or two QA staff, but there are more people involved in the QA process and everyone has to attend these meetings. We still haven't talked about the massive amount of paper spent in preparing these indicators. (Interview, August 8, 2010)

The interviewee from Thammasat University illustrates how QA work has demanded enormous attention from faculty and staff alike. As discussed before, the rationale for the creation of enormous QA bureaucracy can be explained by both the practical as well as political reasons. On the one hand, the demands for data and evidence ultimately require human resources to support the work. As discussed by the Thammasat staff, QA has become an important task for both QA practitioners and others in the

faculty. On the other hand, the creation of numerous QA committees has tended to indirectly persuade the academic community within the universities to accept and become a part of the QA process. In fact, a senior policymaker of QA at the OHEC and ONESQA felt that the creation of QA committees aimed to incrementally mitigate resistance within the university. He argued:

We needed to create a lot of committees. One committee for teaching and learning, others for other things. When we recruit more people into the committees, we will be able to create critical mass to understand QA. The creation of critical mass will indirectly persuade others to understand the needs for QA. Instead of having just three to four people on each committee, we need a lot of people involved. This has been the strategy that the University used and slowly more people accepted our work. (Interview, January 11, 2010)

According to the interviewee, the creation of QA committees has the intended purposes of recruiting more like-minded individuals to work on QA as well as mitigate resistance within the university. While many QA practitioners perceived the creation of QA responsible committees for data collection and interpretation, this interview suggests a diverse view and differing strategy to accommodate the demands for QA.

The next two sub-sections will provide further insight into the QA implementation process at two universities: Prince of Songkla University (PSU) and Suranaree University of Technology (SUT). They aim to further elaborate on the points being discussed in this section.

7.1.2 Prince of Songkla University (PSU)

Prince of Songkla University (PSU) was established on the 22nd of September 1967 and is considered to be the first university established in the southern region of Thailand. Unlike other institutions, PSU is a multiple campus university. There are five campuses in various southern provinces of Thailand: Hat Yai, Pattani, Phuket, Trang, and Surat Thani. Within the five campuses, PSU has 28 faculties and 2 colleges. There are

34,613 students in total. Its teaching staff is made up of 1,409 lecturers, 22 professors, 527 assistant professors, and 262 associate professors.

On April 25, 2001, the Prince of Songkla University Committee for Quality Assurance System Directing approved the establishment of the PSU Quality Assurance Division with the mandate of co-ordinating different activities related to QA within the university.²⁸ The division was upgraded in 2006 to be the responsible unit for coordinating with external organizations related to IQA, EQA, and other quality matters. The division is under the supervision of the Vice President on Planning and Development, and there are eight officers at the QA Division coordinating and communicating with different faculties and departments within the university as well as with outside organizations such as OHEC, ONESQA, and OPDC (Interview, January 19, 2011). Currently, at least nine committees have been involved with the QA process at the institutional level.²⁹ These committees include PSU QA Directing, PSU QA Development, and PSU QA Operating; each supervises the PSU QA Division conducting, interpreting, and developing QA materials and matters. The PSU QA Division has also been responsible for conducting training for academics and individuals who are interested in becoming QA assessors. There are also QA Forums that encourage “knowledge sharing and best practices” between different faculties in the university.³⁰ Furthermore, the PSU QA Division has published a PSU Quality Assurance Newsletter since 2006. The PSU Newsletter is published quarterly and includes the most up-to-date details about QA rules, regulations, and activities related to QA.

PSU has implemented multiple quality policies at the university including the faculty level. Not only is the university subjected to IQA and EQA; it has also embraced

²⁸Accessed March 26, 2012 from: <http://www.qa.psu.ac.th/eng.html>

²⁹Accessed March 26, 2012 from: <http://www.qa.psu.ac.th/eng-com.html>

³⁰Accessed March, 26 2012 from: <http://www.qa.psu.ac.th/news/qa/6-3.pdf>

other quality policies such as PMQA by OPDC and the Malcolm Baldrige TQA by OHEC.

How do the data get collected? Interviews and document analysis elucidated the process of data collection and interpretation within PSU both at the institutional level and faculty level. The PSU QA Division is the responsible organization for receiving the information regarding the rules, indicators, and standards of differing quality policies from the national organizations. Subsequently, the division is required to understand, interpret, and disseminate the information to other faculties and departments on what is needed to be done and collected. Similar to other universities, PSU has integrated the demands of OHEC and ONESQA into new composite quality indicators for PSU to cover and collect all the necessary information for differing organizations. Accordingly, the PSU QA Division created a unique institutional template of 10 Standards and 11 aspects of outputs, resulting in 53 quality indicators. These new indicators were translated into differing data collection forms for all faculties and academics to follow. The interview with a QA practitioner at the university level illustrates how the command of and data collection for QA travels within the university.

When we collect data, we will disseminate the form for each indicator to the responsible organizations. We act as a coordinator, you see. For example, if we want to collect the numbers of the students, we contact the Registry. If we want the student's activities profile, we contact the Students Activity Office. The research data belongs to the Graduates Students Department. The QA Division acts as a coordinator for different Departments and Faculties. (Interview, January 19, 2011)

The interview illustrates the role of the QA Division within the university. Not only were the QA indicators required by OHEC and ONESQA and integrated into one composite template for the QA Division, but they also disaggregated into different divisions and organizations. Even though it is reported that only eight individuals were responsible for QA at the university level, this chain of data collection illuminates how the QA process has been embedded within the system and requires extensive manpower

and bureaucratic support. At the faculty level, the QA template is also diffused into differing departments and offices. The interview with a QA practitioner in the Faculty of Natural Resources supports this point. She argued:

At the Faculty of Natural Resources, the central office is responsible for the data collection process. If we want to collect data about the research, the Research Unit will be responsible for this task. If we want the teaching and learning information, the Registry Unit will do this, while the Academic Unit will be responsible for academic information ... we accumulated one data set and disseminate to the Departments to write up their Self-Assessment Report. They can just use the numbers we collected for their report. We don't have to wait for the data to be reported up from the department. (Interview, January 19, 2011)

The interviewee acknowledged the diversity of the data collection process across different faculties in the university. The interview also illustrates the dynamic processes of data collection. While the PSU QA Division posits its data collection process to be a bottom-up approach, whereby differing units collect the data and send it to the QA Division, the faculty level illustrates a top-down process. Instead of waiting for the data to be reported from the department levels, the Faculty acts as a data collector and subsequently gives the data to the departments to compose their Self-Assessment Reports. This dynamic process of data collection illustrates a complex web of QA practitioners inside the university. At the same time, it becomes even more problematic and difficult to estimate the actual officers who are related to QA as well as the costs of doing so.

Through interviews and document analysis, PSU has implemented mechanisms to incentivize academics and faculties to conduct QA and improve their performance. There are both financial and non-financial incentives. For the financial incentives, the university requires the dean of every faculty to commit their targeted achievements with the University President, while the department head has to commit their aspired targets with the dean. After having agreed with the set targets, the Terms of Reference (TOR) are written, and there is follow-up twice a year. If the faculty or department achieve their set

goals, they will be awarded financial bonuses approximately up to 30,000 baht (1,000 USD). The faculty or department will have discretion on how the money is to be spent (Interview, January 19, 2011). In addition to the monetary value tied to the performance indicators, PSU also provides financial incentives to award academic publication. In an interview with the executive of PSU, he argued that the financial incentive had been a part of the university management prior to the establishment of QA.

Prior to QA, PSU has established a bonus system to incentivize the faculty members to improve their performance. For example, if they had international publication, we provided 20,000 Baht as a token of appreciation and encouragement for the authors. This existed before QA. (Phone interview, January 20, 2011)

Given that PSU is registered as a graduate-research track and is one of the nine National Research Universities, its research and publications are significant parts of the QA performance. Even though the research incentive existed prior to QA, it has undoubtedly been integrated into the quality regime. Beyond financial rewards, PSU has also developed a knowledge management system (KM) to encourage faculties and departments to share their knowledge on differing facets of teaching, research, and management. The central committee at the university level subsequently selects the “Best Practices” and promotes the experiences to academic communities within and outside the institutions. The PSU QA Newsletter became one of the main channels to promote these internal practices.

7.1.3 Suranaree University of Technology (SUT)

Suranaree University of Technology (SUT) was built as the First Autonomous University in Thailand, opening on the 27th of July 1990. The establishment of SUT was due to the mandate from the First Long Range Plan for Higher Education in 1990 that attempted to reform and transform public universities in Thailand into more private-like run institutions with greater efficiency and effectiveness. According to the SUT website, the principles of being an Autonomous University are: “high levels of independence,

flexibility, and efficiency. Important as well is the ability to develop its own organization and work systems.”³¹

Therefore the administrative system, financial structure, and personnel recruitment at SUT were intended to differ from those at other public universities in significant ways. While it continued to receive significant amounts of its budget from the state, the budget for SUT came in the form of block grants rather than itemized budgets. SUT praised itself by following the principle of “Centralized Service, Coordinated Task” in terms of its administrative system (Interview, January 5, 2011). According to this principle, most of the administrative system and teaching and learning resources are shared at the university level rather than being done separately at the faculty or department level as in traditional public universities. The current profile of the university includes 10,941 students and 6 schools (Faculties). There are a total of 165 faculty members: 10 full professors, 110 assistant professors, and 45 associate professors.

Senior executives of the university and QA practitioners argued that the system of QA was embedded in the evaluation system of the university since its inception. While it is still a state-owned university, the university was created to uphold the values of the market. These principles included independence, flexibility, and efficiency.³² Good governance and academic freedom were also discussed as the major ethos of the university. Given that salaries at SUT were more competitive than for other academics in Thai public universities, the academics at SUT were subjected to rigorous assessment and evaluation from SUT's inception. SUT academics were subjected to employment contracts as well as performance-based evaluation to ensure efficiency and “justify the value for money” (Interview, January 5, 2011).

³¹Accessed March 30, 2012 from http://web.sut.ac.th/sutnew/sut_en/e03_asu.php

³²Accessed February, 18 2012 from: http://web.sut.ac.th/sutnew/sut_en/e03_asu.php

Officially, the system of QA began in 1998, prior to the promulgation of the National Education Act 1999/2002. QA executives and practitioners argued that SUT was an early adopter of QA in Thailand due to the “vision of its founding president,” Dr. Vichit Srisa-An (Interview, January 5, 2011). During this early period, SUT developed its own quality standards and indicators. There were 13 quality factors and 48 indicators.³³ Not only did SUT executives argue that the university was a pioneer in introducing QA in Thai higher education; they also argued that SUT experiences became the model for ONESQA to emulate. The SUT rector argued:

In 1996, SUT began to formally introduce QA in our university management. We developed three types of indicators: input, process and outputs. In terms of output and outcome, we began focusing on learning and teaching and moving into research and institutional mission. We began before anybody did. In fact, we were the first in the country to initiate and implement this policy.... When ONESQA was created, they used the experiences of SUT as the best practices to develop their policy. (Interview, January 5, 2011)

Given that senior policymakers who worked within the QA advisory board at SUT later became the director and a board member at ONESQA, they were able to bring with them the experiences and initiatives begun at SUT to the national level (Interview January 5, 2011). The excerpts above illustrate how information flows and networks of policymakers travel both ways. On the one hand, the university benefited from having Dr. Vichit Srisa-an as its rector. He was able to translate the most up-to-date policy discussions into practice. On the other hand, the closely-knit relationship within the education circle enabled other policy elites to take experiences from SUT and justify their policy actions and rationale at the national level.

While SUT is not subjected to OPDC evaluation like other public universities, the interviews reveal a multiplicity of QA systems being implemented in this university. QA practitioners reported that there are Internal Quality Assurance, External Quality Assessment, Risk Management, Knowledge Management, Internal Auditing, Financial

³³Accessed on March, 31, 2012 from: <http://web.sut.ac.th/qa/menu2.php>

Control (Interview, January 5, 2011). The discussion on data collection at the university and faculty level revealed a complex web of bureaucratic works, networks of personnel, and intensive communication and coordination systems required to answer all of these quality demands.

According to the Centralized Service, Coordinated Task, the works of QA began at the central administration system. QA works were subject to the Academic Support Division rather than having their own separate unit, and they reported to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. However, as the national system of QA became more complex and required more specific data systems, the system of QA at SUT also evolved and increased in sophistication. From only 3 personnel at the center academic administration, the university created “QA people” in all 28 Units, 6 Schools, and 7 Institutes. An interview with the QA executive described the process of the Self-Assessment Report:

Before this system, these personnel only provided information that we requested to create one single Self-Assessment Report at the university. The system changed and now every working unit has its own QA committee and is required to draft their own Self-Assessment Reports (SAR). All run parallel with the university SAR. (Interview, January 5, 2011)

The interview explicated the burgeoning of QA work within the university and increasing demand for self-assessment at all levels. Although all the interviewees at SUT prided themselves for having an efficient system of “Centralized Service, Coordinated Task,” they justified the creation of extensive QA networks in all departments and units by two rationales. On the one hand, the creation of QA people is necessary for data collection. The increasing demands for data from OHEC and ONESQA required extensive data collection at all levels. The three personnel positioned at the center level of the university was no longer adequate. On the other hand, QA practitioners argued that the increasing administrative cadre for QA work is necessary to ensure that the

individuals in all departments and academic units acknowledge and internalize the significance of QA. According to a QA practitioner:

They must understand and realize the importance of QA. They must be a part of the system, become a part of the QA people and be responsible for the data. Therefore, we created QA committees in every Department.... This increased the coordination level and clarified our work. We now know who to contact or follow up for data collection.... Now that they are QA people in every organization, it is easier to coordinate. (Interview, January 5, 2011)

The increasing bureaucracy of QA is interpreted as a necessary policy strategy both for practical and political reasons. The interview illustrates how the need for data leads to the creation of more tasks and responsible individuals to complete QA demands.

Paradoxically, it suggests that the need for more QA people and creation of QA bureaucracy within the university help to complete the work with more efficiency and clarity.

In addition to the IQA and EQA indicators imposed by OHEC and ONESQA, SUT created another committee to overlook institutionally unique indicators. A QA executive argued that there are certain things and information that the university would like to know about themselves. However, these are not covered by the indicators required by OHEC and ONESQA. Subsequently, the university created another committee for “follow ups, audits and appraisals of SUT achievement” (SUT Annual Report, 2010, p. 34). These data are then presented in the meetings amongst university and faculty executives. The data provide points of comparison between different departments. Instead of using financial incentives, QA executives argued that SUT uses QA results and achieving indicators to encourage differing faculties to improve. If some departments and units receive relatively low scores in their assessment, it is necessary for the department executives to explain in front of other executive members the reason for their low performance. At the same time, they are required to make commitments and offer policy strategies in order to improve their scores. According to a university executive, the data enable differing faculties and institutions to compare themselves. The data and information created by the external and

internal demands for QA enable the executives to follow up on the progress, strengths, and weaknesses of each department and unit. The QA executive argued:

We have two systems on top of each other. IQA is not complete but we realized we should not add the existing IQA systems because that will create too many indicators. We should follow OHEC and ONESQA on that system so that it is comparable to other universities. Whatever we are interested in should have our own system. The system we created intended to follow up on the progress of the assigned tasks. If the faculties or departments could not achieve, they have to explain why. (Interview, January 5, 2011)

This interview elicits several important points regarding the development and implementation of QA at SUT. Firstly, it illustrates how SUT executives are enthusiastic about assessment and evaluation. Secondly, the excerpt demonstrates the executives' conviction for constant comparison between differing units of the university as well as between SUT and other universities as a means to improve its quality. Comparability is considered an important aspect of QA. Thirdly, it illustrates how QA data and information are used by the executives to instill change within the organization. It provides the point of entrance for executives to follow up on progress, strengths, and weaknesses of the institution.

Not only was the comparison within the university an important part of the policy landscape, but the interviews with the SUT rector and senior executive also illustrated how the university constantly compares itself with other universities in Thailand. Given that SUT has only been established for 20 years, the university executives take pride in the university's success. QA results and SUT selection as one of the 9 National Research Universities in Thailand are used by the executives to amplify its institutional achievements:

This is the 18th year of the university in operation and we are already in the National Research University. We are able to compete with Chulalongkorn, Thammasat and Kasertsart University, who we considered grandfathers. We can also compete with Chiang Mai and Khon Kean University, who we considered like uncle universities ... in the most recent EQA result, we received 4.7 score and ranked second in the nation. We only lost to

Mahanakorn University, which is a private institution. We are the first amongst public universities. (Interview, January 5, 2011)

The interview elicited how SUT executives used QA results and its acceptance to the NRU to indicate its quality and achievement. Furthermore, there are constant comparisons between the university and other public universities in Thailand. This sense of institutional pride is a repeated theme amongst all the interviewees at SUT. As Thailand's first Autonomous University, SUT informants outwardly use these indicators to justify the superiority of the Autonomous University.

The discussions about Prince of Songkla University and Suranaree University of Technology illustrate how the historical legacy, legal system, and structure of each university continue to play substantive roles in shaping how QA is translated and implemented by differing actors. The contextual differences are also essential factors that influence the perception and response each university has on the policy. For example, Prince of Songkla University institutional administration delegating works into the faculty level influenced the way data are collected and how SAR is written up. The faculty structure is a predominant factor in the majority of public universities in Thailand. Similar trends are found in studies of Chulalongkorn, Chiang Mai, and Thammasat Universities. In the case of Suranaree University of Technology, its principle of "Centralized Services, Coordinated Tasks" has created an institutionally unique response to QA demands. It was problematic for SUT to implement QA and collect data due to limited personnel at the faculty level. The brief discussion of the cases of Prince of Songkla University and Suranaree University of Technology aimed to provide an overview on how QA is implemented at the university level.

7.2 The Roles of QA in the Thai Higher Education Sector

The previous sections mapped out the overview of how differing universities implemented QA in their institutions, the processes, and differing actors involved. This

section analyzes the roles of QA in Thai higher education and discuss the intended and unintended consequences of QA. The section investigates what roles QA plays in terms of higher education policy and management at the national as well as institutional level. Subsequently, it sheds light on the disparity between policy expectations and policy outcomes on the ground. The most pertinent question and criticism, from QA advocates and critiques alike, focuses on the missing link between quality and QA. This issue will be addressed.

7.2.1 The Intended Consequences of QA

When questioned about the benefits and intended consequences of QA, the academic executives and those responsible for QA argued that QA has created three main benefits: greater enthusiasm for quality-related issues, a more systematic approach to record the performance of the universities, and a better information system.

More than ten years after implementing QA in Thai universities, interviewees argued that there has been greater enthusiasm within the higher education community to address and discuss the issues of quality. At the national level, there is a greater awareness on the necessity of QA as a policy tool to manage the higher education sector as well as an important instrument to manage issues with the institutions. As Section 7.1 illustrated, QA has been institutionalized and bureaucratized within Thailand's contexts. Through those QA conferences and forums at the national, regional, and cross-institutional levels, ample policy spaces have been created for multiple stakeholders, such as national policymakers, university executives, and QA practitioners, to come together and discuss issues related to QA. Such enthusiasm has brought about new emphasis and focus on the issue of quality in Thailand.

By collecting data and producing the reports according to IQA and EQA guidelines, this resulted in a better and more systematic information system at the national as well as institutional level. Many policymakers at the national level argued that

QA has helped them to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education sector. During one interview with the key policy advisor to the Commission, he demonstrated how the Office of Higher Education Commission has created a new online system for all universities to key in their information for Internal Quality Assurance. This system is called “CHE Online.” Each university has its individual log-in and password to record its information, which will immediately appear on the website and be accessible for the policymakers at OHEC. According to the interviewee, this new information system enables the state and senior policy advisors to acquire a national landscape of higher education institutions as a whole (Interview, September 9, 2010)

Given that universities are compelled to develop a new information system, many argue that the most beneficial aspect of QA is this increasingly systematic approach to collecting data from all levels of the university. According to the QA executive from Chulalongkorn University, “the most obvious benefit of QA is that university becomes more disciplined in data collection. It becomes easier to collect data from various sources and departments” (Interview, November 23, 2010). A similar point is made by the QA practitioner at Thammasat University, who argues that “QA makes our work become more systematic. We are more enthusiastic to follow the 9 quality indicators and accumulate evidence to support it. Before having QA, the information was all over the place” (Interview, November 22, 2010). These responses are representative of all the interviewees on the benefits of QA. University executives and QA practitioners from all institutions attributed the increasing systematic approach to data collection as the primary benefit of doing QA.

The senior executives also argued that the improved information system and data collection have had a direct impact on the universities’ quality. Given that QA aimed to evaluate the outputs of the universities, there has been increased attention and interest to push for more production of research and innovations. The senior executive of the Prince

of Songkla University acknowledged the benefits of QA and linked the improvement of the information system with the quality of the university:

In the big picture, QA creates greater enthusiasm that our education must have high quality.... Although QA encourages an incremental development, it is beneficial to the university. enabled us to see whether the number of faculties are sufficient for the number of students. The system assures that we have quality.... The fact that we have to do Self-Assessment Report enabled us to see how much we publish. The picture of the university is clearer. (Phone interview, January 20, 2011)

Based on an interview with a PSU senior executive, the benefits of QA are evident. The improvement of data collection enabled the university to reflect on its performance and achievements. Subsequently, the executives are able to make better decisions because of the availability of the data. Another advocate of QA from Chiang Mai University demonstrated the integral relationship between the enthusiasm to do QA and university's improvement in terms of publications.

I have seen the change. There is more enthusiasm to do QA and get published. I have seen universities more enthusiastic to do research. It is still less clear on teaching and learning, that is difficult to assess. Publication increased substantially during the past 3 to 4 years. Given that the indicators are driving policy change, research budget has increased and there is more attention to do research. (Interview, January 11, 2010)

The interviewee illustrated a connecting link between the increasing enthusiasm to do QA work and the improvement in research production. While the university executives believe that QA directly helps to improve its performance, the interview with a PSU QA practitioner gives a potential explanation of the data and research improvement. She demonstrated the integral relationship of data and the improvement of research production:

We may have more research. Maybe that is because we have a better information system. Before this system was introduced, we didn't see the data. We might have done it but the lack of evidence and carelessness makes it harder to see ourselves. Now that we are obligated to write reports and keep evidence, every unit tries to have the most detailed information. When we have better assessment results, we receive more funding for research.

With more funding, we then have more production. (Interview, January 19, 2011)

The QA practitioner pointed to several potential answers as to why QA has contributed to the increase in publication. Although there may have been publication prior to QA, there was no information system to accumulate the results and illustrate the performance. From this perspective, QA doesn't directly improve the performance. Rather, it helps to improve the data collection system. In return, the QA practitioner illustrates how the availability of research data helps to improve the university and the faculty's portfolio. With impressive assessment results, it is more likely to attract research funding. This helps institutions to produce more research. It must be noted that QA is not the only cause pushing for greater attention to research and publication. Since the Thai state and presidents of Thai universities are extremely interested in ranking high in the international league table, this aspiration has been the key motivation for national policymakers and university administrators to stress the importance of research publications.

QA data are also connected with improvement in the academics' performance. A PSU executive argued that the evidence enabled the institution to indirectly encourage academics to improve themselves. Accordingly, he argued: "The university does not use the results of QA to directly instill competition. However, the availability of the numbers makes the faculty members more enthusiastic to improve" (Phone interview, January 20, 2011). The case of Suranaree University of Technology exemplifies how university executives use the data to encourage change, improvement, and competition amongst faculty members and different faculties within the university. Although the interviewee argued that the university has no intention to push academics to compete with one another, the interviewee admitted that there is active use of QA results by university executives to follow up on progress, performance, or the lack thereof. These examples illustrate the logic of the academic executives in using the results of QA to steer change.

Policy documents and policymakers reiterated the intention that information and data collected and published via ONESQA and the institutions will make Thailand's education policy more accountable and evidence-based (ONESQA, 2001). In fact, ONESQA advocates strongly believed that through EQA, Thailand is creating "a new culture that is based on evidence, rather than rumors" (Interview, January 18, 2010).

7.2.2 The Unintended Consequences of QA

The last section highlights the main benefit of QA, which is a better information system, and how that potentially links with improvement of the university's performance. The increasing attention given to data and documentation as main evidence to support QA works also raises several points of concern and caused unintended consequences. The first problem is the overwhelming amount of paperwork generated by writing up reports and preparing assessments and materials to support the university's performance according to each indicator. The more indicators, the more evidence is needed. The staff at the Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology at Thammasat University captured these processes of preparing for the assessment and raised some points of concern:

The system is too big. There might be some benefits but we are using enormous resources to evaluate very little things ... sometimes the data is useful but many times they don't reflect anything ... they said that we could do it on-line but when they came to assess, they asked for papers and evidence. Ultimately, we have to prepare so much evidence. Each faculty prepares hundreds and hundreds of papers and filings. (Interview, August 5, 2010)

This interviewee demonstrates the flip side of the need for data and information for QA. It demands enormous manpower, time, and energy to prepare for the assessment. Not only does this require enormous effort, but many QA practitioners also accept that the demand for evidence creates the need to make up new evidence to support each indicator. Interviews with QA practitioners and staff express that it is a common trend to make up the evidence for the assessment. In the voice of one QA practitioner:

Sometimes we need to make up the evidence. Many people admitted that they didn't collect the evidence and needed to create something to support it. Sometimes the Faculties asked if they can fail some indicators this year and improve next year. But that is not possible.... The fact that they have to do it but they could not find the evidence, they have to make it up.... If they didn't have the plans, they have to create the plans. Everyday work already demanding but we have to spend so much time making up supporting evidence. Sometimes we did that activities but we did not keep it. Then we don't have the evidence. The system required evidence, written evidence. (Interview, January 19, 2011)

This detailed description illuminates how the systematic demands for evidence to support the assessment can lead to the unintended consequence of making up documents to support the university's performance. According to the interviewees, QA comes down to enormous documentation and written documents. While the system was created to ascertain the action, it created pressure for QA practitioners to find practical solutions. Furthermore, the QA system in Thailand requires 3 years of evidence to support each indicator. This is a loophole in the system that requires something from the university that might or might not be done. Similar to this experience, another QA executive described how the process and regulation of doing QA enables faculties and universities to create new documents to support their case:

I am responsible for QA in my Department and I can assure how the process created the possibility for fake documents and evidence. Whatever you want to say that your Department did, you can just write a summary report about the meeting. When they come to check, we present them with these documents. (Interview, November 22, 2011)

The making up of evidence to support QA system is not the only one unintended consequence of the system. Interviewees reported different ways the universities have coped with the demand for research production. In contrast to the positive picture the university executives painted of the increasing enthusiasm for research, interviews with QA assessors as well as academics elucidated some of the techniques the universities have used to respond to the stated demand for more publication. The QA assessor and

academic from Chulalongkorn University shared her experience in conducting assessment:

Most of the indicators counted the quantity of the products. For example, how many researches do you have, or how many activities did you do? They are not concerned about the quality of the product as such. In my experience, some academics did one research in different locations. Then they divided their research into different pieces in order to increase the numbers of works to be counted. (Interview, November 23, 2010)

The interviewee illustrated the strategy that some academics use in order to pass the assessment process. Instead of producing quality work, some researchers strategically exploit the system by dividing their case studies into different pieces in order to quantify their performance. Another academic executive supported this: “Some academics did 59 researches per year but it is all customers’ survey. Researching is about confirming or disproving a theory, it is about theory development” (Interview, January 4, 2011). As it will be illustrated, the different perceptions of what is regarded as quality research become a point of disagreement between QA advocates and the opposing academics.

While the university executives and QA advocates argue that QA has created a better information system, differing voices highlight the unintended consequences of the massive data demand for QA work. The making up of new evidence, compartmentalized projects, or the quantity of research are some common problems shared by all QA practitioners and academics across the institutions being interviewed. In an interview with an academic from the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, he rightly reflected the disparity between the objectives of QA as a tool to reform the inefficiency of the public sector and the reality it has created:

Every department is facing the same problem. There is more paperwork and document preparation. We need to increase human resources in order to do QA work. We said we needed QA to improve the effectiveness of the system by having indicators guiding policy work.... The more we do, the bigger and slower the system has become. (Interview, January 6, 2011)

The interview provides an insightful summary and reflection on the reality of QA work. Although QA was created on the premise that it would be a new form of public management and enhance the effectiveness of the bureaucratic system, the massive amount of paperwork and bureaucracy demanded by QA casts doubt on its value.

7.2.3. QA as a Standardized Gatekeeper

This section argues that the processes and results of QA have been used as a tool by the Thai state to manage the higher education system. On the one hand, QA results are used to indicate the Thai state's seriousness about the issues of quality in higher education. By producing state-directed indicators that are applicable to all institutions, the state is able to present itself as a neutral and non-discriminatory policy actor in quality management. On the other hand, QA can be understood as a policy replacement of any national system of ranking. Through the latter view, it is evident that policy elites have strategically selected a global policy tool that mitigates local contestation and conflicts.

As discussed in Chapter V, Thailand has undergone rapid expansion of higher education in multiple forms. New private universities have sprung up rapidly within the past three decades, while nearly 40 teachers colleges have been upgraded into comprehensive universities. With the Ministry of Education having decentralized its authority to the university councils, each institution is authorized to open new courses or campuses without requiring the permission of the Ministry of Education or the Office of Higher Education Commission. During the fieldwork, the issue of off-campus universities that operate freely posed enormous policy concerns for policymakers at the national level. In many interviews, policymakers aspired to use the quality criteria and indicators of IQA and EQA to ensure the quality of these newly opened courses and institutions. Given that IQA and EQA are equally applied to all institutions, old and new, established and limited resources, QA policy hence appeared to be a politically neutral policy tool to manage higher education institutions.

Despite enthusiasm to use quality indicators to dictate policy direction and outcomes, policymakers strongly reject and resist the idea of ranking the results from the assessment. The senior policymaker at ONESQA argued: “It is not ONESQA’s responsibility to rank. Although the newspaper takes the numbers published by ONESQA and ranks the universities, the results are unreliable because different groups of the universities cannot be compared” (Interview, January 15, 2010). This senior policymaker from ONESQA strongly disagreed with the idea of using ONESQA’s results to rank universities in Thailand. Furthermore, it is noted that the newspaper publication on the university ranking was not the direct responsibility of ONESQA. Not only did ONESQA senior policymakers reject the idea of ranking the institutions, but they were also aware and sensitive to how ONESQA’s induced information could be used against its objectives. During the observation of the ONESQA Higher Education Task Force Board members, this point received considerable attention in discussion about the drafting of the third round indicators and methodology. Although in the third round criteria, ONESQA classified the results of university assessment as very good, good, satisfactory, needs improvement, and requires immediate improvement, it was agreed that the exact results of the assessment would not be published in order to prevent others from ranking the results (Observation, October 2010). While the consensus was that it was not the role of the state to rank differing universities, another senior policymaker at ONESQA and OHEC took a different approach to private sector or newspaper ranking. He argued:

Ranking is not the role of the state institution. The state is only responsible for providing public information. Whoever demands the information, we must be able to provide it to them. Ranking is the responsibility of the private sector or newspaper. However, every ranking system must provide adequate information on what indicators and criteria they use. The responsibility of state organizations such as OHEC and ONESQA is only to provide accurate information. (Interview, January 11, 2010)

The interviewee clearly differentiates between the expected roles of the state and private sectors in quality higher education in Thailand. While the state is expected to provide

adequate and accurate information, based on the results of quality assessment, it is not expected to judge and rank the institutions. Although there seems to be a division of labor between the public and private enterprises, it is worth noting that the policymaker envisions the role of the state to be an information provider not only to students and parents, but also to the private sector.

Fear of ranking the universities can be understood from at least two different vantage points. On the one hand, it is an acknowledgement of the policymakers that universities in Thailand differ substantially. In an interview, the former Secretary General of OHEC argued: “Thai universities have different purposes; it is impossible to compare apples and pears” (Interview, January 5, 2010). This acknowledgement of different purposes and resources has resulted in the policy attempt to differentiate the universities by different tracks. Based on the second Fifteen-Year Long-Range Plan (OHEC, 2007), universities have been grouped into four tracks: research intensive universities, liberal arts universities, cultural preservation universities, and community universities. ONESQA embraced OHEC’s differentiation of the universities. From the second round of assessment onwards, these four tracks became the main factor in determining on which indicators the universities will be assessed and what weighting system will be used. Furthermore, the policymakers argued that the need to differentiate universities is not based on any value judgement or hierarchy but rather on an understanding of their context and diversity. The senior advisor to OHEC and ONESQA argued:

We are trying to differentiate the universities into four groups. We are not trying to say which one is better. Research universities are not better than Rajabhat universities. Each institution has to ask themselves where they want to belong. (Interview, September 10, 2010)

On the other hand, it is argued that this is an attempt by ONESQA advocates to mitigate potential social rejection or resistance to the policy. Under the language of “Amicable Assessment,” ONESQA aims to make the assessment process a friendly reflection of existing quality rather than judging the institutions (ONESQA, 2001). In this

scenario, the resistance to national ranking illustrates a negotiated attempt of the Thai policy elites to mediate local rejection of the policy.

7.2.4 Quality and Quality Assessment

Has QA promoted or strengthened the quality of Thai higher education? This is an important question that has been raised by the advocates and critiques of the policy. To properly address this type of question, evaluation research or a cost-benefit analysis is needed. While it is not the focus of this dissertation, this section attempts to shed light on how quality advocates and its critiques respond to this alarming and critical question.

In the beginning, the rationale to support the emergence and establishment of QA policy in Thailand was linked with the lack of quality in education systems. As Chapter V illustrated, the low ranking of Thailand higher education institutions in Asia Week's and other league tables as well as the decreasing competitiveness of Thai workers in comparison to other neighboring countries have been used to justify the necessity of QA. Even in a recent publication of ONESQA (2012), the first mandate of EQA is “to develop quality of education” (p. 2). Despite the overt expectation that QA will enhance the quality of education, interviews with key policymakers produced different responses on this issue. When I probed this question in the interview, one QA advocate argued:

It is not the responsibility of ONESQA to ensure that universities change their behaviors or improve quality. ONESQA is responsible to push them to evaluate and assess themselves, while it is the direct responsibility of the host organization, which is Office of Higher Education Commission and the Ministry of Education that must ensure the link between QA and quality. (Interview, January 18, 2010)

Although he has been working for QA policy since its inception, the detachment to quality is rather interesting. By defining ONESQA function simply as the creator of indicators, he pushed the responsibility of quality improvement to be the mandate of OHEC. This interpretation is a recurrent response amongst many quality advocates to the criticism of the limited improvement in quality of the Thai education system. Another QA

official inside ONESQA reiterated this point: “We already showed what is going on in the system. It’s the responsibility of the government or the Ministry of Education to do something about it. So far I don’t think they take us seriously” (Interview, November 10th 2010). The changing rhetoric from ONESQA advocates provides an interesting insight as to how the organization reduced and minimized its responsibility from improving quality education to simply monitoring quality.

7.3 Perception and Responses: Benefits and Limitations

This section highlights the divergent views between academic executives and other academics. In contrast to Clark ‘s (1983) Triangle of Coordination, which identified the state, market, and academics as three competing factors to implement higher education policy, the interviews with differing actors in the Thai higher education system elicit the differences between academics who hold executive/administrative positions from those who do not. Even though the majority of academics without administrative positions disagree with the methodology and principles of QA, this section attempts to highlight the divergence of disciplines as the points of departure amongst them.

7.3.1 Regulation and Knowledge Works

The previous sections discuss how the system of Internal Quality Assurance and External Quality Assessment demands enormous documentation, form filling, and report writing from all levels of the university system. From the perspective of the academic executives, these processes are useful to reflect the quality, strengths, and weaknesses of the institutions. As the interview excerpts from Rectors, Deans, and QA executives demonstrate, the agreed benefits of the QA system include better information systems, documentation, and clearer evidence. This section attempts to analyze how the systematic

requirements for QA that focus on routine work, self-assessment, and regulations stand in conjunction with the knowledge work of the academics.

The repercussions of QA on academic work is threefold. Firstly the QA requirements to fill in forms, write reports, and document are time-consuming. Therefore, these demands become extra work for each academic in addition to their responsibilities for teaching and research. Some academics are also required to take part in the QA board meetings as parts of their administrative duties. All of these activities demand a time commitment. As illustrated in Chapter V, IQA and EQA are not the only quality policies that have been implemented at the university level. There is also the newly established form of Thailand Qualification Frameworks (TQF), which is a 60-page document each faculty member is required to fill in on questions of syllabus, course structure, expectations, and learning outcomes.

Furthermore, each academic is required to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of every class taught as well as provide an estimation of workloads, preparation hours, and class times for the next five years. An academic from the Natural Resources Faculty of Prince of Songkla University captured the frustration with the time-consuming nature of the TQF forms. Furthermore, he questioned the reliability of the data, given the requirement to predict the workloads five years in advance:

The requirement of data does not reflect the reality. The form questions how many hours of work we will do in the next five years, what kind of numbers should I give? It is a waste of time to do this. Who can estimate the working hours in five years? But we do not have a choice for doing it. This process requires so much writing and is too detailed. It also requires all academics to write a summary of every program and class we teach. Although I raised concerns, there is no response. So I just write whatever I want. (Interview, January 19, 2011)

The interviewee reflected on the unrealistic nature of the requirement and data application. At the same time, this interview illustrates that even though the academics do not agree with the TQF requirement, they continue to fill out the forms regardless. This

illustrates a form of quiet resistance against the bureaucratic demands for quality-related works because TQF has been mandated as an obligation by OHEC and ONESQA, with OHEC requiring every new course to submit TQF forms and ONESQA including TQF requirements as part of its quality indicators for the Third Round of Assessment. Another academic at the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University also reflected on the time-consuming nature of the requirement:

I just spent two hours filling in one outline for the syllabus. I wrote all the necessary details in the forms. However, it is apparent that I am only one of two people who followed the requirements in this faculty. I teach two subjects but I decided to only do one. The question is why should I waste two hours doing something that no one reads. I don't think students care whether I fill in the forms. They care how well I teach. This is just a ritual process that the people in the center created for the sake of regulation.
(Interview, January 6, 2011)

The interview excerpts from the applied science academic from the Faculty of Natural Resources at PSU and this interview account from the Economics faculty provide interesting insights into how these bureaucratic regulations are perceived by the academics on the ground. First, both academics reflected on the time-consuming nature of the work. Both questioned the relationship between these bureaucratic regulations and the quality of their academic work, such as teaching. Both cast doubts on the applicability and use of the information. The two academics demonstrated different ways of coping with what they perceived as rituals. One simply filled in the blanks without necessarily believing in the reliability of the data. The other academic decided to only do one of the two subjects he taught. This illustrates different ways to cope with the increasing demands for paperwork.

Secondly, the QA requirements impose external pressure on the academics to publish research. According to ONESQA's Third Round of Assessment, Indicators No. 5 to 7 focus on the numbers of published research, with differentiated weights given to international publications, national publications, and institutional published works. At the

same time, Indicator No. 14 focuses on the quality of academics. Although researching and teaching are the primary responsibilities of the academics, the increasing demand for reports and constant comparison of achievement through QA requirements create additional pressures. A QA practitioner at PSU shared her observation regarding the negative implications of QA on academic productivity and creativity.

This is an increasing burden on the academics. With so much pressure to do all this administrative work, they have less time and capacity to do creative and academic works. Some people already have high workloads; they are still required to do all of these paperwork and they still have to do research. Some people give up on QA works.... How can they produce more research when they have to teach so many hours and still have to comply with this documentation? (Interview, January 19, 2011)

Thirdly and most importantly, the QA requirements function on the logic of the regulators with strict calendar years and methodology to count. In contrast, quality academic work takes time to process in terms of student-teacher meetings, teaching, and researching itself. Therefore, the rigid requirement of quality forms is not necessarily conducive to the fluidity, flexibility and lengthy process of academic work. In fact, the QA practitioner at PSU pointed out that while QA assessment requires the data and improvement on an annual basis, it takes much longer to get a research work published or support the faculty members to finish a doctoral degree (Interview, January 19, 2011).

The conflicting nature between QA work and academic work is more acute in the realm of social science and the humanities. Interviews with academics from these disciplines raised enormous points of concerns and frustration with how the QA systems and standards are derived from the scientific paradigm that values counting, ranking, and numbers. As mentioned, the TQF forms demand detailed information about the content, hours, and results of teaching and require every academic to submit the form on every subject they teach. In response to this bureaucratic demand, an academic from the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University questioned and criticized the current model of QA as

simplistic and lacking a deeper understanding of the nature of how knowledge works.

Accordingly,

The current system of QA has relied on the simplistic model of assuring quality. It's an industrial model that anticipates that a certain amount of input will create an expected number of outputs. We are nurturing humans, not creating things. This is fundamental. It makes sense to require universities to be responsible for their work. That is acceptable. However, the methodology and model that we are currently using is unacceptable. We give numerical values to everything, our input, output just to create evidence.... For example, the forms expect that if we teach three hours on something, the students will be more morally responsible. Is that crazy? (Interview, December 3, 2010)

The interviewee pointed out the contradictory nature of QA system and that of academic work. While the logic of QA believes it is possible to count the university's input, processes, and output as necessary indicators to assure quality, the interviewee objected to such logic for the work of educators. According to her, to educate students on conceptual ideas, philosophies, and concepts is an incremental approach that cannot be assigned numerical input and output.

Another academic from the Faculty of Social Science at Chiang Mai University raised the same point.

This is an attempt to make university a part of the production sector. This logic might work for professional disciplines such as engineering, accounting and science that produce students to serve the capital. However, it does not work for the disciplines that nurture students to think, imagine or raise conceptual questions. If you teach philosophy, is it possible to say we taught four pages of Nietzsche for the entire semester? (Interview, September 8, 2010)

The two excerpts above illustrate the diversity of academic work, divergent pedagogy, and differing expectations. These interviews demonstrate the gap between the regulatory requirements for paperwork and documentation versus the reality of teaching and learning. Beyond the different expectations for teaching and learning, the requirements for research and ranking are also significant. The QA requirements for research publication level different weighting systems on the each published work. While

a publication that is in the SCOPUS and ISI system receives a full one score, other types of publication at the institutional and national levels receive respectively low scores. For example, research published in nationally accepted journals that are recognized by ONESQA receive 0.5 scores and those published in research proceedings receive 0.125 scores (ONESQA, 2011). The weighing system reflects the values and priorities that the policymakers put on research. Many academics, especially from the fields of social science and the humanities, point out how the different natures of the fields create divergent results and responses to publication. The description on the nature of social science research from the Faculty of Social Science, Chiang Mai University points out this contradictory nature:

The research ranking system is quite ridiculous. It relies on the SCOPUS system, and that does not hold for Social Science disciplines. To produce one research work takes at least a year. Some of our research takes two to three years. This does not include the lengthy process of submitting and editing. Our research system is not conducive to fitting the QA requirements. (Interview, September 8, 2010)

These academics focused on the lengthy process of conducting social science research as a predicament, reinforcing the gap between QA requirements and the reality to do, according to them, “quality research.” Similarly, the former Dean of the Liberal Arts Faculty at Thammasat University pointed out the difficulty Thai academics have to be published in internationally acclaimed social science journals due to the disparity between the international interests and the interests of Thai academics who focus on cultural and nation-specific issues. Furthermore, he agreed that the QA systems might be more conducive to science disciplines than to the social sciences and the liberal arts. He argued that rather than using QA to assure educational quality, in-depth peer review might offer a good alternative to improve the quality of academic content in the social sciences.

In fact, if we are really concerned about quality, we don't need to invite quality organizations such as ONESQA to evaluate us. We can invite experts

on the subjects to sit in and give us feedback. Within two days, these experts will be able to tell us that we are very outdated. This is a better way to improve quality rather than filling in information for the whole year every year. That's a waste of time. QA works has already become routine work. If we really care about quality, we have to look into the content of what we are teaching, (Former Dean, Liberal Arts Faculty, Thammasat University, August 11, 2010)

While QA operates on the need for routine documentation, report writing, and inputs and outputs, these academic experts suggest alternatives. Numerous academic voices question the introduction and implementation of QA in Thailand. However, resistance from the higher education sector became more evident when the government mandated that all new programs must follow the TQF guidelines by 2015. In February 2010, 372 leading academics from 28 institutions in Thailand signed petitions against the introduction of TQF, which were submitted to the OHEC.³⁴ By September 14, 2011 those numbers increased to 700.³⁵ They begged for a rethinking of the entire quality policy in Thailand. Several public conferences were hosted in various places, such as Chiang Mai University, Chulalongkorn University, and Thammasat University. Most of the participants who signed this petition came from Humanities and Social Science disciplines.

7.3.2 The Quality Coalition and Its Discontents

While most university executives presented the picture of QA in a positive light in terms of university administration and policy decision, the differing voices of academics from a variety of disciplines cast doubts on the application and implication of the system. Undoubtedly, the two groups view QA from different vantage points. Whereas the former view and judge the system from an administrative point of view, the latter look at it from an academic view. The previous section highlighted the differing voices of academic

³⁴Accessed April 5, 2012 from: <http://virtualdialogue.wordpress.com/>

³⁵Accessed April, 5, 2012 from: http://www.matichon.co.th/news_detail.php?newsid=1316165241&grpId=no&catid=no

discontents: massive workloads, increasing pressure to perform, and the conflicting nature of QA and academic work. While some academics decided to quietly resist the system by simply writing down unrelated information on the data forms, others decided to give voice in the national media and signed petitions questioning the merits and necessity of the policy.

The question remains: Do their voices get heard by the policymakers? What are the responses from university executives and policymakers? As aforementioned, there is a loose network of university executives and technocrats, which I have termed a quality coalition, who share similar policy beliefs on the transformation of public universities as well as on the implementation of a variety of quality policies. Although in individual interviews with each academic executive and technocrat from OHEC and ONESQA, no singular viewpoint on QA issues emerged. Some agreed with IQA and EQA but not TQF, and vice versa. However, they shared a general acceptance that differing forms of QA are needed in order to assure the quality of the universities. At the same time, the fact that OHEC and ONESQA have strived to integrate their quality indicators and synchronize their policies has created opportunities as well as obligations for the two organizations to refer to one another's policy. Not only has OHEC's higher education differentiation influenced the Second Round of Quality Assessment; its controversial TQF has also been embedded as a quality indicator for the Third Round of Quality Assessment. In an interview with a senior policy advisor for OHEC and ONESQA, the integral relationship between the two organizations that helped to reinforce the quality policy in Thailand was illustrated:

Now we have to include TQF in the Third Round of Assessment. They [OHEC] asked us to include this in our indicators. They need us because we are going to assess universities. They are not able to implement it themselves; they need the assessment to help.... There is a legal mandate that we have to conduct external assessment ... whenever OHEC abolishes this policy, then we don't have to assess it. (Interview, September 10, 2010)

This interviewee pointed out the legal relationship between OHEC and ONESQA. Although he might not personally agree with the rigidity and inflexibility of TQF forms, it is required that TQF be built into the Third Round of Assessment. The legal obligation that quality indicators have to synchronize with national policy on higher education created the necessity for TQF to be embedded into the assessment. Due to a shared policy belief as well as structural requirements, it is argued that the quality coalition between university executives, technocrats from OHEC, and ONESQA helps to maintain the implementation of quality policy in Thailand as well as set up barriers to the voices of resistance being heard. Policymakers at OHEC use the voices of university executives to justify their policies. In response to a question on academic resistance, the Board member of OHEC aptly argued: "Although there is a resistance, the current OHEC Board agrees that it is essential that we move forward with the policy. It is impossible not to do it" (Interview, September 2, 2010). The university executives' voices help OHEC in two ways. Firstly, they help OHEC argue that they have incorporated the universities' perspectives into their considerations. Secondly, they allow them to disregard the voices of resistance in the policymaking process. In another passage, the interviewee used the university rector's opinion to support its decision, saying: "Don't listen too much to those. Sometimes they just spin the media.... The university rectors and administrators tell us not to listen. This policy is good for university quality" (Interview, September 2, 2010).

While their shared policy belief on QA and performance-based indicators helped to sustain the implementation of quality policies in Thailand, this coalition also created barriers to communication between the advocates and resisters of the policy. The scientific consensus among the policymakers has limited the possibility of other policy perspectives, divergent viewpoints, or resistance to be heard. When asked about the policy resistance on autonomous university policy or the implementation of quality assessment, engineer, scientist, and medical doctor policymakers framed the resistance in

terms of ignorance, conservatism, and resistance to change. Rather than taking their viewpoints into consideration, the policymakers completely dismiss and disregard the resisters as being “lazy.” This is the same view of the advocates of the Autonomous University policy calling academics ignorant and lazy. This is a recurrent response of policymakers when asked about the academics’ response to the newly introduced policy. A former policymaker at OHEC argued: “When you look at the resistant group, you have to ask yourself whether they complain because they are lazy or they have a legitimate point. Most of the academics are used to the old comfortable way” (Interview, August 2, 2010). Given that QA was considered a new tool of quality management in Thai higher education, the advocates argued that the academics are just not used to policy change.

One policymaker explicitly accepted that resistance is based on disciplinary differences between science versus the social science and humanities disciplines. The interviewee acknowledged the disciplinary background as a point of departure regarding opinions on the policy. He argued: “There were a lot of problems in the beginning. Academics from particular disciplines, such as social science, argued that this is too rigid. If this was their profession, they will not complain. The resistance was quite huge” (Interview, September 10, 2010). The rejection of policy resistance is a result of divergent perspectives, disciplines, and paradigms. One QA practitioner at Chiang Mai University shared the observation on the influence of academic discipline on the outcome of the policy:

Most of the committee members who are responsible for the development of quality indicators from both OHEC and ONESQA are from science backgrounds ... the nature of the discipline has a lot of influence. When they discussed the details of the indicators, those from science backgrounds understood these indicators. I am not saying they had bad intentions, but the indicators favor science and technology disciplines. For example, they are used to cite publications appearing in international databases like SCOPUS. They might not know that publications from social sciences are rarely cited in SCOPUS. (Interview, September 7, 2010)

This illustrates how the disciplinary backgrounds and epistemic paradigms of the policymakers influence their views of the world as well as their positions regarding the QA policy. Instead of viewing it as an intended imposition of power, this interview substantiates the subtle relationship between the background of the policymakers and their perception and understanding of the policy. Ball (1995) succinctly explained how differences in epistemology and perspectives influence inclusion and exclusion of policy voices. He argued:

The epistemic assumptions of orders, structures, functions, causes and effect are variously mobilized to represent the ‘social’, in doing so, work to exclude many of the mobile, complex, ad hoc, messy and fleeting qualities of lived experience. (p. 259)

The voices of academic discontents shed light on the gap between the expectation of the policy and its realistic application as well on how the policy interacts and influences everyday academic life. Given that the policymakers are predominantly from science backgrounds and view the world through their positivist paradigms, many of the messy reflections and rejections from the academics are undoubtedly discarded.

7.4 Summary

Chapter VII has illustrated how the institutions and individual academics responded to the introduction and implementation of QA in Thailand. The first part of the chapter focused on the implementation of QA at the university level. A comparison of two small case studies; Prince Songkla University and Suranaree University of Technology, provided insight into the process, structures, and actors of QA at the institutional level. It revealed the complexity, redundancy, and difficulties in translating the concepts of QA into practice. The challenges of implementing QA at the institutional level cast doubts on the promotion of quality policies and on the achievement of quality higher education. The latter part of the chapter revealed the academic voices and their

interpretation of QA. The interpretation by the academics of QA are indicative on two grounds. Firstly, they illustrate the differences between the nature of the academic work and the administrative demands of QA, which created routine, administrative, and bureaucratic work. Unlike university administrators and QA administrators, who heralded the benefits of QA, the academics voiced the plausible limitations of the system. This contrasts with Chapter V, which pointed out that the introduction and maintenance of QA in Thailand was sustained by the so-called quality coalition.

This chapter has outlined the voices of the quality discontents. Two main reasons substantiated the academics' discontent with the quality regime in Thailand. On the one hand, the discontent shared by the academics demonstrates a deeply rooted issue of asymmetrical power relations between academics with administrative positions and those without. Similar to the battle lines in the autonomous university policy, the proponents of the QA policy are often academic administrators who push for delegation, decentralization, and autonomous institutional controls. On the other hand, the clash of viewpoints also reflects the divergent epistemological assumptions between those who believe in scientific/positivist paradigms and those from other disciplines.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSION

Chapter VIII serves three purposes: summarizing the research, discussing the theoretical contributions, and identifying the areas for future study. The summary of the analysis chapters will be analyzed in accordance with the research questions. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss how this dissertation contributes to the policy borrowing and lending literature, higher education implementation, and Thai studies. The limitations of the research will be outlined, and areas for future research will be identified.

8.1 Summary of Chapters

A summary of the main arguments and synchronization of the findings in the preceding chapters is presented here in order to address the two main research questions:

1. Why did a "global education policy" such QA resonate in Thailand?
2. How was QA introduced, implemented, and interpreted within Thailand's higher education sector?

In addressing the first research question, it is argued that socio-logic, policy timing, and belief systems of policy actors matter. Historically speaking, the Thai state has been an active importer of Western policy, ideas, and concepts in public administration and education reform. Thailand's policy context of increasing decentralization, deregulation, and delegation of power across all educational arenas provided fertile ground for the

emergence of Quality Assessment. The Asian economic crisis of 1997 presented a window of opportunity for instigating wide-sector reform. More importantly, the policy beliefs of the key actors contributed significantly to the introduction of QA.

This leads to addressing the second research question. State officials were the main driving force behind the introduction of QA in Thailand. Their arguments justifying the need for QA were based on their personal background in the health and private sectors, which had already introduced QA. Chapter V provided a detailed analysis of how these key policymakers justified QA policy in Thailand's education sector. Despite a shared consensus between policymakers and senior academic administrators in Thailand's higher education sector on the need for QA, the academic community resisted and challenged this policy tool on both institutional and individual levels. The chapters in this dissertation elaborate on this argument.

Chapter I introduces how Quality Assessment has become a global education policy (Verger et al., 2012). This chapter also elaborates how the resonance of QA must be understood from several vantage points. Firstly, the implementation of QA policy refers to the establishment of a meta-organization in different countries. A review of the *Journal of Quality in Higher Education* between 1983 and 2010 indicated that at least 48 countries formally established a meta-organization to conduct internal and external evaluation of education quality. The global trajectory for implementing QA fits with the S-Shape Curve. The S-Shape Curve illustrates the pattern of QA development globally, which went through three phases of transformation: early adopters, explosive growth, and late adopters. Early adopters such as France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands began to introduce QA as early as 1983. Many countries in Eastern and Western Europe began to join forces in the 1990s as part of the Europeanization process of higher education. By the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s, QA became a global phenomenon. It was during this period that Asian and Pacific countries began to

introduce QA (Neubauer, 2010). Amongst others, Thailand joined the global bandwagon as a late adopter of the policy.

Secondly, the resonance of QA is not limited to the creation of meta-organizations. Ozga et al. (2011) point out that the current discussion of QA incorporates differing policies into the so-called quality policy. These policies include quality assessment/assurance, quality management, and quality audit. This ensemble of quality policies shares similar trends, which include a focus on measuring, quantitative indicators, and ranking between and within education systems.

The third aspect of QA is discursive. Quality becomes an encompassing goal, traveling across public and private organizations, schools, and universities (Ozga et al., 2011). The discussion of QA requires a comprehensive understanding of differing aspects of the policy.

Chapter II, the review of the literature on globalization, policy borrowing and lending and its relations to understand the global expansion of QA. Situated within the discussion on globalization in Comparative Education, this chapter highlights the policy borrowing and lending framework as a useful theoretical tool to understand the rationale behind the adoption, translation, and interpretation of QA in various countries. Beyond the normative explanation of best practices, the politics of policy borrowing enable one to analyze the relationships with the global discourse of quality, local policy agenda, and policy processes (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). This section highlights the socio-logic of the host countries, the window of opportunity, and the policy beliefs of the policy elites, which provided much of the rationale for the implementation of the global policy (Grindle & Thomas, 1991; Kingdon, 2003; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Schriewer & Martinez, 2004).

Influenced by the policy borrowing and lending theory, the review of literature analyzes the global expansion of QA in light of historical legacies, policy contexts and the agency of policymakers. It is argued that although QA has become a global education

policy, an overview of differing Asian countries elucidates the importance of historical legacies, political structures, and policy agents in influencing policy decisions regarding what, how, and why the reform is adopted. The review of the literature helped to shape the agenda for this research. These guiding questions included why a global policy such as QA resonated across time and space, who were the main actors, and what were their perceptions of the policy. The review of the literature on international experiences on QA provides one level of comparative perspective to the discussion of the case in Thailand.

Chapter III provides an overview of the rationale for a qualitative case study and the methodology used to investigate the two research questions. It outlines the justification for document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and observation at the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) as the means of inquiry for understanding the rationale, logic, and context for the development of QA policy in Thai higher education. Thematic analysis has been used to conduct the qualitative analysis of the data generated in this research. In addition to the discussion on the methodological rationale, reflection on the experience of data collection in Thailand substantiates the arguments put forward in this dissertation regarding the structure, logic, and agencies of quality advocates in Thailand. The clash of paradigm, power, and purposes between the proponents of QA in Thailand and the researcher illustrates the dominance of positivist/quantitative paradigms and research for normative purposes in the Thai higher education sector.

Chapter IV illustrates the historical legacies of the Thai state, which has been an active borrower of Western ideas and concepts. Although Thailand was not colonized by foreign powers, the country has actively borrowed bits and pieces of foreign policy ideas as part of its modernization and nation-building strategy. From being influenced by the British, French, and other European cultures during the modernization era, after World War II, the United States became the main driving force of public policy thinking in general and higher education in particular. However, since 1986, globalization and

internationalization has become the main source of policy aspirations. The historical discussion on the evolution of Thai higher education in relation to borrowing foreign ideas and concepts provides a background for understanding the receptiveness of Thai policymakers and global influences, both of which are useful for the current discussion on higher education policy.

This chapter identified the key policymakers who have been involved in higher education policy in Thailand in general and quality policy in particular. Under the state-society framework, the Thai state has been perceived as under highly centralized control. However, a closer scrutiny illustrates an elusive boundary between what could be considered state actors versus social actors. An argument is developed in this chapter that there has always been a coalition between senior policymakers at the Ministry of University Affairs and later the Office of Higher Education Commission and university executives, who are the main actors in the Thai higher education system. Historically speaking, they have presented higher education problems in terms of bureaucratic bottlenecks and private sector solutions that have always been presented as a panacea to solve higher education issues. Specifically, the coalition between senior bureaucrats and Thai university executives has strongly advocated for the transformation of Thai public universities into autonomous universities. Public universities are presented as having bureaucratic inflexibility and inefficiency, whereas autonomous universities are coined with the picture of flexibility, independence, and effectiveness. Based on the elusiveness of the Thai state framework, it is argued that the same coalition of policymakers and advisors promoted QA as a new policy tool to evaluate, assess, and assure quality in light of greater deregulation for public universities in Thailand.

Chapter V introduces different organizations involved in the quality policy in Thailand. It focuses on the network of policymakers and academic executives who share similar policy beliefs. Furthermore, the analysis highlights how the quality advocates are mostly trained in scientific disciplines, such as medicine, engineering, or science. The

educators who advocate quality assessment are also trained from quantitative backgrounds. The scientific paradigm and preference for quantitative measures, undoubtedly, provide a strong premise to QA advocates. Existing policy beliefs and networks at the local level provided fertile ground to justify the development of QA in the country and highlight the importance of policy agencies, their professional experiences, and their policy belief systems.

Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates a confluence of differing rationales that Thai policymakers provided to support their policy choice of QA and other quality policies being implemented. These rationales can be differentiated into globalization, regionalization, and national contexts. Furthermore, the discussion of the influence of globalization on the decision of Thai policymakers to adopt QA was differentiated by three ways of thinking: global competition, global communication, and global cooperation (Koenig-Archibugi, 2010). Global competition, especially the emergence of the international league table, has been used as a significant argument for reform. Thai policymakers constantly used the low rankings of Thai universities as their justification for pushing quality reforms in Thailand. Thai policymakers attributed the pressure exerted from Asia Week's University Ranking as one of the origins for introducing QA in Thailand.

References to globalization and global trends are replete. Policymakers recalled their experience of visiting multiple countries to learn QA policy, including New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom. At the same time, the policy space created by UNESCO Asia-Pacific and the World Bank through conferences and regional site visits served as significant sources of influence during the policy formulation process. UNESCO and the World Bank might not necessarily have imposed QA on Thailand, but their endorsement of QA as a perfect solution for regional higher education issues was nevertheless seen as essential. These policy channels helped to strengthen global communication and cooperation between differing countries on the promotion of QA.

Internationally speaking, external references are repeatedly cited as sources of QA aspiration. The proliferation of QA globally made it necessary for Thailand to follow the trend. According to these policy individuals, an adoption of the global trend enabled Thailand to “play” in the international and regional arena. Senior policymakers attended multiple international and regional conferences that advocated QA. They insisted that Thailand had no option but to introduce the policy. It was also seen as important from the point of regional integration and harmonization.

Interview data also illustrated how Thai policy elites used the implementation of QA as an indicator to illustrate their knowledge and supremacy at the global and regional level. Thailand’s leadership in promoting regional harmonization for QA, while the country was still at a premature stage of the policy development, is a case in point. Together with the Malaysian Quality Assurance Agency, Thailand pushed for the development of ASEAN Quality Assurance Networks (AQAN) to promote the integration and harmonization of QA issues in the region. Furthermore, Thai policymakers used regional harmonization as an argument to develop a quality policy in Thailand. This became explicit in the development of the Thailand Qualification Framework (TQF), whereby policymakers repeatedly referred to the ASEAN Economic Community of 2015 as the rationale for implementing yet another quality policy.

Given that the legal requirement for QA in Thailand came under the promulgation of the National Education Act of 1999, differing facets of the national context provided significant factors leading to the birth of the QA policy. In a broader perspective, the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997 created a window of opportunity for Thai education reformers to mobilize political resources and push for a comprehensive education law. While Thai policymakers admitted that the adoption of QA was a voluntary option without direct imposition from external agencies or international organizations, Thailand’s request for economic assistance from the International Monetary Funds (IMF) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) reinforced the language of economic efficiency and

business solutions to social problems. ADB specifically called for the transformation of public universities to become autonomous universities within a 10-year timeframe as well as requiring the country to introduce administrative reforms.

The context of the National Education Act 1999/2002 is itself an insightful space to understand the interaction between global policy and the contemporary thinking of Thai policymakers. QA is presented as a national necessity in light of the decentralization, deregulation, and transformation of public universities. Given that QA was promoted within the scope of the National Education Act and in conjunction with decentralization of basic education to a Local Services Area, policymakers believed QA to be an essential tool for ensuring quality and accountability in schools and institutions. University executives also believed in the transformation of public universities into Autonomous Universities and therefore saw QA as representing a new regulatory framework under which the traditional public universities could operate. The new policy environment promised to be more independent and flexible as well as more accountable to the public purse. The deregulation of OHEC policy requirements for university governing boards resulted in the expansion of curriculums, courses, and even external campuses, creating a policy environment in which QA could impose necessary regulations.

Thai policymakers aimed to make the National Education Act of 1999/2002 the most comprehensive education law in Thai history. Therefore, they incorporated all the global models of education reforms into one package, namely decentralization, child-centered learning, lifelong learning, technology and education, and teacher reform. Legal requirements for internal and external quality assessment comprised one chapter. Despite overwhelming traces of global reform packages, the Act outwardly promotes local wisdom, Thai culture, and Buddhist values. In the interviews, policymakers outwardly proclaimed the National Education Act as a “made in Thailand” product. In conjunction with active and selective policy borrowing, policy nationalism has definitely been a part of Thailand’s official language in education policy.

Chapter VI focuses on the Office of Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) as a site to understand the paradoxical logic of Thai policy elites in relation to the global reforms of QA. It illustrates how references to globalization and foreign models were cited to justify and legitimize the creation of ONESQA as a public organization in Thailand. Furthermore, the focus on ONESQA provides a lens to understanding how local contexts, culture, and resistance also contribute significantly to the organization mandate and policy. As illustrated, multiple references to foreign visits and examples were made at the beginning. However, Thailand's policymakers quickly replaced the global aspect of QA with Thai culture and Buddhist values and introduced Amicable Assessment. The flexibility of dropping foreign references illustrates how Thai policymakers strategically use external references only when they serve to justify or support their own policy preference. The policy expectations of ONESQA advocates reveal the Thai struggle to implement multiple market-based reforms in the public sector and Thai higher education.

The creation of ONESQA can be understood as an imported organization with multiple implications. On the one hand, the creation of ONESQA was meant to be a quasi-business organization. Although it continued to receive public funding, ONESQA introduced multiple market-based reforms, such as contracting assessment works to private companies for basic education evaluation and creating multiple governing boards to oversee its policy. On the other hand, ONESQA's policy of external quality assessment was intended to become the new governing strategy for Thai higher education. In light of higher education expansion, the OHEC deregulation of centralized control to university governing boards and the decentralization of education momentum led policymakers to strongly believe that EQA would become the new tool for ensuring quality of education services and administration. EQA is meant to create a culture of evidence-based policymaking whereby the data generated by the QA process enabled policymakers and university executives to make better and more informed policy decisions. Undoubtedly,

the introduction of ONESQA came in a timely manner as Thailand was aspiring to introduce New Public Management (NPM) reform in the overall public sector administration. The birth of ONESQA was definitely resonating in the broader national reform mode.

Chapter VI also reflects on the paradoxical responses to ONESQA's roles and achievements. While advocates praised ONESQA's successes in quantitatively assessing all educational institutions, there were numerous questions, concerns, and challenges to ONESQA's performance and methodology. Furthermore, insight into the organizational structure and decision-making process at ONESQA sheds light on the disparity between policy ideals and actual contexts on the ground. Ideally, ONESQA is meant to be a quasi-business organization that is flat, efficient, and flexible. In contrast, the inner working of the organization provides a deeper understanding into how the existing hierarchy and seniority of Thai society continue to persist in this imported organization.

Chapter VII illustrates how QA was implemented and interpreted in Thai public universities. An insight into the inner workings of the universities illustrates how QA is welcomed by university executives and administrators as a new way of managing higher education. The data elucidate the excitement university executives showed for using QA and other forms of quality policies to administer and improve the institutions. While Prince of Songkla University used QA indicators to provide financial incentives to the faculties and departments, others such as Suranaree University of Technology and Suan Dusit Rajabhat University promoted best practices within the institutions. QA has provided a point of comparison and discussion between differing units of university life. Furthermore, the data point out how QA results have become a point of comparison and competition between differing institutions. University executives constantly used their rankings in international league tables as well as the assessment results to demonstrate their strength and superiority. In some cases, such as Thammasat University and Prince of

Songkla University, QA practitioners reported that QA results have been used by university executives to demonstrate their achievements or performance.

A detailed discussion on the process of QA in two public universities, Prince of Songkla University and Suranaree University of Technology, substantiates the broader argument of the thesis that institutional contexts do matter. The structure of the university, its mission, and legal framework contribute to the translation of QA and the perception of the respective policy actors. As a traditional public university with delegation of responsibilities down to the faculty level, Prince of Songkla University delegated QA work down the bureaucratic line of command and diffused its responsibilities to almost every unit of university life. The data requirements from OHEC and ONESQA are received by the central office of the QA Division, translated to fit the institutional characteristics, and delegated to all existing bureaucratic units in the university.

As the first Autonomous University of Thailand, Suranaree, policy actors have a positive perception of performance indicators. Since its inception, Suranaree has built multiple performance-based indicators into its faculty and staff contracts. Not only do they welcome QA, but they have also implemented a multiple audit system within the structure. They also take pride in the administrative rationale of “Centralized Missions, Coordinated Tasks.” Hence, the QA system began with only a few individuals at the central level. However, given the demands of data collection, the demand for QA people grew within Suranaree.

The previous chapters reveal how senior policymakers and university executives heralded QA as a necessary management tool at the national and institutional level, while Chapter VII provides significant space to highlight the voices of academics. In contrast to the optimistic perspectives of QA, academics point out that the requirements of QA, such as extensive administrative paper work to quantifying teaching and learning as well as an expectation for publication in a scientific data base on an annual basis, do not square with the reality of academic and intellectual work. Although most of the academics

interviewed reported their rejection of the bureaucratic requirements of QA, the disciplinary backgrounds of each academic contribute significantly to how they view and respond to the policy. Economists viewed the whole production of QA through a cost-benefit perspective. Humanities and social science academics argued that QA is a new form of surveillance by the government to scrutinize and control academic work. At the same time, they rejected QA and other quality policies as the domination of positivist-cum-scientific paradigms over other alternatives. In contrast, scientists rejected QA on the assumption that it lacks scientific probability.

The resistance patterns of the academics also differ. Humanities and social science academics have signed public petitions and outwardly criticized the QA regime in Thailand. In contrast, others decided to resist the policy quietly by mishandling the forms or misreporting the required data. Not only are the institutional characters of the universities significant factors, but the disciplinary backgrounds matter substantively on how academics view this policy.

8.2 Research Contribution

This research contributes to the advancement of four types of literature. First, the research helps to advance the interdisciplinary attempt of comparative policy studies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). It also contributes to the discussion on policy borrowing and lending, the main theoretical framework of this study. The empirical evidence of this research also helps to clarify discussions in higher education policy on two grounds: the concept of General Model of QA (van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994) and the Triangle of Coordination (Clark, 1983). Lastly, this dissertation contributes to the dearth of systematic research into Thailand's higher education under the rubric of Thai studies. These contributions are thoroughly discussed below.

8.2.1 Comparative Policy Studies: Globalization as Problem, Policy, and Politics

To acquire a comprehensive understanding of the policy process of the origin of QA in Thailand, Kingdon's (2003) "Multiple Stream" theory is an insightful conceptual framework. The interdisciplinary approach to understanding why a global education policy such as Quality Assessment resonated in Thailand at this particular time helps to further the Comparative Policy Studies that bridge the gap between comparative education and policy studies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010, 2012).

The case of Thailand illustrates that different faces and functions of globalization have been used as the *problem*, *policy*, and *politics* to support the need for quality assessment in Thailand. While the low ranking of Thai higher education in international league tables has been used to identify the problem in the system and sector, the global education policy of QA has been presented as the policy solution, a perfect panacea, to address multiple problems with the Thai higher education sector, such as the issue of quality education vs quantitative expansion of higher education as well as the need for a new regulatory framework for decentralization of education management. In the case of higher education, QA has been presented as a much needed policy tool to accompany another contested reform of the Autonomous University. In terms of politics, the belief that QA is necessary has also helped to create a quality coalition amongst key stakeholders in Thai higher education. The coalition is comprised of policy actors ranging from senior bureaucrats, to university executives, academics from the Faculty of Education, and representatives from the private sector (Chapter V). Although each actor argues from a different vantage point to support the implementation of QA, they all agree that QA is a necessary policy mechanism for Thailand. It must be noted that the underlining argument for QA was supported by the positivistic-cum-scientific policy belief systems of Thai elites. As Kingdon (2003) argued, the three streams come together when the "window of opportunity" is available. The Asian Economic Crisis of 1997 provided a much needed window of opportunity to legitimize the sector-wide education

reform of the National Education Act of 1999, which legally mandated internal and external quality assessment for all educational institutions. The following paragraphs will elaborate on this argument.

Three main problems regarding the quality of higher education were highlighted through the historical and contemporary analysis of Chapter I. Firstly, there is the dilemma between quantitative and qualitative expansion (Watson, 1980). The transition from elitism to mass higher education presents a new mode of problems for Thailand's higher education. Between 1916 and 1950, there were only five universities in Bangkok. By the 1970s, enrollment in Thailand higher education experienced exponential growth. This is attributed to the opening of two open universities: Ramkhamheang and Sukothai Thammatirat. These universities were created to respond to the rapid increase in demand and accommodate students who did not pass competitive entrance examinations (Watson, 1980).

Secondly, the increasing private sector involvement in higher education through the promulgation of the Private College Act in 1969 and the drive for Autonomous University Policy in the 1990s contributed significantly to the changing policy landscape in Thailand. While quantitative expansion enabled the state to respond to societal demands for access, the question of quality remained problematic. By the end of the 1980s, argued Watson (1981), the rapid massification of higher education posed a threat to the qualitative aspect of the system and caused "unexpected side effects" (p. 312).

Thirdly, it is argued that Thailand's increasing concern with global competitiveness culminated in the pressure for reform. While the gap between public universities and new private colleges was well documented (Watson, 1980), there was a growing concern that even the top public universities in Thailand were falling behind in the international marketplace. Several signs pointed to the lower quality of Thailand's higher education compared to its regional competitors. Although Chulalongkorn University is the best in the country, Thailand's tertiary ranking is not considered to be on the top tier among

leading universities in Asia (World Bank, 2007, p. x). As illustrated previously, Thai policymakers used international league tables to signify the need for reform. The increasing obsession with globalization and the so-called knowledge economy exacerbated the need for quality higher education in Thailand (Fry, 2000). By combining policy borrowing and lending with policy studies, one is able to understand how the use of external forces such as international ranking can create necessary policy pressure for reforms (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

Through the policy stream, QA has been presented as a policy option since the early 1990s. This was pointed out in Chapter IV. The discussion on QA came at the same time as the move to decentralization and deregulation of power in Thai higher education. The centralized and state-centered control of higher education has been the main characterization of higher education management in Thailand since its inception (Watson, 1980). The MUA has exercised centralized control over higher education policy and its management. The MUA controlled the appointment of rectors and deans. Furthermore, the MUA had the highest authority to approve curriculum and oversee general admission to higher education institutions. It was also responsible for more than 80% of the university's income. As the system rapidly expanded to include more students and institutions, Watson (1980) aptly argues that the centralized system of quality monitoring was questioned. Along with the call to move public universities away from centralized control of the MUA, there was increasing pressure to reform the system of quality monitoring. In tandem with the MUA, the Council of University Presidents of Thailand (CUPT) proposed internal QA as a policy option to ensure the quality of Thailand's higher education. There were frequent visits to the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand to learn from the experiences of QA abroad. This illustrated how externalization to cross-national attraction has been used in the process of policy formulation to seek a solution for higher education management. It was not until July 8, 1996 that the MUA announced guidelines for all universities to conduct self-evaluation to enhance instruction

and improve the academic learning environment (Muangkeow, 2009). Despite the guidelines, no major policy implementation took place. QA was still optional for universities, rather than a legal obligation.

Kingdon's (2003) expectation that problems and policy streams are separate is hardly the case in Thailand. As illustrated, the coalition between senior policymakers and university executives was an important factor in the creation of QA in Thailand. This group of actors was constantly involved in policy consultations and conferences that identified the problems of Thai education as well as offered solutions. It is evident that the policy had been discussed and planned prior to its implementation in 2000. Despite extensive involvement of the policy elites to promote QA policy in Thailand, the policy remained at the consultation level rather than one of implementation. Using Kingdon's perspective, one can argue that the earlier discussion of QA did not have the support of the political stream. The analysis of higher education reform in relation to the political context of Thailand supports this point. Suwantragul (2009) argues that political instability in Thailand between 1994 and 1996 impeded reform in higher education. This is especially the case for the autonomous university. The King Mongkut Institute of Technology's (KMUTT) proposal to become autonomous from state control failed to materialize due to the dissolution of parliament (p. 137). If it was difficult to transform one university, it is expected that there was greater pressure or resistance against the implementation or institutionalization of an entire new policy. Against this background, political support and the national mood became essential factors to facilitate policy change.

Although the problems embedded in Thailand's higher education have long been recognized, it is argued that the level of public awareness or political will was not adequate for reform. Chapter V offers an insight into the relationship between the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis and National Education Act of 1999. Arguably, the 1997 crisis was one of the most important moments in recent history for Thailand in general and

education reform in particular. The Thai government requested financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the sum of US\$17.2 billion. In addition to IMF assistance, Thailand received \$500 million in loans from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to reform its social sector (ADB, 2002). Under the Loan-1611 (31606) THA: Social Sector Program, the ADB set out three main conditions to mitigate short-term problems and restructure for long-term development. Not only did the ADB conditions require Thailand to push further the autonomous university agenda, it also stated the need to “revamp the civil service and to accelerate privatization of enterprises” (ADB, 2002, p. 7). Undoubtedly, these conditions set a new tone for higher education reform in Thailand. The IMF/ADB requirements elevated autonomous university and quality assessment policies to the national level. Furthermore, it is argued that the presence of these two organizations legitimized the "organic" aspirations for reforms in Thailand as conditions in the loan process.

The 1997 Economic Crisis provided a much needed window of opportunity for educators and policy elites to call for a system-wide national education reform. Although the signs of weakness in the Thai education system had been apparent since the early 1990s, it is argued that the Asian Economic Crisis was a window of opportunity for the education sector. Many experts on Thai education have supported this view and argue that the economic crisis provided reform-minded groups an opportunity to bring education reform back on the national agenda (Fry, 2000, 2002a; Witte, 2002). The new education law, the National Education Act of 1999, called for an overhaul of the Thai education system and provided the policy space to mandate internal and external QA across universities in the country.

By combining policy borrowing and lending (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012) with the multiple stream theory (Kingdon, 2003), one is able to understand how externalization to global reference, cross-national attraction, and cross-sectoral borrowing can be the source of different policy streams. In this case, externalization to globalization and global

competitiveness provided an argument for the problem stream in Thai higher education. Cross-national attraction to other countries to learn about QA system presented the policy solution to the QA advocates in Thailand. Although the proposed policy of having internal and external QA existed since the early 1990s, it was not until after the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997 that the policy received public attention at the national level. It is the national discontent on the failure of the economy that provided a window of opportunity to overhaul the entire education system and led to the promulgation of the National Education Act of 1999. While the structure of the Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) is a result of cross-sectoral borrowing, it is argued that the establishment of ONESQA and legal obligation for QA are products of the problem, policy, and politics streams coming together. Evidently, the case of Thailand has illustrated the flexibility of globalization and externalization in the policy process. This research substantiates the view that globalization is not an external imposition; rather it is “domestically induced rhetoric mobilized at particular moments” to generate pressure for reforms (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012, p. 9).

8.2.2 The Third Generation of Policy Borrowing and Lending: The Culture of Borrowing

The detailed analysis on the logic of the Thai higher education sector on Quality Assessment Policy is qualified to be considered as the third generation of policy borrowing and lending. Policy borrowing and lending theories seek to answer when, why, and how a global policy resonates in other countries. Steiner-Khamsi (2012) argued that the established field of policy borrowing and lending has undergone three main generations. Each generation differs in terms of research focus, theoretical assumptions, and unit of analysis. The first generation of researchers focused their attention on the analysis of traveling reforms between the US, UK, and within Europe. The second generation of theorists explored the roles of agencies, impacts of traveling reforms, and roles of international agencies in the process of borrowing reforms. The third generation

of policy borrowing and lending deals with (1) the shift from bilateral to international reference frames, (2) understanding the logic of systems or cases, (3) methodological repercussions of "policyscapes," and (4) deciphering projections of cross-national policy attractions (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012, p. 9).

This research contributes to the two areas mentioned above. On the one hand, policy elites frequently refer to globalization, global competition, and global trends instead of identifying any one particular country as the frame of reference. The global references, international league tables, and international organizations become convenient references that are flexible and elusive, which slowly replace the bilateral policy borrowing of country-specific examples. To generate reform pressure at the national level, policymakers made extensive references to globalization and international league tables to exemplify that the Thai education system must be overhauled. This point is well illustrated in Chapter V. On the other hand, the historical analysis of Thailand's higher education sector (Chapter IV) and detailed accounts of the actors' perspectives and policy belief systems (Chapter V and VI) contribute to an understanding of the logic of Thailand's higher education sector.

The case of Thailand has also opened up new avenues to understand why borrowing and lending take place. The current discussion on policy borrowing and lending identified two main rationales of the politics and economics of policy borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006, Steiner-Khamsi and Waldow, 2012). In relation to the empirical research available, there are accounts of the politics and economics of borrowing through the introduction and implementation of QA. From a political perspective, referencing global league tables and the global education policy of QA helped to create a coalition amongst different actors in Thailand, which led to the creation of the quality coalition. QA is also a partial result of economic borrowing. Although Thailand is normally not considered an aid-dependent country, the crisis of the Asian economy in 1997 brought the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Asian

Development Bank (ADB) into the picture of policymaking. The conditionality of the ADB loan required Thailand to revamp its administrative system toward a more market-driven one. Specifically, it identified that Thailand public universities must restructure themselves to become autonomous within ten years. Such a condition was coupled with the policy belief that QA is a necessary tool to manage the newly more decentralized and autonomous higher education institutions.

The politics and economics of borrowing perspectives leave several issues unexplained. The politics of borrowing expect that a reference to elsewhere is used to mitigate or replace existing a locally contested reform agenda, while the economics of borrowing are mostly the product of aid dependency (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). In the case of Thailand, QA was voluntarily embraced by key policy elites in the education sector. Rather than using QA to replace or mitigate local reforms, the contestation over QA policy came after it was introduced and implemented. While ADB involvement and other international organizations might have influenced the push for QA, policy elites in Thailand continued to have the final say of what reform was introduced. As demonstrated in the analysis, senior bureaucrats outwardly admitted that ADB relied on their preferred policy agenda rather than QA being imposed on Thailand. It was also illustrated that the World Bank was invited to get involved in the policy by Thai policymakers in order to indirectly force civil servants to follow a particular QA agenda. External references and involvement were indeed internally induced, but not necessary for political and economic purposes.

I argue that QA resonated in Thailand because there existed a historically embedded and locally induced culture of borrowing. The culture of borrowing is an interpretive framework drawing upon the externalization thesis of policy borrowing and lending (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004), while acknowledge the Neo-Institutionalism conviction that modernity is the main thrust driving nation-states to adopt globally shared culture or values (Meyer et al., 2007).

On the one hand, the case of Thailand illustrates that the country has relied on externalization as a policy strategy from its early days of modernization and nation building until the present. The Thai state has been an active borrower and importer of foreign ideas and concepts in various realms ranging from the restructuring of royal households to public administration and higher education policymaking. Although the Thai state has been the only Southeast Asia country that was not colonized by a Western power, Thai policymakers have used external forces such as colonization and globalization to stir the need for reform. During the colonization period, Thai policy elites used colonial threats to justify and legitimize the creation of a centralized bureaucracy system. While Thailand's policy leaders admitted that the system was voluntarily applied, references to globalization, global trends, and the experiences of “others” served as the “imagined” necessity to introduce the policy.

On the other hand, modernity has served as the most important motivation driving the emulation, adoption, and borrowing of foreign-based examples for Thai elites (Peleggi, 2002). The historical analysis of the Thai state and the trajectory of Thai higher education sector exemplified that Thai elites have always, actively and purposefully, made reference to policies and models from elsewhere, especially the West, in order to legitimize the country's aspiration to be considered modern (Anderson, 1978; Peleggi, 2002). The establishment of universities during the early days of nation-building relied on European models, while American economic assistance and models of higher education became the blueprints after the Second World War. Thailand's introduction of QA and obsession with international league tables and rankings illustrate how global trends and international references have become policy commonsense just because “everyone was doing it” (Interview, August 5, 2010).

While Neo-Institutionalism believes local particularities are only byproducts of “loose-coupling” and the rationale for nation-states to emulate global standards “heavily dependent on broader institutions – even more than most local work organizations are”

(Meyer et al., 2007, p. 188), the historical analysis illustrates that Thailand's aspiration to become modern is not a straightforward account of copying others or shared international norms and values. It is a historical and contextual development of wanting to be civilized, modern, and better than others in the region. Thailand has actively externalized and made reference to models and policies from elsewhere to justify the locally and historically embedded logic and aspiration that becoming modern is a national necessity.

The historical discussion in Chapter IV illustrated that Thailand's quest for modernity has been locally induced by Thai elites to be at par with Western prowess. Due to the historical idiosyncrasy of Thailand for being the only Southeast Asian nation that was not colonized, Thai policy elites developed an internal and paradoxical logic for Westernization/modernization with strong emphasis on maintaining localization as a non-colonized country. Thai policymakers from the nation building era of Rama the Fifth up until the present gave taken pride in being able to selectively and strategically borrow foreign policy. While it is evident that Thailand embraced the images and languages of modernity, the eminent logic of the Thai state is to ensure the inclusion of Thai culture and Buddhist values. According to Winichakul (2000), this paradoxical logic of the Thai state is not simply "a reaction to the colonial threat, rather it was an attempt originated by various groups among the elite ... to attain and confirm the relative superiority of Siam; as the traditional imperial power in the region" (p. 529).

The paradoxical logic of the Thai state as an active borrower and enforcer of local culture has been treated as unique to the Thai state by many authors on Thai education (Jungck & Kajornsinsin, 2003). In fact, the interview data elucidated that policymakers in Thailand are well versed in this argument. Prior to the creation of the National Education Act 1999, there were numerous visits to foreign countries, such as the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Despite outward efforts to travel the world, learn from foreign reforms, and make the most comprehensive law in education in modern history, Thai policymakers argued that the Act was a "Made in

Thailand” product (Interview, September 2nd 2010). While the reform initiatives emulated the language of global education reform movements, such as decentralization, child-centered and outcome-based education, Thai thinking, wisdom, and culture persisted as significant parts of the package. The paradoxical logic of the Thai state is well elucidated in the case of QA. Although numerous references were made to New Zealand's, Australia's, and the United Kingdom's structures and strategies, Thai policymakers pointed out that they did not copy wholesale any one place in particular. In fact, the policymakers went so far as to argue the uniqueness of the Thai QA system. The promotion of Amicable Assessment is a case in point.

The case of Thailand has also illustrated that many externalization strategies were deployed to ensure the implementation of QA. Three types of externalization strategies have been used throughout the borrowing process: international league tables, cross-national and cross sectoral borrowings. Senior bureaucrats, university executives, and the media actively used the poor performance of Thai universities in international league tables as the context to justify QA. While the need for QA was activated by the regional ranking of Asian universities conducted by Asia Week, the persistence of low ranking of Thai universities in various other international league tables was also constantly and consistently used to justify the need for educational reform in Thailand. Thai policymakers used these quantitative rankings as crucial policy ingredients to generate necessary reform pressure for QA and other quality-related policies, such as the National Research University. A detailed discussion in Chapter V sheds light on multiple sources of policy aspiration that Thai policymakers used in order to justify and legitimize the need for education reform in general and higher education in particular. These interviews and documents illustrate how externalization to globalization and global competition were used as “abstract others” to identify problems at the national and institutional levels. By the time Thailand adopted QA, the country was already considered a late adopter in the global march for QA. Hence, policymakers used the argument that QA had already

become a global trend; therefore, it was necessary for Thailand to be a part of the global phenomenon. Instead of specifying specific countries to emulate, interview accounts elucidated the use of “international trends” or “global trends” to replace country-specific experiences. Undoubtedly, globalization, the economic crisis, and international ranking systems created the first level of externalization to generate a national mode for reform.

During the process of policy formulation and agenda setting, cross-national borrowing was actively used by policymakers in Thailand. Chapters V and VI illustrate numerous accounts of Thai policy elites who traveled to other countries to learn about the QA system. During the formulation of QA policy as well as the Thailand Qualification Framework, there were multiple policy visits to New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom. The interviews and policy documents elucidate how policymakers used their experiences in these policy travelings to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how QA is done in other countries. Thai policy elites argued that these visits helped them to formulate QA policy and strategy for Thailand. As Chapter VI points out, the experiences of OFSTED or Australian Quality Assessment Agencies became most prominent in the adoption of ONESQA, particularly when there was a disagreement among Thai advocates regarding the structure of the new organization. Policy documents and policymakers repeatedly used the fact that in the United Kingdom, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) was under the auspices of Her Majesty’s Chief of Inspection or HMI, while the Education Review Office (ERO) in New Zealand was directed by a separate ministry. These examples were strategically used by Thai policymakers to justify that ONESQA must be a public organization and independent from the Ministry of Education.

In addition to global references and cross-national attractions, the implementation of QA in Thailand was also the result of cross-sectoral borrowing. The influences of the health, engineering, and business sectors were prevalent in the legitimization of QA in

Thailand. Cross-sectoral borrowing is considered to be the third level of externalization in the introduction of QA policy.

Two factors contributed significantly to the cross-sectoral borrowing in Thailand. On the one hand, it is argued that cross-sectoral borrowing from the health, engineering, and business sectors was a product of the policy belief systems of the quality advocates in Thailand. Chapter IV makes an argument that there is a quality coalition in Thai higher education comprised of senior bureaucrats and university executives. Many of the key policy players come from health, engineering, and scientific backgrounds. These policymakers have been introduced to QA in their respective sectors. Therefore, the policy tool was seen as a common practice and acceptable procedure. The belief systems and professional backgrounds of key policy advocates served as a legitimate source of justification for cross-sectoral borrowing. As pointed out, QA advocates often referred to their professional knowledge to justify the necessity of QA in Thai higher education management.

On the other hand, there were excessive attempts to borrow the tools, systems, and language of the business sector for the higher education system. From the push for autonomous universities to the delegation of power from OHEC to the establishment of ONESQA, policymakers in Thailand sang in unison about the need to transform inflexible and bureaucratic organizations into a flat, flexible, and independent organization. Market-based reforms were introduced and promoted in order to achieve institutional autonomy as well as evidence-based policymaking. As Chapter VI points out, the creation of ONESQA aimed to represent a new wave of public organization in Thailand that moved away from traditional bureaucracy into a quasi-business-based organization.

The multiple processes and levels of externalization served different purposes of the policy borrowing depending on the timing of the process, conflicting issues, and policy contexts. However, it was evident that these externalization processes were

intended to generate reform pressures within the national and institutional level and offer solutions for educational problems. In this case, globalization was used as an external phenomenon affecting Thailand and requiring an overhaul of the national system. Cross-national learning about QA from New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom offered the solution, while cross-sectoral borrowing from health, engineering, and business offered specific sets of policy tools and standards for reform.

8.2.3 Higher Education Policy Studies

The detailed analysis of the Thai case provided new insights into two types of literature within the discussion of Higher Education Policy Studies. On the one hand, it contributed to the debate between advocates of the existence of the General Model of QA (van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994) and others who question such a thesis (Billing, 2004; Brennan & Shah, 1997; Tomusk, 1995). On the other hand, this dissertation contributes to the clarification of Clark's (1983) Triangle of Coordination thesis.

8.2.3.1 General Model of QA and the Case of Thailand. One of the most contested debates on QA in international literature focuses on the question of policy convergence and divergence. While Van Vught and Westerheijden (1994) proposed that there exists a general model of QA globally with five main characteristics – meta-level organization, self-assessment, peer reviews/site visits, published reports, and no direct link to funding, many others contest this general model thesis. Billing (2004), for example, argued that these five features are useful as the beginning points to understand QA and potential variation in multiple contexts. The analysis of the Thai case supported the latter argument. This section highlighted how the Thai culture of highly hierarchical and respected seniority played out in the case of QA in Thailand in relation to the five common features of the General Model of QA (Van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994). The

paradoxical logic of the Thai state is well illustrated with the concept of Amicable Assessment.

A meta-level organization: While Chapter VI clearly outlined and discussed the nature of ONESQA, it is necessary to reiterate here how the Thai culture of seniority and hierarchy penetrates this organization. ONESQA was created as a Public Organization. While it receives funding from the state, it is intended to be independent and run as a semi-private organization. Interview excerpts and three months of observation elucidated that ONESQA has a high level of policy autonomy from the Ministry of Education. The majority decisions are made within the institution, with the Director as the most mandated and authorized person. However, a closer scrutiny questioned to what extent this public organization differs from traditional bureaucratic organizations. The internship experience enabled me to realize that all decision-making went through several steps of hierarchy: from the leader of the Task Force, to the deputy director, senior advisor to the Director, and ultimately required the Director's authority. Another aspect that is uniquely Thai about the meta-level organization is that ONESQA strongly and overtly aims not to be the assessors themselves. The organization sub-contracts to private companies to conduct the assessment at the primary and secondary level, while it composes teams of experts to conduct EQA for higher education. Instead of being an assessor, ONESQA is intended only to work as secretariat to the QA process. In fact, even the creation of indicators for various EQA relied heavily on external individuals/experts who sit on multiple commissions. This very nature of ONESQA of sub-contracting and commissioning has cast doubts on the organization's legitimacy and expertise.

Self-assessment: This aspect is closest to the general understanding of what a self-assessment report should be. Every university is required to write and submit a self-assessment report to the Office of Higher Education Commission on a yearly basis, and this self-assessment report is used as part of the IQA as well as EQA process.

Peer Reviews/Site Visits: The interviews with QA practitioners illustrated that the Thai idiosyncrasy is most apparent in the peer-reviews and site visit process. Similar to international practices, EQA examiners are academic peers from other higher education institutions that come and assess the quality of the host institutions. Unlike other countries, Thailand's culture of seniority plays an influential role in this. For example, the so-called team leaders are always retired and respected university executives. Given their seniority, it is expected that they will present the wisdom and wealth of knowledge of knowing how to manage higher education institutions and enhance their quality. There are not many individuals who possess such social capital in Thailand; hence famous individuals are often highly demanded and sit on several committees. Furthermore, they are the only ones who can make comments during the institutional visit. Therefore, it is not "peer review" in a literal sense, as these highly respected individuals are treated as "former bosses" or "seniors."

Published Reports: Each institutional visit is required to produce an extensive report. However, only the executive summary of each report is published through the ONESQA website. As mentioned before, there is a high sensitivity regarding the resistance to rank higher education institutions based on these results. Therefore, only the overview verbal summary makes it to the public eye. ONESQA leaves it up to each university to publish the entire report or the result of the assessment. Indeed, many universities publish these reports on their websites. The pass/fail and numerical results have been used as indicators to promote institutional quality to the public.

No Direct Links to Public Funding: While there is no direct link to funding, there are continuous talks within higher education policymakers that the state should use the EQA results for funding allocation purposes.

The logic of the Thai state is most apparent in the introduction of the Amicable Assessment assessment policy. Despite the overt welcoming of QA as a necessary global policy, Chapter VI illustrated that soon after QA was introduced and rejected by teachers

and academics, ONESQA introduced the concepts of Amicable Assessment to appease the discontents. Such a concept incorporated the Buddhist concept of “genuine friends always reflect the truth” into QA (Interview, January 18 2010). Interview excerpts pointed out clearly how the advocates of Amicable Assessment aimed to adjust the language of QA to resonate with the existing culture and religion beliefs. This is not to mention that the perseverance of Thai culture is one of the key quality standards of EQA.

These discussions provided useful insights to understand how the general model of QA played out in the context of Thailand. Instead of viewing the implementation of QA as an indicator of global convergence, closer scrutiny provides insights into how historical and contextual factors crept in to influence the face of the policy.

8.2.3.2 Voices of Academic Oligarchs and Academics. While Clark's (1983) Triangle of Coordination has helped to identify the key actors in higher education policy implementation, this research has, in turn, contributed to a clarification of the framework in the context of a developing country such as Thailand. Based on extensive research in developed countries, Clark identified three main actors influencing higher education policy: the state, the market, and the academic oligarchs. The detailed analysis of the Thai case elucidates that the state has the utmost power in determining higher education policy. However, the Thai state should not be perceived as omnipotent. Instead, the state has actively sought new strategies to justify its policy decisions. The state opened policy space for more actors to become involved in the process. These individuals are mostly senior administrators in higher education institutions who come from the health sector or science disciplines and believe in the market strategy to solve higher education issues (autonomous university policy). By including like-minded individuals in the process, this strategy enabled the argument that the policy decision was a result of sector-wide participatory approach. At the same time, it enabled the state to ignore and silence the voices of academic discontents on the policy.

Furthermore, the historical analysis of the Thai state offered an insight into the role, logic, and agenda of quality advocates in Thailand. While the detailed discussion in Chapter IV on the elusiveness of the Thai state and quality coalitions offered a useful heuristic device to understand the actors behind the QA advocacy in Thailand, the voices of discontent from the Thai academic community as outlined in Chapter VII provided an insight into the asymmetrical power within the country. Although one could argue that Thai policy elites are active and strategic borrowers of the global policy, the academic voices serve as a reminder that global models of the local version should not be viewed through a normative lens.

8.2.4 Understanding the Thai State through QA

A detailed description and analysis of Thailand's higher education system has provided a lucid case to understand the logic and the changing role of the Thai state. The interdisciplinary nature of the research, which merges the discussion of policy borrowing and lending in education with that of political science, has contributed significantly to understanding the development of the Thai state.

Within the realm of Thai studies, extant historical and contemporary research reinforces the image of the Thai state as an active borrower of foreign ideas. There existed a strong obsession to achieve modernity through active emulation of Western ideas and models (Anderson, 1978; Peleggi, 2002; Winichakul, 2000). In a polemic article on the quest for “Siwilai,” Winichakul (2000) aptly argued that since the late 19th century, Thai policy elites have strived and aspired to become “Siwilai” – a term transliterated from the word “civilized.” In his own words:

Ideas to make Siam siwilai ranged from etiquette to material progress, including new roads, electricity, new bureaucracy, courts and judicial system, law codes, dress codes, and white teeth. The list could be much longer. But unlike the European experience, the Siamese quest for siwilai was a transcultural process in which ideas and practices from Europe, via

colonialism, had been transferred, localized, and hybridized in the Siamese setting. (p. 529)

Similar to the discussion on the culture of borrowing, the passage above illustrates that selective borrowing has been an ongoing strategy of the Thai state to introduce and implement reforms with the clear objectives of becoming civilized and modern. This line of reasoning has been substantiated by empirical evidence in Thai studies. While historians and political scientists on the Thai state have analyzed selective borrowing with critical insights to understand the logic of Thailand's ruling elites, very few research studies have applied this critical lens to understand the development of the Thai education system (Nilphan, 2005; Watson, 1980, 1989). The meta-narrative of research on Thai education has taken the issue of selective borrowing with optimism – if not naïveté (Jungck & Kajornsinsin, 2003). Therefore, a systematic view of the development of Thai higher education that is grounded in the historical and political analyses of the Thai state contributes to the dearth of analysis. Furthermore, the continuous quest to become civilized and modern of the Thai state is apparent in the introduction and implementation of QA policy. In return, the culture of borrowing, a perspective developed through analysis of the logic of the Thai higher education sector on QA, also provided a theoretical understanding of the historical development of the Thai state.

The analyses of the Thai state and its involvement in QA also contributed to understanding state-society relations. The concept of the quality coalition provided a picture of the shifts, changes, and dynamics in education policymaking, where the distinctions between the state and non-state actors are blurred. Not only that the market-oriented mantra has dominated higher education policymaking in Thailand, but it also shows the changing role of the state bureaucracy in the process. From traditionalized central control of power, appointments, and approval, the Commission has strived to revamp its own image to be a “friendly institution” and help to promote institutional improvement. Unlike the traditional centralized control systems of the Ministry of

Education, the mechanism of QA has enabled the state to delegate and decentralize its power to the institutional level, while maintaining a certain level of policy control.

Although the extent to which QA can control and correct institutional behavior is still debatable and requires further exploration, it is evident that this new mode of regulation, surveillance, and evaluation instills even stronger resistance from the academic community against the Commission.

Although the bureaucratic apparatus continues to dominate the product of policy changes, a closer examination reveals a more complex and complete picture. In contrast to a static model, this dissertation illustrates that policy change is a function of the dynamic interplay between bureaucrats and networks of academic advisors. The presence of academics in high-level decision making illustrates elusive boundaries between what is assumed to be state versus society. On the one hand, one can argue that these academic elites have been strategic in using the state as a site to push forward their preferred agenda, which would otherwise be contested in their own institutions. In this sense, the state provides the “mask” for academic managers to strengthen line management at their universities. By scaling their preferred policy at the national level, one is able to mitigate institutional conflicts. On the other hand, one can argue that the policy elites at the Commission have been strategic in “using” the academics to pursue their preferred, yet contested, agenda. By including the respectful academics into high-level policymaking, the Commission is able to present itself as a “participatory” and “friendly” organization to the university community, rather than an omnipotent, authoritarian, and state-led regime. It is argued that a systematic analysis of new networks and coalitions being formed within the bureaucratic apparatus helps to shed light on the new state-society relationship.

An in-depth qualitative case study on the emergence of QA in Thailand has contributed to the empirical as well as theoretical discussion. Empirically speaking, it is a rich qualitative case study on the context and actors in the higher education sector in

Thailand. Theoretically speaking, it aims to advance the interdisciplinary discussion of policy borrowing and comparative policy study. An integrative framework comprised of policy borrowing and lending (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012), the multiple stream theory (Kingdon, 2003), Clark's Triangle of Coordination (1983), and policy belief systems (Grindle & Thomas, 1991) has offered significant insight into the context, actors, and timing of policy change.

8.3 Areas for Future Research

Given that this research set out to understand how a traveling reform such as QA resonated in the national, organizational, and institutional contexts of Thailand's higher education sector, it has purposefully chosen policy borrowing and lending as the theoretical lens to study the phenomenon. The focus of the analysis lies in terms of the socio-logic of Thailand, timing of the policy process, and the policy beliefs of the policy elites at differing policy levels of divergent positions. As the eight chapters illustrate, differing methods of inquiry ranged from document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and observations at ONESQA to yield extensive and substantive qualitative data. Through the existing rich qualitative data, one could further explore issues such as how QA reflects the changing role of the state in Thailand, governance, and organizational change. Each of these issues would have required different points of departure, theoretical frameworks, and foci. To include them in this limited space would have diverted the researcher's and the readers' focus away from the issues of globalization, traveling reform, and policy borrowing and lending. One could revisit the field notes and re-examine the issues from the diversity of theoretical frameworks, such as organization theory and governance.

Many important issues emerged from the research and require further analysis. These include: What is the consequence and policy impact of the QA to different

stakeholders? While QA is tightly linked with accreditation of institutions in many countries, why do QA advocates in Thailand continue to promote QA without accreditation? Further research can also probe into the cases of different types of institutions such as community colleges, Rajabhat universities, and private universities in Thailand.

Methodologically speaking, a quantitative analyses of the costs and benefits of QA activity would be a very much needed supplement to this research. The government spends at least 400 million baht each year organizing QA activities at the national level, while each university and faculty spends enormous amounts of budget, manpower, and resources to complete this task. A quantitative analysis on cost effectiveness would be very beneficial to supplement the political and policy analysis of this research.

The analysis of the logic of Thai higher education sector in quality assessment policy has addressed many issues and humbly advanced the theoretical discussion of several frameworks, especially that of policy borrowing and lending. To conclude is not to end the analytical process; rather, many issues have emerged that require further consideration and theoretical clarification.

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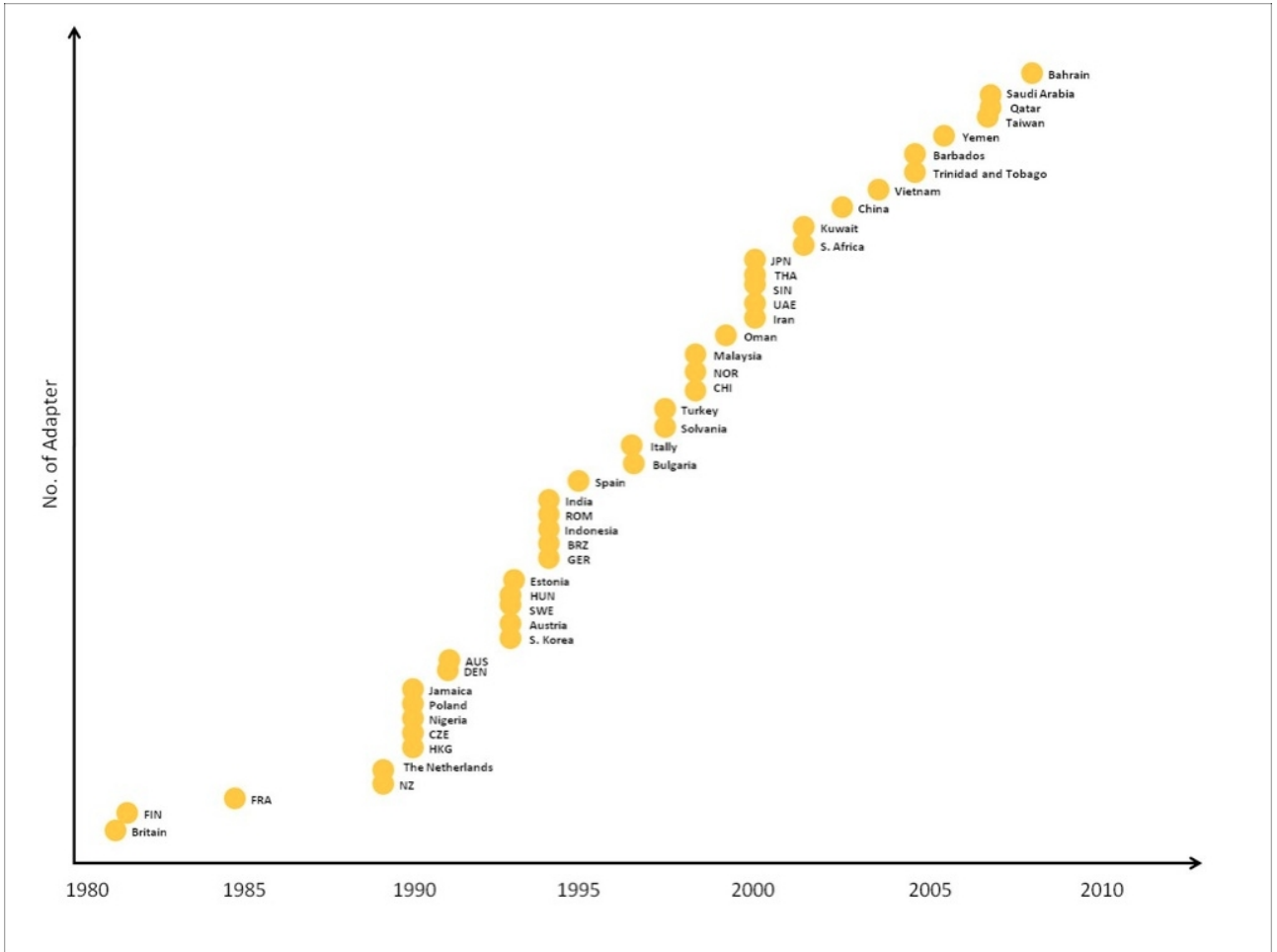
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Appendix A

List of Countries that Have Established QA Organizations



Wednesday, October 24, 2012

country	year	Names
United States	1885	New England Association of Schools and Colleges
Philippines	1977	The Federation of Accrediting Associations of the Philippines
Britain	1983	University Grants Committee
Finland	1983	The Academy of Finland
France	1985	Comite National D Evaluation
New Zealand	1989	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
The Netherlands	1989	The Association of Cooperating Universities in the Netherlands
Hong Kong	1990	Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation
Nigeria	1990	Quality Assessment - NUC
Czech Republic	1990	Accreditation Commission
Poland	1990	Higher Education Council
Jamaica	1990	The University Council of Jamaica
Australia	1991	The Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
Denmark	1991	The Evaluation Centre
South Korea	1993	Council for University Accreditation
Hungary	1993	The Hungarian Accreditation Committee
Estonia	1993	Higher Education Evaluation Council
Sweden	1993	Swedish National Higher Education Agency
Austria	1993	UOG93
India	1994	National Assessment and Accreditation Council
Indonesia	1994	National Accreditation Board for Higher Education
Brazil	1994	National Commission for Evaluation
Germany	1994	Regional Evaluation Agencies: Association of Northern German Universities; the Central Evaluation Agency; the Evaluation Agency North Rhine-Westphalia
Romania	1994	National Council for Academic Assessment and Accreditation
Spanish	1995	National Plan of Evaluation of Universities Quality
Bulgaria	1996	National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency
Italy	1996	National Committee for Evaluation of the University System
Turkey	1997	Turkish Council of Higher Education
Slovenia	1997	Higher Education Quality Assurance Commission
Malaysia	1998	Malaysia National Accreditation Board
Norway	1998	the Norwegian National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
Chile	1998	National Commission for Accreditation
Oman	1999	The Oman Accreditation Council
Japan	2000	National Institute for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation
Singapore	2000	International Academic Advisory Panel
Thailand	2000	Office of National Educational Standards and Quality Assessment
United Arab Emirates	2000	The Commission for Academic Accreditation
Iran	2000	Center for Evaluation Studies and Research
South Africa	2001	Higher Education Quality Committee
Kuwait	2001	Private Universities Council
China	2002	Overall Quality of Undergraduate Education
Vietnam	2003	General Department of Assessment and Accreditation
Trinidad and Tobago	2004	Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago
Barbados	2004	Barbados Accreditation Council
Yemen	2005	Supreme Council for Yemen Universities
Taiwan	2006	Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan
Qatar	2006	Quality Assurance Committee
UAE	2006	The Knowledge and Human Development Authority
Bahrain	2007	Council of Higher Education Accreditation
Saudi Arabia	2006	The National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment

Appendix B
List of Interviewees

Date of the Interviews	Institution/ Position of the interviewees
5th of January 2010	-Former Secretary General of OHEC, -Senior policymaker at ONESQA
11th of January 2010 (a)	- Senior policymaker at OHEC and ONESQA
11 th of January 2010 (b)	- Advisor to OHEC
15th of January 2010	-Senior policymaker at ONESQA
18th of January 2010	-Senior policymaker at ONESQA
08 th of July 2010	- Academic, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University
09 th of July 2010	- Academic, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University
16 th of July 2010	-Representative, SEAMEO-RIHED
17 th of July 2010	- Representative, National Economic and Social Development Board
22 th of July 2010	- Senior Administrator, Rajabhat Suan Dusit University
23 rd of July 2010 (a)	- Academic, Faculty of Engineering, KMUTT
23 rd of July 2010 (b)	- Academic, Faculty of Medicine, Prince Songkla University
2nd of August 2010 (a)	-Board member of OHEC -University Executive of Private University
2nd of August 2010 (b)	-Former Senior policymaker at OHEC
3rd of August 2010 (a)	-Former Secretary General of OHEC -University Executive of Public University
3rd of August 2010 (b)	-Social Science Academic at Thammasat University
5th of August 2010 (a)	-Board member of OHEC - Former University Executive of Public University
5th of August, 2010 (b)	-Board member of OHEC -Former University Executive of Public University
7th of August 2010	- Academic from Humanities Discipline at Chulalongkorn University

Date of the Interviews	Institution/ Position of the interviewees
11th of August 2010 (a)	- Former Minister of Education - Former Secretary General of Ministry of University Affairs
11th of August 2010 (b)	- Former Dean of Liberal Arts Faculty, Thammasat University
26 th of August, 2010	- Academic, Faculty of Pharmaceutical, Chulalongkorn University
27th of August, 2010	-UNESCO representative
2nd of September 2010 (a)	-Board member of OHEC -Board Public University
2nd of September 2010 (b)	-Former Deputy Minister of Education - Former senior bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education
6th of September 2010 (a)	-Academic, Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai University
6th of September 2010 (b)	-Board member of OHEC -University Executive of Private University
7th of September 2010 (a)	- University Executive for QA, Chiang Mai University
7th of September 2010 (b)	- University Executive for QA, Chiang Mai University
7th of September 2010 (c)	- QA practitioner, Chiang Mai University
8th of September 2010 (a)	- Academic, Social Science, Chiang Mai University
8th of September 2010 (b)	-Academic, Social Science, Chiang Mai University
10th of September 2010 (a)	-Academic, Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai University
10th of September 2010 (b)	- Senior policymaker at OHEC and ONESQA
13 th of September 2010 (a)	- Foreign expert on Thai higher education
13 th of September 2010 (b)	- Former Minister of Education
15 th of September 2010	- Senior policymaker at OHEC
19 th of October 2010	- Representative from Private Sector
20 th of October 2010	- Official from OHEC
1 st of November 2010	- Senior policymaker at OHEC

Date of the Interviews	Institution/ Position of the interviewees
09 th of November 2010	- Official at ONESQA
10 th of November 2010	- Official at ONESQA
22 nd of November 2010	- QA practitioner at Thammasat University
23 rd of November 2010	- Executive at Chulalongkorn University
25 th of November 2010	- Academic, Chulalongkorn University
25 th of November 2010	- QA practitioner Rajabhat Suan Dusit University
26 th of November 2010 (a)	- Representative from OEC
26 th of November 2010 (b)	- Representative from OEC
28 th of November, 2010 (a)	- Academic from Education Faculty, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University
28 th of November, 2010 (b)	- University Executive, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University
28 th of November, 2010 (c)	- QA practitioner, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University
29 th of November 2010 (a)	- QA practitioner, Chiang Mai University
29 th of November 2010 (b)	- Former administrator, Chiang Mai University
30 th of November 2010 (a)	- Academic, Faculty of Agriculture, Chiang Mai University
30 th of November 2010 (b)	- Academic, Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai University
30 th of November 2010 (c)	- Academic, Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai university
2 nd of November 2010	- QA practitioner, Chiang Mai University
3 rd of December, 2010	- Academics from Humanities Discipline at Chulalongkorn University
6 th of December, 2010	- Senior official, OEC
7 th of December 2010	- Official at ONESQA
8 th of December 2010 (a)	- Official at ONESQA
8 th of December 201	- Senior official, ONESQA
10 th of December 2010 (a)	- Senior official, ONESQA
10 th of December 2010 (b)	- Senior advisor ONESQA, OHEC
10 th of December 2010 (c)	- Former Senior official, Ministry of Education

Date of the Interviews	Institution/ Position of the interviewees
13 th of December 2010 (a)	- Board member, ONESQA
22 nd of December 2010	- Higher Education Researcher ONESQA
23 rd of December 2010	- Researcher at ONESQA
23 rd of December 2010	- Senior executive at ONESQA
4th of January 2011	- Academic from Political Science Faculty, Chulalongkorn University
5th of January 2011 (a)	- Executive at Suranaree University of Technology
5th of January 2011 (b)	- Executive at Suranaree University of Technology
5th of January 2011 (c)	- QA administrators at Suranaree University of Technology
6th of January 2011	-Academic, Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University
19th January 2011 (a)	- Dean, Prince Songkla University
19th January 2011 (b)	- QA administrator at the Faculty Level, Prince Songkla University
19th January 2011 (b)	- QA administrator at the University Level, Prince Songkla University
20th January 2011 (a)	- Phone interview, Executive Prince Songkla University
20th January 2011 (b)	- Academic and QA executive at the faculty level, Prince Songkla University
20th January 2011 (c)	- Academic, Science Faculty, Prince Songkla University
21st January 2011 (a)	- Executive at Rajabhat Songkla University
21st January 2011 (b)	- QA administrator at the University Level, Rajabhat Songkla University
21st January 2011 (c)	- Academic, Rajabhat Songkla University