

Equity
in
Thai Private Institutions
of Higher Education

Nuntarat Charoenkul

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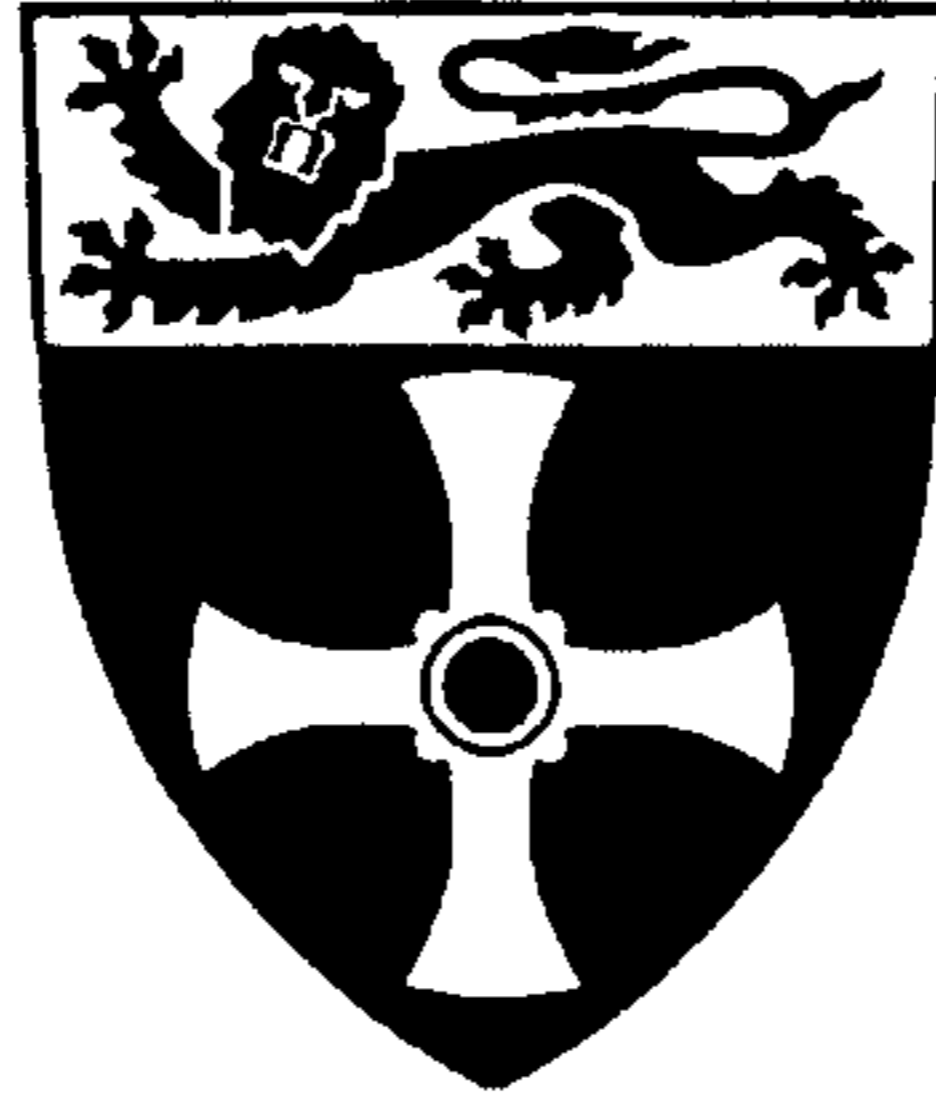
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Date: *July 2005*

Abstract

This research aims to investigate the policies, administrative plans and strategies taken by eight leading Thai private institutions of higher education to develop equality of educational opportunity for economically disadvantaged college-age people. It also probes into the viewpoints of students, as the real users of higher education, on the ethics of markets in education as well as the possibility of the development of equity in a private university in Thailand. In addition, it explores students' attitudes towards equity in private higher education, socio-economically disadvantaged students and student aid schemes provided by the eight focus institutions.

In this study, the researcher applied a mixed-methods approach to elicit data from a range of sources: the government, the eight focus universities and students. The staff participants are university administrators and officers (ten of them in total, at least one and sometimes two from each focus institution) in charge of student grants and loans. Student participants are divided into two groups: the control group and the focus group. The control group consists of on average 174 students who are non-takers of loans and grants from each institution (1,390 in total). The focus group is composed of on average 203 students who are loan and grant takers from each university (1,626 in total). In the research, all student participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire on students' attitudes towards Thai private higher education, designed by the researcher. Face-to-face interviews were also conducted with 35 students from all the focus institutions (four or five from each university).

The research findings reveal that it is possible for the eight focus institutions to develop equality of educational opportunity through the application of a variety of student aid programmes, focusing on loans. In this study, it turns out that a student loan programme tends to be able to assist economically disadvantaged students on a larger scale than can a grant or a scholarship scheme. These results are hoped to serve as a guideline for the promotion of equality of educational opportunity, the establishment and improvement of future student aid schemes, as well as the creation and development of a more equitable system in Thai higher education.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Research Background

1.1 Introduction

Equity has been recognised by the Thai government and many educationists as well as policy makers as a key issue in the development of higher education. Since the promulgation of the Eighth National Development Plan of Thai Higher Education (from 1997 to 2001), it has been raised on the agenda of many educational forums and debates in Thailand. With its stated intention to create, maintain and develop equity in Thai Higher Education, the Thai government set up two main education policies concerning *access and equity* and *privatisation and corporation*. Under these key policies, the government has stated its intention to provide *mass higher education* for all Thai people, especially those socio-economically disadvantaged but academically qualified high school or secondary school leavers, to have a greater opportunity to attend both public and private universities, regardless of their socio-economic status, gender and geographical characteristics. Also, the government has promoted the establishment of private universities and has encouraged the private sector, private organisations as well as international institutes to invest and play a more important role in higher education, and to collaborate with higher education institutions in the provision of high quality education alongside the equity scheme.

As the establishment of higher education in Thailand is a long-term investment, the government formulated some incentives and privileges to attract investors. Each education investor will be exempted from the tax and fees for the transfer of property ownership to a private higher education institution, from the income tax for an institution, from the personal income tax for a licensee, from the value added tax and donation income tax as well as from the import duty for educational, scientific and cultural materials. In order to promote the investment of the private sector in establishing private educational institutions, the government set up an educational loan project worth 20 billion baht or about £27 million. (£1 was equal to 75 Thai baht as of 1st September 2004).

In addition, the government set up a *student loan* scheme for socio-economically disadvantaged students under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of University Affairs (now merged as the Ministry of Education). Socio-economically disadvantaged students from private higher education institutions, whose parental combined income does not exceed 150,000 baht (or about £2,000) a year, are also eligible for the loans. According to a report on the process related to the *Establishment of Private Higher Education in Thailand* for foreign and local investors, compiled by Muangnoicharoen (2001), in 2000, the budget of 25 billion baht (or approximately £33 million) were allocated to this loan scheme. The interest rate is as low as one per cent with the grace period of two years after graduation. Each student borrower is obliged to pay the total (capital plus interest) within 15 years of his/her graduation.

With reference to the above report regarding the establishment of private universities, the government has actively and continuously promoted and supported private higher education in the country since the entrance of the private sector into higher education system in 1969, in conformity with the *Private Higher Education Act of 1969*. (The present Act is currently under amendment to enhance flexibility in administration. In addition, new policies are introduced to allow foreign universities to take part in or to set up collaborative degree programmes.) In fact, the first private institution of higher education, named the College of Commerce, was previously founded in 1940 by the Thai Chamber of Commerce. In 1984, the College was elevated to university status and renamed the *University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce*. The university aims to produce graduates in Natural and Social Sciences and Humanities in correspondence with the economic environment of the country.

Currently, there are 57 private institutions of higher education in Thailand (53 in operation and four in the process of being officially inaugurated). All private higher education institutions independently operate within the framework of

***The Ninth National Development Plan of Thai Higher Education (2002-2006)**

* The Ninth Development Plan of Thai Higher Education (from 2002 to 2006) accentuates the government policy on access and equity in higher education. The work plans operated under this policy include the extension of educational opportunity to peripheral and regional areas, by establishing colleges and universities in 37 provinces, and the development of educational media and information technology to facilitate distance learning in 30 institutions.

and ***The National Education Act of 1999**, under the supervision of the Office of the Higher Education Commission (Division of Private Higher Education), Ministry of Education. Each private institution has its own council which autonomously functions as the administrative body, responsible for the general affairs of the institution as well as the organisation of its internal administrative structure.

1.2 Student Loan Programme as a springboard to the Development of Equity in Thai Higher Education

In conformity with the government policy on *access and equity* in higher education, the private universities or the public institutions under the process of privatisation/autonomy have set up and developed a variety of student aid programmes such as grants, loans, work-study plans and internships to assist needy students as well as to provide more educational opportunities for able but economically disadvantaged people who would like to take part in higher education. Amongst various types of financial support for university students, *educational loans* are likely to be the most practical approach to accomplish the government's twofold goals of improving *access and equity* and promoting the *cost-sharing* scheme in higher education.

Since the beginning of its operation in 1996, the national *Student Loan Programme*, under the government support, has played a crucial role in widening access to upper secondary education and higher education for socio-economically disadvantaged people. It has been jointly managed by the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) or the present Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) and the Ministry of Finance (MOF). The office which has been directly in charge of this student loan scheme is a non-governmental body under the supervision of the Department of Controller, Ministry of Finance,

* Under the **National Education Act of 1999** (Chapter II), all individuals have equal rights to access to fundamental education, for not less than 12 years, provided with good quality and free of charge by the government. Parents are required to offer their children an opportunity to get into compulsory education or the upper levels of education in accordance with the readiness and preparedness of each family. In this regard, all parents, whose children are studying at the compulsory level, will enjoy an income tax reduction or remission for education.

known as the *Office of the Student Loans Fund (OSLF)*. The debt collection has been carried out by the *Krung Thai Bank Public Company Limited (KTB)*, a state-owned bank under the control of OSLF and MOF.

In correspondence to the government policy on access and equity, the programme aims to equip able but low-income people with advanced knowledge and training that will prompt them to better opportunities in their future career and will, eventually, elevate their socio-economic status as well as living standards. This properly conforms to the government policy on distribution of income and wealth to economically disadvantaged people. From 1996 to the present, the government has allocated totally 185,510 million baht (or about £2,474 million) to support totally 2,178,809 students (both at upper secondary school and post-secondary school levels): about 557,086 loan takers in the grace or debt-free period, approximately 915,163 loan takers who are studying at schools/colleges/universities and about 700,337 borrowers in the repayment period. So far, as stated by the Office of the Student Loans Fund (2004), the programme has achieved, at a certain level, its goal of cost recovery. Under the government loan programme, 64.31% of borrowers have paid out their loans while 34.84% of those have been in debt deferment (i.e. those who are studying, who have been unemployed and whose earnings do not reach 4,700 baht or about £63 a month, as defined by OSLF). Only 0.46% of borrowers could not be pursued and tend to become defaulters and 0.39% of those are not able to repay the loans owing to death or disability.

Besides its provision of equality of educational opportunity to economically disadvantaged people, the student loan scheme has been used as a strategy to promote the *cost-sharing* plan. As cited above, such a plan, proposed by the Office of the Student Loans Fund (2004), reflects the principle that higher education tends to bring about private advantages, i.e. better opportunities and higher wages/earnings, for the individual (or those who benefit from higher education) and his/her family rather than the public good. It is supported by Barr (1998), Johnstone (2003a) and Woodhall (1987 and 1992a and b) who indicate the private benefits of higher education and suggest the introduction of a cost-sharing system as an approach to develop *fairness* or *equity* in higher learning. This will be further discussed in 2.6/Chapter 2.

This thesis presents a case study of the implementation plans and strategies taken by eight leading Thai private institutions of higher education to promote the government policy on access and equity in higher education, through various kinds of student aid programmes focusing on student loans. It also probes into students' views on the promotion of equity and the development of financial aid programmes within the focus institutions. The following questions help define the focus of this study:

- Why focus on private universities?
- Why focus on equity?
- Why concentrate on student aid programmes?
- Why a case study approach?
- Why concentrate on eight private universities in Thailand?

Each of the above questions is discussed under separate headings. The final section of this chapter explains a structure of the thesis as well as the following chapters.

1.3 Why focus on private universities?

In conformity with the Ninth National Development Plan of Thai Higher Education (2002-2006), the National Education Act of 1999 as well as the government policy on support and promotion of private institutions of higher education, a private university is expected to achieve its goal in the provision of high quality education and to meet the same educational quality and standards as its public counterparts. At the same time, it also needs to establish and maintain equity, so that the access to private higher education will not be limited to or reserved for only those who come from well-off or high-income families. To this point, it is worth exploring and probing into administrative strategies and action plans employed by some prestigious private higher education institutions to effectively promote *equity* as well as to efficiently support *socio-economically disadvantaged* but academically qualified college-age students with limited funds and resources allocated by the government, while maintaining their reputation and high quality as well as excellence in education provision.

1.4 Why focus on equity?

Prior to a discussion of the above query, it is necessary that we explore a working definition of equity in this study.

1.4.1 Definition of Equity in this research

Equity in this study means that *no person who has the ability to benefit from higher education should be excluded from its system on the grounds of his/her lack of wealth or financial resources*. It can be interpreted as *equality of opportunities* as recommended by Friedman, 1980, or *adequacy of opportunities* as suggested by Tooley, 1996a. Friedman (1980, p.132) states that this fits in with a remarkable concept existing in the French expression dating from the French Revolution (1789): “*Une carrière ouverte aux les talents*” (or a career open to the talents). This expression implies that people should not be deprived of or prevented from gaining or achieving the rewards or positions that befit their talents, qualifications and values. Not birth, nationality, race, religion, gender nor any other arbitrary obstacles should determine or limit the opportunities that are open to an individual, but only his/her abilities. Therefore, in this research, *equality of opportunities* and *adequacy of opportunities* as well as *social justice* are the working definition of *equity*. They are used as synonyms.

To this point, it is also worth probing into some international perspectives on the definition of equity in higher education as well as the development of equality of opportunity in higher education markets. Although some of the following discussions in 1.4.2 and 1.4.3 are beyond the scope of this thesis, they could be used to explore and might be applicable to the situations in Thailand.

1.4.2 Definition of Equity in Higher Education: International Views

Equity, in educational terms, has intricate characteristics and significance. Unlike absolute equity without difference (where people have the same needs, same

ability and same aspirations that lead them to the same tastes and expectations) as implied by Le Grand (1991), it relates to *adequacy of educational opportunities* for people with different needs from dissimilar socio-economic backgrounds who are supposed to be enabled and encouraged to choose what kind or which level of education suits their (or their children's) needs and capacities. This concept fits in with Tooley's (1996a) suggestion that rather than searching for absolute equity or the totally same education, all educationists and economists had better concentrate more on the creation of *adequate educational opportunities* for all individuals at all levels of education to develop their skills and aptitudes. Therefore, according to Tooley (1996a), *equality*, in a more reasonable and practical aspect, should ensure that one achieves his/her level of *adequacy of opportunities*, not equality of outcome or resources in comparison with others. However, it is quite difficult to pinpoint what should be regarded as *adequate* for all as people who are from divergent socio-economic backgrounds tend to have different perspectives, motivations and objectives towards education as well as dissimilar goals of life and careers. So *adequacy of opportunities* in educational terms may vary, based on each individual's culture and belief as well as his/her socio-economic or family background.

Different from equality or adequacy of opportunities in lower levels of education, *equity* in higher education concerns the development of *fairness* in its funding system which has called for more effective strategies to utilise the government or public resources for the utmost benefits of the common good or the society as a whole rather than for the advantages of particular groups of people and more educational opportunities for the qualified but economically disadvantaged who would like to go to colleges/universities. For a developing country, Tooley (2000b) indicates that *inequity* is actually caused by the large proportion of public funds unnecessarily and excessively spent on higher education which is non-compulsory and requires the largest amount of capital in comparison with primary and secondary education. Hence, *equity* in higher learning may be interpreted as *justice* or *fairness* for all. Such *fairness* could be accomplished by *diminishing public resources* invested in higher education that have mostly benefited the privileged or high-income people, *searching for and raising non-governmental resources* to supplement the public ones as well as *widening access* to higher education for able but low-income people who would like to take part in higher learning.

Since this research concerns the development of equity in Thai private higher education, it is worth exploring some international views on the development of equity in higher education markets that might be applicable to the improvement of equality of educational opportunity in Thailand.

1.4.3 Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education Markets

Based on an idea of education as a *social market* or *quasi-market* (a market that takes part in human resource development or a special kind of enterprises that aims to serve all society members with knowledge and skills), Williams (1997) compares universities to *marketeers* or *market-oriented educational enterprises* (as defined by Bai, 1998), who need to find the most effective tactics and strategies to sell their products (education) to students, regarded as educational *consumers/investors* or *liberal meritocrats* with differential purchasing power and unequal capital for their investment in higher education. This long-term investment is expected to help broaden their future life-chances.

However, in the market system of higher education, there are still some student consumers recognised as the *bright poor* (the undoubtedly under-represented/the least advantaged proportion of population) or the small minority who are academically qualified but cannot invest in themselves. According to Borne and Picus (1994), low socio-economic status has prevented the bright poor from achieving in higher education, and brought in higher dropout rates of low-income students who are also taking the helm of their nation, like their higher-income peers. This phenomenon, albeit its effects on the minority, cannot be regarded as real equality. *Real equity* in this context requires that able college-age people, who are qualified for higher learning, have access to higher education. Such equity is not supposed to be negatively affected by inherent resources or social status, recognised as unacceptable correlates to participation by Johnstone (2003b).

To this point, an interesting issue, addressed by Plant (1992) and Henry *et al* (2001), which has remained in question and which has been highly discussed between all stakeholders (the government, institutions, educators, economists, students) is that

how to effectively embed and stabilise *equality of opportunity* in education markets and which policies and approaches benefit the education system of each country.

According to Finnie (1996) and 2.2/Chapter 2 (concerning free higher education as the middle-class appropriation of welfare), low tuition as well as a fee-free system (as identified by Bray, 1998) appear to be ineffective approaches for achieving equity or access to higher education since they would cause more burden on the government and taxpayers who are non-users of this level of education and those well-off who could bear the full costs would also benefit from this. Thus, Finnie (1996) suggests that there should be some direct student aid programmes, not low tuition, to support the academically able but low-income people who would like to participate in higher education. This idea was agreed by Levin (1990), who notes that

“Financial barriers are not the primary obstacle to greater accessibility to universities ... Accessibility could be improved more readily and more substantially through direct programmatic efforts than through indirect measures such as tuition policy.”

(Levin, 1990, p. 51-52)

Due to the lack of effectiveness of the low tuition policy, the government needs to find more practical approaches as well as more external sources of capital, apart from the public funds and taxes, to set up efficient student aid schemes in its country. In this regard, Woodhall (1970) recommends that study loans could be recognised as an alternative and feasible method of financing higher education and reducing public expenditure as well as tax burden on the non-users of higher education.

In the IFC (International Finance Corporation) study, the development of equity or equality of opportunity was also addressed amidst the growth of private education in developing countries, Tooley (2001) argues that, besides the enhancement of accountability, education markets can help promote equality through cross-subsidisation (in which some exceeding fees collected from the better-off are used to support the less advantaged), social responsibility programmes (e.g. a village

schools programme by the Delhi Public School Society or DPS, India and a student volunteers project for the poor in economically stressed areas by the New International School of Thailand or NIST, Thailand), and involvement with the government or the public sector (public-private partnerships) through student loan programmes. Although the study was mainly based on primary education, it seems to be applicable and adaptable to higher levels of education. The importance of the establishment of partnerships in line with the encouragement of community participation (e.g. in the form of various kinds of businesses, enterprises and donations) to promote equality of opportunity (at all levels of education) is also supported by Bray (1998).

In terms of the promotion of equity in higher learning, the idea of the establishment of a cost-sharing system, especially in higher education, is supported by a large number of educators and economists, such as Bai (1998), Bray (1998 and 2002), Curtin (2000) and the World Bank (1994). Amongst the supporters of this system, Blöndal (2002a and b) suggests that, to promote equity as well as to minimise the government expenses, the government and universities could establish a cost-sharing system, in which the tuition fees are raised and adjusted in correspondence with the real costs of instruction, teaching and learning materials as well as administration fees of each academic programme. Through such a system, universities and colleges can make the best use of the additional amount collected from affordable and better-off students to improve their quality in the provision of education and services, and simultaneously to increase the availability of student loans or target grants for the least advantaged and low-income students. However, universities should be transparent and assertive in communicating with their students concerning the necessity and advantages of a cost-sharing plan as well as their strong commitments to maintain or develop quality and efficiency in instruction, student aids and services.

Forsyth and Furlong (2003) note that previous academic achievement is not the only factor influencing the higher dropout rates of the under-represented students. There are some financial and cultural factors which may explain this phenomenon. The longer time involved with more advanced courses or higher level of education may deter some college-age but low-income young people, with very limited funds,

who actually would like to take part in post-secondary education (e.g. if nobody in their household has a job or sufficient funds to cover all expenses incurred during their study or commuting is expensive). Alternatively, local culture as well as lack of familial experience of higher education (e.g. in deprived areas or in small towns) may make further education (vocational training schools/colleges) seem a relatively attractive prospect for them, in comparison with the bigger step of moving directly from a secondary school to a university. Thus, most of them may decide to attend a vocational training school/institute instead of a university. Even those who have already entered higher education, with the determination to complete a degree course, realise that the same barriers to continued participation in higher education tend to be there at the end of the course. For instance, as raised by Forsyth and Furlong (2003), the prospect of prolonged debt and poverty has already deterred some disadvantaged degree students from considering postgraduate qualifications. Thus, we may find that some disadvantaged students who do access higher education are enrolling in courses which are not equitable with those enrolled in by their peers who come from more advantaged backgrounds.

Undoubtedly, the financial barriers could be relieved by the provision of economic assistance for those under-represented students. Should the government need to play a supporting role in education markets, as noted by Tooley (2000a), to what extent and what level of the state funding would be justified to ensure equality of opportunity in education for the disadvantaged is really an enthralling issue. To diminish such barriers, this kind of financial aids could be in the form of non-repayable or outright bursaries plus housing, or travel assistance, supported either by the universities themselves, the government or jointly sponsored by both the government and the private institutions, or in the form of private-public partnerships, as proposed by Tooley (2001), to help encourage more students to enrol at distant and prestigious institutions.

Slaughter and Leslie (1997) call these market-like efforts to create a more effective fund-raising scheme and to secure external sources of finance (by establishing and strengthening public-private and university-industry collaborations) *academic capitalism*. After conducting their research interviews and observations of university faculty regarding the impacts of academic capitalism on higher education

policies and changes in the nature of academic labour in Australia, Canada, UK and USA between 1970 and 1995, Slaughter and Leslie (1997) discovered that these countries promoted access and encouraged greater student participation, but at a lower government expense. As a substitute for the cost previously supported by the government, each country raised tuition fees and emphasised student loans rather than grants. Most universities and colleges in all four countries tended to change their income-generating patterns, switching from funding by the government or general public means towards self-funding through the increase of tuition fees, research contracts, private grants and donations, private-public partnerships, and other competitive sources of funds. This means that most academic staff in the focus countries, in order to generate additional revenues for their universities or colleges and to be more self-dependent, have shifted their duties from simple lecturers to *researcher-lecturers*, who commit themselves to both teaching assignments and research or consultancy work, interpreted by Slaughter and Leslie (1997) as an *entrepreneurial* activity.

As recommended by Slaughter and Leslie (1997), to balance their teaching and research commitments as well as other non-teaching tasks, the researcher-lecturers or universities, with the revenues obtained from entrepreneurial activities, may employ needy and qualified departmental students, as research, teaching or graduate assistants (RAs, TAs or GAs). The GA, TA or RA schemes could relieve researcher-lecturers of these heavy duties, so they would be able to continue to teach while engaging in entrepreneurial activities. However, Slaughter and Leslie (1997) indicate that most RAs, GAs and TAs are usually postgraduate or research students with advanced knowledge of research and teaching skills. For undergraduate students who are qualified and in need of funds during their studies, the researcher-lecturers or universities could employ them as part-time project assistants (or PAs), who help faculty with a variety of non-teaching tasks or extra-curricular activities which require less-skilled labour. In short, apart from being used to alleviate the faculty's burden, these GA, TA, RA and PA schemes could be significantly applied as a strategy to maintain efficiency in education provision (of the researcher-lecturers) and to help promote equality of opportunity, on the condition that they are well-managed and equipped with an appropriate set of screening and targeting criteria as well as means-tested indicators to ascertain the accessibility of the funds to the right group of

disadvantaged students, who are qualified for the TA, RA, GA or PA positions and greatly in need of funds.

The GA, TA, RA and PA schemes, recognised by the World Bank (1994) as a kind of “work-study” programmes, seem to work well in the provision of higher education opportunity to needy students (if they are well-executed) as, normally, those who (or whose parents) can afford the full costs of their studies prefer not to work while studying, especially in oriental countries, like Thailand. The work-study programmes, as indicated by OECD (1990), has been widely used as a strategy of financial aids for students, especially, in USA, apart from government-sponsored or federal-sponsored grants and government-subsidised loans.

However, as a result of academic capitalism, universities might face a problem related to the *brain drain* phenomenon, in which they lose their staff of high potential and great ability to an industrial company or an external organisation. To cope with this, Slaughter and Leslie (1997) suggest that each university should establish and develop a set of strategies or a type of welfare system to retain their academic staff of high quality (e.g. academic bonus per annum, medical insurance and a university savings cooperative, which offers an attractive interest rate, for faculty/staff).

If the financial barriers faced by the disadvantaged students can be reduced, the existing cultural barriers, subsequently, tend to be lessened as well. Once wider access to higher education has become more ensured, the gap between the affluent and the disadvantaged student consumers will be likely to be bridged. This will significantly help increase the number of disadvantaged college-age learners entering higher education and will also help increase their level of participation on entry.

However, based on the sociological research taken in Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), Woodhall (1970) claims that the goal of the promotion of equality of educational opportunity calls for not only the removal of financial barriers to entry into higher education, but also the provision of assistance to secondary school pupils as well as the flexibility of selection procedures. Thus, besides the availability of various forms of aid programmes for those disadvantaged university students, it is also worth probing into targeting strategies, applied by the

government and higher education institutions, to make some grants and study loans accessible to low-income but qualified secondary school pupils, who would like to participate in higher education.

Once wider participation in higher education has been nearly ensured, Yorke and Thomas (2003) note that it is also essential for institutions of higher education to apply some effective strategies to improve the retention as well as to support the completion of their students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

To empower those socio-economically under-represented (college-age) student consumers to participate more in higher education as well as to retain them until the completion of their degrees, governments and higher education institutions could set up grants/vouchers or student aid packages (including loans and target grants) in line with the injection of more professional-oriented subjects or modules into each programme of study and the development of various kinds of student services (e.g. student support groups, student tutoring, student consultancy and career services) to assist them through difficulties which may arise in the course of their studies.

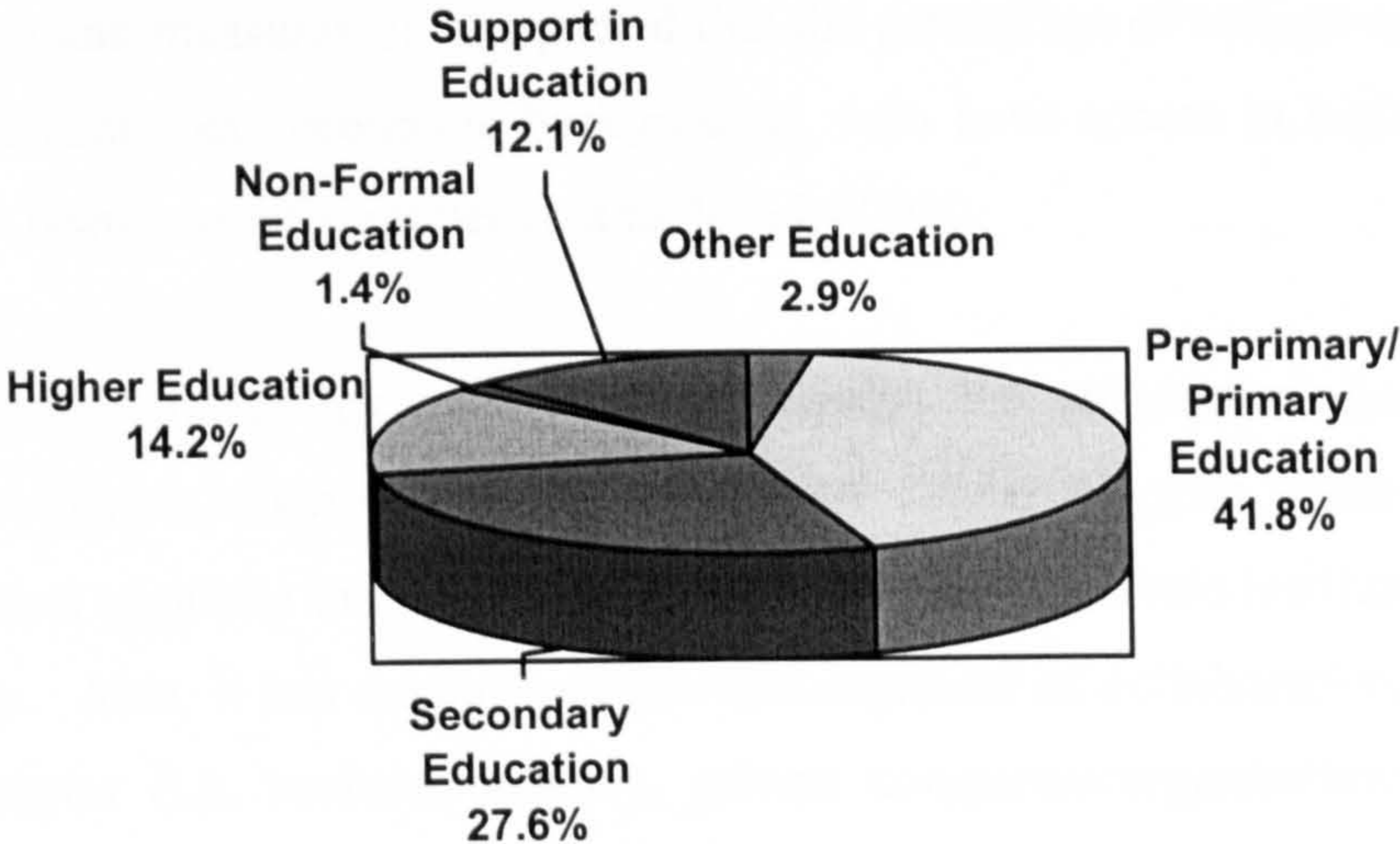
In this regard, Yorke and Thomas (2003) suggest that each higher education institution may deal with the issue of student financial difficulty in three ways: providing information and guidance about financial matters (e.g. available sources of finance, how to apply for funding), providing direct financial support (e.g. Opportunity Bursaries, Hardship Funds) and facilitating part-time employment, both on-campus and off-campus.

1.4.4 Equity as an element of the development plan of Thai Higher Education

In accordance with the government policy on higher education reform embodied in the Ninth National Development Plan of Thai Higher Education (from 2002 to 2006), *equity* has been regarded as one of the most crucial elements to be introduced in line with competence in the provision of quality knowledge to those

who are qualified for higher education, regardless of family incomes and socio-economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, the government's limited budget seems to be insufficient for the development of equity and the expansion of higher learning system that require a vast amount of funds. The following chart demonstrates the government budget allocated to all levels of education.

Chart 1.1 Percentage of the government budget distributed to each level of education in fiscal year 2003



Source: Bureau of the Budget, Thailand, 2003

From the above chart, the largest proportion (41.8%) of the government's educational budget was allocated to pre-primary and primary education. About 27.6% was distributed to secondary education. Approximately 14.2% was allocated to higher education. Only 1.4% was distributed to non-formal education. Hence, based on chart 1.1, we may assume that, in the allocation of the government's educational budget, the priority has been given to pre-postsecondary education, rather than higher learning. This fits in with the World Bank (1994) recommendations and is probably a feature of equitable systems as it concentrates resources on the masses or the common good rather than the smaller number of people who go on to higher education. It also implies the calls for supplementary sources of finance, beyond the government budget, for the future funding and the expansion of higher education.

To improve equity in higher education, the government, in accordance with the World Bank (1994) suggestions, has set up various measures and implementation plans (i.e. the promotion of the establishment of private universities, the encouragement of private investments in higher education and the development of a variety of student aid programmes, focusing on *educational loans*) to raise more non-governmental resources or to mobilise greater private sources of finance (as supplementary parts to the government revenues) in the provision of quality education as well as to widen access to higher education for people of diverse socio-economic status and dissimilar geographical characteristics throughout the country. Through these plans and measures, it is expected that the percentage of college-age population from divergent socio-economic backgrounds, who have access to higher education, will grow from currently six per cent to 40% by 2020.

Besides its policy on *access and equity*, the government has emphasised another policy on *privatisation and corporation*. Under this plan, it has promoted the privatisation of public universities and the foundation of private institutions of higher education. Also, it has encouraged the establishment of collaborations between the private sector (i.e. business/industry, private companies/organisations) and higher education institutions in the improvement of efficiency in knowledge provision and in the *expansion* of higher education throughout the country. These two policies reflect the government's endeavours to improve equity in Thai higher education.

Amidst the growth of private higher education in Thailand, it is intriguing to study whether or not equity exists and how it is developed in higher education.

1.5 Why concentrate on student aid programmes ?

To improve equality of educational opportunity in higher education markets, the private universities have to develop a variety of *student aid schemes*, together with various kinds of courses and programmes of study, to suit the needs of their service users or students, endowed with different interests and abilities, from divergent socio-economic backgrounds and family conditions. Amongst various kinds of strategies in higher education reform, student aid programmes are a critical vehicle for the translation into practice of government policy on access and equity. In the provision

of educational opportunity to able but economically disadvantaged people, several types of financial support for university students such as tuition waiver, partial/full scholarships, supplementary fees/coupons, work-study programmes and educational loans, have been explored and applied. A main motivation of this research is to find out which type of student aid schemes (grants/tuition waiver, educational loans or other kinds of financial assistance) is the most dominant and is the most practical approach used for the development of equity in Thai private higher education.

1.6 Why a case study approach?

Due to its powerfulness in the contribution of the in-depth knowledge and understanding of phenomena or cases under consideration, the case study method has been used in this research. Cohen *et al* (2000) indicate that case studies can generate *strength in reality* of the research as they are based on *real practices* or real social experiments of particular events or situations. Through the case study approach, the researcher could obtain additional information and details of specific views and characteristics of particular groups of people in their *real* conditions and surroundings. Therefore, in comparison with other kinds of research methods which are theory-based, the case study approach seems to be more practical in the provision of richness of data equipped with thick descriptions as well as explanations of events and things as they actually take place, appear or exist in thoughts and feelings of research informants. As they are strong in reality, case studies may be regarded as an effective method in the corroboration of a universal concept or theory in a particular setting or in specific circumstances. Being endowed with unique features which may be missed out in larger scale research, they could disclose some unique and valuable truths in particular areas of study that might lead to the formation of innovative findings as well as to the development of new theories, which are based on *real practices*. Moreover, the findings produced by a case study can serve as a significant lesson or meaningful guidelines for the creation and development of other case studies, that intend to test the same concept or theory and to investigate on similar aspects of *reality*. In addition, they could be used to help explain or interpret similar phenomena and characteristics in other case studies.

Despite these strengths, Hamel *et al* (1993) claim that case studies have some disadvantages that should not be overlooked by researchers. Apart from their lack of representativeness and difficulties in being generalisable, they have also been slammed for the risks of being affected by prejudice and subjectivity of either the field informants or the researcher himself/herself. Being aware of the possible impacts of such drawbacks on this case study, the researcher has endeavoured to prevent and diminish the above-mentioned problems through the application of a mixed-methods strategy (the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches) and multiple instruments (called *triangulation*) in the extraction of data from various sources of evidence (so that they could be checked against each other) and through the use of probability or random sampling in the selection of the field informants (in order to avoid being biased and to maximise representativeness of the sample population).

1.7 Why concentrate on eight private universities in Thailand?

This research concerns a case study which consists of eight sub-cases (or eight private universities in Thailand). The eight focus institutions are the largest private higher education institutions with the largest numbers of students (as compared to those of other 49 private universities in the country). Hence, they are regarded as the leading Thai private institutions of higher education which have over 10,000 students registering in a variety of degree programmes offered by each institution. For reasons of confidentiality, all the focus institutions are renamed Universities A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H so that they could be safe from being inadvertently and inappropriately compared to each other or from being negatively cited in the future. The details on the number of students in each of the focus institutions will be presented in Chapter 3. Being the largest private universities of the country, the focus institutions, in comparison with other smaller universities, are likely to have a larger number of students from divergent socio-economic backgrounds and to receive higher amounts of loans and grants allocated by the government per annum. Moreover, from conducting fieldwork in the largest institutions, the researcher tends to gain more information from a wider variety of students, who are taking and not taking part in any kinds of student financial support. Also, from these eight sub-cases, it is likely that the researcher will adequately obtain more complete data provided by the field

informants and other sources of evidence within time, rather than carrying out the research in smaller private universities that have a smaller number of students.

1.8 Aims of Study

This case study on *Equity in Thai Private Institutions of Higher Education* aims to:

- investigate the policies and administrative strategies taken by eight leading Thai Private Institutions of Higher Education to set up and maintain equity within their institutions, in conformity with the government policy on access and equity in Thai higher education.
- study their implementation plans, grant/voucher or loan programmes, applied for encouraging socio-economically disadvantaged but academically qualified college-age people to participate or increase their level of participation in higher education.
- examine the roles of the private sector or private institutions and to learn how they promote and support access and equity in Thai higher education.
- probe into students' attitudes towards equity in private higher education, socio-economically disadvantaged students and student aid programmes provided and operated by private institutions of higher education.

Apart from its provision of the in-depth knowledge concerning the policy on access and equity as well as a variety of student aid schemes practised and operated within the eight focus universities, this research may be used as a guideline for further improvement of student assistance programmes, as a critical instrument to create a more equitable system, in Thai private institutions of higher education, in conformity with the government policy on access and equity. Also, it is hoped to serve as a driving force towards the establishment and development of cooperative networks and partnerships between private universities, the public and the private sectors, as well as

other units and organisations, in the promotion and support of equity in Thai higher education.

As mentioned above, *access and equity* has been recognised as one of the key components of higher education reform in the country. However, to effectively promote equality of educational opportunity and expand higher education system, the government needs more non-governmental or private resources to supplement its tight budget on higher education. Therefore, in line with the improvement of access and equity, the government has tried to implement its plans on the promotion of the establishment of private universities, the privatisation or autonomy of public universities and the application of a student loan programme. These plans could be regarded as three critical strategies to bring about a cost-recovery scheme, in which tuition fees (especially of the public universities) are suitably raised or adjusted to reality, as well as to develop a cost-sharing system, in which university students and/or their parents/guardians are required to make more contributions to the costs of their or their children's higher education. In accordance with one of the government concepts on the reform of higher education funding (cited in the Office of the Student Loans Fund, 2004), such schemes are based on the principle that higher education tends to generate private benefits rather than public benefits.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis and Conclusion

This research mainly concentrates on the promotion of *equity* and the development of *student aid programmes* as well as the national *student loan scheme* within the eight focus Thai private institutions of higher education. Its most crucial objective is to investigate whether or not *equity* exists in Thai private higher education and to explore the efficiency of Friedman's liberal concept on the possibility of the development of *equity* in education markets within a specific context of Thai higher education. Such a concept, plus the motivation to study the strategies applied by the private higher education institutions to improve *equality of educational opportunity*, has triggered off the following five research questions, which are subdivided into institutional focused and student-focused:

Institutional focus

1. To what extent do private higher education institutions focus on low-income or socio-economically disadvantaged students?
2. What are the private universities doing in order to support higher education students from low-income background in conformity with the government policy on access and equity in Thai higher education, in particular with reference to their implementation plans and strategies?
3. What are the private higher education institutions' policies or measures on collaborations and partnerships with their public counterparts, the public and the private sectors, as well as external institutes and international organisations, to promote and support equity in higher education?

Student focus

4. What are students' attitudes towards a student loan programme operated by private universities, including criteria used for the selection of loan recipients?
5. Are the present loan and grant recipients at each institution really in need of funds and economically less advantaged than their peers who are not taking any loans and grants?

The thesis consists of six chapters. This chapter demonstrates the research background and interest, motivation as well as aims of the study. Chapter 2 defines the theoretical framework of this research. It embraces both national and international perspectives and concepts regarding *equity* in higher education, the improvement of *equity in education markets*, the development of *student aid programmes* for higher education students, the application of *student loans* as a key instrument to bring about the cost-sharing scheme and to improve *equity* in higher education system as well as the use of an *income-contingent loan* approach (known as *ICL*) to help relieve an excessive debt burden on low-income borrowers and to help widen access to higher

education for socio-economically disadvantaged people. The theoretical perspectives and concepts, cited in Chapter 2, have generated the motivation to explore the existence of equity in private higher education. They also have fostered the above five research queries. Based on the theories and concepts mentioned in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 begins with an explanation of the rationale of the study and research gaps in the exploration and corroboration of the liberal idea on the possibility of the development of *equity* in higher education markets. It thoroughly describes the characteristics of a case study, the criteria of a mixed-methods approach and research design, the formation of hypotheses, data collection and data analysis procedures, research methods, strategies as well as instruments applied for eliciting data and for responding to all of the research questions. Also, it encompasses discussions of methodological issues, research ethics, limitations of the study, validity and reliability of the research results, as well as the strategies applied by the researcher to maximise these.

This thesis includes two results chapters. Chapter 4 presents qualitative findings derived from the interviews of university staff and students as well as other sources of evidence: documents, archival records and observations. Chapter 5 presents the quantitative results obtained from the completed questionnaires, aiming to study the students' views on *equity* in Thai private higher education and the operation of student aid programmes within the eight focus institutions. The research findings shown in Chapters 4 and 5 are used to supplement each other to constitute the comprehensiveness as well as to improve the *strength in details* of this case study. Chapters 4 and 5 include the interpretations and meanings of the qualitative and quantitative results, respectively. They also embrace corroboration of the research hypotheses developed in Chapter 3. The last chapter concerns in-depth discussions of the research findings, shown in Chapters 4 and 5, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of this case study, as indicated in Chapter 3. It reveals the links between the research results, the principal theories and concepts cited in Chapter 2 and the research backgrounds as well as queries mentioned in Chapters 1 and 3. Also, it brings into light whether or not the results of this case study help explore the efficiency of the universal idea on the possibility of the development of *equity* in Thai private higher education. Besides the exploration of such a critical concept on the existence of *equity* in a specific context of higher education markets, this research and

its findings may be regarded as a guideline for other case studies or for larger scale research concerning *equality of educational opportunity* in private higher education. Moreover, they may usefully serve as a driving force towards further development of *equity* in Thai higher education.

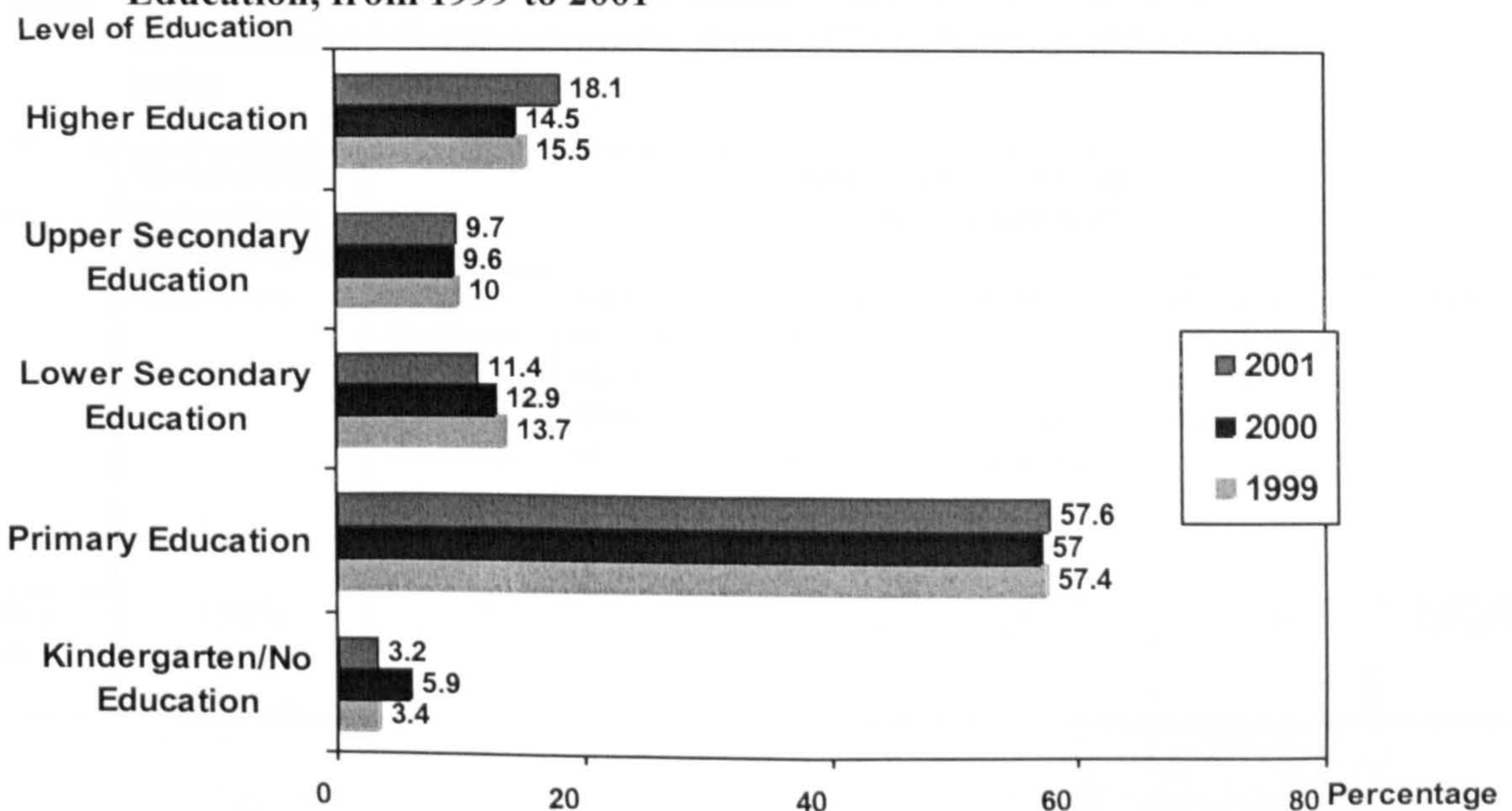
Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Equity in higher education has been a highly discussed issue between educationists, economists and philosophers worldwide. Having abstract notions and complex characteristics, it has become part of very lively debates on what should be considered as *equity in higher education* and which approaches should be used to widen access to higher education and to open more educational opportunities for people from low-income backgrounds as well as to bring about *equity* or *fairness* in this level of education.

Chinnamethipitak (2004) states that the problem concerning *equality of educational opportunity* has been regarded as one of major obstacles to social and economic as well as human resource development in Thailand. In comparison with primary and (both upper and lower) secondary education, higher education seems to be able to serve a smaller proportion of people in the country (known in Thailand as the *intellectuals*) who have been equipped with advanced knowledge and skills as well as granted with greater opportunities to enjoy higher social status and incomes. This is backed up by the following chart showing the percentage of Thai people in employment, divided by different levels of education.

Chart 2.1 Percentage of Employed Labour Force, aged 15-59, by Level of Education, from 1999 to 2001



Source: The National Economic and Social Development Board, in cooperation with the National Statistics Section, Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, 2003.

From the above chart, in each year, the proportion of Thai labour force who obtained primary education is larger than the proportions of those with higher levels of education (either secondary or higher education). It signifies that, beyond primary education, not so many of the employed labour force had an opportunity to further their studies at lower and upper secondary-school levels. Consequently, there has been a small proportion of Thai labour force having advantages from higher education. This mirrors the fact that higher education is likely to benefit only particular groups of Thai people, especially those *intellectuals* who have been able to overcome pre-university or pre-college barriers and have proved to be qualified for advanced knowledge and training.

In addition, Chinnamethipitak (2004) indicates that the majority of those who benefit from the government budget on higher education tend to come from upper middle-income and high-income backgrounds, while a very small proportion of low-income people obtain advantages from this level of education. This is supported by an official report, regarding the proportions of the government expenses on different levels of education, compiled by the Research Unit in Macro-Society and Policy on Social Investment, Division of Macro-Social Policy, the National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand (2002).

Table 2.2 Percentage of the Government Educational Expenses, by Level of Education and Socio-economic Status of beneficiaries (Fiscal Year 2001)

Level of Education	Government Expenses on Each Level of Education	Socio-economic Status (by family backgrounds)					
		Poorest (Labourers/ unskilled workers)	Lower middle-class (Basic skilled workers)	Middle-class (Highly skilled workers)	Upper middle-class (Executive/ Managerial)	Richest (Professional/high class)	Total (%)
Pre-primary Education	13.6%	24.0%	24.2%	22.5%	17.8%	11.4%	100.0%

Level of Education	Government Expenses on Each Level of Education	Socio-economic Status (by family backgrounds)					
		Poorest (Labourers/ unskilled workers)	Lower middle-class (Basic skilled workers)	Middle-class (Highly skilled workers)	Upper middle-class (Executive/ Managerial)	Richest (Professional/high class)	Total (%)
Primary Education	44.2%	28.1%	24.8%	20.7%	16.3%	10.1%	100.0%
Secondary Education	28.7%	15.2%	19.5%	22.9%	21.5%	20.8%	100.0%
- Lower Secondary	19.1%	16.7%	21.2%	22.9%	20.1%	19.0%	100.0%
- Upper Secondary	9.6%	12.3%	16.1%	22.9%	24.5%	24.3%	100.0%
Non-formal Education/ Vocational Training	5.5%	4.7%	13.0%	24.5%	32.8%	25.2%	100.0%
Higher Education	8.0%	0.4%	0.9%	7.2%	25.6%	65.9%	100.0%
Total (%)	100.0%	20.3%	20.6%	20.7%	19.7%	18.7%	100.0%

Source: Research Unit in Macro Society and Policy on Social Investment, Division of Macro-Social Policy, the National Economic and Social Development Board, Thailand, September 2002.

Table 2.2 demonstrates that, starting from secondary education, the proportions of educational budget distributed to low-income people become smaller whereas those allocated to higher-income people (either from middle-income, upper middle-income or the highest-income background) become higher. In higher education, only small proportions of the government budget (0.4% and 0.9%) go to people from the least advantaged and lower middle-class backgrounds, while larger proportions of the budget on this level of education fall on middle-class, upper middle-class and, especially, the highest-income people, who seem to have the most advantages of higher education. This reflects some shortcomings of the government and the public sector in the provision of *equity* in higher education. Also, it signifies that most of the *real* beneficiaries of higher education are likely to come from upper

middle-class and high-income backgrounds, rather than lower middle-class and the least advantaged families.

In short, chart 2.1 and table 2.2 show that not many Thai people in the labour force have benefited from higher education and not many low-income people have taken advantage of the government budget on higher learning beyond primary education. Thus, government expenditure on higher education has tended to serve people from middle-income, especially upper middle-income, and high-income families equipped with private resources and better opportunities to take part in higher levels of learning (from post-primary or secondary to post-secondary or higher education), rather than those from lower-income backgrounds. This signifies that public resources provided by the government have not been able to solve the problem of inequity in higher education and to fully benefit the underprivileged or low-income people in the country. Amidst the trends towards economic growth and increasing demand for higher education, the government has been obliged to search for the most appropriate and effective measures and strategies to crack such problems of inequality of educational opportunity and, at the same time, to upgrade efficiency in the provision of higher education for Thai people, regardless of gender, age, race, physical disabilities and socio-economic backgrounds. However, as raised in Chapter 1, to implement its plan on the development of *access and equity* in higher education, the government, with its budgetary constraint, needs additional private resources and more collaborations from the private sector as well as non-governmental bodies. Owing to both national and universal concerns about *equity* in higher education and *ethics* of education markets in the present climate of global exchange of knowledge and expansion of education industry, it is worth probing into some international perspectives and beliefs regarding the intricate definition and the improvement of *equity* in higher education.

The above-mentioned facts and concepts prompted the interest and motivation to carry out the research on *equity* in private higher education and the role of private institutions of higher education (as a supplementary part or an alternative to the government and the public institutions) in developing student aid programmes, focusing on *educational loans*, to bring about a cost-sharing system as well as to achieve equity in Thai higher education.

This chapter aims to examine some philosophies, theories and ideas that are intended to promote better understanding of *equity in higher education* and higher education funding system as well as to explore the possibility of the development of *equity* in higher education markets. It begins with a discussion of free higher education as the middle-class appropriation of welfare, followed by international perspectives on the improvement of equity in higher education, that have brought about ideas on the promotion of equity in Thai higher education. It probes into international concepts of the introduction of a cost-sharing system into higher education. Such a system has led to the development of student loan programmes as an effective approach to promote equity in higher learning and as a significant type of financial aid schemes for higher education students. Moreover, it includes universal perspectives on the development of equity through educational loans as well as the lessons of student loans from other countries. The international views, policies and practices discussed in this literature review are to be integrated and infused into the Thai context, where higher education reform calls for the development of equity (equality or adequacy of opportunities) in theoretical and practical terms. They are also supposed to be injected into Thai higher education more concerns about *fairness* in higher education funding and the improvement of *welfare* or *equality of educational opportunity* for economically disadvantaged students and able but underprivileged people who desire to take part in this level of education. In addition, they are expected to serve as a guideline for the establishment and enhancement of *equity* in higher education, both in Thai and international circumstances. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the student loan scheme in Thailand and possible ways towards improvements as well as the motivation to explore the existence of equity in Thai private higher education.

2.2 Free Higher Education: the middle-class appropriation of welfare

As cited above and as shown in table 2.2, the majority of public resources spent on Thai higher education have tended to benefit high-income and upper middle-income rather than the underprivileged or the least advantaged people. This signifies that higher education provided by the government could not efficiently help improve

equality of educational opportunity for economically disadvantaged people in the country. Even worse, it has exacerbated inequity by unnecessarily granting excessive advantages to high-income and upper middle-income people who could cover the full costs of higher education (comprising the cost of instruction and the instruction-related as well as living expenses, as defined by Johnstone, 2004b) for their children without the government support or public funds.

Nevertheless, there exist some opposing views and beliefs from around the world stating that higher education should be free and should be considered as a kind of public welfare. Amongst those contrasting opinions, Szymanski (2002) claimed that access to colleges or universities, like access to elementary and secondary education, should be a basic social right for all as it is supposed to bring about well-being of people in a society and the social good. Apart from its provision of personal fulfilment, she stated that higher education has also played an important role in social and economic development of a country. So she argued that free higher education provided by the government (or financed by taxpayers) should be granted to all of those who are qualified for it in order to eliminate or reduce financial barriers and encourage the underprivileged to participate in higher learning. Her idea was backed up by 50% of student participants in a survey, concerning students' views on higher education funding, conducted by Gallup (1992) on behalf of the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) in 50 higher education institutions in England, randomly selected from the Education Authorities Directory, 1990. In this regard, Szymanski and those students might have overlooked the fact that higher education tends to produce private rather than public benefits, either in the form of higher earnings, better opportunities, more life options, dignity, pride or some social privileges that university/college graduates are likely to enjoy above those who do not take part in this level of education and who do not have any university degrees/certificates. Also, Fischer (1990) points out that the following components could be recognised as private advantages for the users of higher education: the ancillary pleasures of life on a university/college campus and the extra opportunities to be endowed with advanced knowledge and training as well as to develop desirable intellectual and personal qualities (i.e. knowledge integrity and tolerance of change). Johnstone (2003b) notes that higher education generally benefits a small proportion of people, equipped with personal interests and well-preparedness for advanced learning. Barr (1998) indicates

that this level of education tends to generate private advantages for people from well-off or upper middle-income families (who are likely to gain higher incomes and other non-financial profits, i.e. dignity, pride and better social status afterwards) rather than public benefits for the underprivileged or the society and the *real* educational barriers for the least advantaged (i.e. in the Thai context as shown in table 2.2) do not seem to be in it. Hence, free higher education at the government/public (or taxpayers') expenses seems to be an unreasonably regressive plan, in which those low-income taxpayers who or whose children are the non-users of higher education need to support (through a regressive tax system) their higher-income countrymen who or whose children are the *real* users of higher education and tend to enjoy higher or above average incomes and better knowledge as well as opportunities after universities/colleges. However, a strong belief that *equality of educational opportunity* could only be provided by the government or public education has prevailed in many countries all over the world. In one of her anti-privatisation books (which mainly focuses on basic rather than higher education), Robertson (1998) suggested that the only way to achieve equity and to give all people the opportunity to enjoy an equal education is the state provision of education. Concerning this, Robertson might have forgotten that, even in public schools or universities/colleges, there remain inequalities and social gaps between the well-off and the underprivileged. This is supported by Tooley (2000b) who indicates that, even in developed countries, there is still great inequality in the standard and quality of state schools from higher-class (middle-class) to lower-class (working-class) areas. So such a belief on public education as the sole approach towards success in the promotion of equality of educational opportunity tends to represent a preconceived idea rather than a practical concept.

Fischer (1990) notes that the free or low tuition approach, under the government support, might help some of those from middle-income or lower middle-income families who could not afford the full costs or unsubsidised prices of higher education but could afford low tuition fees as well as other education-related and miscellaneous costs (e.g. books and learning equipment, transportation and living expenses), but might not be able to help the bright poor or the least advantaged people who could afford neither tuition fees nor other non-tuition costs or the remaining-cost threshold (as defined by Fischer, 1990). This conforms with the Carnegie

Commission report on higher education policy in USA (1973) stating that *a low tuition policy, per se, does not provide much assistance for the underprivileged or the least advantaged people who cannot afford to go to universities/colleges even at low tuition fees.* Accordingly, the idea on the government's provision of free higher education or the use of a low-tuition policy as a method to help relieve or solve the problem of inequity for the underprivileged may be regarded as barking up the wrong tree or applying a false formula for dealing with such a problem.

Prior to the in-depth discussion of student loans as an approach to help enhance equality of opportunity in higher learning, it is worth probing into some international perspectives on equity in higher education as well as a cost-sharing plan as a possible strategy to cope with the problem of unfairness in higher education funding.

2.3 Equity in Higher Education: International Perspectives

Based on the World Bank (1994) review of experiences from both developed and developing countries, *equity* is included in four key strategies and directions for *higher education reform*. According to *OECD (1992), the equity issue was discussed at the third Ministerial Meeting on Education in 1990, of which the theme was *High Quality Education and Training for All*. The common concerns were identified as the improvement of quality of schooling for under-represented students, regarded as part of human capital in economic development of each country. This development plan could be accomplished by promoting *equality of opportunity, expanding and widening access* of education systems.

After that, *equity* was recognised as one of priorities for the OECD (1994) agenda on the implementation of coherent and effective policies for human resource development and life-long learning. It was also raised by OECD (1996a) as a crucial

*OECD stands for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. The OECD member countries are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

issue at a conference (in Paris) between the OECD education committee, on the theme *High Quality Education for All*, where the development of equity indicators was listed as a priority for the 1997-2001 phase of the educational indicators project. To achieve the goal of high quality education for all with minimal effects on *fairness* in higher education funding, Henry *et al* (2001) recommend that there should be a call for greater resource efficiency in universities and an effective approach to mobilise resources from various sources, including the government, students/parents, the public and the private sectors (i.e. state enterprises and business/industry) to fund and extend *universal tertiary education or higher education for all*. However, Schugurensky (1999) claims that the government and institutions should be aware of efficiency or individuals' academic ability and interest while expanding higher education to all. Therefore, the meaning of *all* in this context may be interpreted as *all of those who value higher education and who are qualified for it*. Besides public universities and colleges, the government of each country could encourage the development of private institutions of higher education as a complement to their public counterparts and as a significant base for increasing the diversity of academic and training programmes, widening access to and broadening social participation in higher education, as well as managing the costs of expanding higher education enrolments. To boost up competence in the provision of academic services of those private institutions, the government could use access to public resources and subsidies as a stimulus for the improvement of quality in instruction, research and student services, and for the increase of diversity in academic curricula and training programmes. At the same time, to enhance equity, the government needs to provide support to qualified but disadvantaged students who are unable to pursue their studies owing to insufficient family income/financial resources.

For the development of equity, universities (both private and public) could search for alternative sources of funding, apart from the government and universities themselves. They may need to mobilise greater private and external financing. According to the World Bank (1994), Bray (1998 and 2002), Henry *et al* (2001) and Johnstone (1986 and 2003a), this can be achieved through *users-pay funding mechanisms* or *cost sharing with students* (as previously suggested by Friedman, 1963), e.g. in the form of tuition fees and the diminution or elimination of subsidies for non-instructional or unnecessary costs, donations and endowments from alumni

and private industry or external aid and lending agencies (in the form of trust funds), and income-generating activities, e.g. short-term courses and training programmes, workshops and seminars (open to the public), contracted research for industry and consultancy services. In terms of cost sharing, Woodhall (1987) reveals that study loans are viable and seem to be more practical, in comparison with grants and other student aid instruments. That is because they tend to be more effectively geared to serving a significant purpose of the cost-sharing system (or a shift in the balance between private and public funding) in higher education. Also, with regard to revenue diversification, Van Harte (2002) reinforces that, besides the introduction or the increase of tuition and the decrease in government-subsidised costs of maintenance and books, the government should rely more upon student loans (to be repaid after graduation) while simultaneously reducing the amount of merit-based grants and full scholarships to be allocated to each institution. (The information and details on development of different types of educational loans will be further discussed in 2.9.) Moreover, the government should promote an increase in the use and the *general availability of private higher educational opportunities*.

It is possible that higher education institutions use the above external funds, obtained from the cost-sharing plan, various forms of endowments and income-generating activities, to boost up their competence in the improvement of curricula, instructional equipment and student services, as well as in the development of instructional and research skills, alongside ethical values, of their faculty/staff. To enhance equity, they can also earmark an amount of funds to support academically qualified but economically disadvantaged students (e.g. the establishment of student loan and scholarship programmes in parallel to the cost-sharing or fee-charging system). Woodhall (1989) recommends that a *top-up loan* scheme could be applied to help widen access to higher education and to fill in the gaps or to supplement grants and family/parental contributions for economically disadvantaged students whose parents/guardians could not cover the total costs of higher education and for those who are ineligible for the government support and other kinds of student aid programmes. In addition, Bai (1998) suggests that students who study specialist areas of national importance or shortage fields of study, and who are from the most economically deprived areas, can be either entirely exempt from tuition fees or granted a special subsidy.

Concerning the intricate perspectives on equity in higher education, West (1988 and 1995b) indicates that relating to the issue of post-secondary education, there are two types of equity. The first type is the *equity between the users of post-secondary education*, while the second is the *equity between the users and the non-users of higher education*. Both types of equity have been highly discussed amongst educational administrators, educators and researchers all over the world, who have been actively involved in searching for the fairest and the most suitable approach to finance higher education and in setting up the most appropriate policy and practical measures to fill a gap between higher-income and lower-income users of post-secondary education in their countries as well as to encourage higher level of participation from the latter. Before setting up an education policy and a funding approach to bring in more benefits to those from low-income families, it is necessary that we understand the present mechanism and circumstances of general educational systems in the world.

Ahier (2000) states that rising demand for higher education combined with attempts to cut down state expenditure have promoted changes to the funding of higher education in many countries, including Thailand. These changes have been defined by Calero (1998) as *social market or quasi-market reforms* (or the shift from fully state-subsidised to partly state-subsidised or totally private education), which are expected to motivate higher education institutions, both public and private, to efficiently produce higher quality instruction and a variety of learning courses in order to effectively attract more participation or investments from students. In the description of the reforms, Calero (1998) divides the financing system into two types: the *supply-side funding* (in which the government allocates some funds to universities for further operation in the development of instructional and research quality as well as student support) and the *demand-side funding* (in which public funds go directly to students who will have more freedom to choose their appropriate providers of education and programmes of their interest). As previously recommended by Friedman (1963 and 1980), to make the higher education institutions more sensitive to students (especially those disadvantaged with government funds and support) and more efficient in the provision of education, the second type (the demand-side or student-based funding) tends to be more practical and effective in the promotion of

access and equity in higher education. According to the World Bank (1994), once economically disadvantaged students are allowed to take their assistance package to any institution of their choosing, they will have an opportunity to make the same choices as their higher-income peers. Such *portable* funding will stimulate competition amongst universities and colleges to develop and offer courses and programmes in line with student demands. The government may use the demand-side funding as an instrument or a kind of market forces to stimulate the development of efficiency of both private and public institutions of higher education. This will also provide private universities with a chance to have more access to public resources by accepting more low-income students, financially supported by the government, into their institutions.

The above international perspectives have brought increasing concerns about the development of *equality of opportunity* in Thai higher education.

2.4 Equity in Thai Higher Education

Based on a paper entitled *Higher Education in Thailand and the National Reform Roadmap*, presented by Kirtikara (2001) at the Thai-US Education Roundtable, Bangkok, Thailand, the problems of equity and access to higher education have been recognised and partially solved. Actually, nearly three quarters (70%) of higher education students in the country are from middle-class families. However, there have been calls for the increase of student loans (since the first student loan scheme was introduced in the Eighth Development Plan of Thai Higher Education, 1997-2001), in order to accommodate a large increase in projected numbers of higher education students of lower middle-class (skilled manual) and also working-class (semi-skilled and unskilled manual) backgrounds. Funding for these students, regarded as the minority of all higher education students in the country, could be shifted overtime from supply-side financing (direct to institutions) to demand-side financing (student loans), as suggested by Friedman (1963, 1980) and Calero (1998). The loan scheme seems to be an effective way in the promotion of equity in Thai Higher Education. However, loan conditions, based on family earnings, as well as loan payment still need to be revised. Also, there have been calls to make loan payments *income-contingent* or *income-related* (as recommended by

Friedman, 1963) or as *graduate taxes*. Consequently, as approved by the Office of the Student Loans Fund of Thailand under supervision of the government (ministries of education and finance), an *income-contingent loan* scheme (known as *ICL*) is going to be applied in all Thai higher education institutions that have taken part in the government loan programme, starting from academic year 2005-6. The information and details on a trend towards *ICL* in Thailand will be further discussed in Chapters 4 and 6. Nevertheless, in the Thai higher education system, especially in Thai private education, sums of grants still need to be combined with loans in a student aid package in order to invite more investments and encourage more participation from economically disadvantaged students, who might be aware of incurring a large amount of debts prior to the beginning of their post-graduation career.

Apart from the subsidy funding from the government for the promotion of equity via student loans and scholarships, it is intriguing to further explore Friedman's (1980) philosophy on the development of *equity* in education markets as well as to investigate the methods and strategies applied by private universities/colleges in searching for additional aids and other forms of support to encourage higher level of participation in higher education from lower middle-class and the least advantaged students, as well as the practicality of their administrative plans to effectively and efficiently maintain *fairness* in their institutions.

Varghese and Achava-Amrung (2001) state that, in response to the economic crisis on higher education in Thailand, the government has applied two main strategies to improve equity in higher learning and to deal with the problems arising from its financial constraints on higher education funding: the establishment and expansion of a government-sponsored *student loan scheme* as well as the promulgation of a policy on *autonomous universities*.

2.5 Autonomous Universities as a step towards Privatisation and Higher Education Markets in Thailand

As a result of the economic crisis in East Asia which seriously hit Thailand in 1997, Thai higher education policy, as indicated by Atagi (1998) and Varghese

(2001), has moved towards its most drastic reform in nearly a century. Due to its budgetary constraints on the expansion of higher education, the government has encouraged the foundation of private universities and has promoted partnerships between the public and the private sectors as well as higher education institutions in extending higher learning network and in boosting up the quality of higher education provision throughout the country. Contemporaneously, in conformity with the government policy on *privatisation and corporation*, all public universities have been in the process of becoming autonomous under supervision of the government. As noted by Atagi (1998), *being autonomous* means that universities will be (partly) *freed from the state control* and bureaucratic restrictions on their financial and administrative autonomy, with their own salary accounts. All public universities, with the small amount of budget allocated by the government, will need to mainly depend on themselves and to be more competitive to keep pace with the reform and changes. They need to search for additional (non-governmental) sources of incomes to supplement existing subsidies from the government and taxpayers. This can be achieved by creating more professional-oriented programmes and short courses in correspondence to the market trends (as recommended by Varghese and Achava-Amrung, 2001) and establishing more income-generating activities (either from contracted research, consultancy or partnerships with the private sector and external organisations). Also, Atagi (1998) and Achava-Amrung (2001) indicate that all university staff and lecturers will no longer be civil servants or government officials, but university officers. This government strategy on *autonomous universities* could be recognised as a significant step towards *privatisation, competition and education markets*, in parallel with the development of equity in Thai higher education.

In line with the promulgation of the policy on autonomous universities, Varghese and Achava-Amrung (2001) point out that the Thai government has focused on the application of a student loan programme as an approach to expand higher education as well as to widen access to higher learning for able but economically disadvantaged people. As cited in the Office of the Student Loans Fund (2004), such a programme is grounded in a cost-sharing idea which is based on a benefit principle.

2.6 From the Benefit Principle to a Cost-Sharing System

Given that higher education provided and financed by the government tends to benefit people from high-income and middle-income (especially upper middle-income) families rather than the underprivileged or the least advantaged and to bring about private rather than public or social advantages, some people have argued that there should be a policy and measures that can effectively generate and promote equity in the funding system of higher education, eradicate or relieve the problem of the (upper) middle-class appropriation of welfare (higher education provided by the government) as well as help enhance *equality of educational opportunity* for people from low-income or the least advantaged families who are qualified for higher learning. Thus, to accomplish the promotion of equity in higher education, the development of a particular type of financial support scheme for higher education students is to be carried out in line with the rectification of higher education funding.

To implement a goal of *fairness* (to an appropriate extent) under public resource constraints, Friedman (1963) suggests that the government should reduce inequality by introducing a *users-pay system*, in which those who would like to invest in their (or their children's) higher education and who can bear all the tuition and other hidden fees have to fully cover the costs themselves. Alternatively, for those economically disadvantaged who would like to further their higher education or their vocational training, the government, either in the form of grants, loans or voucher plans, could financially support or could help finance the costs of tuition or training of each disadvantaged individual who could meet minimum or basic quality standards required for each level of education. In return, Friedman (1963) recommends that the individual should agree to pay to the government a specified percentage of his/her *future earnings* upon the completion of his/her study. This payment, including a minimum of additional administrative expenses, could be made through a *national income tax* system. Moreover, Friedman (1963) states that a subsidy, offered by the government, should be granted directly to individuals, so that they have an opportunity to spend the allocated funds at the institutions of their own choosing. Such arrangements or, in other words, the shift from *supply-side* to *demand-side* funding would help enhance diversity, equity and efficiency, as all institutions have to

compete among themselves. So they would more efficiently improve their curricula, all kinds of services and the management as well as the utilisation of their resources in order to attract a larger number of qualified students. This shift of funding has been widely accepted by many educationists and economists as a means for promoting *equality of educational opportunity* and has also been regarded as a tactic to boost up efficiency of institutions.

Friedman's idea is theoretically noteworthy. It generates some views of the creation and promotion of *equality of opportunity*, especially in tertiary education, through a *revolving fund* system. Theoretically, in such a system, the amount to be paid back to the government through the income tax scheme could be used to further support more students and the loss of benefits incurred from unsuccessful students could be compensated by the amount collected from their more successful cohorts. His view has also left some points to be further explored. One of these issues concerns the creation of a set of means-tested indicators and a targeting as well as monitoring system which can be effectively used to ascertain the accessibility of the funds to those who are really in need of funds. Another issue is related to the development of a tax or debt collection machinery which can efficiently prevent or minimise and retrace defaulting as well as deal with debtors who are not in regular or monthly paid employment and who are not able to provide the exact amount of their earnings per annum. However, Friedman's concept, regarding the implementation of the goal of *justice* or *equity*, still requires more evidence to corroborate its efficiency as well as to prove whether and how it could be successfully translated into action in the *real ambience* of higher education markets of each social context and each country.

Friedman's philosophy on the improvement of *justice* in education markets is consistent with the idea of Johnstone (2003b) who indicates that the establishment and development of *equity* or *fairness* in higher education ought to be grounded on the concept that those who are the *real users* or *real beneficiaries* of this level of education should bear at least some of higher educational expenses. Such a concept formed a *benefit* principle leading to the development of a cost-sharing or cost-recovery scheme in higher education, recommended by Barr (1998) and Johnstone (1986 and 2003a). According to Johnstone (1986) and Woodhall (1989), the cost-

sharing plan, grounded in the *benefit* principle, has called for a trend towards the shift of augmenting burden of higher educational costs from the government/ taxpayers to students/parents or greater contributions from students and/or parents and reductions in taxpayers' or public subsidies spent on higher education. Johnstone (2003a) states that the cost-sharing scheme is based on three main rationales: the precipitous need for non-governmental resources in the expansion of higher education to respond to the increasing private and public demand for this level of education, the *benefit* principle and the concept of *equity in higher education funding* which suggest that the users or beneficiaries of higher learning should share responsibility for, at least, some of the higher educational costs as well as the neo-liberal economic philosophy which proposes that a tuition fee or top-up fees policy in the climate of augmenting demand for higher education helps create the market virtues in higher learning system. Such market virtues, indicated by Johnstone (2003a), include *better quality* resulting from cost-consciousness of both students/parents (who are supposed to value higher learning and become prudent consumers) and higher education institutions (that are expected to be more sensitive and responsive to student/parent needs as well as to upgrade their efficiency in all aspects to attract more student consumers). As recommended by the World Bank (1994) and by a large number of resource persons and experts in development of higher education funding such as Johnstone (2003a), Woodhall (1992a) as well as Ziderman and Albrecht (1995), the *cost-sharing* plan or the search for non-governmental revenues (focusing on contributions from students/parents) to supplement the government resources spent on higher learning is regarded as one of the primary remedies for a problem concerning the insufficiency of public revenues to finance universities/colleges and to efficiently expand higher education in developing countries. According to Woodhall (1992b and 2002), such a plan has been recognised as a crucial approach to higher education funding, creating a balance between the public and the private expenditures on higher learning. As cited in Woodhall (1992b), since the 1980s, it has been reviewed and applied by governments in many countries (i.e. Australia, China, South Africa, Great Britain, USA and Thailand) with divergent economic, social, educational and political systems. For instance, all higher education students in Australia are required to share financial responsibility for approximately 20% of the average costs of tuition fees in universities/colleges (either in the form of *up-front fees* or *deferred payments*) under the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) that was introduced in 1989.

Also, in the UK where the low-tuition policy and grant-based student aid programmes have been widely practised, a form of the cost-sharing strategy known as the *Graduate Contribution Scheme*, aiming to bring to reality the costs of higher education and to improve *justice* or *fairness* in the funding system of higher learning, is supposed to be officially introduced and to replace the present plan in 2006. As indicated by the Department for Education and Skills or DFES (2003), under such a scheme, universities/colleges throughout the country will be allowed to raise their tuition fees up to £3,000 a year for each programme of study. However, there have also been the concerns about improving *equality of educational opportunity* and *widening access* to higher education for the underprivileged and the least advantaged amidst the global trend towards the cost-sharing scheme.

Johnstone (1986) notes that, to promote *fairness* in higher education funding, the costs of higher education should be shared by four principal sources of finance: students (from future earnings or deferred payments), parents/guardians (up-front fees/expenses), the government/taxpayers (in the form of grants/scholarships and educational loans) and higher education institutions (i.e. universities/colleges which obtain extra revenues from alumni, donors, philanthropists/charities and any kinds of fund-making or entrepreneurial activities to support students). The proportions of funds derived from different sources may vary depending on economic and social conditions as well as cultural beliefs of each country. For example, according to Johnstone (1986), higher education funding in USA has been regarded as a *real practice* of cost sharing between students, parents, taxpayers and institutions or philanthropists with primary focus on student and parental contributions (both for tuition fees and cost of living). Hansen (1989) indicates that, apart from student and parental contributions, the US higher learning system has also obtained diverse sources of funds from institutions, the government or federal taxpayers and various kinds of philanthropists or private fund-making bodies, either in the form of target grants/bursaries, a variety of educational loan schemes adjusted to dissimilar needs of students from divergent socio-economic backgrounds and work-study programmes. An idea on the search for diverse sources of finance to generate and improve a variety of aid schemes for higher education students, under the cost-sharing system, has developed from some international views and perspectives on *equity* in higher learning.

2.7 From a Cost-Sharing System to the Development of Student Loan Schemes

Barr (1998) and Johnstone (2001a) state that *student loan* programmes initially took shape from the *benefit* and the *cost-sharing* principles that those who are the *real users* and who *benefit* from higher education should pay or at least share in its costs. Woodhall (1987 and 1992a and b) and Johnstone (2003a) note that student loans were introduced into many countries and have been recognised as a more effective financial aid scheme for higher education students, in comparison with grants and bursaries or non-repayable financial assistance (as defined by Johnstone, 2004b), due to the following advantages:

- Student loans, in the long term, relieve the government/taxpayer burden of the high and increasing costs of higher learning and, in the same time, allow the government to transfer public resources to support lower levels of education while expanding higher education. Woodhall (1992a) indicates that they could significantly reduce financial constraints on the public resources in developing countries.
- They help promote *fairness* in the funding system of higher education. They help lessen tax burden on low-income people who, or whose children, are non-users of higher learning. They also encourage cost sharing between the government/taxpayers, mirroring the public benefits (i.e. economic growth and some aspects of social development), and university/college students and their families (parents/guardians), mirroring the great private benefits (i.e. higher earnings/social status, pride and better opportunities/feelings) to both the *real users* of higher education themselves and their families.
- They help enhance students' interest and motivation in their studies and help instil into them more cost-consciousness and more thoughtfulness about the prospects of their future career.

- They are more flexible and seem to be able to help more students than can grants that are normally limited to only particular groups of students equipped with specific qualifications in particular fields of study.

However, as raised in Woodhall (1987 and 1992b), there have been some critics of loans, i.e. the National Union of Students (NUS) in England, who claim that loans may generate fear of future debts and might deter low-income people from taking part in higher education. In those opposing views, they might bring a *negative dowry* and difficulties to some female loan takers who would get married while being indebted. Also, they might cause administrative problems, especially at the repayment stage, and may bring in the risk or danger of default.

Nevertheless, Woodhall (1989) notes that it could not be taken for granted that loans discourage participation while grants encourage higher level of participation by low-income people. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2002), it turns out that the overall rates of participation in tertiary education or the gross university/college enrolment ratios (the sum of all higher education students enrolled at the start of the school year, expressed as a percentage of the mid-year population in the five year age or the college-age group after the official secondary school leaving age) are higher in USA and Australia (72.6% and 63.3% respectively), which have focused on loans, than in the UK (59.5%), which has mainly relied on grants.

Although they bring controversy, *student loans* have been introduced into many countries around the world. Barr (2001) claims that *loans* seem to be the only approach of funding which can provide resources on a *larger scale* and in a more *equitable manner* than can funds from other sources that are not always forthcoming. Also, they have been regarded as one of the most critical financial aid schemes, especially for higher education students which is hoped to efficiently recover at least some portions of higher educational costs from the *real users* of higher learning and to effectively provide *equitable access* to higher education for economically disadvantaged people.

In the provision of direct financial support for low-income students, Finnie (2002) recommends that the emphasis should be on loans rather than grants. In a grant

system, normally, some funds, either with or without strings, are awarded to a very limited number of qualified students (usually those with outstanding academic performance or those in particular fields of study). Actually, those students might not be necessarily needy in a long-term sense, since they tend to go on to relatively successful careers and to have above-average earnings levels, out of which they will be able to afford to pay back any reasonable level of student loans. In a loan system, the money is supposed to be paid back and will be, subsequently, recycled. This recycled amount of money can be used to further support other disadvantaged students in the future. Therefore, the loan system seems to be more practical, especially at a time when the government funds for student financial support are extremely limited. This means that the loan system tends to provide more assistance to more students in a more effective and equitable manner than can grants, debt remission, or lower tuition fees. However, in some exceptional cases, for those who come from very low-income families, Finnie (2002) proposes that grants could be an important element of an overall student aid package (even as the emphasis should be on loans).

In short, based on the ideas concerning the development of *fairness* in higher education funding under the *benefit* principle (mentioned in Woodhall, 1989, as well as in Johnstone, 1986 and 2003b) and grounded in the *cost-sharing* or *users-pay* system suggested by many philosophers, academics and researchers, Woodhall (1987 and 1992a and b) and Johnstone (2003a) claim that *student loans* (or student contribution to the costs of their higher education via deferred payments or future incomes) seem to be a significant self-help aid programme to help widen access to higher learning and an effective strategy to help improve the two tiers of equity (between users as well as between users and non-users of higher education) proposed by West (1988 and 1995b). Also, Johnstone (2001a) indicates that they tend to serve twofold goals of cost recovery from students/parents as the *real users* or *real beneficiaries* of higher learning and improvement of *equality of higher educational opportunity* for economically disadvantaged people who would like to take part in higher education.

2.8 Student Loan Schemes: A Bank of Educational Opportunity for the Poor

Based on the ideas discussed in the above section, *student loans* have been recognised worldwide as an approach for financial assistance or *The Educational Opportunity Bank* (named by Shell *et al*, 1968) for able students who desire to take part in higher education but do not have sufficient funds and resources to cover all the fees and living expenses during their studies. Loan schemes, with their social aspects (as defined by Woodhall, 1970), are widely used by governments and entrepreneurial institutions or universities as a strategy for widening access to education for the economically disadvantaged, who would like to invest in their higher learning and agree to repay the loans to their sponsors upon the completion of their studies. The repayments could be either in the form of income taxes, graduate taxes or a number of instalments per annum within a specified time frame. To boost up the efficiency of a student loan scheme as a bank of educational opportunity, besides the cooperation with governments in establishing and developing effective cost recovery and debt collection machinery, Johnstone (2001a) recommends that institutions should continuously upgrade their quality in instruction, research and all kinds of student support programmes and services. Through the development of efficiency, they are supposed to justify that every unit of money invested (or borrowed and bound to be paid back later) in education best benefits student investors as well as paves the way for a better opportunity, a better career and, eventually, a better life. In short, as implied by Johnstone (2001a), all entrepreneurial institutions (both private and public) should assure the maintenance of efficiency, apace with *equity*, in order to prove to student customers the worthiness of their investments as well as of debt burden they need to bear after graduation. Such an idea of the development of *equity*, while maintaining efficiency, signifies the necessity for the expansion of a quality higher education system, to be kept in mind of entrepreneurs in education markets. Regarding an education policy to move towards greater cost sharing, Johnstone (2001a) suggests that

“The shift of a portion of higher education costs toward parents and students should be accompanied by measures to democratize and liberalize the governance

of the campuses as well as the ministry, to effect greater financial transparency, and to share not only the costs but the pain—i.e. to economize on administration and other expenditures not directly supportive of students and of the instructional program. (In short, the student, parents, and faculty need to perceive the possibility of some gain to them—as well as to perceive that the university administration and the ministry have also sacrificed in the name of greater efficiency.)”

(Johnstone, 2001a, p. 28)

Although the loan system is likely to be more practical and effective than the grant scheme, it seems unreasonable to predict that the student borrowers’ future incomes and earnings level will be surely high enough and should not bring in any problem to them when the time of repayment arises. Also, it could discourage some under-represented students, who are so concerned about being chronically loan burdened after the completion of their degrees that they may decide not to participate or further take part in higher education. Therefore, as suggested by Finnie (2002), an interest-relief programme (for individuals whose low incomes cause them undue hardship), a debt-relief scheme (for individuals who are facing chronically excessive loan burdens) as well as an insurance plan against excessive debt loads (for all borrowers who may or may not use it) could be introduced to raise the confidence of student consumers who would like to invest or continue their investment in higher education markets. In addition, Woodhall (1987) recommends that flexibility of repayment terms should be injected into a student loan programme for student borrowers in particular circumstances, e.g. deferment of repayment for married female loan takers while taking care of their children and a longer repayment period for those who further their studies abroad and tend to face large debts. An issue on the development of a loan scheme that could possibly help relieve an excessive debt burden as well as encourage more participation (in higher learning) from low-income people will be further discussed in 2.9 and 2.10.

In this regard, it is worth probing into the background of student loan programmes and the development as well as significant roles of the income contingency plan in the international arena.

2.9 Loans for Higher Education Students: International Perspectives

As mentioned in 2.7, student loan programmes originated from the increasing prominence of the *cost-sharing* principle which relates to the shift of at least some higher education costs from states and taxpayers to parents and students. Johnstone (2001a) states that such a principle has been raised on the agendas of the government policy for higher education in many countries.

Barr (2001), Johnstone and Aemero (2001) indicate that student loans have two basic forms: *conventional or mortgage-type loans* and *income-contingent loans* or sometimes recognised as a kind of *graduate taxes*. These two forms may be combined, modified or adjusted to best suit the cost collection, employment and wage payment systems of each country.

2.9.1 Mortgage-type loans

A *conventional or mortgage-type* loan is composed of a rate of interest expressed as an annual percentage of the amount borrowed, a repayment period (the specified amount of time the borrower has to repay the loan) and repayment terms (which can be either equal monthly instalments or instalments that begin small and increase over time or any other arrangements that yield a stream of payments sufficient to amortise the loan at the contractual rate of interest). Barr (2001) notes that advantages of the *mortgage-type* schemes are *transparency* of the cost of loans to borrowers and fewer effects, in comparison with income-related loans, on the borrowers' choices of future career as all loan takers are expected to pay out the same percentage or portion of capital plus the same interest each year, regardless of their earnings. However, disadvantages of such schemes are that low-income people might not dare to take loans due to the fear of *risk* and *uncertainty* about the return to their educational investment in qualifications and future earnings and of an unmanageable or excessive debt burden (especially for those who could not finish their studies with a large amount of debt).

2.9.2 Income-contingent loans

An *income-contingent* or *income-related* repayment loan contains a contractual obligation to repay some percentage of future income, generally until the loan is repaid at a contractual rate of interest, or until the borrower has repaid either a maximum amount (which can release the high earner) or for a maximum number of years (which can eventually release the low earner). For this type of loan, the percentage of income that must go to loan repayment may be either *fixed* for all income levels or *progressive* (increasing at higher incomes). As indicated by Finnie (1996), the borrower will, normally, start paying out his/her loan (plus interest) when he/she reaches some proportion of the national average income of each country. The repayment period and the annual burden of repayments vary in accordance with the *borrower's earnings* and his/her *ability to pay*, unlike a conventional loan in which the repayment period and the rate of interest is specified in the loan contract.

The income-contingent loans and repayment system, previously suggested by Friedman and Kuznets (1945) and Friedman (1963), was further developed by West (1993, 1995a and b), and was also discussed by a number of researchers in the field of education policy and administration, such as Seville and Tooley (1997) and Turner (2001). Finnie (1996) claims that it is a desirable repayment model, which is adjustable to the borrower's income and meaningfully helps relieve serious problems arising from excessive debt loads (as raised in 2.7). Woodhall (1992b) and Barr (2001) indicate that it could be a possible solution to the problem concerning how to minimise public resources spent on higher education without deterring the underprivileged or economically disadvantaged people from taking part in higher learning. According to West (1995b), contingency systems encourage the sharing of responsibility between the users of higher education, without unfairly drawing upon the incomes of taxpayers who are poor and are non-users of higher education. In coincidence with what was suggested by Friedman (1963), even though some borrowers' lifetime earnings are low (which results in their small repayments), the government, with more revenue or surcharge obtained from more successful and higher-income borrowers, could be able to cover the costs of financing the less successful or lower-income borrowers.

Owing to its several benefits over the conventional loan, such *income-related* loans were proposed by Barr (1998 and 2001), Chapman (1997) and Chapman and Ryan (2002). According to Barr (2001), the *income-contingent* loan is comparable to a *graduate tax* that is *switched off* once a borrower has repaid his/her agreed contribution for the cost of his/her higher learning. Barr (2001) and Chapman and Ryan (2002) note that the significant advantages of this type of loans are that it usefully helps *reduce the risk and uncertainty* regarding an excessive debt burden that could be faced by borrowers, especially those with low lifetime earnings, and helps *enhance security in repayments* as well as *diminish administrative cost* since it is normally linked to a kind of *income tax* or *social insurance contributions*. However, to efficiently operate an *income-contingent* scheme, the World Bank (1994), Barr (2001) and Chapman and Ryan (2002) suggest that a reliable income report system as well as the robust income tax/debt collection machinery are needed.

In coincidence with what was recommended by Friedman (1963) and West (1995b), Johnstone (2001a) points out that the *general availability* of both forms of loans requires the *government participation* in bearing all or at least a significant part of risk (through the government guarantees to private lenders or through the government being the lender itself with public funds to be put directly at risk), in subsidising the rate of interest (plus the cost of administration and collection) or the cost of lending paid by student borrowers (cost sharing between the government and student borrowers), in absorbing or effectively hiding some of administrative costs of the loan programme, and in employing for student loan collection the potentially powerful machinery of the governmental or income tax and/or pension collection systems. Nevertheless, West (1995b) claims that the market call for government intervention in administration and debt collection does not imply the imperfection of markets in education, but only the need of cooperation from the government, who has monopoly access to machinery unavailable to the markets and the private sector.

In addition, Johnstone and Aemero (2001) suggest that an efficient student loan scheme should carry a parental co-signature (so that the government can use it as an additional means of debt collecting when defaults arise and keep it as a record of families in need of financial aids for education of their children), a passport control on émigrés which requires a renewed contract and possibly new collateral or co-

signatories on borrowers who are leaving the country with student debts, a government guarantee backing up the guarantees of the co-signatories (especially to cover those parents or families with low earnings and assets), provision to repay either in instalments or income contingently, and to deduct amounts due from the salary (in case the employer is the government or a private employer of a reliable company or organisation), additional provisions for deferment of loan repayments in the event of unemployment or verified financial hardship, reasonable repayment terms sufficiently long for the monthly payments to be manageable for most borrowers, and an interest rate either at a minimum, relating to the rate of inflation, or at a maximum to the government's borrowing rate. Moreover, there should be a need-based system of financial assistance or a reasonable approximation and verification of financial needs (known as means-tested indicators) which may comprise parents' annual incomes, parents' highest levels of education, parents' occupations, place of residence, parents' assets, programmes of study, the costs of attending particular public or private institutions, and numbers of family members who are dependent or unemployed and who are studying.

2.10 Income-contingent loans as a vehicle for the promotion of Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

Due to its flexibility to the *borrower's future income* and his/her *ability to pay*, the *income-contingent* plan tends to be an effective approach to encourage more participation in higher education from low-income people as well as to promote access and equity in higher learning. This is supported by a comparative study, conducted by Chapman and Ryan (2002, p. 76-78), on the *Effects of the Australian Income-Contingent Loan Scheme or HECS on Access of Low-Income Prospective Students*. The research was carried out in 1988 and 1993, prior to the introduction of HECS, as well as 1998, after the movements towards HECS in 1997. The research participants (higher education students), aged 18, were divided by their family wealth: those from the lowest, the middle two and the highest socio-economic backgrounds. According to Chapman and Ryan (2002, p. 77), the result of this study reveals that the introduction of the income-contingent scheme (in Australia) *does not diminish*

participation from low-income people, but *does increase participation* from all students, regardless of their family wealth and socio-economic backgrounds.

Johnstone and Aemero (2001) and Woodhall (2002) indicate that the *Australian Higher Education Contribution Scheme* (or the Australian *HECS-type* income-contingent loan model), of which the concepts were previously developed by Chapman (1997), has been undoubtedly successful in expanding the revenue to higher education in Australia. Thus, it is worth exploring the applicability of the Australian HECS-type income contingent loan schemes for developing countries. These Australian schemes provide a subsidy to all borrowers in the form of a maximum *zero real* rate of interest (an interest rate which does not let the maximum repayment go beyond a rate set at the prevailing rate of inflation), the choice to pay (presumably by parents) *up front* at a 25% discount instead of accepting the conditions of the loans, and the assurance that the “income-related repayments or repayments through tax debits” (as recognised by OECD, 1990, p. 54) will not start until the borrower’s earnings reach the national median income as well as will remain at a given or presumably manageable per cent of income. Chapman and Ryan (2002) as well as Woodhall (2002) note that a reason behind the success of the Australian income-contingent schemes is strong support from the government and other related bodies, complemented by effective *publicity campaigns* for disseminating to all stakeholders (including university/college administrators, staff and students as well as their parents/guardians) and to the wider public the principles of such schemes and explanation of the repayment method, including the way to calculate interest.

Johnstone and Aemero (2001) indicate that the above-mentioned Australian HECS-type schemes are likely to function well only when the government demonstrates its readiness to be a potential lender and initial supporter of all student borrowers, by communicating (through each institution) with all university/college students the concept of tuition and the benefits of cost sharing in higher education and showing its willingness to forego the potential of more up front tuition as well as its ability to tax or borrow sufficiently to keep universities and colleges open, students fed and housed and to accept payment only in the future. The schemes tend to work well when the majority of student borrowers (who are obliged to repay the loans in the form of a percentage of their future earnings upon the completion of their studies)

will have a permanent job and a single employer, who will pay them a relatively regular salary and who can be counted on to take out of the borrowers' pay cheques the correct amount per month. However, if incomes are paid irregularly or come from multiple sources which are difficult to be traced, it may bring in some significant losses. To cope with this problem, as recommended by Johnstone and Aemero (2001), repayments could be collected non-income contingently, e.g. via a *coupon book*, for those whose earnings cannot be traced and verified. Or an alternative solution, for those with unverifiable reports of earnings, is the setting up of a flexible conventional scheme, in which the borrowers are bound to pay out the known costs with a fixed (and manageable) rate of interest (plus some percentage of the risk of defaults and administrative cost), to be either deducted by employers or collected yearly by a national tax agency, and a determined repayment schedule, that is changeable and yields a debt-free or suspension period whenever the borrowers face clearly demonstrated or verifiable difficulties, unemployment or unexpected hardships in the course of their loan repayment.

Johnstone and Aemero (2001) affirm that the advantages of income-contingent loans over the conventional schemes are the flexibility and manageability of repayments as well as the possibility of default reductions. "The income contingent schemes help relieve repayment hardships as well as minimise distortions of the borrower's plans for future career, further education or marriage." (Johnstone and Aemero, 2001, p.10). Nonetheless, Johnstone and Aemero (2001) note that, in spite of its advantages over the traditional or mortgage-type plan, an income-contingent loan is still a loan and is not per se any cheaper than a conventional one as the borrower is still bound by repayment obligation to pay out a percentage of his/her earnings. Also, an income-contingent loan is not to be regarded as a substitute for tuition, but just another way of *deferring the tuition* and/or any other costs of higher education. Despite the possibility that disadvantaged students are more likely and willing to borrow income contingently for their higher education as assumed by the proponents of this type of loan repayment, it has not been testified yet whether or not the income-contingent loans actually result in more participation of under-represented students in higher education, especially in developing countries, and whether or not they truly reduce defaults.

In accordance with what was indicated by Friedman (1963) and West (1995b), Johnstone (2001b) states that the income-contingent repayment plans are recognised as *mutualised* plans, or those that recover some premium (gauged by an excess or extra percentage point or two or three of interest) from successful borrowers who are able to pay, and as *externally-subsidised* plans, or those that cover the shortfalls or losses on the low-earning borrowers from the government or taxpayers—just like other forms of student assistance (Johnstone, 2001b, p. 2). However, Johnstone (2001b) points out that the drawback of the cohort mutualisation plans is the doubt or difficulty of demonstrating why the shortfalls caused by low earners, which admittedly are obliged to be made up somehow, should have to be made up by a particular group or class of high earners who also needed to borrow to pay for their higher education.

Notwithstanding its advantages over the mortgage-type plan (in terms of the flexibility of repayments and the possibility of default reductions), Johnstone and Aemero (2001) and Johnstone (2004a) note that the *income-contingent* loan may not be applicable to or tend to become a regressive plan (where the underprivileged or lower-income people need to pay a higher percentage of their earnings than the rich or higher-income people) in most developing or transitional countries where income tax systems are unreliable and are not well-operated and where sources of earnings are multiple, variable and, sometimes, non-detectable and unreported. The malfunction of an ill-structured income tax collection scheme and the non-detectability or under-reporting of income are likely to bring in heavy losses from this type of loans and to exacerbate inequity by forcing borrowers who are in regular paid employment (especially government officials and poorly paid employees in civil service) to pay out a loan (or a cost of higher education) that others or higher-income people (particularly businesspersons and successful entrepreneurs or émigrés with multiple sources of income) can avoid.

Finnie (1996) claims that another shortcoming of these plans is the possible difficulties for the government, as a main lender or provider of the loans, who needs to be responsible for the substantial up-front capital costs and who tends to face a variety of uncertainties about its long-term financial viability as well as about the default rates. In response to these weaknesses, Finnie (2002) notes that an effective

cost-sharing plan, together with the search for additional sources of finance or extra funds (e.g. via the top-up fees policy, contracted research, academic consultancy, partnerships between the government, universities, the private sector and industrial companies), could be scrupulously taken and translated into action in line with the above mutualised or externally-subsidised plans.

To this point, we have seen many advantages of income-contingent loan schemes. Nevertheless, universities and the government are supposed to actively cooperate in operating and monitoring the progress of the schemes and in setting up effective targeting criteria and means-tested indicators to ascertain the accessibility of the loans to those who are academically qualified and are really in need of them.

In short, according to Friedman (1980) and Barr (1998 and 2001), an income-contingent repayment scheme, in line with a users-charge or top-up fees policy as well as an efficient administrative and cost recovery system, seems to be an effective approach to relieve debt burden on student borrowers and to encourage more investments from low-income people, especially in higher education. Friedman (1980) suggests that it could be a meaningful vehicle for the promotion of *equality of opportunity* in higher education markets.

Prior to the discussion of student loans in Thailand, it is worth exploring some lessons of educational loans from other countries that might usefully serve as a guideline for the improvement of a loan scheme in Thai higher education.

2.11 Student Loan Schemes and Lessons from Other Countries

Based on the World Bank (1994) review regarding student loans as an effective means of financial support to needy students, the financial performance of student loan schemes in about 50 industrial and developing countries has not been satisfactory, due to heavily subsidised interest rates, high default rates, plus high administrative costs. However, the experiences of some countries, like Colombia and the Canadian province of Quebec, have testified to the possibility to create and operate financially sustainable programmes.

Johnstone (2001a) points out that a significant student loan programme, which has been thought (by a number of economists and educationists) to be applicable to some developing countries, is the *Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS)* in Australia. The Australian HECS is a generally available loan scheme up to the full amount of tuition for various fields of study. As cited in 2.10, parents or students who agree to pay up-front fees will obtain up to 25% discount of tuition due. The interest rate is pegged to the rate of inflation, known as a *zero real* rate of interest, which is somewhat below the low market or prime commercial rate. Repayments are *income contingent* on annual earnings above A\$ 21,984 (about US\$ 16,910 or £11,273). Repayments due are collected as an *income surtax* either by the employer or by the tax system. There is no forgiveness when the borrower reaches a certain age or after passage of years since the borrowing came about. The enlistment of the national tax system equips the HECS with an aspect of a *graduate tax*, and assures a very low administrative cost of servicing and collecting as well as a low rate of defaults.

The income contingency schemes are likely to be practical in some countries, like Sweden, New Zealand, The Netherlands, the UK and South Africa, where governments demonstrate their readiness to be principal lenders as well as risk bearers (in the event of defaults or any unexpected circumstances) through the creation of efficient and reliable national tax machinery and through the provision of sufficient funds to cover the substantial up-front tuition, plus hidden fees, and to ascertain that the interest rate will not go beyond or much beyond the rate of inflation (*zero real* rate as the minimum, the government's borrowing rate as the maximum), and that loan collection will not take place until the borrowers finish their studies, get their jobs and obtain the taxable incomes.

Despite its success and practicality in some developed countries, e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, Johnstone and Aemero (2001) and Johnstone (2004a) state that an income-contingent repayment scheme may not function well in many developing or transitional countries where most people have multiple sources of income, which are difficult to be identified and reported, e.g. in Ethiopia where the income tax system is inefficient and lacks a reliable scheme of earnings report. According to Albrecht and Ziderman (1991),

default rates (either of an income contingency or a mortgage-type plan) are normally lower among developed countries, in comparison with developing countries, due to smaller populations which are easier to be tracked and retraced (like in Sweden and New Zealand). It has not been yet clearly proved that defaults, even after the introduction and application of an income contingency scheme, could be minimised truly and effectively in large developing countries, without extensive costs of administration.

For Ethiopia, Johnstone and Aemero (2001) note that, owing to the lack of workable and reliable income tax system or debt collection machinery, the government may be able to collect amounts due only from the borrowers who are government officials, civil servants, and from a number of those employed by international organisations and by some large private enterprises. As indicated by Johnstone and Aemero (2001, p. 14), repayments tend to be considerably low or missing due to the possible failure to collect the larger amounts from virtually all "émigrés" (historically a significant proportion of Ethiopia's university graduates, most of whom have become successful entrepreneurs), a large number of those employed in first, second or third jobs in the private sector and most of those who are businesspersons or the self-employed. Johnstone and Aemero (2001) state that the number of non-governmental employees and self-employed people is likely to continuously multiply and to constitute a proliferating proportion of the university or college graduates. The exclusion of those people from the population of graduates who are bound to bear or to share some of the costs of higher education will eventually bring in great losses in terms of cost recovery and will lead to inequity, unfairness and, finally, market distortions. Therefore, an income-contingent loan plan will not be able to significantly serve as an alternative non-governmental revenue stream for universities in Ethiopia. It is noteworthy that, in Ethiopia, the university is currently free, plus subsidies from the government and taxpayers for students' *pocket money*. However, a very small number of under-represented or ethnic minority people have been going to the university, even at no cost to their parents. The problem of low participation from the disadvantaged, recognised by Johnstone and Aemero (2001) as *the special problem of the socio-economically biased participation*, are not due to the World phenomenon of globalisation and markets, but the *limited capacity of human resources*. To encourage more participation from those

disadvantaged people in higher education, the government needs to search for additional non-governmental sources of funds, like parental and student revenue in the form of tuition, top-up fees and student loans (the introduction of a cost-sharing system), to supplement the government and tax revenues and, contemporaneously, to create a variety of professional-oriented courses and vocational training programmes as well as social welfare for disadvantaged people (the establishment of a safety net for the least advantaged in the society).

In Kenya, Otieno (2004) indicates that the national student loan programme has been operated by the *Higher Education Loans Board (HELB)* since 1995. The Board aims to establish revolving funds through the setting up and development of an effective cost recovery system. The interest rate is four per cent (moderately subsidised by the government), including the risk of defaults and administrative fees. So far, a major achievement of the Board has been the increase in the number of loan recipients or students supported in both public and private institutions, as a result of an innovative legislation taken by the Board to recover old loans. This legislation, recognised by Otieno (2004) as an aggressive but quite promising campaign, mandates employers to collect outstanding loans from the earlier Kenyan student loan programme, back in 1974. Defaults or non-repayments are supposed to result in severe penalties both on borrowers and their employers. However, like the Ethiopian case, a crucial problem is that borrowers who can be reached by the Board are only those who are in formal employment. Those who cannot be reached (which are regarded as the majority of borrowers) tend to work in the private or informal enterprises, which are currently the largest and fastest growing sector in the country. According to Otieno (2004), it is possible that several borrowers, who cannot be reached, could be willing to repay but are not in salaried jobs, which enable them to repay regularly or monthly (the failure to define the exact amount of earnings). As the majority of people in the country are likely to work for the informal sector and tend to have multiple or unidentifiable sources of earnings, it remains uncertain that the introduction of an income contingency scheme will bring success to the cost recovery plan in Kenya.

To this point, we need to keep in mind, as noted by Tooley and West (1998) as well as Johnstone and Aemero (2001), that, despite its advantages over a traditional or

mortgage-type plan in terms of flexibility, manageability, and borrower-oriented characteristics, an income contingency scheme is not the panacea for all student loan programmes of all countries. The success of a loan programme (either income contingent or mortgage-type) depends on various factors, especially the effectiveness of loan collection machinery or approaches (which may be different from one country to another), a sense of responsibility supposed to be instilled in each student borrower as well as each country's socio-economic conditions and experiences.

The World Bank (1994) states that a sustainable loan programme must be composed of an effective collection agency, with incentives to prevent or minimise defaults and deceptions, and the increase of interest rates to positive, market-driven or (nearly) market-like levels in accordance with inflation and the real costs of administration. In addition, the World Bank (1994) recommends that scheduled repayments or graduated repayment plans should be set up so as to lower initial payments (which are supposed to be smaller than later ones), to estimate the trend in expected earnings and, eventually, to minimise debt burden on graduates as well as to develop loan recovery rates. Nevertheless, the programming of loan repayments may vary depending on the employment and salary or wage payment systems of each country. Also, to effectuate loan recovery plans, governments could call for active cooperation from a national tax collection office, like the Inland Revenue (in the UK), which has strong connections with various employers, state enterprises and companies (both public and private), in reporting the employment status of each borrower and in retracing defaults.

The various lessons of student loan schemes in the countries cited above have led to more concerns about the development of a more effective student loan programme, as well as other forms of student aids, in conformity with the higher education system and socio-economic circumstances in Thailand.

2.12 Student Loan Programme in Thailand

Varghese (2001) and Achava-Amrung (2001) state that the *student loan programme* in Thailand, alongside the promotion of the growth of private institutions,

was set up and has been expanded in conformity with the government policy on *higher education reform*, accelerated by the economic crisis in East Asia which seriously hit Thailand in 1997. The programme began its operation in 1996. Like student loan schemes in other countries, it aims to tap additional (non-governmental) sources of funding, to alleviate financial burden on economically disadvantaged students studying at secondary and tertiary or university levels, to widen access to upper secondary and tertiary education for low-income people and, finally, to enhance *equality of opportunity*. The interest rate is only one per cent. Borrowers are bound to repay the total (capital plus interest) within 15 years, following a two-year grace period after graduation, with the repayment percentage fixed initially at very low rates and increased progressively over time (a kind of the mortgage-type plan).

Ziderman (2003) argues that the student loan scheme in Thailand is unnecessarily and over-generously subsidised by the government, with an extremely low rate of interest (only one per cent per annum) and an overly long repayment period (15 years, plus two years of grace period). This contrasts markedly with a well-constructed loan scheme, as defined by Barr (1998), that should not be heavily subsidised so that it could be effectively used as an instrument to recover the real costs of higher education. Such a very low rate of interest may, afterwards, unreasonably result in heavy burden on the government, and even worse more tax burden on non-users of higher education. Tooley and West (1998) warn that, instead of increasing equity, this might exacerbate inequity. Apart from its responsibility for the up-front fees and other educational expenses, unable to be covered by borrowers throughout their programmes of study, the government has to offer the extremely large amount of subsidies through this over-generous loan scheme. Tooley and West (1998) note that the very low interest rate of one per cent is unrealistic as levels of inflation, in general, are assumed to be greater than one per cent. This *negative* real rate of interest implies another subsidy or the large amount of hidden grants (over-subsidised or highly subsidised loans), plus extensive costs of administration and the risk of defaults. Ziderman (2003) indicates that these hidden grants are estimated at 80% of a highly subsidised student loan in Thailand. This means that a borrower will have to return only about 20% of each loan granted to him/her, according to the current repayment conditions. Therefore, Ziderman (2003) claims that the current

student loan scheme in Thailand, with its excessive level of subsidy, is not financially viable and needs to be revised.

Besides the over-subsidised loans with an unrealistic or negative rate of interest, Ziderman (2003) points out two discernible weaknesses of the Thai student loan scheme: lack of full-time management and an efficient monitoring system as well as ineffectiveness of means-tested indicators.

The main operating bodies of the Thai student loan scheme are the *Office of the Student Loans Fund* (the *Student Loans Scheme Committee*, known as *SLSC*), the *Krung Thai Bank* or *KTB* (a quasi-public bank, guaranteed by the government, which operates loan collection), the *Ministry of Education* and the *Office of Higher Education Commission* (Ministry of University Affairs), and all the educational institutions taking part in the programme. Concerning the administration and management of the programme, Ziderman (2003) argues that a *top-down* allocation mechanism of the programme, from the Office of the Student Loans Fund through successive administrative layers in the ministry to educational institutions, is quite bureaucratic and inefficient in terms of targeting needy students and providing horizontal equity amongst students of similar socio-economic backgrounds and the same levels of need, studying in different institutions. Moreover, this *top-down* approach is supportive of a *supply-driven* system, in which educational institutions are fully authorised to select new students as well as grant/loan recipients in accordance with their admission and screening criteria (which are, sometimes, unfair and bring in inequality amongst students of different socio-economic backgrounds and dissimilar abilities). For screening and targeting approaches, Ziderman (2003) claims that the use of family or parents' earnings as the sole criterion for identifying and targeting needy students seems to be insufficient and ineffective.

To make the loan scheme more effective and financially viable as well as to raise the repayment and recovery ratios, Ziderman (2003) recommends that the present over-generous subsidising plan should be modified, and the liberal repayment conditions should be tightened. This could be accomplished through increasing the rate of interest on the loan from one per cent to either three per cent or an interest rate that is pegged to the rate of inflation (as the minimum) or the rate of the government's

borrowing (as the maximum) and through shortening the repayment period from fifteen to eight years (if possible) with the annual repayments fixed in accordance with reality. To help promote the two tiers of equity – equity between users of higher education and equity between users and non-users of higher education— (as previously identified by West, 1988 and 1995b), the hidden grant existing in each loan could be divided into two principal parts: one is to be allocated (either through a central grant/loan operating body or through the individual institutions) to the least advantaged in great need of funds at secondary and tertiary levels, the other to be returned to taxpayers (especially those non-users of secondary or tertiary education) either in the form of health care, medical insurance, professional training programmes, transportation or other kinds of public (or public in cooperation with private) services for people in the rural and remote areas.

To improve the targeting and horizontal equity (amongst under-represented students of the similar backgrounds and needs), Ziderman (2003) suggests that the *top-down* allocation of loans is to be replaced by a *bottom-up* system of loan or grant applications, from students (through educational institutions) to a central grant and loan distribution body, like a “Student Loans and Scholarships Bureau” or “SLSB” (Ziderman, 2003, p.104). The *SLSB*, of which the membership should be on a personal or voluntary basis rather than representative as at present (as recommended by Ziderman, 2003), is supposed to be in charge of full-time management, direct distribution of all loans to student applicants and progress monitoring of the effectiveness of the grant/loan scheme. Besides facilitating the operation of a more horizontally equitable scheme, a direct line or direct relationship between student borrowers and the *SLSB* might result in the quickness of loan turn-round or revolving funds and, possibly, might help decrease the costs of administration. Moreover, this *bottom-up* approach (if well-executed) will help strengthen a *demand-driven* system, which empowers students’ rights to choose institutions in accordance with their interests and abilities and which stimulates more competition amongst educational institutions for better quality in order to attract more student customers (the use of grants/loans as a means of the promotion of quality, apace with equality of opportunity by removing the task of grant/loan distribution from the educational institutions). Through the shift from the *top-down* to the *bottom-up* system as suggested by Ziderman (2003), the individual institutions could act as advisers to

students on loan procedures and eligibility and distributors of only application forms, not loans (as at present). Also, the *SLSB* would need active cooperation from all institutions in the inspection and the provision of socio-economic profiles as well as academic records of all student applicants. In this regard, the *SLSB* may set up an auditing unit or section within the Bureau to make occasional visits to all institutions and to work closely with grant and loan officers of each institution, as well as to ensure that grants and loans are properly used. In addition, to diminish administrative burden at the *SLSB*, each institution could collect and submit all application forms in bulk to the *SLSB*. Once the application has been examined and approved, it could be passed on to the *Krung Thai Bank*, that is in charge of loan administration and collection.

To assure its accessibility to those who are really in need of funds, Ziderman (2003) recommends that the Thai student loan programme should include more means-tested indicators, besides family or parents' income. Ziderman (2003) and Tekleselassie (2001) suggest that more weight should be given to other factors, relating to needs and poverty, e.g. the number of family dependents (both children and the aged), the number of family members currently studying, gender and the main occupation of the head of family, family assets or private property owned and levels of debt. Moreover, Woodhall (1987) recommends that the means-tested indicators may include both earned income (i.e. salaries, wages, commissions) and non-earned income (i.e. dividends, rents, interest) of other members of the family, besides parents (like the student loan programmes in Hong Kong), and other special circumstances such as unemployment, illness or disabilities of any family members. However, albeit its usefulness and feasibility (in a small country like Hong Kong) in terms of the assessment of actual socio-economic status and needs of students, the inclusion of other family members' earnings (apart from parents' or guardians') might make the application process even more complicated and time-consuming. In spite of being in permanently paid employment, it does not mean that all the family members with permanent salaries would be capable of supporting the applicants' studies. If the reports of both earned and non-earned incomes of all the family members were required, the information on their debt burden and estimated expenses per annum would also be needed. This might be a reason why most student loan schemes in Thailand as well as in some other developing countries only focus on the annual

earnings of parents, guardians or persons who are usually responsible for tuition fees and living costs of the loan applicants, though it still remains difficult to obtain accurate information on that.

Apart from financial needs of students, Woodhall (1987) recommends that the efficiency criterion or capacity of the loan applicants to succeed in their studies and to repay their loans should be considered, alongside the equity criterion (or financial needs of students), in order to prevent the occurrence of non-performance loans or the loss of loans. Also, it is worth exploring students' attitudes towards loans to obtain some ideas which may significantly contribute to further development of the student loan programme both in terms of distribution and cost recovery.

In short, to improve the *equity* and *efficiency* of the student loan scheme in Thailand, Ziderman suggests that a national grant and loan distribution body, like the above *Student Loans and Scholarships Bureau* or *SLSB* should be established and empowered to fully operate an integrated scheme, to distribute loans to all eligible student applicants on an equal basis, as well as to define and apply more effective means-tested indicators or targeting criteria (apart from family or parents' income) in order to ensure the accessibility of grants and loans to those who really need and are qualified for them.

To relieve low-income borrowers' concerns about an excessive debt burden upon the completion of their studies, Woodhall (1987) suggests that, in certain circumstances, there may be a trade-off or compromise between a longer repayment period and a higher rate of interest. Thus, initially, as proposed by Ziderman (2003), either the increase of interest rate (to three per cent) or the shorter payback horizon (of eight years, excluding the two-year grace period) could be applied, alongside the communication of the objectives and national benefits or the common good (e.g. the use of repaid loans to support more under-represented students who are in great need of funds) of this reform to both old and new student borrowers through the educational institutions taking part in the programme. Also, an auditing, monitoring and evaluating system could be set up to examine the progress and practicality of the reform from time to time, by conducting informal surveys (e.g. through questionnaire and/or semi-structured interviews) at each institution, concerning the views and

feedback of students (who would be directly affected by the above-mentioned changes) on this reform.

2.13 Conclusion

In summary, all the international concepts and philosophies cited and discussed in this chapter generate more concerns about improvement of *fairness* in higher education funding and *equitable access* to higher learning for the underprivileged or the least advantaged people. From such concerns, various ideas and approaches in the promotion of equity have been created and developed to assist the least advantaged people of a society. To foster social justice of higher education markets in the age of global economic freedom and academic capitalism, the term *equity* is to be defined as *equality or adequacy of opportunities*, which enables all individuals to pursue their objectives in accordance with their needs, capacities and knowledge. This coincides with what was suggested by Friedman (1980) and Henry *et al* (2001). However, a market of *real quality* (at all levels of education) could establish and improve a kind of *welfare* or *safety net* for disadvantaged people who are qualified for a certain level of education but are deprived of *adequate educational opportunities*, owing to lack of inherent wealth and resources. Such a *safety net* may have dissimilar forms at different levels of education, in different places and social contexts. All international perspectives, concerning various kinds of *safety net* (e.g. target grants/vouchers, loans and work-study programmes), discussed in this chapter may be regarded as a guideline for the establishment and improvement of *safety net* in Thai higher education markets.

To this point, a crucial issue, which is high on the agenda of Thai higher education reform and which is timely consistent with the awareness and concerns about *ethics in education markets*, is the exploration of Friedman's (1963 and 1980) philosophy on the possibility of the development of *equity* in a specific context of Thai private higher education and the study of whether and how private higher education institutions that are fast growing in Thailand have developed their *safety net* (known as student aid schemes) for the qualified but socio-economically disadvantaged (who would like to participate in higher education) as well as how they

promote *equality of educational opportunity* in this era of globalisation and educational freedom.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction, Rationale of the Research and Research Gaps

This research has been motivated by the interests in the exploration of the establishment and development of a *safety net* in Thai private higher education, as well as the investigation of the possible development of *equity* in Thai education markets. As we have learnt from Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, private higher education in Thailand is fast-growing to supplement the limited capacity of the government and the public sector in the provision of quality education and the expansion of educational opportunity to people of different gender, age, ethnic and social backgrounds. At the same time, as a result of Asian economic crisis (since 1997), a large number of public universities in the country have been in the process of becoming autonomous (at least partly independent from the state control) and privatised, in accordance with the government policy on the augmentation of flexibility in higher education administration and the mobilisation of private and external resources to supplement the limited government budget (e.g. in the form of increased tuition, short-course programmes, contracted research, extra-curricular activities, work-study programmes and academic consultancy). This phenomenon is categorised by Slaughter and Leslie (1997) as *academic capitalism*, in which universities become *quasi-markets* or partly institution of higher learning and partly educational service suppliers and entrepreneurs. In such circumstances, apart from the calls for efficiency and flexibility, there have been concerns about access and equality of opportunity for socio-economically disadvantaged people who are qualified for and would like to participate in higher education.

Based on the above rationale and international perspectives (quoted in Chapter 2) on the improvement of *equality of opportunities* in higher learning and the development of financial support for higher education students, a case study on the possibility of the development of *equity* in Thai private higher education needs to be conducted, in order to explore the efficiency of *Friedman's liberal concept of the unproblematic injection of equity into education markets*.

This chapter will explain how the research was designed and how it has been carried out. It will explore critical concepts and criteria of case studies as well as possible empirical methods and techniques applied to extract data, in order to respond to the research questions, concerning policy on access and equity, student aid programmes of the focus universities as well as students' attitudes towards private higher education in Thailand. It will also discuss the validity and reliability of the data obtained from the methods and techniques used in this research. Moreover, this chapter will address ethical issues, limitations of the study and problems which have arisen in the course of data collection.

3.2 Research Design: A Case Study

3.2.1 Definition and Characteristics

Hamel *et al* (1993) state that a case study is an in-depth study of the sub-cases or the phenomena under consideration. The depth of each case or phenomenon in focus has been regarded as a critical feature of *the case study approach*.

According to Gall *et al* (1996), the four main characteristics of case study research are:

3.2.1(a) The study of phenomena by focusing on specific instances or cases

This research focuses on specific sub-cases as it deals with a policy on equality of educational opportunity for disadvantaged people, student aid programmes and students' attitudes towards such programmes in the eight leading private institutions in Thailand or the eight selected sub-cases.

3.2.1(b) An in-depth study of each sub-case

The phenomenon of interest in this research mainly concerns an in-depth study of the student aid programmes, focusing on educational loans, as a critical instrument for the promotion of equality of educational opportunity in Thai private higher education. Such in-depth study was carried out through various methods and instruments: questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, documents and observations.

3.2.1(c) The study of a phenomenon in its natural context

In this study, the researcher had an opportunity to interact and communicate with participants as well as to observe some of their reactions and behaviour before, during and after the interviews. From the post-interview observations, the researcher could notice some actions and behaviour of the staff and student participants in their natural contexts (i.e. some staff interviewees' communication with colleagues and students after their office hours and some student interviewees' activities after classes), which proved quite divergent from what expressed by some participants in the course of interviews. For the researcher, this might imply an attempt to generate some appearances or to create positive images in front of the public. This issue is to be further discussed in the following chapters.

3.2.1(d) The study of the emic (or insiders') perspectives of case study participants

In this research, the semi-structured interviews were applied to probe into the participants' (or the insiders') attitudes and feelings towards student aid programmes, especially student loan projects, in the eight focus institutions.

In short, this case study research could be regarded as an in-depth study of eight instances (or eight sub-cases) of a phenomenon, concerning the development and operation of student aid programmes (i.e. student grant and loan services, work-study projects, career counselling), in a specific context of Thai private higher education, from the emic or insiders' perspectives of the participants (both university administrators/staff as the service providers and students as the service users of private higher education) who have been involved in the phenomenon.

3.2.2 Why a case study?

The case study approach has been applied in this research, owing to some of its advantages, especially its powerfulness in the provision of the profound understanding and the detailed explanation of a case or cases under investigation.

Cohen *et al* (2000) indicate that case studies are *strong in reality*. They are based on real practices (not solely on theories). They could provide more details of particular characteristics and attitudes of particular groups of people in real situations and real

circumstances, in comparison with other types of research methods. Case studies could reveal the truths which might be unique and valuable for particular fields of study in the production of innovative findings and the establishment as well as development of new theories. They might contain unique features that may be overlooked or lost in larger scale studies. Also, they could be regarded as significant lessons or guidelines for the design and improvement of other case studies, which aim to prove the same theories or to probe into similar things. They could probably be interrelated to or integrated into other cases in order to clarify or explain similar phenomena and features.

In spite of the above advantages, Hamel *et al* (1993) note that case studies have been criticised for their lack of representativeness as well as their lack of rigour in the construction, collection and analysis of the empirical materials or data that can fully give rise to the research. The latter issue may be linked to some other drawbacks of case studies, which should be kept in mind of all researchers: the risks of being selective, biased, personal and subjective (from either the researchers' or the field informants' sides), as well as not being generalisable. To avoid or minimise this, the researcher may apply a mixed-methods approach and *triangulation* (the use of multiple instruments) in the elicitation of data from their informants. Also, they may use some strategies in the selection of their informants, like random choosing or other approaches, which allow them to put some distance between themselves and the informants chosen.

Through the application of the mixed-methods approach (both quantitative and qualitative) and triangulation, this research aims to extract detailed data from and produce profound analyses of a case study composed of eight sub-cases, which help define boundaries of the research. The in-depth study of such a case study has been carefully conducted under the exemplary case design suggested by Yin (1993), in which all the units and materials studied are expected to reflect strong and positive examples of the characteristics and phenomena of interest (that concern the possibility of the co-existence of equity and efficiency in these eight sub-cases).

3.3 Main Components of a Case Study

This research is set up with the five main components of a case study, defined by Yin (1994, p.20): the research questions, the hypotheses, the units of analysis, the links between the data and the hypotheses (or propositions) and the criteria for data analysis and interpretation.

3.4 Research Questions

From the concepts and perspectives cited in the literature review (Chapter 2), the following research questions are developed. They are subdivided into institutional focused and student-focused questions.

Institutional focus

1. To what extent do private higher education institutions focus on low-income or socio-economically disadvantaged students?
(Instruments used: Interviews, Documents, Archival Records and Observations)
2. What are the private universities doing in order to support higher education students from low-income background in conformity with the government policy on access and equity in Thai higher education, in particular with reference to their implementation plans and strategies?
(Instruments used: Interviews and Documents)
3. What are the private universities' policies or measures on collaborations and partnerships with their public counterparts, the public and the private sectors, as well as overseas institutions/international organisations, to promote and support equity in higher education?
(Instruments used: Interviews, Documents and Archival Records)

Student focus

4. What are students' attitudes towards a student loan scheme managed by private institutions as well as the criteria used for the selection of loan recipients?

(Instruments used: Questionnaire and Interviews)

5. Are the present loan and grant recipients at each institution really in need of funds and economically less advantaged than their peers who are not taking any loans and grants?

(Instruments used: Questionnaire, Interviews and Observations)

To answer all the above research questions, the researcher needed to apply a *multiple methods approach* or *method triangulation*, as cited by Brannen (1992). This approach requires various instruments for the elicitation of a number of data sets from a range of sources: eight focus universities as the service providers, the government as the superintendent and students as the service users of private higher education. In this study, the researcher applied the following instruments for data collection: questionnaire (completed by students), semi-structured interviews and observations of staff and students, as well as documents and archival records from each focus institution and the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education of Thailand.

3.5 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have taken shape from the researcher's reading of literature review (mentioned in Chapter 2) and her experience and discussion with administrators as well as officers in charge of student loans and grants from each focus institution. (As with the research questions, they have been divided into institutional focused and student-focused hypotheses.)

Institutional focus

Hypothesis 1 The government policy on equity and fairness in higher education has been properly practised in eight leading Thai private universities. (They reasonably focus on able but low-income students.)

(Instruments used: Documents, Interviews and Archival Records)

Hypothesis 2 In each focus institution, most grants and scholarships are merit-based rather than need-based, while loans are need-based rather than merit-based. (This means that loans tend to be more effective than grants in assisting low-income students.)

(Instruments used: Documents and Interviews)

Hypothesis 3 Family income is the most important criterion for offering grants and loans to students.

(Instruments used: Documents and Interviews)

Hypotheses 4 From the viewpoint of administrative staff or student aid officers in each institution:

Hypothesis 4.1 In their opinion, a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants and full or partial tuition waivers.

(Instruments used: Documents, Interviews and Archival Records)

Hypothesis 4.2 An income-contingent loan scheme is going to be more effective than the present mortgage-type plan, in terms of the development of equity in Thai private higher education.

(Instrument used: Interviews)

Hypothesis 4.3 The focus institutions need assistance and cooperation from the government and/or external funding bodies to effectively operate all types of student

aid schemes.

(Instrument used: Interviews)

Hypothesis 4.4 It is possible that equity does not undermine quality in private higher education in Thailand.

(Instrument used: Interviews)

Student focus

Hypothesis 5 The following factors have an effect on the student respondents' decision to participate in higher education: parents' education, one or more (extended) family members who graduated with a university degree (or equivalent) and permanent places of residence.

(Instruments used: Interviews and Questionnaire)

Hypothesis 6 Parents' earnings have an effect on the student respondents' decision to study at particular institutions.

(Instruments used: Interviews and Questionnaire)

Hypothesis 7 The following factors have an effect on the student respondents' decision of taking loans: programmes of study, length of programmes, parents' income, number of assets, number of dependents in family, number of dependents in family who are studying and parents' occupations.

(Instruments used: Interviews and Questionnaire)

Hypothesis 8 The present grant and loan recipients (the focus group) at each institution are really in need of funds and are economically less advantaged than their peers who are non-takers of grants and loans (the control group).

(Instruments used: Questionnaire, Interviews and Observations)

Hypotheses 9 The following factors have an effect on the student respondents' fear of loans: parents' or guardians' income and gender of respondents.

Hypothesis 9.1 Higher-income students are less afraid of loans than their lower-income peers.

Hypothesis 9.2 Female respondents are more afraid of loans than male respondents.

(Instruments used: Interviews and Questionnaire)

Hypotheses 10 From viewpoints of the student respondents:

Hypothesis 10.1 In their opinion, economically disadvantaged students are not only those whose parents' or guardians' income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month).

Hypothesis 10.2 The eligibility for loans should not be limited only to those whose parents' or guardians' income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month), in accordance with the government criterion on family income.

Hypothesis 10.3 Family income should be the most important criterion for the universities or the government to offer grants and loans.

Hypothesis 10.4 A loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants and full or partial tuition waivers.

Hypothesis 10.5 An income-contingent loan (or ICL) scheme is going to be more effective than the present mortgage-type plan, in terms of the development of equity in Thai private higher education.

Hypothesis 10.6 The focus universities need assistance and

cooperation from the government and/or external bodies in the promotion of equity in private higher education.

Hypothesis 10.7 It is fairer that the government or a funding body (either public or private) allocates either grants or loans directly to students rather than to universities.

Hypothesis 10.8 It is possible that equity (or adequacy of educational opportunity) is not incompatible with quality in Thai private higher education.

(Instruments used: Interviews and Questionnaire)

3.6 Units of analysis

- This case study covers eight sub-cases. It is divided into four units as follows:

Units being studied	Themes and concepts being explored
1. Eight private universities	Policies and action plans on the promotion of equity and fairness in private higher education.
2. Government	Its role and cooperation with the focus institutions in the establishment and development of equity in private higher education (through student scholarship and loan programmes).
3. Administrative staff (in charge of student affairs and services) of the focus universities	-Their attitudes towards and their knowledge about the government policy on the promotion of equity in higher education. -Their measures on the establishment and development of student aid programmes in conformity with the government's and the

Units being studied	Themes and concepts being explored
3. Administrative staff (in charge of student affairs and services) of the focus universities	universities' policies on equity and the expansion of educational opportunity to able but economically disadvantaged students. -Their opinions about student aid programmes within their universities and future improvements (if any).
4. Students in the focus universities	-Comparison between students who are taking grants/loans and those who are not taking any of them, in terms of parents' (or guardians') income, occupations, education, assets, and numbers of family members who are dependent and who are studying. (Such a comparison and the above-mentioned means-tested indicators are supposed to reveal whether those who are taking grants/loans are less advantaged and in greater need of grants/loans than their peers who are not taking any grants/loans.) -Their attitudes towards student aid programmes provided by the universities and their opinions about the improvement of such programmes.

3.7 Links between the data and the hypotheses

- The data elicited from the eight sub-units: eight institutions (through documents, archival records and available statistics), one or sometimes two staff from each sub-unit (through interviews) and on average 377 student informants from each sub-unit (through questionnaire), as well as four or sometimes five student participants from each sub-unit (through interviews) are to be compared in order to find out the convergent and divergent characteristics (in terms of the policies on and attitudes towards the promotion of equity in Thai education markets) of these eight sub-cases. The information obtained from all sub-units is expected to provide detailed responses to the research questions as well as to address and examine the above

hypotheses. Also, the data obtained or research results will be compared with the hypotheses, based on theoretical perspectives on the possibility of the development of equity in higher education markets.

3.8 Criteria for data analysis

The criteria for evidence analysis are mainly composed of the comparison between what have been predicted or the hypotheses and what have actually occurred or the research results (recognised by Yin, 1994, as *pattern-matching*, which is going to be further discussed in this chapter), and the links between predictions, research results as well as the theoretical perspectives on the development of *equality of opportunity* in higher education (cited in Chapter 2).

3.9 Data Collection Procedures

This research was carried out in accordance with the following planning steps of a case study, proposed by Cohen *et al* (2000):

- 3.9.1 Selecting suitable cases, which could be, afterwards, generalisable to other similar cases, in the same or similar contexts.
- 3.9.2 Designing research approaches (both quantitative and qualitative).
- 3.9.3 Negotiating access to participants and asking permission for data collection from APHEIT (Association of Private Higher Education Institutions of Thailand) and all of the focus institutions.
- 3.9.4 Use of multiple sources (primary and secondary sources), which tend to provide a high level of accuracy and reliability.
- 3.9.5 Triangulation/data collection methods (the application of multiple methods and instruments to extract data from participants and other sources of evidence)
- 3.9.6 Data analysis/interpretation and the corroboration of a theory.
- 3.9.7 Writing up the research results.

3.10 Research Protocol

The actual protocol of this case study (as proposed by Yin, 1994, p. 49) is as follows:

3.10.1 Define and Design

3.10.1(a) define theory to be examined (Friedman's perspective on the development of equity in higher education markets)

3.10.1(b) select sub-cases

3.10.1(c) design instruments and data collection procedure;

3.10.2 Prepare, Collect and Analyse (mixed-methods approach)

3.10.2(a) test, retest and revise questionnaire as well as interview questions

3.10.2(b) conduct a case study, which comprises the eight focus universities (eight sub-cases), the government, staff in charge of student affairs and services and students (in the focus universities), through the use of triangulation: questionnaire, interviews, documentation, archival records and observations, focusing on comparative study between data derived from different sources

3.10.2(c) Write individual reports on both quantitative and qualitative data, test student-oriented and staff-oriented hypotheses (through triangulation), and pattern match with hypotheses embodying theoretical perspectives concerning the possibility of the development of equity in higher education markets

3.10.2(d) Prepare an individual report of each sub-case and distribute to all the sections/units involved for member checking.

3.10.3 Analyse and Conclude

3.10.3(a) Draw cross-case conclusions

3.10.3(b) Examine theory and related perspectives

3.10.3(c) Explore the efficiency and practicality of the theory, through the use of findings, and bring up ways forward suggested by this case study.

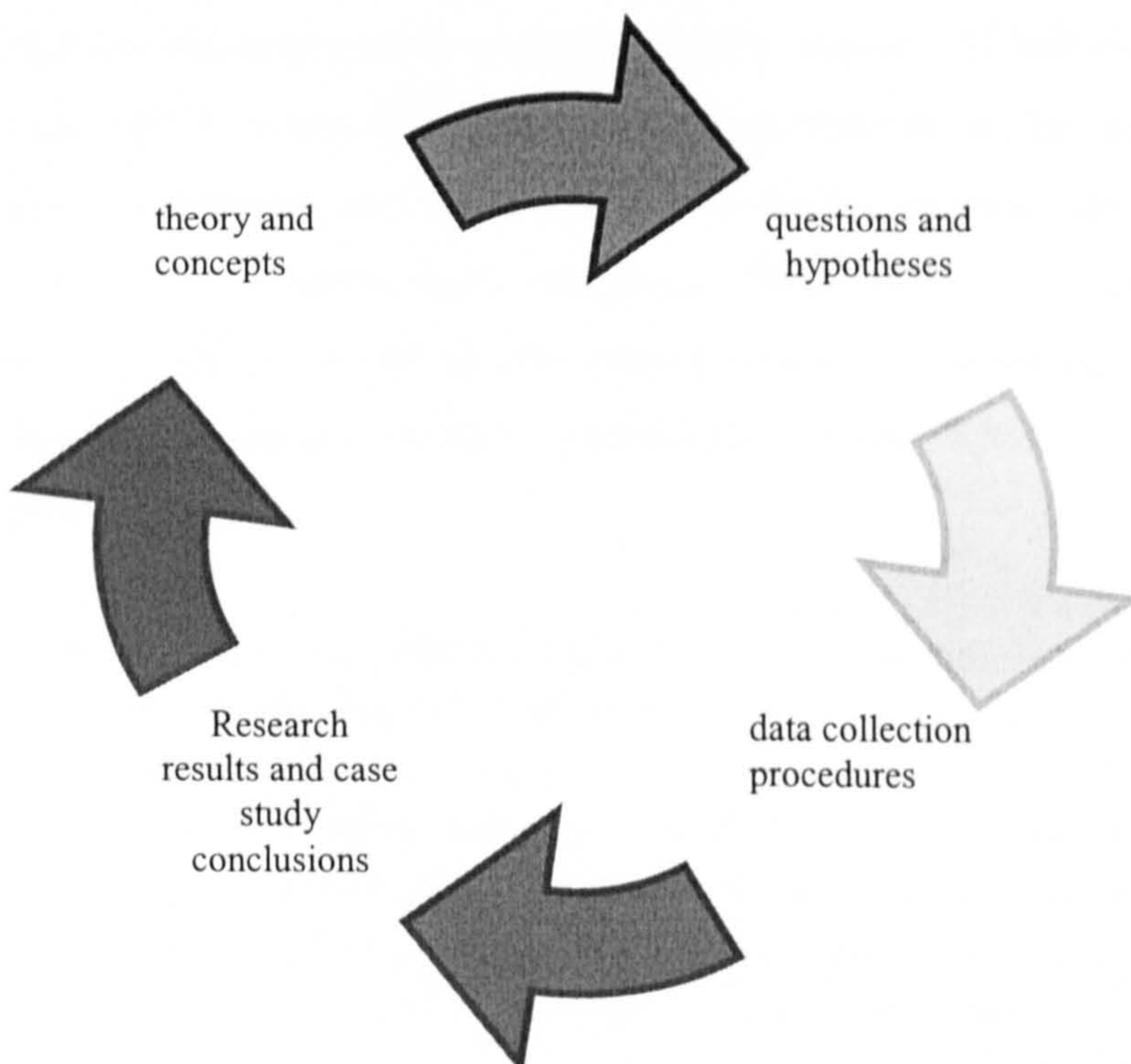
Yin (1994) suggests that researchers should concentrate on the following principles, while conducting a case study:

- 1. The use of multiple sources of evidence, e.g. documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artefacts (This perfectly coincides with one of the above-mentioned planning steps of a case study, recommended by Cohen *et al*, 2000.)**
- 2. The application of a case study database or a formal collection of evidence separated from the final case study report (e.g. the creation of eight databases for the eight sub-cases in this research)**
- 3. The use of a chain of evidence or explicit links between the questions asked, the data collected and the conclusions drawn.**

In this case study, the researcher applied multiple sources of evidence in order to maximise the accuracy and reliability of the data as well as the research results. These multiple sources of evidence are composed of the completed forms of questionnaire, the responses obtained from the semi-structured interviews of staff and students, as well as pre-interview, during interview and post-interview observations (recognised as primary sources of evidence). They also comprise documents and archival records (known as secondary sources of evidence). The data obtained from both primary and secondary sources of evidence have been carefully checked by the researcher and have been verified by all the institutions and units involved. Prior to drawing cross-case conclusions, the researcher also sent a transcription of the interviews of staff to each focus institution to have it rechecked by the staff interviewees. (This is called the *member checking* process.) In order to avoid confusion and to facilitate the retracing of evidence (should any problems arise), the researcher established eight databases for the eight sub-cases. Each database consists of the raw data and the individual case report of the researcher. The evidence

obtained from each sub-case is kept separately from that of other sub-cases and from the final case study report. In this research, a chain of evidence is developed through the establishment of explicit links between the research questions, the multiple methods and instruments applied for data collection, the research results (both quantitative and qualitative) and the conclusions drawn, that is the exploration of a universal theory and concepts on the possibility of the development of equity in a specific context of Thai private higher education. Therefore, from the explicit connections between the above-mentioned components, we could see the circular relationship between the theory and concepts (leading to the research questions and hypotheses in this research), the questions and hypotheses themselves, the data collection procedures (through the use of multiple research strategies), the research results and the ultimate case study conclusions, which are used for the revision and/or the corroboration of such theory and concepts. These ideas and theory are hoped to generate the motivation for conducting other similar case studies, in which other researchers can go through the same procedures before coming to the exploration of the cited concepts.

Chart 3.1 A map presenting the chain of evidence and its principal components in this research.



3.11 Research Techniques: Quantitative and Qualitative Designs

Prior to going in depth into the sources of evidence and the data collection procedures in this research, it is worth getting more acquainted with two main approaches or techniques normally applied in social sciences research, the similarities and differences between them, the advantages and disadvantages of each approach, as well as the ways of combining two approaches (known as a mixed-methods approach) in order to maximise the accuracy and the reliability of data extracted from informants and various sources of evidence.

The two principal research techniques widely used for data collection in the field of social sciences and humanities are *quantitative research* and *qualitative research*. Bryman (1996) states that quantitative research is correlated with a number of different approaches to data collection. In social sciences, the social surveys and experiments (including questionnaire and observation) are principal vehicles and methods of data collection which incorporates the main features of quantitative research to be explored and re-examined. The survey's capacity for producing quantifiable data obtained or elicited from large numbers of people who are recognised as representatives of a wider population in order to corroborate theories and hypotheses has been recognised by many practitioners and researchers as a means of capturing many of the components of a science. Therefore, *quantitative research* is regarded as an experimental or quasi-experimental design as it consists of processes and components similar to those of scientific research that is related to variables, control, measurement and experiment. This reflects the influence of a **positivist* or a *natural science model* on quantitative research. Accordingly, any empirical research in social sciences must be measured and evaluated before it can be recognised as *valid knowledge*.

* With reference to Finch (1986, p.7), in quantitative research, *positivism* is an approach to the creation of knowledge through research which emphasises the model of the *natural sciences*, in which the scientist adopts the position of the *objective* researcher, who collects facts about the social world and then builds up an explanation of social life by arranging such facts in a *chain of causality* (causes-effects), in the hope that this will uncover general laws about how society works. The underlying logic is *deductive*, where a hypothesis is generated from a universal statement (theoretical perspectives), then tested by *empirical research*, which then leads to a validation or a modification of such universal generalisations.”

In this research, the quantitative design has been used for examining and measuring (through questionnaire) students' attitudes towards private higher education in Thailand, as well as for investigating the links between students' socio-economic backgrounds (parents' or guardians' income, parents' or guardians' education and parents' or guardians' occupations), their programmes of study, age, gender, their opinions on the private universities' policy on student aid programmes, their feelings towards loans and their decision to take or not to take loans. The eight sets of students, obtained from eight focus institutions, in this study represent a larger number of students, both those who are taking grants or loans and those who are taking neither of them, in eight sub-cases. Each set of students in each sub-case has been divided into two sub-sets: the control group which consists of on average 174 students who are not taking grants or loans (randomly selected by the researcher, with the cooperation from each institution) and the focus (analogous to *experimental*) group which comprises on average 203 of those who are taking grants or loans. The quantifiable data derived from the quantitative approach in this research have been expected to generate considerable components of a case study. Although it has the tendency to produce a degree of certainty with the research findings presented in numerical forms, the quantitative approach cannot provide detailed description on the viewpoints of participants and surroundings. These non-quantifiable data are also crucial for the researcher to better interpret each sub-case which needs to be probed into in this study. Therefore, the application of another design, known as *qualitative approach*, is required to render the research results more comprehensive and understandable.

Generally, *qualitative research* is based on observation, in-depth investigation, description and interpretation of ongoing processes and of participants' behaviour and their way of life. Myers (1997) states that qualitative research methods are designed to enable researchers to better understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) contend that the goal of understanding a phenomenon from viewpoints of the informants and its particular social and institutional context is largely lost when textual data become quantified. While the data obtained from quantitative research are presented and summarised in numerical forms, the data derived from qualitative research are shown and concluded in narrative or verbal forms. Unlike quantitative research which is normally assessed

through statistical and logical methods, qualitative research could be evaluated through multiple sources of information (or triangulation). While the data in quantitative research are usually broken down, translated into numerical forms or simplified for study, the data in qualitative research are holistically studied and regarded as a complex system.

In this research, the qualitative approach has been applied (through the interviews of some administrative or scholarship/loan staff and student informants) to elicit viewpoints and attitudes towards the universities' policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity, the establishment and improvement of student aid programmes as well as the screening and targeting criteria on student loans and grants. These qualitative data are significant in this study, as they could provide more detailed information, in addition to the numerical data obtained from quantitative approach, regarding the students' attitudes towards the development of equity and the student aid programmes within their institutions. Such information could also help the researcher better understand and interpret the results derived from quantitative approach. However, Bryman (1996) notes that a distinct drawback of qualitative research is the difficulty of undertaking replications (or lack of external validity and accuracy) of its findings due to its intuitive component which might be considered a product of the idiosyncrasies or eccentricities of the researchers. In addition, the data obtained from the qualitative approach alone, without the support from any concrete or quantifiable sources of evidence, could be regarded as the presentation of biased viewpoints of particular informants or of the researcher's subjective interpretations. Therefore, to avoid or relieve these problems, the qualitative method needs to be supplemented by quantitative approaches.

From the above details concerning quantitative and qualitative approaches, since both research techniques have some advantages and drawbacks, the mixed-methods approach, or the use of multiple methods to extract data (known as *triangulation*), has been applied in this study to provide as much information and as many details as possible as well as to enhance the validity of research findings. (Through the application of triangulation, the results of the qualitative investigation might be checked against or used to corroborate those of the quantitative study.) Bryman (1992) recommends that, in conducting social research through the use of a

mixed-methods approach, researchers should regard qualitative work as a *facilitator* of quantitative work and/or vice versa, and should emphasise both approaches on an equal basis. Also, he further suggests that, sometimes, in a situation where an in-depth study is needed, it seems to be more appropriate to elicit some data through a qualitative method (i.e. interviews, observations), so that participants could be more encouraged and would feel more convenient to talk and explain at length about their beliefs, views, experiences, comments and suggestions, rather than just choosing and filling in the responses, limited by the researcher's query and pre-determined categories. Thus, in this case study, a qualitative approach was conducted, through the semi-structured interviews of staff and student participants in the focus institutions, to produce the detailed explanations of student aid programmes in the eight sub-cases as well as to generate some additional information which could be used to facilitate the analyses of some quantitative data derived from the quantitative technique (questionnaire). The data derived from the qualitative study (the interviews of student participants) are used to fill in the gaps and to prove as well as to follow up some critical issues in some personal circumstances, where it does not seem to be suitable to apply the quantitative approach. Moreover, data obtained from the qualitative approach can facilitate the interpretation of relationships between variables in the questionnaire (quantitative study). For instance, in this research, the qualitative approach (i.e. interviews, observations) is applied to explore the additional in-depth information on student participants' family backgrounds and status as well as some more details of the reasons why some student participants, even from the same socio-economic background, decided to/or not to take loans/grants, why some of them are or are not afraid of loans, and why most of them agree or disagree with each statement (statements 17-30) in the questionnaire.

At the same time, the data obtained from the quantitative approach could be employed to plug the gaps in the qualitative study. Also, they could be applied to help increase and maximise the reliability of the detailed information derived from the qualitative technique. For example, in this research, the quantitative approach (questionnaires distributed to over 300 respondents from each focus university) is used to enhance the validity of and to add more weight to the qualitative study (the interviews of only four or sometimes five student participants), which tends to be limited by time and/or budgetary constraints. (i.e., The researcher could not be in

more than one place at any one time to interview a very large number of participants.) Moreover, the quantitative technique facilitates the qualitative approach in the selection of student interviewees from the completed quantitative data table, through the systematic sampling method.

In short, in this case study, both quantitative and qualitative data are treated and regarded as complementary to one another (since multiple data sets derived from various sources are related to different research questions).

3.12 Sources of Evidence: Documents, Archival Records, Questionnaire, Interviews and Observations

Research approaches applied in this study are document analysis, data comparison, interviews and observations of administrative staff and some students, as well as a questionnaire, completed by students (a mixed-methods approach). The main sources of information are the Office of the Higher Education Commission (Division of Private Higher Education), Ministry of Education of Thailand (MOE), and the division or department of student affairs (student scholarships and loans section) of each private institution.

Sources of evidence	Details
1. Documentation	-National Education Act 1999, the ninth National Development plan of Higher Education 2002-2006 (focusing on private universities) -Information on the universities' administrative policies and action plans on the promotion of equity within their institutions and on student aid programmes.
2. Archival records	-Statistics of number and/or percentage of grant/loan recipients in each focus institution, from 1999 (or before, if available) to present.
3. Questionnaire	-Means-tested indicators (including programmes of study, parents' or guardians'

Sources of evidence	Details
3. Questionnaire	<p>income, occupations, education, assets, and numbers of family members who are dependent and who are studying)</p> <p>-Students' attitudes towards student aid programmes provided by the universities, the universities' criteria on the selection of grant/loan recipients, as well as their feeling towards loans.</p>
4. Interviews	<p>Institutional/Staff focus</p> <p>-Staff's knowledge about and attitudes towards the government policy on the promotion of equity and the expansion of educational opportunity (in higher education) for able but economically disadvantaged people.</p> <p>-Their attitudes towards student aid programmes and screening as well as targeting plans within their institutions.</p> <p>Student focus</p> <p>-The detailed information on their viewpoints regarding student aid programmes, provided by the universities or the government</p> <p>-Their opinions on the promotion of equality of educational opportunity for the socio-economically disadvantaged (e.g. through the users-pay system, target grants/loans, government voucher, the introduction of income contingency plan, and the shift from supply-side or funds allocated to universities to demand-side funding or funds directly allocated to students based on their needs and academic performance).</p> <p>-The detailed information on their feeling towards loans (for education).</p>

Sources of evidence	Details
4. Interviews	-Their future aspirations and career after graduation. (i.e. what they actually expect from higher education).
5. Observations (as additional evidence)	-Staff's and students' behaviour and reactions (both verbal and physical) before, during and after the interviews (in order to help identify the facts as well as the real emic or insiders' perspectives out of the possible attempts to generate appearances or false images).

3.13 Interview Techniques

The *interview* is one of the key instruments applied in this research. In comparison with other instruments, like questionnaires and observations, interviews seem to be the most effective technique in the elicitation of emic (or insiders') perspectives from participants. Cohen *et al* (2000) state that interviews enable people, both interviewers and interviewees, to express at length their views, their attitudes and feelings towards particular situations and events as well as to discuss their understanding and interpretations of the society or the world in which they live. From interviews, the researcher tends to be able to elicit the details of participants' opinions, feelings and some sensitive issues, which are difficult to be extracted from questionnaires.

The **semi-structured* interviews conducted in this case study mainly aim to extract the details of facts and some emic views of participants, concerning student aid programmes (i.e. loans/grants) as an instrument to promote equity in the focus institutions. As recommended by Tooley (1998), to avoid confusion and to distinguish the facts from the subjective ideas of participants, the interview questions (both for staff and student participants) are divided into two main sets: fact-oriented

* The *semi-structured* interview, as defined by Gall (1996), p.310, is the mixture between the use of a series of structured questions (to be initially addressed to the respondent) and the application of a set of *open-form* questions, based on the respondent's answer to the initial questions, to probe more deeply into some particular issues to obtain additional information.

queries and interviewee-oriented queries. Fact-oriented questions are designed to elicit factual data or general and personal information regarding the participants' positions, status and family backgrounds (for student interviewees), as well as the details of student aid programmes operated in each focus institution. Interviewee-oriented queries aim to probe into subjective information or the participants' viewpoints, understanding and interpretations of the government policy on access and equity in higher education, their opinions about the operation and the development of student aid programmes (especially the university grants and the national student loan project, supported by the government), as well as their experience of and their feelings towards loans (for student interviewees).

To effectively conduct an interview, Cohen *et al* (2000) suggest that the researcher should be equipped with the ability to elicit *trust* (i.e. a bond of friendship, a feeling of togetherness and joint pursuit of a common mission rising above personal egos); *curiosity* (the researcher's desire to know, to learn more about some facts and the participants' views and feelings towards particular things and events); and *naturalness* (the researcher's endeavour to exclude his/her views or subjectivity from responses of the interviewees and to present only what is within the minds of interviewees, non-interfered and unaffected by the researcher or the interviewer).

In this case study, the interview questions for university administrators/staff are developed from the main objectives of the research, that concern the study of policies and strategies taken by the focus institutions to create and maintain equity as well as to help socio-economically disadvantaged students, who would like to participate in higher education, to have more access to their universities. The staff interviewees, in this regard, are university administrators and officers, in charge of student scholarships and loans, assigned by their rectors to participate in this research. So they are expected to be endowed with a high level of knowledge of student aid programmes operated within their institutions. The interview questions for students are based on one of the principal aims of the research, that is to explore students' attitudes towards student aid programmes operated within the focus institutions. Since most student interviewees, in this research, are loan/grant takers and all of them are the users of private higher education, they are supposed to be equipped with a

certain level of knowledge on student grants and loans as well as other types of student aid programmes available in their universities. All the questions addressed to both staff and student participants are quite straightforward. Therefore, it is unlikely that interviewees will misinterpret the meaning of each query and provide wrong information owing to misunderstanding of questions. Most of the interview questions express interest in the interviewees' viewpoints and demonstrate concerns about the development of equity (through student aid programmes) which could be a crucial instrument to enhance the prestige as well as to upgrade the competitiveness of their universities. Thus, they tend to motivate active participation from the interviewees as the representatives of their institutions and as the narrators of their own stories and experiences, regarding grants, loans and other kinds of student aid programmes.

To build up trust between the researcher and the interviewees, prior to the beginning of fieldwork, the researcher made an initial visit to each focus institution to get more acquainted with all the administrators and officers in charge of student grants/loans of each university, by breaking the ice and having informal conversations with the persons who would contribute to the interviews. For student interviewees, the researcher tried to create friendly and relaxing atmosphere prior to the interviews by starting with informal conversations, concerning the interviewees' programmes of study, their family members, their hobbies and personal interests. Prior to and after the interviews, all the participants were confirmed that all their answers and personal information would be strictly kept in confidence and would be used for the research purposes only. During the interviews, in order to call for more attention and active participation from the interviewees, the researcher tried to express interest and curiosity in all the facts provided by the interviewees, concerning student aid programmes, as well as in all the interviewees' views and experiences either as loan/grant providers, loan/grant recipients or peers of loan/grant takers. Consequently, some open-form questions were occasionally addressed to some interviewees to probe more deeply into their views and feelings towards particular issues (i.e. student loan/grant programmes, criteria for the selection of grant/loan recipients, their experiences of/feelings towards loans, the introduction of *income-contingent loans* or *ICL* into Thai higher education and the cost recovery system). Through such open-form queries, the researcher could obtain some additional information which might facilitate the interpretations of some quantitative data, derived from the questionnaire,

and might be useful for further study of similar cases. In the course of interviews, the researcher tried to maximise the naturalness of the findings and to exclude her subjective ideas from the interview data by making separate notes of the researcher as an observer of the event/phenomenon in each sub-case. During the interviews, the researcher also had an opportunity to observe the interviewees' reactions (both verbal and physical) when they responded to interview questions, especially those which are related to the operation of student loan schemes within their institutions and those which are relevant to the student respondents' feelings towards loans as well as a top-up fees policy, which has already taken place in some private universities and might be applied to other higher education institutions nationwide in the future, after the introduction of an income-contingent loan scheme into Thai higher education. After the interviews, the researcher also had a chance to notice the actions of some interviewees when they interacted with their students or their peers and colleagues. Thus, it seemed that the researcher acted as an interviewer and an observer at the same time, while conducting semi-structured interviews in each focus institution.

In spite of the richness of information and details provided by the interview techniques, there are some discernible drawbacks of this kind of qualitative approach. For example, in this research, the four main disadvantages of interviews are the inevitable subjectivity and bias of some interviewees, the representativeness of student interviewees, the reliability of the findings (which is quite limited by the small number of student respondents, or only four or sometimes five of them from each focus institution who could be reached and who could fully and voluntarily take part in the interviews) as well as the time and budgetary constraints (as the researcher could not be in more than one place at the same time to interview hundreds or thousands of students). Therefore, student interviewees, in this research, might not represent the overall population of students in all the focus institutions.

The other noteworthy caveat in this research is the reliability of data derived from the interviews of administrative staff, regarded as well-known, high-ranking and powerful persons in each sub-case. As cited in Cohen *et al* (2000), powerful people or elites will normally be equipped with eloquence and high communicative skills. Being concerned about the maintenance of their reputation, they are likely to apply such skills to manipulate the conversations. This may bring in negative effects on the

interview results. For instance, in this study, the powerful and high-ranking people, with an attempt to protect the fame of themselves and of their institutions, might create some positive images of their universities by concealing some weaknesses or prejudice that may exist in the operation of some student aid programmes under their supervision and by giving distorted information to the researcher. As it is possible that these high-ranking and powerful people try to protect the prestige of themselves and their institutions through the generation of impressive appearances or positive images in front of the researcher and the public, the reliability of the findings obtained inhibited by these kinds of *power relations* (interviews of renowned and powerful people) tend to be limited and are supposed to be re-examined through the application of other instruments and methods, like documents and post-interview observations (the use of triangulation to check against the result derived from a single method as well as to extract additional information).

3.14 Selection of sub-cases and participants

- “Why eight institutions?”

This case study has been conducted in the largest eight private institutions of higher education in Thailand. These eight private institutions each have the largest numbers of students, in comparison to those of other 49 private universities in the country. They have over 10,000 students registering in a variety of degree programmes offered by each institution. Due to the intake of larger numbers of students per annum, they are supposed to obtain more grants and loans annually allocated by the government. In addition, the researcher is more likely to receive more data and a variety of respondents and information. From these eight institutions, the researcher tends to collect more complete information as well as sufficient details from the respondents and various sources of evidence within time, in comparison with conducting research in other institutions with fewer respondents.

Table 3.2 Presentation of the numbers of students, registering in the focus institutions, and the tuition and fees per annum (in Thai baht) for each university. (As mentioned in Chapter 1, for the reasons of confidentiality, all the focus universities are renamed Universities A-H.)

Institution	Academic year 2004-2005			
	Number of students	Tuition and fees per annum for BS and BA (baht)		
		Social Sciences	Science and technology	Health Science
University A	25,636	75,000	105,000	-
University B	10,122	45,370	75,270	-
University C	21,216	51,250	82,600	-
University D	13,673	45,100	78,570	94,700
University E	18,358	83,875	113,600	115,000
University F	12,231	79,130	93,530	104,330
University G	21,773	44,500	77,000	-
University H	21,372	59,800	85,650	-

Sources: OHEC (Office of the Higher Education Commission) and all the focus institutions
N.B. : £1 was equal to 75 (Thai) baht as of 1st September 2004.

Participants in this research are key administrative staff and students from these eight leading private institutions. The staff informants are executive administrators and officers (ten of them, one or sometimes two from each institution) who have worked in the focus institutions and who have been in charge of student scholarships and loans for over two years. These staff participants are expected to provide the researcher with more accurate and informative data, since they are supposed to have already been acquainted with their institutions' student welfare systems and policies. Student informants in this research are divided into two groups: the control group and the focus group. They are all college-age people (from 17 to 26 years old). The control group consists of on average 174 students who are not taking grants or loans, randomly chosen from each institution (totally 1,390 students). The focus group is composed of, on average, 203 students, who are grant or loan

recipients, from each institution (totally 1,626 students). Student participants are classified according to their parents' or guardians' income and present occupations. Most of the focus group members are socio-economically disadvantaged students, who come from either lower middle-class (skilled manual) or working-class (semi-skilled and unskilled manual) backgrounds, with the parents' (or a guardians') income of not more than 150,000 baht a year. (£1 was equivalent to about 75 baht, as of 1st September 2004.) From the initial visit to each focus institution, the researcher learnt that some of them come from neighbourhoods with low higher education participation rates and have no or little familial experience of higher education. All student participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire, designed by the researcher. The questionnaire includes each student's gender, age and details of a programme/course taken at each institution, his/her education background, his/her family background (parents' occupations and education backgrounds) and parents' or guardians' income per month, his/her source(s) of funds for education, his/her home location, his/her feelings towards loans and his/her attitudes towards private higher education and a student loan scheme managed by each focus institution. In this case study, apart from the interviews of university staff/administrators, some face-to-face interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of student informants (in total 35, made up of four or sometimes five participants from each institution) who contributed to the questionnaire. The student interviewees were randomly and opportunistically selected by the researcher, based on the probability (or random) sampling system proposed by Cohen *et al* (2000), p. 100, as well as each individual's willingness and consent.

3.15 Sampling Methods

In this research, for the quantitative study, the sample size of student representatives (questionnaire respondents) from each focus institution is determined at on average 377 (out of 20,000), based on the table determining the size of a random sample, recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970, p. 608). Such a sample size could yield the representativeness of the sample population (in all the eight sub-cases or eight focus institutions), with a high confidence level of 95% and sampling error of only five per cent, as determined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970, p. 608) and noted by Cohen *et al* (2000). It also tends to bring in *replicability* of the research results if the same kind of case study is carried out again on the same groups of respondents from

the same focus institutions or the same sub-cases. The mixed methods of sampling were applied for the selection of respondents for all the sub-cases. Initially, a *random sample* or *probability sampling* was used as the main method of choosing the respondents.

In her first visit to each focus university, the researcher communicated with the section or the office of scholarships and loans of each institution and asked for a list of schools, student clubs/societies which tend to have a large number of grant/loan takers (i.e. schools of engineering, accountancy, law, liberal arts, communication and language sciences as well as a grant and loan takers' society) and another list of those, in which most students are unlikely to take any grants/loans (i.e. schools of business, economics, computer science, medical and health sciences, architecture as well as international sports clubs). After the random selection of a couple of schools and some student clubs/societies from the lists (by alternately picking out the first, third, fifth, seventh and ninth schools/institutes and the second, fourth, sixth, eighth and tenth clubs/societies from a list containing about ten schools/institutes as well as ten clubs/societies provided by each university), the researcher contacted the sections/offices of scholarships/loans of all the focus institutions again and asked for the name lists of grant/loan takers and of non-takers of grants/loans from all the selected schools/institutes and clubs/societies. With the cooperation of some staff in charge of scholarships/loans of the focus universities, some forms of questionnaire were passed on to all members of the selected clubs/societies. After that, the researcher communicated with the registrar section/office of each school, through the section/office of scholarships/loans, and asked them to distribute the questionnaire to on average 125 grant/loan takers and 125 non-takers of grants/loans, randomly drawn from the name lists provided by each focus institution. (In most sub-cases, a school has about 1,000 students in total: approximately 500 grant/loan takers and 500 non-takers of grants/loans. Thus, every fourth person on the lists would be asked to complete the questionnaire, $\frac{500}{4} = 125$).

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This type of method is called *multi-staged* or *stage* sampling (as defined by Burton, 2000, and Cohen *et al*, 2000), that is the random selection of respondents from some schools, classes, clubs and societies. From this kind of probability

sampling, the researcher obtained 2,480 respondents (on average 310 of them from each sub-case).

However, in this case study, the researcher found that the above kind of probability sampling was obstructed by non-responses from some selected participants. Thus, in addition, *opportunity sampling* (a type of *non-probability sampling*), was applied. Through the application of opportunity sampling, the researcher could have access to the nearest individuals at a time and, eventually, could reach the expected sample size of respondents for each focus institution. From opportunity sampling, the researcher got an additional 536 respondents.

In total, the number of student participants in the quantitative study from all the focus institutions is 3,016 (or on average 377 respondents as representatives from each university or each sub-case). 1,626 of them are grant/loan recipients (or on average 203 from each institution), while 1,390 of them are non-takers of grants/loans (or on average 174 from each university). 82% of student participants were randomly selected while 18% of them were opportunistically chosen.

For the qualitative approach (interviews), all the key persons (either administrators or officers), in charge of student loans and grants from all the focus institutions, were asked to contribute to the semi-structured interviews, conducted by the researcher. This might be recognised as *cluster* sampling, which includes all the potential staff participants in the study. However, the mixed methods of sampling were applied for the interviews of students. The first method is called *systematic sampling* (a type of probability sampling), in which the researcher picked out every 94th respondent of each focus institution from the completed (quantitative) data table, i.e., the 94th, 188th, 282nd and 376th or the last respondent from each university. This sampling criterion is derived from the estimated total number of the wider population from each university divided by the estimated required number in the interview sample from each institution:

$$\frac{377}{4} = 94.25 \text{ (rounded down to 94).}$$

N.B. : Source: Cohen *et al*, 2000, p. 100

However, due to some problems, which cropped up while applying the systematic sampling (e.g. refusals from some selected participants, missing appointments on part of some participants, unexpected illness/engagements, difficulties in getting in touch with some of them and other obstructions, that resulted in the researcher's inability to obtain the complete data/crucial information), the researcher obtained only 16 student interviewees. Thus, she needed to carry out an alternative method of sampling, in addition to the first one. In this regard, opportunity sampling (or access to the nearest individuals) was applied again in this research. Finally, the researcher gained 19 student interviewees through this kind of non-probability sampling. For the interviews, the researcher obtained in total ten staff participants (one or sometimes two from each institution) and 35 student respondents (four or sometimes five from each university).

From this case study, the researcher has learnt that either probability or non-probability sampling method has both advantages and drawbacks. In spite of its tendency to produce representativeness of samples and to prevent the researcher from being biased and subjective (in the selection of respondents), probability sampling, especially for qualitative approach, could be impeded by some factors such as unavailability of and inactive cooperation as well as non-responses from the selected respondents, that may adversely affect a sample's representativeness (as noted by Burton, 2000). Although non-probability sampling, often recognised as *convenience* or *opportunity sampling*, seems to be a useful and practical method for many case studies due to its less complicated design and operation procedures (in comparison with probability sampling), this kind of sampling method is generally limited by non-representativeness and non-generalisability of the samples. Therefore, the limitations and drawbacks of all the sampling methods applied in this study, which might have an effect on the representativeness of the samples in this research, should be kept in mind of users and readers as well as other researchers who are interested in conducting the similar kind of case study research through the application of the above-mentioned sampling methods.

3.16 Procedures of Evidence Analysis

After the survey, the quantitative data collected from all eight sub-cases are divided into different variables (e.g. name of institution, name of school, gender, parents' income, education background and name and number of assets owned by respondents). Each variable contains various codes indicating the same or different responses obtained from the respondents (i.e., For the feelings towards loans, 1 stands for being afraid of loans, 2 for not being afraid of loans, and 9 for no answer). All the responses extracted from the questionnaire participants are kept in the form of a data table or database storing various codes that present the same or dissimilar information and details on the respondents from different universities and from divergent socio-economic backgrounds. The quantitative data are analysed through the application of SPSS programme. The quantitative study, in this research, mainly focuses on the exploration of participants' attitudes towards private higher education, equality of opportunity in private universities, socio-economically disadvantaged students and student aid schemes provided by the private institutions of higher education. It also aims to investigate some possible factors (i.e. parents' income, assets and occupations) which may affect the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans/grants as well as their decision to study at particular institutions.

The correlation between each pair of variables is examined through the Pearson Chi-Square test (that is normally applied in the test of correlations between two variables in the two-sided or 2 x 2 tables).

With reference to Gayle (2000), the chi-square (χ^2) test is based on two main hypotheses:

- The *null hypothesis* (H_0) indicates that there is no structured or systematic correlation between two variables.
- The *alternate hypothesis* (H_1) states that there is a structured or systematic correlation between two variables.

To test which hypothesis is true, we use a significant level or p (probability)-

value as indicator. As stated by Gayle (2000), in social science research, we normally require the significant level or the p-value of 0.05 or five per cent. If the p-value is equivalent to or less than 0.05, we could reject the null hypothesis and indicate that the alternate hypothesis is true. This means the two variables are correlated. However, if the p-value is more than 0.05, we have to accept that the null hypothesis is true. That is the two variables are not correlated.

After the examinations of correlations between variables, the findings obtained from quantitative data analysis are matched with all the related hypotheses. They could be used to test the efficiency of the theory and concepts corroborating the existence of equity in Thai private higher education.

The qualitative data extracted from the staff and student interviewees of different institutions (the primary sources of evidence) as well as those obtained from the secondary sources of evidence (e.g. documents and archival records) are kept as individual case reports. In this research, documents and archival records, obtained from the government and all the focus institutions, are checked against and compared with the responses elicited from the interviewees prior to qualitative data analysis. Some minimal pieces of evidence gained from the observations of interviewees are integrated into the interview data.

In this case study, the interview data are manually analysed by searching for some key words, phrases and sentences, which seem to be often raised and cited by most staff and student interviewees (as they may represent some common thoughts, beliefs, opinions and attitudes shared by the interviewees). In this regard, such key words, phrases and sentences are picked out. Then, they are classified according to the issues they are related to (e.g. the key words and phrases expressing the interviewees' ideas on the *government loans* are grouped together under the same heading). This may be regarded as a kind of coding process, as suggested by Stroh (2000). After that, the words, phrases and sentences under each heading (or each code) are linked together to form the common thoughts, beliefs and views of the interviewees on and their feelings towards a particular issue/event (i.e. the interviewees' perspectives on the government loan programme, operated within their universities, as well as its effectiveness in assisting disadvantaged students in the

focus institutions). All the headings, as well as the interviewees' common thoughts and ideas developed under them, are matched with the relevant hypotheses and research questions, concerning the viability of the government policy on access and equity in higher education practised in the focus private institutions and the utility of the government loan programme for private higher education. The findings obtained from the interview data, supported by other sources of evidence such as documents and archival records, could demonstrate or imply the possibility of the development of equity in Thai private institutions of higher education.

3.17 Mode of Evidence Analysis

In this case study, the dominant strategies or modes of evidence analysis are *pattern-matching* and *explanation-building*.

Yin (1994) claims that *pattern-matching* is one of the most preferable strategies used in case study analyses. Its norms are mainly based on the comparisons between empirically based patterns (or research results) and previously predicted patterns (or hypotheses) embodying theoretical perspectives (on the possible co-existence of equity and efficiency in Thai private higher education). If the real or empirically based patterns coincide with the predicted ones (the hypotheses), the findings can help strengthen the *internal validity* (that is grounded in a real causal relationship between independent and dependent variables) of the case study. In this research, pattern-matching is primarily used for quantitative data analysis and for the validation of causal links between independent variables (e.g. parents' income, assets and the number of dependents in family) and dependent variables (i.e. respondents' decision to take loans, their decision to study at particular institutions and their fear of loans).

Yin (1994) notes that *explanation-building* is actually a special type of pattern-matching. Normally, the objective of this strategy is to analyse the case study data by building an explanation about the cases. In this case study, explanation-building is based on the stipulation or specification of a set of causal links or interlinks between independent variables (or a set of key words, phrases and sentences), which could be used to represent the common views, beliefs and

perspectives amongst staff and student interviewees. The causal links and interlinks, developed through the application of this strategy, may reflect the general perspectives of the case study participants, that could help explain some phenomena and events (i.e. the promotion of equity and the development of student aid programmes within the focus institutions) in this research.

3.18 Limitations of the study

Despite its provision of a wealth of critically in-depth knowledge about student aid programmes operated in all the sub-cases under investigation, this research has some discernible limitations. Its main disadvantage concerns the difficulty of generalising the research results to other situations or other cases (a problem concerning *external validity* or *generalisability* of the research findings, that will be further discussed in the below section and in the last chapter). While the research methods and findings of this case study could be applicable and generalisable to similar cases of other large private universities in Thailand, with more than 10,000 students, they may not be generalised to smaller private institutions. Although the findings obtained from the sample population in all the eight sub-cases turn out to be the same or similar, this could not guarantee that the researcher would gain exactly the same or similar results if she conducted the same kind of case study with the same research instruments as well as the same data collection methods and procedures in smaller institutions.

Another discernible weakness of this research concerns the limitations of probability sampling approach, mainly caused by non-responses and inactive cooperation from as well as unavailability of the randomly selected respondents both in quantitative and qualitative studies. Such limitations as well as time and budgetary constraints drove the researcher to apply non-probability approach or opportunity sampling in order to achieve the expected sample size of respondents for each sub-case in quantitative study as well as to gain additional interviewees for qualitative study. This use of an alternative sampling method (which is not purely random sampling) might have a minimal effect on the representativeness of the sample population in this case study.

The other weakness of this case study is the subjectivity and bias of some staff and student interviewees, which might impinge upon the reliability of the interview findings. Although the researcher tried to cope with such a problem by applying triangulation approaches (the use of other instruments such as documents, archival records and post-interview observations) to check against and re-examine the result derived from a single method, it seems that subjective thoughts and emic or insiders' perspectives of the participants are inseparable from the interview data. Another factor that may have an effect on the reliability of the interview findings is the non-representativeness of student interviewees, as only 35 of them (from all the focus institutions) could be reached and were able to fully and voluntarily contribute to the interviews. The other component which might affect the reliability of the interview results is the distorted information that is possibly derived from power relations or the communication with some high-ranking and powerful interviewees, driven by their attempts to create some impressive images and appearances in front of the researcher. Owing to the prevailing hierarchy, seniority and face-saving culture of senior or high-ranking people in the Thai society, it is hard for a young Thai female researcher to challenge some high-ranking staff or administrators on some information (i.e. the exact numbers and amounts of some types of grants/loans allocated to some students in particular fields of study) that is treated in strict confidence within their universities.

On this matter, users and readers of this research as well as other researchers who might be interested in conducting a similar kind of case studies should be aware of the above-mentioned caveats of the external validity and generalisability of the research results as well as the reliability of the interview data.

3.19 Validity and Reliability

Validity and *reliability* are regarded as the crucial criteria for the judgment of the quality of a research design. For case study research, Yin (1994) indicates that the quality of a case study design can be judged by using four quality criteria, composed of three types of validity criteria and a reliability criterion: internal validity, external validity, construct validity and reliability (of research findings).

Bryman (2004) notes that *internal validity* concerns the query of whether a conclusion that reveals a causal relationship between two or more variables (or between x and y) is genuine and is not produced by other plausible factors. To achieve internal validity, the researcher is expected to be able to determine whether x, as an independent variable, causes or is at least in part responsible for the variation identified in y, as a dependent variable.

In this case study, *internal validity* is addressed through the application of analytical tactics of *pattern-matching* for quantitative study and *explanation-building* for qualitative approach. Through *pattern-matching*, alongside inferences of correlations between variables based on Pearson *Chi-Square* test, the causal relationships between a number of independent and dependent variables under investigation (i.e. the causal impact of parents' earnings on the respondents' decision to study at particular institutions as well as the causal impacts of the following factors on the respondents' decision of taking loans: parents' income, parents' assets, parents' occupations, number of dependents in family, programmes of study and length of the programmes of study) have been shown to exist. Through *explanation-building*, a network of the causal relationships and interconnections between a number of variables, such as the causal impacts of a variety of student aid programmes as well as the numbers of grants and loans available at the focus universities on the student interviewees' (especially the grant/loan recipients') decision to take part in specific programmes of study at particular institutions, have turned out to be reasonable and realistic. Thus, this research aims to achieve internal validity through the use of two dominant case study tactics: *pattern-matching* and *explanation-building*.

External validity deals with the question of whether the findings of a case study can be generalised to similar cases or beyond the specific research context (e.g. the possibility for the quantitative findings to be generalised beyond 3,016 respondents, from the focus institutions, in this case study). To address this type of validity, the research is supposed to establish the domain to which the findings can be generalised. To maximise generalisability of the qualitative results, as recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Bryman (2004), the research is expected to produce a *thick description*, or rich accounts of the details of a phenomenon/event, which

could be regarded as a database for making judgments about the possible *transferability* of the results to similar cases in similar settings/circumstances.

In this case study, the researcher has tried to apply the replication logic in case study research, as suggested by Yin (1994), to maximise external validity of the findings. Based on such logic, the research is designed to explore the theory and concepts concerning the possibility of the development of equity in Thai private higher education, through replications of the results in eight sub-cases or eight leading private higher education institutions with the largest numbers of students (over 10,000), in comparison with other private universities in Thailand. Most participants in quantitative study are randomly selected to prevent the researcher from being biased and subjective as well as to maintain the distance between the researcher and the participants chosen. In qualitative approach, the researcher has carefully constructed the interview questions for staff in charge of loans and grants as well as for student interviewees from all the focus universities, so that they could be used to elicit a large amount of data or *thick description* on the national student loan programme practised by all the focus institutions, most of which tend to be the same or similar within the eight sub-cases under consideration. As the main policy and measures on the operation as well as the repayment of student loans are defined by a central body or the government, such information and details on the student loan programme are likely to be transferable between the eight focus institutions and to be generalisable to other large private universities, beyond these eight sub-cases. Moreover, such a large amount of data (obtained from the interviews of staff and students in this study) could be regarded as a meaningful database for future references as well as for making judgments about *replicability* of the research findings, on the condition that the same kind of case study is conducted again on the same groups of interviewees (in their same positions) from the same focus universities in about the same time.

From the study, it seems that all the eight focus sub-cases yield the same results that corroborate the efficiency of the theory and concepts on the possibility of the development of equity in Thai private higher education. However, as cited in 3.18 (limitations of the study), such results might not be generalisable to smaller cases.

Construct validity or measurement validity concerns the query of whether the operational measures used in a case study correctly represent and reflect the concepts being studied. To attain this type of validity, the research is supposed to accurately operate the constructs or complicated ideas formed by the mixture of various simpler ideas of interest in the study, through the application of multiple measures of the same constructs, as part of the same study.

In this research, *construct validity* is addressed through the use of all the key strategies, recommended by Yin (1994): the application of *multiple sources of evidence*, the establishment of *a chain of evidence* and *reviews of draft case study reports* by key informants. The application of more than a single source of evidence helps increase the *accuracy* of both qualitative and quantitative findings of the research, as multiple sources of evidence can be checked against one another and can be significantly used to examine and help clarify the data gained from only one source of evidence (i.e., Documents and archival records can be checked against the interview data. In the same time, the interview data can help explain the findings obtained from quantitative study). The multiple sources of evidence applied in this case study consist of results gained from student questionnaires, responses from the interviews, alongside the observations, of administrative staff and student interviewees, documents and archival records, provided by the reliable sources, like the Office of the Higher Education Commission (Division of Private Higher Education), Ministry of Education of Thailand (MOE), and the division or department of student affairs (student scholarships and loans section) of each focus institution. To enhance credibility of the qualitative data, some draft case study reports were sent out for member checking or reviews by the key respondents and authorised persons, in charge of student grants and loans, of all the focus institutions.

The synthesis of various elementary ideas of interest in the research (i.e. facts regarding policy on the promotion of equity and student aid programmes operated in the focus institutions as well as staff's and students' attitudes towards such policy and programmes), provided by the above-mentioned multiple sources, helps accurately form and operate the constructs or complicated ideas under investigation (concerning the corroboration of the universal theory and concepts on the possibility of the

development of equity in private higher education, within a specific context of Thai private universities).

Reliability deals with *consistency* and *replicability* of the findings of a case study. Yin (1994) and Cohen *et al* (2000) suggest that, to establish the reliability of a study, the researcher should be able to demonstrate that his/her operations of the study as well as data collection procedures can be repeated, on the same or similar group of respondents in the same or similar context (however defined) and with the same or similar results.

To maximise reliability of the research findings, test-retest strategy is incorporated in the protocol of this case study. Prior to extracting data from actual participants in the research, the questionnaire was tested and retested on the same group of 30 students, randomly selected by the focus institutions (three or sometimes four from each university), with a 4-month interval. In this research, test-retest strategy is applied to examine *consistency* of the research findings.

From reliability analysis, based on the retest findings, the Cronbach's alpha is estimated at a high level of 0.89%, which indicates reliability of the research instrument (questionnaire). Table 3.3 shows how the two tests produce similar results, with similar average values and SD.

Table 3.3 Demonstration of the comparison between the average values and SD (standard deviations) of viewpoints of the experimental group of respondents (with reference to statements 17-30 in the questionnaire), through the application of test-retest method.

Statement	Test (January 2004)			Retest (May 2004)		
	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning
17. <i>Private</i> higher education should be only for high-income people.	1.97	0.74	Disagree	2.03	0.76	Disagree

Statement	Test (January 2004)			Retest (May 2004)		
	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning
18. <i>Private</i> higher education should be made more accessible to young people of disadvantaged background or low-income family.	3.25	0.83	Agree	3.23	0.82	Agree
19. Socio-economically disadvantaged students are <i>not</i> only those whose parents' (or guardians') income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month).	2.14	0.82	Disagree	2.27	0.87	Disagree
20. The government should consider parents' (or guardians') income the most important criterion to offer a loan or a grant to a student.	2.87	0.86	Agree	2.87	0.86	Agree
21. The eligibility of loans should <i>not</i> be limited only to students whose parents' (or guardians') income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month).	2.44	1.06	Disagree	2.47	1.07	Disagree
22. Each <i>private</i> institution of higher education should establish more student grant or loan schemes, or Hardship Funds, to support socio-economically disadvantaged but academically qualified students.	3.23	1.14	Agree	3.23	1.14	Agree
23. Each <i>private</i> education institution should apply and emphasise a loan scheme rather than a grant scheme to support socio-economically disadvantaged students.	2.47	1.25	Disagree	2.47	1.25	Disagree

Statement	Test (January 2004)			Retest (May 2004)		
	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning
24. In higher education (in general, both public and private), a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants, debt remission, or lower tuition fees.	2.20	1.32	Disagree	2.27	1.36	Disagree
25. The ceiling or maximum amount of loans allocated to each student should not exceed 100,000 baht per year.	2.10	1.54	Disagree	2.10	1.54	Disagree
26. A loan or grant recipient should be allowed to be in paid employment while studying.	3.06	0.94	Agree	3.03	0.93	Agree
27. To effectively operate a student aid (loan/grant) scheme, <i>private</i> institutions of higher education need cooperation and support from the government.	2.67	1.03	Agree	2.73	1.05	Agree
28. The promotion of equity also helps promote quality in <i>private</i> higher education.	3.05	1.13	Agree	3.00	1.11	Agree
29. To promote equity in <i>private</i> higher education, the government should allocate funds (loans or grants) directly to students rather than to institutions.	2.58	1.24	Agree	2.60	1.25	Agree
30. An <i>income-contingent</i> loan scheme or a graduate tax system should be introduced and set up in <i>private</i> higher education.	2.20	1.15	Disagree	2.23	1.17	Disagree

N.B.

- Criteria for the identification of the respondents' viewpoints on the above statements are as follows:

- 3.26 - 4.00 - Strongly agree
- 2.51 – 3.25 - Agree
- 1.76 – 2.50 - Disagree
- 1.00 – 1.75 - Strongly disagree
- (*0.75 is added to each range: 4-1 = 3, $\frac{3}{4}$ = 0.75.)

- £1 was 75 (Thai) baht as of 1st September 2004.

However, as mentioned in 3.18, the critical factors that may affect reliability of the interview data are the non-representativeness of student interviewees and the distorted information caused by some high-ranking and powerful interviewees' attempts to generate impressive images and appearances of themselves and their institutions in front of the researcher as well as the public.

Apart from the validity and reliability criteria, ethical issues should also be addressed by case study researchers and regarded as a crucial component of the quality case study research.

3.20 Ethical Issues

Since this research mainly concerns equity issues and the effectiveness of student aid programmes of the eight leading private universities in Thailand, some data which seem to be quite personal and confidential in Thai culture (e.g. parents' or guardians' income and assets) need to be elicited from student informants so that the researcher would be able to use them as part of means-tested indicators and as an instrument to find out whether the grants and loans have been appropriately targeted and whether they are accessible to those who are the least advantaged of the focus group and are in greatest need of them. Hence the researcher's responsibility to all student participants needs to be seriously concerned about in this case study.

In the course of data collection, the researcher strictly followed the ethical rules, defined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 1992). First of all, before conducting the fieldwork, the researcher asked for permission from APHEIT (Association of Private Higher Education Institutions of Thailand) and all

the focus institutions to have access to their universities, to distribute questionnaires to students and to interview some administrators, staff and students. In this regard, all of them were informed of the main objectives of this case study. Once the permission was granted, the researcher approached all the staff and student participants and re-informed them of the aims, the expected outcomes and the benefits of the research as well as their contribution to the questionnaires and the interviews.

In this study, the confidentiality and anonymity of each institution, each respondent/interviewee and some personal data, derived from the staff and student respondents, are regarded as the most critical concerns of the researcher. To avoid negative reference and inappropriate comparisons or criticisms that may arise afterwards, all the focus institutions are renamed Universities A-H (assigned in a non-alphabetical order). For the reasons of confidentiality, all the respondents are called, for example, Staff 1/University A or Student 2/University B. However, in certain situations and circumstances, where the names, contact addresses or phone numbers and e-mails of some respondents are required (e.g. for future interview arrangements between the researcher and a number of questionnaire respondents), the researcher had to ask some respondent volunteers to fill in their names, contact numbers and e-mails for further communication. In this regard, the researcher told the respondent volunteers that all the information, both in the completed questionnaires and interviews, will be strictly kept in confidence. In any case, it will not be divulged to other people, to the public or even to the focus institutions themselves.

Prior to carrying out the interviews, the researcher asked for permission and consent from all the staff and student interviewees to record the conversations between the researcher and interviewees on videos and cassettes. On this matter, the interviewees had full rights to refuse to be video- and/or tape- recorded. Also, they had full freedom to withdraw from the study or the interviews at any time. As suggested by Kimmel (1988), the researcher tried to avoid identifying the interviewees (especially student participants) and specifying their unique characteristics in order to protect their individual privacy and confidentiality of the interview data. Sometimes, the researcher needed to replace their real names with some fictitious names or pseudonyms.

To encourage and motivate all the respondents to take part in this case study, the researcher needed to clearly address the expected outcomes as well as the common benefits, contributed by their participation in the study.

3.21 Informing participants of Expected Outcomes

Prior to taking part in the study, all the respondents were informed of the following expected outcomes of the research:

3.21.1 This research may be useful in shaping a policy and creating a more equitable system in Thai private institutions of higher education.

3.21.2 This research may be used as a guideline for further development of student aid schemes in Thai private higher education.

3.21.3 This research is hoped to serve as a driving force towards the establishing and the strengthening of partnerships and, if possible, cooperative networks amongst private institutions, the public and the private sectors, as well as external organisations, in the promotion and support of equity in Thai higher education.

3.22 Conclusion

From this chapter, we have learnt the structure and characteristics of this case study, the research design, data analysis procedures and criteria, as well as the chain of evidence showing relationship between the theory and concepts (concerning the possibility of the development of equity in private higher education), the research questions and hypotheses (developed from such theory and concepts), the data collection procedures (including the use of multiple research strategies to elicit the data), the research results and the conclusions drawn, that is the corroboration of the above-mentioned theory and concepts within a specific context of Thai private higher education (or within the eight sub-cases). Due to the different advantages and disadvantages of both quantitative and qualitative techniques, the researcher needs to apply the mixed-methods approach and triangulation (the use of multiple methods and

instruments) to extract data, to respond to all the research questions and to test hypotheses in this case study as well as to maximise validity and reliability of the research results. Besides the validity and reliability criteria, ethical issues (i.e. confidentiality of the data and anonymity of the informants) are also regarded as a critical concern in this research. Despite the richness of in-depth information and quantitative data provided by the research, the limitations of this case study (e.g. non-representativeness of student interviewees and queries on external validity and generalisability of the findings to smaller cases as well as reliability of the interview data) should be kept in mind of readers and other researchers who are keen to conduct a similar kind of case studies to explore the same theory and concepts on the possibility of the development of equity in Thai private higher education.

Chapter 4

Interview Results and other sources of evidence

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 3, apart from the questionnaires, responses obtained from the interviews of staff and students, documents, archival records as well as observations are significant sources of evidence in this research. The qualitative data obtained from the above-mentioned sources have provided more in-depth information of all the focus sub-cases. Such information helps the researcher better understand and interpret the results derived from the quantitative approach.

The data obtained from the interviews of student respondents are used to follow up some crucial issues concerning personal circumstances, the respondents' opinions on and feelings towards loan and grant schemes within their institutions, which are quite difficult or do not seem appropriate to be explored through the quantitative approach. Through some open-form queries addressed to respondents during the semi-structured interviews, the researcher obtained some additional information, which usefully helps facilitate the interpretations of quantitative data and discovered some convergent and divergent patterns of responses derived from the interviews, which might be transferable and applicable to similar cases. The interview questions addressed to university administrators/staff are based on the main objectives of this case study which are relevant to the study of measures and action plans taken by the focus universities to establish and maintain equity as well as to assist economically disadvantaged students, who would like to take part in private higher education or who are studying in their universities.

This chapter presents the qualitative results of this case study, which will be explored in the following sections and will be further discussed in Chapter 6. First, we will start from the interviews of staff and students as a principal source of information in this research.

4.2 Objectives of the Interviews of University Staff

The interviews of administrators and staff, in charge of student affairs and student aid programmes, from the focus institutions aim to:

- study the policies and administrative plans and strategies taken by eight focus Thai private institutions of higher education to establish and maintain equity within their institutions (in conformity with the government policy on access and equity in higher education).
- probe into their implementation plans, grant/voucher or loan schemes, used for encouraging socio-economically disadvantaged but academically qualified college-age people to fully participate or increase their level of participation in higher education.
- study the roles of the private sector or private institutions and to learn how they promote and support access and equity in Thai higher education.
- to examine the following institutional oriented hypotheses (1-4), mentioned in Chapter 3:

Hypothesis 1 The government policy on equity and fairness in higher education has been properly practised in eight leading Thai private universities. (They reasonably focus on able but low-income students.)

Hypothesis 2 In each focus institution, most grants and scholarships are merit-based rather than need-based, while loans are need-based rather than merit-based. (This signifies that loans are more effective than grants in assisting low-income students.)

Hypothesis 3 Family income is the most important criterion for offering grants and loans to students.

Hypotheses 4 From the viewpoint of administrative staff or student aid officers in each institution:

Hypothesis 4.1 In their opinion, a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants and full or partial tuition waivers.

Hypothesis 4.2 An income-contingent loan scheme is going to be more effective than the present mortgage-type plan, in terms of the development of equity in Thai private higher education.

Hypothesis 4.3 The focus institutions need assistance and cooperation from the government and/or external funding bodies to effectively operate all types of student aid schemes.

Hypothesis 4.4 It is possible that equity does not undermine quality in private higher education in Thailand.

The staff respondents (in total ten of them, made up of at least one and sometimes two from each institution) in this research are university administrators and officers, in charge of student loans and grants, assigned by their rectors and superintendents to participate in the interviews. Hence, they are fully equipped with the knowledge of student aid programmes operated within their institutions.

Besides the interviews of university administrators and officers, the researcher had an opportunity to interview four or sometimes five students from each focus university, who had previously contributed to the questionnaires.

4.3 Objectives of the Interviews of Students

The interview questions addressed to student respondents are developed from one of the principal aims of the research, that is to explore students' attitudes towards student aid programmes operated within the focus institutions. The interviews of students from each focus institution, as complementary part of the questionnaires

(randomly and also opportunistically distributed to some students, both those who are taking and who are not taking grants/loans, from each focus university) aim to:

- probe into students' views on private higher education, equality of opportunity in private universities, socio-economically disadvantaged students and student aid schemes provided by private institutions of higher education.
- find out how low-income students, from each focus institution, manage to cover all their tuition fees and course-related expenses in private universities, apart from the loans or grants offered by the institutions under the government support.
- examine the following student-oriented hypotheses (8 and 10—10.3-10.5 and 10.7-10.8), mentioned in Chapter 3:

Hypothesis 8 The present grant and loan recipients (the focus group) at each institution are really in need of funds and are economically less advantaged than their peers who are non-takers of grants and loans (the control group).

Hypotheses 10 From viewpoints of the student respondents:

Hypothesis 10.3 In their opinion, family income should be the most important criterion for the universities or the government to offer grants and loans.

Hypothesis 10.4 A loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants and full or partial tuition waivers.

Hypothesis 10.5 An income-contingent loan (or ICL) scheme is going to be more effective than the present mortgage-type plan, in terms of the development of equity in Thai

private higher education.

Hypothesis 10.7 It is fairer that the government or a funding body (either public or private) allocates either grants or loans directly to students rather than to universities.

Hypothesis 10.8 It is possible that equity (or adequacy of educational opportunity) is not incompatible with quality in Thai private higher education.

Since most student interviewees, in this case study, are loan/grant takers and all of them are the users of private higher education, they are expected to have some knowledge on student grants and loans as well as other kinds of student aid programmes available in their institutions.

Most of the queries, addressed to both staff and student respondents, are quite straightforward. Hence, it is unlikely that most respondents provide wrong information due to misunderstanding or misinterpretations of all the questions. Each interview question significantly implies the researcher's interest in the interviewees' life stories, experiences and their views on the improvement of student aid programmes (focusing on loans and grants), as a critical vehicle for the enhancement of competitiveness (in terms of the provision of student welfare and services) and the development of equity within their universities. Thus, the interview queries, in this research, tend to motivate active participation from the interviewees, who act as representatives of their universities and also as narrators of their own stories and experiences, concerning loans, grants and other types of student aid programmes.

To enhance validity of the research findings, the interview data need to be checked against and supplemented by other sources of evidence: documentation, archival records and observations as well as questionnaires (the results of which will be presented, analysed and discussed in Chapters 5 and 6).

4.4 Other sources of evidence: Documents, Archival Records and Observations

In this research, apart from the questionnaires (which will be thoroughly examined in Chapter 5), the researcher tries to extract additional information from documents, archival records and observations in order to corroborate the interview data. Such documents and archival records are recognised as secondary sources of evidence. They include some critical written documents, concerning the government policy on the promotion of equity and access in Thai Higher Education (cited in both the National Education Act 1999 and the Ninth National Development Plan of Higher Education 2002-2006), the statistics of the amount of loans allocated to each university in each academic year (from 1996 to 2004) and the number of loan recipients of each focus institution (if available), as well as the policies and measures taken within the focus institutions to improve equality of opportunity for low-income college-age people and economically disadvantaged students through the use of various kinds of student aid programmes, i.e. loans, grants, tuition waivers, work-study projects and part-time jobs /assignments within and outside the university campus. The archival and statistical records, in this study, can help testify to each institution's determination and endeavour to develop its student aid schemes and to increase the numbers of grants and loans in order that they would be able to assist a larger number of needy students in the following academic year(s).

Apart from the application of documents and archival records, the researcher had an opportunity to observe some of the respondents' behaviour and reactions prior to, during and after the interviews. These observations help identify the facts and the respondents' actual perspectives out of the attempts to create some impressive appearances or false images in front of the researcher and of the public. For instance, it is possible that an administrative officer or a high-ranking person tries to protect the prestige of himself/herself and of his/her institution by informing that his/her university mainly focuses on low-income students and all the staff in charge of loans and grants are very friendly and helpful to all students, regardless of their physical appearances, socio-economic backgrounds and status. (As mentioned in 3.18/Chapter 3, this is recognised as a problem that may crop up from *power relations*, especially

when a young female researcher interviews a senior, powerful and renowned person.) Also, it is likely that a loan/grant recipient, who might not be really in need of loans/grants, provides the researcher with some distorted information, concerning his/her financial status, his/her parents' (or guardians') earnings and occupations. Hence, in this case study, the researcher had to act as an interviewer and as an observer in the same time. Apart from extracting verbal or interview data from the respondents, the researcher needed to observe their physical appearances, their conversations with as well as reactions to friends, colleagues and people of lower rank/status, after the interviews. In short, in this research, the data obtained from the post-interview observations could be checked against the information elicited from some staff and student interviewees.

4.5 Analytical Techniques for Qualitative Data

All responses from the interviews of staff and students, as well as the data derived from other sources of evidence are compared and checked against each other. Then, they are carefully analysed through the application of *explanation-building* strategy. In this strategy, the causal links and interlinks between some independent variables (or a set of key words, phrases and sentences) are stipulated and specified. Such links between the key words and phrases, expressed by the respondents and shown in other sources of evidence, are used to represent the facts, some common views, beliefs and perspectives amongst staff and student interviewees, regarding the development of equity through student aid programmes operated within the focus universities. Eventually, the causal links and interlinks between the key words and phrases, generated through the use of explanation-building strategy, are expected to help reveal the convergence and divergence between the facts or events that actually take place in the focus institutions (or what things actually are) and the general perspectives as well as opinions of the case study respondents (or what they should/are supposed to be). Such convergence and divergence between the facts and the respondents' ideas, demonstrated in this research, may usefully help explain and predict some phenomena and events (i.e. the common criteria which tend to be used by most of the focus universities for targeting loans/grants to needy students and the possibility of success in the promotion of equity as well as in the development of

student aid programmes within each focus institution, from viewpoints of the respondents).

The tables shown throughout this chapter present the facts and the respondents' views on the student aid programmes operated within their universities. All the interview data, presented in this chapter, have been checked against the documents and archival records derived from the reliable sources of information, such as the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education, the Office of the National Education Commission, Office of the Prime Minister, the Office of the Student Loans Fund, Ministry of Finance, and the units/sections/offices in charge of student grants and loans of all the focus institutions. In addition, the interview data, concerning the staff respondents' attitudes towards and their willingness to assist low-income students as well as the student respondents' financial status/socio-economic backgrounds and their feelings towards loans, are occasionally compared with what the researcher obtained from the observations.

4.6 Findings of the Interviews of Staff

Tables 4.1 to 4.9 show the facts, obtained from the reliable sources of information cited in the above section, as well as the interview data extracted from ten administrators/staff in charge of student loans/grants of all the focus universities. In this study, we need to bear in mind that University E is different from other sub-cases as it is an international institution. Thus, it tends to have extra sources of funds (obtained from overseas students, international programmes and many international philanthropists), which could enable the university to develop a variety of grant and loan schemes as well as to maintain the balance between the number/amount of grants and the number/amount of loans offered to students a year.

Table 4.1

Table 4.1 demonstrates the numbers and types of grants and loans allocated to students in academic year 2004-5.

Institutions	Number of grants and loans offered to students in academic year 2004-5				
	grants		loans		Total
	bonded	outright	university	government	
University A	-	220	-	3,193	3,413
University B	-	149	-	3,798	3,938
University C	-	440	-	9,178	9,618
University D	-	1,474	-	4,621	6,095
University E	-	1,196	186	833	2,215
University F	-	911	-	3,658	4,569
University G	-	430	89	10,110	10,629
University H	-	450	-	2,594	3,044
Total	-	5,270	275	37,985	43,521

Sources: OHEC (Office of the Higher Education Commission) and all the focus universities

Table 4.1 reveals that, in total, the number of loan recipients is much larger than the number of grant recipients from all the focus institutions. In most universities or most sub-cases, it turns out that grants can assist only hundreds of students, while loans can help thousands of students. However, in an exceptional case, like University E, the number of grant recipients and the number of loan takers are not much different. That might be because it is the only international university which may gain lots of supporting funds from its worldwide links with various types of local and global organisations, Christian foundations as well as international fund-making bodies.

From the interviews of staff, most of them indicated that, in conformity with the *government policy on access and equity in higher education*, their institutions try to set up and develop a variety of scholarship and grant schemes befitting students' divergent abilities and talents, regardless of family incomes and socio-economic backgrounds. In most sub-cases, funds are divided into four types: scholarships for those with outstanding academic performance, bursaries for those who study in the shortage fields (i.e. medicine, health science, science, engineering, nursing), supporting funds for those endowed with talents in particular areas and activities (e.g. sports, music, Thai dances) and grants for able but disadvantaged students in any areas. Most grants and bursaries available at the focus universities cover tuition and

fees for a semester, for an academic year or throughout the programmes of study. Proportions of divergent types of grants in different institutions are dissimilar, based on the financial circumstances and primary policies of each focus university.

4.6.1 University A

Most University A scholarships and outright grants are available to students with outstanding scholastic achievements and those who can prove a real need for financial aid. For academic year 2004-5, 220 scholarships were awarded to its students: 120 bursaries for students with good academic performance and secondary school leavers or equivalent vocational school graduates with outstanding academic performance (with a GPA of 3.00 or higher), who would like to further their studies at the university level, 30 scholarships for athletes of the university such as those who are players of the university rugby and the university football teams, 35 grants for able but economically disadvantaged students and 35 emergency grants for needy students who unexpectedly face financial crisis, natural catastrophes and any difficulties beyond their control.

4.6.2 University B

University B offers 149 scholarships to students per annum: 40 bursaries for students with outstanding academic performance, 30 scholarships for those with special skills in sports, 30 bursaries for those with talents in music, Thai dances and other cultural activities as well as 40 president-sponsored grants for economically disadvantaged students with good academic performance and for those with good behaviour who are facing financial problems or other problems. With reference to the interview of its staff, recipients of the president-sponsored bursaries are selected on a case-by-case basis. Besides the above-mentioned scholarships, University B also awards nine outright grants (in the form of tuition and fees waiver) per annum to low-income secondary school leavers with good academic performance (normally with a GPA of 3.00 or higher) who would like to further their studies at University B. These funds are given through Raja Prachanukroa Foundation, under the royal patronage of His Majesty the King. Such a foundation aims to assist and support low-income secondary school graduates with good academic performance from rural and remote areas nationwide, who would like to go to private universities.

4.6.3 University C

University C outright scholarships are divided into 78 bursaries for its students (years 1-4) with outstanding academic performance (with a GPA of 3.00 or 3.50 up), 32 grants for able but disadvantaged students (years 2-4) with a GPA of 2.50 or over, 30 grants for new students from low-income families, 78 bursaries for those who study in the shortage areas (i.e. engineering, science and technology), 60 bursaries for secondary school leavers with good academic performance (with a GPA of 3.00 or over) who would like to further their studies at University C, 42 grants for college-age government officials as well as state and private enterprise officers selected by their units/offices to further their studies at the university level, 40 scholarships for students with special talents in sports, 40 scholarships for those with special skills in music and Thai dances and 40 bursaries for students (years 2-4) who actively get involved in activities of the university and who work on campus as assistants of the university staff/lecturers/researchers.

4.6.4 University D

Like University B, University D awards nine scholarships a year to economically disadvantaged secondary school graduates from schools under the support of Raja Prachanukroa Foundation. The Raja Prachanukroa Scholarship recipients will obtain tuition and fees waiver throughout their programmes of study at University D. Apart from the Raja Prachanukroa scholarships, it offers on average 1,465 outright grants per annum: 15 full bursaries for new students with outstanding academic performance (with a GPA of 3.00 or higher from the secondary schools approved by the Ministry of Education), 20 one-off scholarships (worth 5,000 baht each) for able but disadvantaged students (with a GPA of 2.00 or higher), 1,000 partial grants (worth 3,000 baht each) for the government loan recipients during the first two or three months of each academic year, 300 alumni scholarships (worth 5,000 baht each) for those whose parents (either father or mother) or brothers and sisters are its alumni, 150 University D network scholarships (worth 5,000 baht each) for secondary school graduates from schools which have academic agreements and links with University D and bursaries for those with talents and special skills in sports, cheerleading, music as well as Thai dances.

4.6.5 University E

For academic year 2004-5, University E offers totally 1,196 outright scholarships, worth 71,432,960 baht. The university awards 813 scholarships a year to students with outstanding academic performance (with a GPA of 3.00 or higher), 221 bursaries to secondary school graduates with outstanding academic performance and good behaviour from schools under the support of organisations or foundations which have links with University E, 54 scholarships for those who study in the shortage field like nursing, 54 bursaries for University E employees' children who would like to study at the university and ten scholarships for students (in years 3-4) with a GPA of 2.75 or higher who have actively got involved in the university activities or in any social programmes under the support of University E. Outright funds for economically disadvantaged students are divided into two main types: 22 supporting grants for those who urgently face financial crisis and 22 emergency grants for those who unexpectedly face fatal damages or natural catastrophes (i.e. fire, flood and storm) or those whose father, mother or guardian is instantly dead or becomes disabled. Moreover, its alumni foundation offers some monthly expenses (about 4,000 baht a month) for economically disadvantaged students on the condition that the grant recipients have to work for the foundation when they do not have lessons. To be eligible for the supporting and emergency grants as well as the alumni funds, students are expected to have a GPA of 2.00 or higher. Most of the above-mentioned university grants and scholarships cover tuition and fees for an academic year or throughout the programmes of study at the university.

4.6.6 University F

University F offers 911 scholarships per annum. 574 scholarships are granted to its students with outstanding scholastic achievements (with a GPA of 3.00 or higher) and for secondary school students (in their final year of study) who obtain the highest scores in every major subject in the Pre-entrance examinations (known as the *Pre-entrance* or *Towards the Campus* scholarship project) organised by the university in cooperation with secondary schools in remote areas nationwide. 184 bursaries are awarded to students with talents and special skills in sports, cheerleading, inventions, arts and cultural activities. The university, under the support of educational organisations and foundations, also offers 153 grants (mostly in the form of tuition

waiver throughout the programmes of study) to economically disadvantaged students with outstanding academic performance (with a GPA of 3.00 or higher) and secondary school leavers with good academic performance from schools in rural and remote areas, which are supported by the organisations and foundations which have links with University F.

4.6.7 University G

University G awards 430 grants per annum. The university funds consist of 70 scholarships (in the form of tuition and fees waiver throughout the programmes of study) for students with good academic performance in the fields of engineering, IT, computer sciences, economics and accountancy, 60 royal family-sponsored bursaries (covering tuition and fees throughout the programmes of study) for those who study electrical or electronic engineering, computer sciences, communication arts, economics, accountancy, business administration, law and arts, 30 partial scholarships (worth 5,000 baht each) for students (in years 2-4) with outstanding academic performance (with a GPA of 3.50 or higher), 30 grants (covering tuition and fees waiver in the second semester of each academic year) for economically disadvantaged students (in years 2-4) with good academic performance (with a GPA of 3.00 or higher) and 40 scholarships (tuition and fees waiver throughout the programmes of study) for those with special skills in sports. Apart from the above-mentioned scholarships, University G, under the support of various educational and charitable foundations, offers 100 partial grants (mostly in the form of tuition and fees reduction) for needy students with good academic performance and good behaviour, who are facing financial crisis, natural catastrophes or unexpected difficulties during their studies at University G, and 100 bursaries (tuition and fees waiver throughout the programmes of study) for low-income secondary school leavers with outstanding academic performance and good behaviour, who live in rural and remote areas and would like to go to universities.

4.6.8 University H

University H offers totally 450 grants and scholarships to its students, based on their divergent interests and abilities as well as different needs and talents. 280 scholarships (in the form of tuition and fees waiver for an academic year or throughout the programmes of study) are awarded to students with outstanding

scholastic achievements from all schools and departments. 80 bursaries are offered to those with special skills and gifts in sports, Thai music and Thai dances. The university offers 20 grants a year to economically disadvantaged students with good academic performance (with a GPA of 2.75 or higher) and 20 emergency grants per annum to those who unexpectedly face financial crisis or other problems. Apart from the above-mentioned funds, University H also has 50 grants and scholarships for students who take part in various kinds of special university projects and for those who have actively participated in the university activities.

Besides the grants and scholarships, each of the focus institutions has the government loans amounting to 100 millions baht, allocated to thousands or nearly a thousand of its students per annum. Based on the documents, concerning the government loan programme, and the interviews of staff, to be eligible for the government loans, applicants must:

- have Thai nationality and study in Thailand;
- be economically disadvantaged students whose parents' or guardians' incomes do not exceed 150,000 baht per annum (or approximately 12,500 baht a month);
- never before have held any bachelor's degrees;
- not work full time while studying;
- have good behaviour and have never been in prison or been bankrupt;
- have good academic performance or pass the standard evaluation of their former or present educational institutions;
- have been admitted to and have qualifications that satisfy the requirements of the educational institutions where the applications are submitted;
- have a guarantor (either father, mother, guardian, or any person as approved by the Loan Committee).

For the government loan programme, the ceiling of loans is 100,000 baht (or about £1,333) per annum for the university level. With reference to the Announcement of the Committee of the Office of the Student Loans Fund (given on 4th February 2004) regarding the limitations of loans allocated to all government loan

recipients at the university level, the amount of loans taken for each purpose cannot exceed or go beyond the following plan:

Table 4.2

Programme of study	Tuition (baht)	Education- related fees	Cost of living/year		Ceilings (The total loan size must not exceed... baht)
			Housing	Personal expenses	
All programmes, except Health Science	46,000	6,000	18,000	30,000	100,000
Health Science	73,000	6,000	18,000	30,000	127,000

Note: £1 was equal to 75 (Thai) baht as of 1st September 2004.

Repayment of the loans and interest starts two years upon the completion of the borrowers' studies or after their leaving universities. The interest rate is only one per cent per year. The frequency of payment is once a year (in every July). Borrowers are obliged to pay back the total (capital plus interest) within 15 years, following a two-year grace period after graduation, with the repayment percentage fixed initially at very low rates and increased progressively over time.

The table below (4.3) demonstrates the calculation of the principal and interest for the government loan programme, throughout 15 years of repayment period (supposing that the loan size is 100,000 baht or approximately £ 1,333).

Table 4.3

Year	Loan Size (baht)	Repayment (% of loan)	Principal due for each instalment (baht)	1% of interest / year (except the first year)	Principal and Interest due (baht)	Transfer fees for each instalment (baht)
1	100,000.000	1.50	1,500.000	-	1,500.000	10
2	98,500.000	2.50	2,500.000	985.000	3,485.000	10
3	96,000.000	3.00	3,000.000	960.000	3,960.000	10
4	93,000.000	3.50	3,500.000	930.000	4,430.000	10

Year	Loan Size (baht)	Repayment (% of loan)	Principal due for each instalment (baht)	1% of interest / year (except the first year)	Principal and Interest due (baht)	Transfer fees for each instalment (baht)
5	89,500.000	4.00	4,000.000	895.000	4,895.000	10
6	85,500.000	4.50	4,500.000	855.000	5,355.000	10
7	81,000.000	5.00	5,000.000	810.000	5,810.000	10
8	76,000.000	6.00	6,000.000	760.000	6,760.000	10
9	70,000.000	7.00	7,000.000	700.000	7,700.000	10
10	63,000.000	8.00	8,000.000	630.000	8,630.000	10
11	55,000.000	9.00	9,000.000	550.000	9,550.000	10
12	46,000.000	10.00	10,000.000	460.000	10,460.000	10
13	36,000.000	11.00	11,000.000	360.000	11,360.000	10
14	25,000.000	12.00	12,000.000	250.000	12,250.000	10
15	13,000.000	13.00	13,000.000	130.000	13,130.000	10
Total		100.00	100,000.00	9,275.000	109,275.000	150

Note: The exchange rate was £1:75 (Thai) baht, as of 1st September 2004.

Apart from the government loans, two of the focus universities (Universities E and G) have their own loan programmes, which aim to assist needy students whose qualifications and family earnings do not meet the requirements and the rules defined by the government and to help some unsuccessful applicants for the government loans.

The University E loans are divided into three types: short-term or on-credit loans, long-term loans and loans for monthly expenses. Both short-term and long-term loans cover tuition, fees, the use of laboratories and miscellaneous costs, depending on the needs of borrowers. The short-term loans aim to assist those who are facing financial problems in the course of registration. The borrowers are bound to pay back the loans, in full amounts, within each semester, or on a case-by-case basis. The long-term loans aim to help needy students who are facing financial crisis and whose qualifications do not meet the requirements of the government loan programme. Loan recipients are selected on a case-by-case basis. The borrowers are obliged to pay out the whole amounts of loans within four years after the completion of their courses. The loans for monthly expenses are offered to those who are in need

of living cost, while studying at University E. They are adjustable to the different needs of students. The borrowers have to repay the whole amounts of loans within four years of leaving the university.

University G has offered approximately 800,000 baht (or about £10,667) of loans a year, under the university foundation. The foundation has been supported by donations from the university administrators, alumni and other benefactors. At present, it has, in total, 43 types of funds, that amount to about 13,035,047 baht (or approximately £173,800). The University G loans aim to assist economically disadvantaged students with good academic performance and needy students whose families are facing financial crisis. Loan recipients are selected on a case-by-case basis. The repayment conditions are flexible. With reference to the interview of a university staff member, apart from the government and the University G loans (under a student financial aid project), the university has prepared an alternative or a way out for economically disadvantaged students who are unsuccessful in applying for both the government and the University G loans, especially those whose parents' or guardians' are government officials with annual earnings of over 150,000 baht (or more than £2,000) but with lots of dependents and burden. Students who are unsuccessful in applying for or who are ineligible for the government and the University G loans can borrow some amounts of funds from a number of educational foundations, external organisations, private companies and low-interest trusts (e.g. a national trust that is supported and guaranteed by a state-owned bank) which have links with the university. The interviewee stated that the interest rate (for the above-mentioned trusts) is five per cent per annum. The repayment period is six years or could be negotiable on a case-by-case basis. Student borrowers are bound to pay back the loans upon the completion of their courses at the university. Normally, the government and university loans can be taken in combination with outright grants and scholarships of all the focus universities, on the condition that they are not full bursaries (that cover all tuition, fees and monthly expenses).

Besides the grant and loan schemes, most of the focus institutions try to search for additional sources of funds to help economically disadvantaged students, who are unsuccessful in application for the government loans, and loan recipients in unexpected difficulties by arranging fund-raising programmes and activities (*i.e. from*

friends to friends, from seniors to juniors and from academic staff to students projects at University C as well as *bowling for charity* at University G). To assist economically disadvantaged students and to equip them with work experience, all the focus universities have developed some work-study programmes. Under such programmes, students obtain remunerations or allowances (approximately 1,000-2,000 baht or £13 -£27 a month), while working on campus as lab assistants, tutors, research assistants and assistants to the university or school librarians/technicians /lecturers. In addition, most of the focus institutions, with cooperation from some private companies, state enterprises and charitable foundations, are developing *future career* projects for the government and the university loan recipients in order to broaden their opportunities to get jobs after their graduation. Most staff interviewees believed that such a kind of projects would enable the borrowers to pay out their debts earlier and within the deadlines.

The following tables (4.4-4.9) show the staff respondents' initial ideas on some specific statements and their initial responses to some specific questions addressed by the researcher. There are some follow-up discussions below each table.

Table 4.4

Table 4.4 demonstrates the staff interviewees' common views and beliefs concerning the utility of loans, in comparison with grants and outright scholarships, in assisting economically disadvantaged students in their institutions. The researcher asked each interviewee whether or not he/she agreed that a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can other types of funding, such as grants and full or partial tuition waivers.

Staff respondents' beliefs and their attitudes towards loans		
Institutions	Loans can provide more assistance to more students than can grants and outright funds.	
	Agree	Disagree
University A	x	
University B	x	

Staff respondents' beliefs and their attitudes towards loans		
Institutions	Loans can provide more assistance to more students than can grants and outright funds.	
	Agree	Disagree
University C	x	
University D	x	
University E (Staff 1)	x	
University E (Staff 2)	x	
University F	x	
University G (Staff 1)	x	
University G (Staff 2)	x	
University H	x	

Based on the above table, all staff respondents unanimously agreed that, in higher education, loans can assist a larger number of students than can grants, outright bursaries and other kinds of student aid programmes. Most interviewees indicated that, from their experiences, with the same amount of funds a loan scheme can help more students in a more equitable manner than can grants and scholarships. In most sub-cases, the government loans are the main source of funds for many disadvantaged students, while most university grants and other types of outright scholarships are quite limited to some groups of students with the particular kinds of abilities and talents or to those in the specific areas of specialisations (which usually need to be geared to the interests and requirements of the universities or fund-making bodies). Some interviewees pointed out that loans can assist up to thousands of students a year, while grants and scholarships, in most sub-cases, can fully serve not more than 500 students a year. This could be testified by table 4.1, showing the numbers and types of grants and loans offered to students of the focus institutions in academic year 2004-5. Moreover, the majority of staff interviewees noted that grants and outright bursaries are normally bound with some conditions, like scholastic achievements, high GPAs, special skills in particular areas and shortage fields of study, while loans

have much fewer requirements and are available to all able but disadvantaged students, regardless of their programmes of study as well as education and family backgrounds. In addition, some interviewees stated that, unlike grants, scholarships and other kinds of student aid programmes, loans, that cover both tuition fees and monthly expenses (according to the regulations on the present government loan programme), are *revolving funds* (collected from old borrowers who repay their debts) which can be continuously used to support the following generations of needy people (on the condition that the borrowers are responsible for the repayment of loans and the cost recovery system is well-operated). Some of them believed that a loan scheme could help instil into student borrowers their commitments to finish their studies within time in order to avoid an excessive debt burden accumulated upon their leaving the universities. At the same time, loans could help motivate them to find jobs as soon as possible so that they would be able to pay out their debts by the due dates. In short, most staff interviewees, in this case study, believed that loans can more effectively help widen access to higher education for a larger number of low-income people than can grants, outright funds and other kinds of financial aid schemes. Through the loan schemes, able but economically disadvantaged people tend to have more opportunity to take part in private higher education.

“Being in charge of student aid programmes for over ten years, I’ve realised that loans can help disadvantaged or low-income students far better than can grants. The university scholarships or grants from other sources of funds can normally assist only hundreds of students a year, while the government loans are able to help thousands of them a year...”

(Staff/University C, 1st June 2004, 11 am)

According to an official bulletin published by the Office of the Student Loans Fund of Thailand (2004) on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of its foundation, starting from the academic year 2005-6, there will be a shift from the present government loan programme (which covers both tuition fees and monthly expenses) to a new system, known as *Income-Contingent Loan Scheme (or ICL)*. The ICL scheme, which will be used in Thai higher education, is a system in which a student borrower, after his/her graduation, will be bound to pay back his/her loan through the income tax system, when his/her salary reaches a taxable amount or the national average income (that is estimated at 10,000 baht, or £133, a month or 120,000 baht, or £1,600, a year). The loans are supposed to be free of interest. However, the loan size or principal may be adjusted to the rate of inflation on each due date or each date of

repayment. The repayment period will be flexible and geared to each borrower's real future income and his/her ability to pay. The ICL system will be applied to only university students (either full-time or part-time). In the ICL scheme, all university students, regardless of family incomes and socio-economic backgrounds, can apply for the government loans, each of which will cover tuition and education-related fees only. The amount of funds allocated to each loan recipient will be based on the real tuition and fees of his/her programme of study at each institution. All the information and details on each loan recipient as well as the amount of loan taken will be recorded on his/her *smart card*, to be used as an ID as well as a credit card for the registration and the payment of tuition and fees at each institution. For some economically disadvantaged people who study in the shortage areas (i.e. health science, medicine, nursing, engineering), the government may grant tuition and fees waiver throughout their programmes of study. For the lower levels of education (like secondary and primary school levels), the government may offer a kind of grants and outright scholarships or other types of financial aid schemes as appropriate to support students from the least advantaged backgrounds.

As the introduction of ICL to Thai higher education is a highly discussed issue amongst economists, educationists as well as university administrators and staff in charge of student loans and grants of higher education institutions nationwide, it is worth probing into some perspectives and views on ICL of the staff interviewees (as practitioners of the loan scheme) in this case study. Initially, the researcher asked each interviewee if he/she agreed that an ICL scheme would be appropriate for Thai higher education and that it would be more effective than the present mortgage-type scheme, in terms of the promotion of equity within his/her institution.

Table 4.5

Staff respondents' views on the introduction of ICL into Thai Higher Education		
Institutions	Agree	Disagree
University A	x	
University B		x
University C	x	
University D		x

Staff respondents' views on the introduction of ICL into Thai Higher Education		
Institutions	Agree	Disagree
University E (Staff 1)	x	
University E (Staff 2)	x	
University F	x	
University G (Staff 1)		x
University G (Staff 2)	x	
University H	x	

From the above table, the majority of interviewees (seven of them) agreed with the ICL principles concerning the contingency of loans upon the real future earnings of borrowers. They pointed out that ICL should be introduced into Thai higher education. They believed that the ICL system, in comparison with the present (mortgage-type) scheme, would be more effective in terms of cost recovery as repayments are to be connected with the income tax system. Since the ICL scheme will be open to all needy students, regardless of their family incomes, those whose parents or guardians are government officials or employees with earnings of more than 150,000 baht a year (that exceeds the ceiling defined by the present government loan programme) but with lots of dependents and debt burden will have more opportunity to apply for and obtain the loans to finance their studies as well as to relieve the burden on their parents/guardians and families. Moreover, as each loan under the ICL system will cover tuition and education-related fees only, this will automatically help prevent student borrowers from abusing the loans for other purposes. One respondent said:

“I strongly agree that the present mortgage-type plan should be replaced by an income-contingent loan or ICL scheme. In my view, a student loan should cover tuition fees only. So I think ICL could automatically and more effectively help our university control and monitor the use of loans in conformity with objectives and goals defined by the government. It’s supposed to be able to help reduce administrative costs and to facilitate the screening process of loan recipients as it will be linked to the national income tax system and will have no limitations on parental income. However, the amount of loans to be allocated to each recipient, under the ICL scheme, should be adjusted to the real tuition fees of his or her academic field or programme of study in each institution. Without an amount of loans to be earmarked for living expenses, the government and our university could provide more loans to support tuition fees for a larger number of needy students. Accordingly, I believe that, in comparison with the present plan, ICL will be able to more effectively promote

equality of educational opportunity and to encourage more participation from low-income people.”

(Staff 2/University G, 11th June 2004, 2 pm)

However, the interviewees who did not agree with ICL pointed out that, notwithstanding its advantages in terms of cost recovery and flexibility in family incomes and repayment conditions, such a scheme might be suitable for some middle-income students who or whose parents/guardians could afford monthly expenses and other non-tuition costs. It might not be able to fully serve the least advantaged who still need monthly expenses to pay for their rents and cost of living, such as low-income people from upcountry or rural areas and those whose parents/guardians are agriculturists/farmers and general employees with unidentifiable incomes. Another respondent argued:

“Notwithstanding its advantages above the present mortgage scheme in terms of repayment system, I’m afraid that we haven’t been ready yet for ICL. As it’s going to cover only tuition fees, ICL may suit some of middle-income students whose parents or guardians can manage to pay for living expenses and other non-tuition costs. It might not be applicable to some lower middle-income and the least advantaged students, especially those from upcountry or rural areas whose parents or guardians are farmers or general employees with unidentifiable income, who need to pay their rents and to cover other non-tuition costs by themselves.”

(Staff/ University B, 7th June 2004, 11 am)

They also warned that, if not well-operated, ICL might turn out as a double-edged sword, as it could bring in a phenomenon in which a larger number of non-needy people unnecessarily and inadvertently fall into debts without the real understanding of the government loan scheme and its objectives. Moreover, they suggested that, if ICL will be introduced into Thai higher education, the government will need to deal with an additional burden in searching for extra sources of funds to support a larger number of secondary school leavers from various socio-economic backgrounds who tend to go to universities and apply for the government loans. In addition, they emphasised that the government and the related offices should prepare a solution or a way out (either in the form of outright grants or application of the present scheme which covers both tuition fees and monthly expenses) for the least advantaged, especially those who are from rural areas and whose parents/guardians are agriculturists/farmers or general employees with low and unidentifiable earnings.

Also, they indicated that the ICL scheme still lacks some clarity in terms of the qualifications of loan applicants, the repayment system as well as its connection with the rate of inflation. Accordingly, prior to the promulgation of ICL, they recommended that the government should clarify the scheme and its regulations, making ICL more concrete and intelligible to all stakeholders, such as the universities, practitioners of student loans in each institution as well as student borrowers.

Although the government has defined the main regulations and guidelines for screening loan applicants, each focus institution has its own criteria for the selection of loan recipients, based on its student aid policy and the judgments of administrators and staff in charge of loans. In the interviews, the researcher gave the respondents five criteria for offering loans to students and asked them to rank these criteria in order of importance. There were some follow-up discussions afterwards.

Table 4.6

Staff respondents' ranking of important criteria for targeting loans to students (from the most important,1, to the least important, 5)					
Institutions	Ranking of important criteria for offering loans				
	GPA	parents'/ guardians' incomes/ occupations	programmes of study	parents'/ guardians' expenses/ number of dependents in family	Other (i.e. applicants' behaviour and recommend- ations from student advisers
University A	3	2	1	5	4
University B	4	1	3	2	5
University C	4	1	3	2	5
University D	4	1	3	2	5
University E (Staff 1)	3	1	2	4	5
University E (Staff 2)	3	1	2	4	5
University F	3	1	2	4	5

Staff respondents' ranking of important criteria for targeting loans to students (from the most important,1, to the least important, 5)					
Institutions	Ranking of important criteria for offering loans				
	GPA	parents'/ guardians' incomes/ occupations	programmes of study	parents'/ guardians' expenses/ number of dependents in family	Other (i.e. applicants' behaviour and recommend- ations from student advisers
University G (Staff 1)	4	1	3	2	5
University G (Staff 2)	4	1	3	2	5
University H	4	1	3	2	5

Note: 1 = the most important, 2 = very important, 3 = somewhat important, 4 = not so important, 5 = the least important

Based on table 4.6, the majority of the focus institutions (five of them) and most of the staff interviewees (six of them) agreed that parents'/guardians' earnings and occupations should become of prime importance in targeting loans to needy students. As most interviewees pointed out that students' family conditions and needs are different owing to unequal burden on their parents/guardians, they indicated that family expenses and number of dependents in family should be regarded as a very important criterion, alongside family earnings. For most of them, in spite of being less important than family incomes and burden, students' programmes of study and their academic performance or GPAs should also be taken into account to assure that loans are given to applicants who are likely to finish their studies within time and who tend to meaningfully serve the society and the nation with their knowledge and advanced skills, especially those in the shortage areas (i.e. health science, medicine, nursing, science, engineering). Normally, the focus institutions expect that loan applicants should have a GPA of at least 2.00 (on the scale of 4.00) or higher. However, this could be negotiable and could be considered in combination with

students' behaviour and recommendations from their schools/advisers. One respondent said:

“For the criteria of university bursaries, it depends on each type of grants and requirements of donors or owners of funds. However, for educational loans, family income or student need is our top priority. Nevertheless, academic performance or GPAs should also be considered alongside earnings and need in order to ensure that the loan takers are really qualified for higher learning and tend to be able to finish their studies as well as to pay out their debt.”

(Staff 1/University E, 14th June 2004, 10.30 am)

Another respondent added:

“Before targeting loans to any students, family expenses, number of dependents in family and other types of necessary burden should be taken into account in parallel with earnings. In our institution, there are still many of those who are in need of loans but are ineligible for them due to the limitations on parents' or guardians' income...”

(Staff/ University D, 8th June 2004, 1.30 pm)

From the above tables and information, we have learnt that grant and loan schemes are the most crucial instruments in the promotion of equality of educational opportunity for able but economically disadvantaged students within all of the focus institutions. Different kinds of grant/loan programmes aim to support students with divergent abilities and dissimilar needs. At this point, it is intriguing to explore the staff interviewees' views on the operation of grant and loan schemes, as well as on the principal criteria for the selection of grant and loan recipients of their institutions. In this regard, the researcher asked the interviewees whether most grants and loans, which have been offered and operated by their universities, are merit-led or need-led, and whether or not they agreed that most loans and grants should be merit-led or need-led. Also, there were some follow-up discussions afterwards.

Table 4.7

The facts VS staff respondents' opinions on grant and loan schemes								
Institutions	General Funding System							
	Grants				Loans			
	are (mostly)		should be		are		should be	
	merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led
University A	x		x			x		x
University B	x			x		x		x

The facts VS staff respondents' opinions on grant and loan schemes								
Institutions	General Funding System							
	Grants				Loans			
	are (mostly)		should be		are		should be	
	merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led
University C	x			x		x		x
University D		x		x		x		x
University E (Staff 1)	x			x		x		x
University E (Staff 2)	x			x		x		x
University F	x			x		x		x
University G (Staff 1)		x		x		x		x
University G (Staff 2)		x		x		x		x
University H	x			x		x		x

From table 4.7, most grants available at all of the focus institutions, except Universities D and G, are merit-based. Normally, they are offered to students, based on academic performance, GPAs and other special skills in some particular areas, like sports, music and cultural activities. Most outright funds at each focus institution cover only tuition and fees or partial fees either for a semester or throughout the programmes of study. Although the majority of staff interviewees thought that the grant schemes should focus more on students' needs and socio-economic status, they accepted that, owing to limited funds, their institutions need to maintain efficiency and prestige, by offering the grants and outright scholarships to those who have proved academically qualified and who are likely to graduate within time as well as to represent their universities on various occasions. However, most staff interviewees noted that their institutions would try to upgrade their grant schemes by increasing the number/amount of outright scholarships for economically disadvantaged students with divergent abilities and different needs. One respondent said:

“Being aware of the improvement of equity and student welfare which has been our prime concern, our university has established and developed links with many charitable institutions and fund-making bodies to provide financial support, either in the form of

need-led grants or loans, for economically disadvantaged students and to widen access to private higher education for able but low-income people.”

(Staff 1/University G, 11th June 2004, 12.30 pm)

Another respondent claimed:

“Notwithstanding the highest priority given to efficiency and students with outstanding academic performance, our institution has tried to create and upgrade a variety of need-led grant and loan schemes to support needy students.”

(Staff/University H, 18th June 2004, 2.30 pm)

Both the government and the university loans available at all the focus institutions are given to students, based on their family incomes and needs. All the staff interviewees unanimously agreed that the loan schemes should be need-led rather than merit-led. For all of them, loans are regarded as the most effective student aid programme, which can assist a large number of able but economically disadvantaged people who would like to go to universities and which can generate revolving funds for the next generations of loan takers who are from low-income families. The present government loan programme covers tuition, related fees and monthly expenses (usually 3,000-4,000 baht, or about £40-£53, a month per capita).

In general, as noted by most interviewees, loans are supposed to be targeted to those with lower socio-economic status. However, in practice, some interviewees indicated that it is difficult to point out who are less advantaged or who are the least advantaged. Apart from family earnings (which must not exceed 150,000 baht a year), there seem to be so many factors (e.g. family expenses, number of dependents in extended families, debt burden and number/value of mortgaged or seized assets/residences) which are supposed to be included and used in the classification of the real socio-economic status and financial need of students. To cope with this problem, most of the focus institutions need to take into account other components, such as last year's results of government loans, the entrance exam results (organised by each institution) and priority for loan applicants who register in first (that could demonstrate the enthusiasm in their studies). To help identify students' needs and socio-economic status, some interviewees suggested that persons in charge of the interviews of loan applicants (of each university) may indirectly extract additional information and details from the applicants concerning their lifestyles, routines, activities after lessons/during weekends/summer, hobbies, facilities at home (e.g.

computers, air-conditioners, washing machines), pets (if any), transportations (e.g. their commuting from home to university), types of houses (e.g. detached houses, terraces, flats or condominiums), part-time jobs (if any), extra jobs/earnings of parents/guardians (apart from their permanent careers), their future plans (after graduation) as well as the relationship between applicants, their parents/guardians and other (extended) family members. From the experiences of some staff interviewees, some students might inadvertently divulge some information that may not coincide with what is stated on the application forms and other kinds of evidence.

Some staff interviewees accepted that the targeting process of the government loans as well as some of the university grants/loans still have weaknesses as consideration is mainly based on documents and interviews, mostly conducted by schools/departments where applicants are studying. Nevertheless, their institutions have tried their best to frequently conduct home visits in various regions throughout the country. In addition to the paper-based evidence (including a photograph of each applicant's current place of residence) and information elicited from students, some focus institutions also conducted interviews with some applicants' advisers/tutors/close friends and asked for comments from the student advisers. From most interviewees' experiences of home visits, it turned out that the majority of applicants who are not really in need of loans reside in Bangkok rather than in other provinces. Especially when defaulting arises, they claimed that it tends to be more difficult to follow and retrace defaulters who live in Bangkok (the capital city) rather than those in other provinces.

From the viewpoints of most staff interviewees in this case study, the funding systems (both loan and grant schemes) operated within their institutions are quite appropriate and reasonably adjustable to students' needs and their abilities. However, to make the loan and grant schemes fairer, they pointed out that there were some discernible drawbacks that should be of concern, regarding the flexibility in the criterion on family incomes, a more effective targeting plan and inspection of the real socio-economic status of students (which may require additional means-tested indicators, besides parents'/guardians' incomes and occupations as well as number of dependents in family), loan allocations (which should be based on the real tuition and fees for each programme of study at each institution) as well as the repayment period

(that could become shortened). Such drawbacks will be further discussed below table 4.8.

With reference to table 4.1, the government loans turn out to be the main source of funds for students in almost all of the focus institutions. Accordingly, it is worth probing into the staff interviewees' attitudes towards the student loan programme under the government support and their ideas on the establishment as well as development of other kinds of student aid schemes that may call for cooperation from the government or the public sector in order to improve equity in the focus institutions. Initially, the researcher asked the interviewees whether or not their institutions need assistance and cooperation from the government in the operation of student aid programmes and in the development of equity within their universities. The interviewees were given an opportunity to express their ideas afterwards.

Table 4.8

Staff respondents' perspectives on the development of loan and grant schemes		
Institutions	To effectively operate student aid schemes, assistance and cooperation from the government is needed.	
	Yes	No
University A	x	
University B	x	
University C	x	
University D	x	
University E (Staff 1)	x	
University E (Staff 2)	x	
University F	x	
University G (Staff 1)	x	
University G (Staff 2)	x	
University H	x	

Table 4.8 demonstrates that all staff interviewees agreed that they still need assistance and cooperation from the government in the operation of student aid programmes within their institutions. For all of them, the government loan programme is regarded as a concrete part of the government policy on access and equity in higher education. One respondent said:

“To develop equality of educational opportunity for economically disadvantaged students, our university needs further support and cooperation from the government in allocating a reasonable amount of loans or about 100 millions baht a year in accordance with the average number or approximately 4,000 of needy students who apply for the government loans each year.”

(Staff/University F, 15th June 2004, 2 pm)

Another respondent added:

“For the promotion of equity, we need collaboration from the government in supporting old recipients of the government loans throughout their programmes of study or until the completion of their courses or degrees. Accordingly, the criterion on family income, which must not exceed 150,000 baht a year, should be revised as some parents or guardians earn slightly higher than 150,000 baht a year but have many dependents or lots of burden. Also, the repayment period should become more flexible to each borrower’s ability to pay.”

(Staff/University H, 18th June 2004, 2.30 pm)

To effectively promote equity, the majority of the focus institutions need support from the government in allocating a larger number/amount of loans per annum in correspondence to the increasing number of economically disadvantaged students in each focus university, especially those who could not pass the entrance exams (comparable to A levels in England) to get into public universities. According to the majority of interviewees, especially those who agreed with the introduction of ICL into Thai higher education, the criterion of parents’/guardians’ earnings (which must not exceed 150,000 baht, or £2,000, a year) should be revised as there are a considerable number of students whose parents/guardians are government officials and employees with fixed incomes per annum and with lots of dependents and burden. If their parents’/guardians’ incomes go up (due to the bureaucratic system and higher positions) even slightly higher than 150,000 baht a year, they will not be eligible for the government loans any more. Most interviewees suggested that the government loan programme should be more flexible for disadvantaged students who fall in such circumstances (i.e. by considering family expenses and number of dependents,

alongside family earnings, and by adjusting the ceiling of family income to 200,000 or 250,000 baht a year).

Some interviewees indicated that, due to unidentifiable incomes, applicants whose parents/guardians are businesspersons or freelancers (sometimes called the self-employed) may have advantages over those whose parents/guardians are government officials or permanent employees under the present loan scheme. In this regard, some of them suggested that those whose parents/guardians are businesspersons or freelancers should attach the evidence of income tax payment to the official reports of annual earnings and other credentials.

In terms of loan allocation, some staff interviewees recommended that each loan (for tuition and related fees) offered to each student borrower should be based on his/her programme of study at each institution as tuition and fees of private universities are different (or much higher) than those of public institutions. Moreover, the government should cooperate with the focus institutions in expediting the allocation of loans to each university as well as to all loan recipients so that they will have sufficient funds to cover tuition, fees and other necessary expenses prior to the start of each academic year. On this matter, some interviewees recommended that the government define the standard operating regulations, to be practised by all universities (both private and public) nationwide.

Some staff interviewees noted that another drawback of the present government loan programme is the unnecessarily long repayment period of 15 years, plus two years of grace or debt-free period after graduation. Such a long period of time could result in the negligence of borrowers in paying out their debts and, eventually, in defaulting and forgetting about it. To cope with this kind of problem, some interviewees suggested that the grace period should be only six months (instead of two years). The repayment period could become eight years (a year of borrowing per two years of repayment). They believed that the shortening of the debt-free and the repayment periods would help motivate the borrowers to pay out their debts earlier or as soon as possible. From their experiences, some staff interviewees indicated that, normally, borrowers who get a job instantly upon the completion of their studies tend to be more enthusiastic about paying out their debts, in comparison

with those who have worked for a couple of years after their graduation might begin to think about marriage and setting up their own families. One respondent claimed:

“In my opinion, a critical disadvantage of the government loan programme is a very long repayment period of 15 years, not to mention the additional two years of grace period after graduation. I’m afraid that this unnecessary length of time may bring in problems caused by the negligence of some borrowers who might have forgotten to repay the loans when the time of payments arrives. This could bring in defaulting afterwards...”

(Staff/University F, 15th June 2004, 2 pm)

Another respondent added:

“I’m afraid that 15 years of repayment, plus two-year grace period, is too long. It could become shortened. Let’s say a year of borrowing per two years of repaying. Yes, eight years of repayment, excluding the grace period, should be appropriate.”

(Staff 2/University G, 11th June 2004, 2 pm)

A few of the staff interviewees in this case study proposed that, another way to help motivate and instil into borrowers a responsibility to repay their debts is the shift from the supply-side to a demand-side funding system. Under the demand-side system, besides having more freedom to choose subject areas and institutions in accordance with their interests and abilities, borrowers are supposed to have more bonds with and more gratitude for the owners of funds or the lenders, whom they directly communicate with. Thus, they might feel more committed to pay out their debts as soon as possible. One respondent said:

“Another problem that should be of concern is that some (government) loan takers don’t know where the loans are from and who are supporting them. Some don’t even know how much they need to pay for tuition fees as the fees have been paid through the university. This is because the loans are given through the university, not directly from the owners of funds. Since they don’t know who are their financial

sponsors, they might not value the funds or the loans they've got and might not feel committed to repay the loans. In my opinion, such a supply-side funding plan may diminish students' feelings of being indebted. Some might misunderstand that they've got outright funds. As a result, I think we'd better try a demand-side funding scheme, in which students will have to apply for the funds themselves and will have to communicate directly with the fund-making bodies or the loaners. I believe that the demand-side funding system could help strengthen the relationship between the student borrowers and the owners of funds or the loaners. Moreover, it could effectively help instil into students responsibility and commitment in loan repayments."

(Staff 1/University E, 14th June 2004, 10.30 am)

However, some interviewees argued that, if not well-operated, the funds directed to students might be unconsciously or inadvertently abused or might be used for other non-necessary stuff, instead of for education. Having some doubts about the possibility in the establishment of effective data storage, monitoring and inspecting plans for such a funding system, they did not believe that directing funds to students would be more practical than allocating funds through the institutions. Another respondent claimed:

"I don't think that a demand-side funding plan will be more effective than a supply-side scheme, especially in the promotion of equity in Thai higher education. In my opinion, the demand-side scheme could bring in the abuse of either grants or loans, if not well-targeted. You know, students are students. If the funds were directed to them, they would misuse those funds for non-educational purposes..."

(Staff 2/University E, 14th June 2004, 2 pm)

In addition, some staff interviewees noted that the government should cooperate with the focus universities in the establishment and development of some grant schemes (i.e. in the form of outright scholarships such as *one bursary for one district project*, tuition waiver or emergency funds) to support the least advantaged students, especially those from rural and remote areas who cannot pass the entrance exams to get into public universities and whose parents/guardians are low-ranking

government officials with lots of dependents and burden or agriculturists/farmers and general employees with unidentifiable incomes.

With the government loans as well as the student aid schemes operated within the focus universities, it seems that all the focus institutions have tried to respond to the government policy on the improvement of equity and fairness in higher education. However, as stated by some staff interviewees, while developing equity, their universities also need to be concerned about quality or academic ability, behaviour as well as other qualifications of students who deserve the support or financial aid. To this point, it is intriguing to explore all the staff interviewees' opinions on the development of equity, without undermining quality, in private higher education.

In the interviews, the researcher asked the respondents whether or not they agreed that the promotion of equity could undermine quality in private higher education. In this study, the respondents were informed of the meaning of *quality* or *efficiency* (recognised as a synonym for quality in this research), defined by the researcher as *academic excellence* (of the institutions themselves, of their academic staff and of their students), *competence in research and in the provision of high-quality education as well as student services* of the focus universities. There were some follow-up discussions afterwards.

Table 4.9

Staff respondents' views on the development of equity		
Institutions	The promotion of equity could undermine quality in private higher education.	
	Agree	Disagree
University A		x
University B		x
University C		x
University D		x
University E (Staff 1)		x
University E (Staff 2)		x

Staff respondents' views on the development of equity		
Institutions	The promotion of equity could undermine quality in private higher education.	
	Agree	Disagree
University F		x
University G (Staff 1)		x
University G (Staff 2)		x
University H		x

From table 4.9, all the staff interviewees in this case study did not agree that the development of equity could undermine quality. On the contrary, they believed that the promotion of equality of educational opportunity could help promote efficiency or quality within their institutions. One respondent pointed out:

“In my opinion, the promotion of equity or equality of educational opportunity should not undermine quality. These two components could complement each other if an institution well maintains the balance between them.”

(Staff/University A, 4th June 2004, 10 am)

Another respondent claimed:

“Actually, the improvement of equality of educational opportunity, in parallel with quality, has been a prime mission of our university. Our institution has succeeded, at a satisfactory level, in the development of academic quality and technology. Now, it's time to boost up equity!”

(Staff 1/University E, 14th June 2004, 10.30 am)

Despite most of them accepting that students with outstanding scholastic achievements or high GPAs help develop quality of the universities, all the interviewees claimed that their institutions would become more competent if they could educate and train able but economically disadvantaged people to become highly qualified university graduates, endowed with advanced knowledge and skills for the development of nation. Thus, while improving quality, equity and economically disadvantaged students should not be overlooked. Also, while promoting equity, quality or students' academic ability, talents and special skills should not be disregarded. One respondent said:

“Although students with outstanding academic performance significantly help enhance the quality of our university, we shouldn’t overlook low-income students who have perseverance and strong determination in their studies. Those students, even without high scholastic achievements, deserve support from the university and from the government. If well-educated and well-trained, they could become part of the development of the university and of the nation.”

(Staff/University C, 1st June 2004, 11 am)

In the viewpoints of most staff interviewees, *equity* and efficiency could be complementary parts of each other, on the condition that the academic institutions well maintain the balance between them. Some interviewees stated that equity could be regarded as a crucial indicator of efficiency. Accordingly, the promotion of equality of educational opportunity, alongside efficiency, has become a prime mission of most of the focus institutions. Another respondent added:

“I don’t think that the development of equity could undermine quality of our university. On the other hand, equity should be regarded as a critical component and indicator of quality. We could not say that a university of high quality is an institution which supports only 20 or 30 students with outstanding academic performance...”

(Staff 1/University G, 11th June 2004, 12.30 pm)

From the interviews of the university staff/administrators, it seems that they gave the same weights of importance to equity and efficiency. However, with reference to the information below table 4.1 (regarding grants available at each focus institution) and from the comparison between the responses from the interviews of staff as well as other sources of evidence (documents, archival records and observations, focusing on the possible effects of *power relations* on the interview results derived from the administrative staff of each university), it turned out that, in most sub-cases, the majority of university funds, excluding the government loans, were targeted to those with outstanding scholastic achievements rather than to

economically disadvantaged or needy students. In addition, in the course of interviews, some staff respondents occasionally emphasised that, in targeting any grants/loans to students, they also need to take into account GPAs and academic ability of students. This could imply that, in spite of their concerns about equity, most of the focus institutions still regard efficiency or quality as priority and as the most crucial component in the development of their universities. Nevertheless, through the government loan programme as well as some of their student aid schemes, all the focus institutions, while upgrading or maintaining efficiency, have also tried to improve equity, by widening access and granting more educational opportunities to economically disadvantaged students.

Apart from the study of facts on the student aid programmes (operated within the focus institutions) and views of the university administrators/staff (as representatives of the real practitioners of the promotion of the government policy on access and equity in higher education through the application of loans, grants and other types of student aid schemes), it is worth exploring the comments and opinions of some students from each focus institution (as samples of the real users of private higher education), who have been directly affected by such a policy and who have benefited from various kinds of student aid programmes provided by each focus university.

4.7 Findings of the Interviews of Students

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the objective of interviews of students is to elicit some detailed information concerning their attitudes towards private higher education and student aid schemes provided by their universities and the government (through the universities). Apart from the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires distributed to over 100 students (both those taking and not taking grants/loans), the researcher had an opportunity to extract some qualitative data by talking in person, in a relaxed and informal atmosphere, with four or sometimes five students from each focus institution (35 of them, in total).

In this study, the student interviewees were divided into two main groups: the loan/grant takers and the non-takers of loans/grants. The former group consists of nine (two male and seven female) students taking either loans or grants only and ten (four male and six female) students taking both loans and grants (19 of them, in total). The latter group is composed of 16 (ten male and six female) non-takers of loans and grants. Most respondents, aged between 20 and 22, are in the third or the final year of their study. In this research, we have seven loan/grant takers from the school of science, engineering and IT, five from the school of business administration, three from the school of humanities (and liberal arts), two from the school of accountancy, one from the school of communication science and one from the school of law. For the non-takers of loans/grants, six of them are from the school of science, engineering and IT, four from the school of business administration, two from the school of humanities (and liberal arts), two from the school of communication science and two from the school of economics. From her initial conversation with both groups of interviewees, the researcher learnt that the parents/guardians of most loan or loan and grant takers are self-employed. Most of them own small business (i.e. small grocery shops, flower shops, food shops and bookstores). Some are general employees or farmers (sometimes called agriculturists). A few of them are government officials or employees of state enterprises or private companies. However, owing to some problems, such as their parents'/guardians' financial crisis, unstable jobs and unidentifiable earnings, debt burden, a large number of dependents in family and other unexpected difficulties, the respondents need to take loans or both loans and grants. On the contrary, the parents/guardians of most non-takers of loans/grants are businesspersons. Most of them own medium or large business, such as industrial factories, big restaurants or supermarkets, printing houses and residential properties to let. So many respondents expressed their intention to carry on their family's business in the future.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher asked each student participant to introduce himself/herself and his/her programme of study, as well as to talk about the motivations of his/her study at university level in each institution. Most respondents from all the focus institutions believed that a university degree would lead them to better opportunities and ameliorate their quality of life. Some of them have been inspired and motivated by their own parents, brothers and sisters and

members of their extended families, who obtained university degrees and who have experienced life at colleges or universities. For the main reasons of their study at private universities, most respondents indicated that private institutions have flexible systems in student admissions and do not have so many requirements as public universities. Moreover, they offer a variety of courses with adjustable timetables to suit the needs of both full-time and part-time students with different interests and dissimilar skills. Equipped with modern instructional media and high-tech learning equipment in many areas, private universities tend to provide students with full services in technology-assisted knowledge transfer and professional training. Some respondents chose to study at particular private institutions as recommended by their parents/guardians, relatives and friends who graduated from or who are studying in those universities. Some of them considered private universities as an alternative after their failure in the entrance examinations for the public institutions. Some believed that private universities have various kinds of student aid schemes to assist economically disadvantaged students with different needs and divergent abilities.

For their main sources of funds for study, some respondents have obtained scholarships, most of which are tuition waivers, from their institutions. Some have got student loans, most of which are granted by the government through their universities. Some have taken both the scholarships from their universities and the government loans. Having parents/guardians who are the owners of small business or in self-employment (freelancers) with low or unstable earnings per annum and who are low-ranking government officials/permanent employees with lots of dependents and debt burden, students who have obtained loans and grants (19 of them or about 54 % of all the interviewees) tend to be less advantaged than those who have not taken any of them and whose parents/guardians are businesspersons or the owners of big or medium for-profit business.

However, from the observations of student interviewees, the researcher found that some loan takers own costly items, e.g. laptop computers and brand-name products. After being asked for personal information (i.e. their relationship with parents/guardians and other extended family members, their routines, their activities after lessons/during weekend/in summer as well as their future plans upon leaving universities), some of them inadvertently disclosed that they would be able to afford

the cost of living themselves, without the loans. That might be the reason why they did not express any negative views on the ICL scheme that tends to cover tuition fees only. When the loan takers were given time to talk at length about their future plans, their parents' or guardians' expectations and career prospects after leaving universities, a few of them (perhaps unintentionally) divulged their plans to further their studies abroad instantly after graduation from the focus institutions. In contrast, the majority of loan takers, who seem to come from lower middle-income families with the real need of financial aid, revealed that they have to do some part-time jobs both on and off campus to finance their study and living expenses, as well as to help their parents/guardians support other dependents in their families. This could imply that not all the loan takers in this case study are from the least advantaged families and not all of them are less advantaged than their peers who are not taking any loans/grants.

From the interviews of student respondents (as well as of some staff respondents), the researcher learnt that, apart from parents'/guardians' incomes and occupations, there should be additional indicators (i.e. family conditions--divorced or united parents--, expenses and burden, number of dependents in family as well as number of dependents who are studying at different levels of education) that could help identify students' socio-economic status and their financial need. Thus, economically disadvantaged or needy students, who deserve financial aid either from the focus institutions or from the government, may not be only those whose parents'/guardians' earnings are not more than 150,000 baht or £2,000 a year.

In the interviews of students (as well as of staff), the researcher gave them some criteria for targeting funds to needy students in their institutions and asked them to rank the criteria in order of importance. After the ranking of these criteria (shown in table 4.10), there were some follow-up discussions.

Table 4.10

Student respondents' ranking of important criteria for targeting loans/grants to needy people (from the most important,1, to the least important, 5)						
Institutions	Ranking of important criteria for offering grants / loans					
	GPA	parents'/ guardians' incomes/ occupations	programmes of study	parents'/ guardians' expenses/ number of dependents in family	Other (i.e. applicants' behaviour and recommendations from student advisers)	
U. A	1	4	1	5	2	3
	2	1	3	2	4	5
	3	1	3	2	4	5
	4	3	1	4	2	5
U. B	1	1	3	2	4	5
	2	4	1	3	2	5
	3	3	1	4	2	5
	4	5	1	4	2	3
	5	1	3	2	4	5
U. C	1	5	1	4	2	3
	2	4	1	3	2	5
	3	5	1	4	2	3
	4	4	1	3	2	5
U. D	1	4	1	3	2	5
	2	4	1	3	2	5
	3	5	1	4	2	3
	4	5	1	4	2	3
U. E	1	1	3	2	4	5
	2	1	3	2	4	5
	3	4	1	3	2	5
	4	1	3	2	4	5
U. F	1	1	3	2	4	5
	2	3	1	4	2	5
	3	3	1	4	2	5
	4	4	1	3	2	5
	5	4	1	3	2	5

Student respondents' ranking of important criteria for targeting loans/grants to needy people (from the most important,1, to the least important, 5)						
Institutions	Ranking of important criteria for offering grants / loans					
	GPA	parents'/ guardians' incomes/ occupations	programmes of study	parents'/ guardians' expenses/ number of dependents in family	Other (i.e. applicants' behaviour and recommendations from student advisers)	
U. G	1	4	1	3	2	5
	2	4	1	3	2	5
	3	4	1	3	2	5
	4	1	1	3	2	4
U. H	1	4	1	3	2	5
	2	4	1	3	2	5
	3	4	1	3	2	5
	4	3	1	4	2	5
	5	5	1	4	2	3

Note: - 1 = the most important, 2 = very important, 3 = somewhat important, 4 = not so important, 5 = the least important.

- U. A: 1, 2, 3 and 4 mean the first, the second, the third and the fourth interviewees of University A, and so on.

Based on table 4.10, for most respondents, parents'/guardians' incomes and occupations are the most important criterion for the university or the government to offer grants and loans to students. One typical student said:

“For either grant or loan schemes, family income and financial need should be given the highest priority as less advantaged people need to be aided first. However, GPAs and academic ability should also be considered...”

(Student 1/University G, 12th July 2004, 9.30 am)

The majority of respondents noted that, alongside parents'/guardians' incomes and occupations, family expenses and burden as well as number of dependents in family should also be taken into account. They indicated that students whose parents'/guardians' earnings are the same may face dissimilar difficulties and may

have different needs. Those with a larger number of brothers and sisters tend to get into more trouble than those who are the only sons of families or who have only one brother or sister under support of the same parents/guardians. However, some respondents argued that, in targeting grants or loans to economically disadvantaged students, GPAs or academic performance as well as programmes of study should be of prime importance. They claimed that this would help motivate students to pay attention to their studies and to try to boost up their GPAs in order to be eligible for the grants or loans. In spite of accepting that family incomes and financial need should also be brought into account, they indicated that it would not be worth assisting those who are in financial need but without attention or determination in their studies or those who are unlikely to finish their studies within time. One respondent claimed:

“Although family income and financial need are important, priority should be given to GPAs and academic achievement, which seems to be a main indicator of students’ intention, perseverance and tendency to be successful in their future careers. If the university supported disadvantaged students with low GPAs who aren’t likely to finish their studies within time, both the university and students themselves would fall into trouble.”

(Student 4/University E, 15th July 2004, 3 pm)

Accordingly, to avoid a phenomenon in which students cannot finish their studies and need to leave the universities while being in debt or while wasting the grants, they suggested that, in targeting any grants/loans to students, GPAs and academic performance should become priority. In short, they tried to emphasise that the focus institutions should select to assist only able but economically disadvantaged students, who prove qualified for higher education and who tend to graduate within time.

From the interviews of students (as well as of staff) in this case study, we have learnt that, although family earnings turn out to be the most important criterion for targeting loans/grants to needy students, they perceived that *socio-economically disadvantaged people should not only be defined as those from low-income families or those whose parents’ or guardians’ income is not more than 12,500 baht (about £167) a month or 150,000 baht (about £2000) a year.* Besides parents’ or guardians’ earnings and assets, most respondents noted that we should not disregard other factors

such as family expenses per annum, number of dependents in family, debt burden, family conditions (divorced or united parents) as well as the stability of parents' or guardians' occupations and incomes. Hence, in the views of most interviewees in this case study, the focus universities, the government and other funding bodies should also take into account, alongside family earnings, the above-mentioned factors and students' GPAs or academic performance as well as their behaviour, prior to targeting any loans/grants to needy people.

In this study, the researcher put forward to student interviewees the same queries addressed to staff interviewees, regarding their viewpoints on what should be of prime importance in the selection of loan and grant recipients as well as the operation of loan and grant programmes within the focus universities. Initially, the researcher informed the respondents of the facts (previously obtained from the staff interviewees and the focus institutions) concerning the merit-led and the need-led grant and loan schemes operated by the focus institutions. Then, she asked the respondents whether or not they agreed that such loan and grant schemes should be need-led or merit-led. After that, there were some follow-up discussions.

Table 4.11

The facts VS student respondents' opinions on grant and loan schemes									
Institutions		General Funding System							
		Grants				Loans			
		are (mostly)		should be		are		should be	
		merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led
U. A	1	x			x		x		x
	2	x		x			x	x	
	3	x		x			x	x	
	4	x			x		x		x
U. B	1	x		x			x	x	
	2	x			x		x		x
	3	x			x		x		x
	4	x			x		x		x
	5	x		x			x	x	

The facts VS student respondents' opinions on grant and loan schemes									
Institutions		General Funding System							
		Grants				Loans			
		are (mostly)		should be		are		should be	
		merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led	merit-led	need-led
U. C	1	x			x		x		x
	2	x			x		x		x
	3	x			x		x		x
	4	x			x		x		x
U. D	1		x		x		x		x
	2		x		x		x		x
	3		x		x		x		x
	4		x		x		x		x
U. E	1	x		x			x	x	
	2	x		x			x	x	
	3	x			x		x		x
	4	x		x			x	x	
U. F	1	x		x			x	x	
	2	x			x		x		x
	3	x			x		x		x
	4	x			x		x		x
	5	x			x		x		x
U. G	1		x		x		x		x
	2		x		x		x		x
	3		x		x		x		x
	4		x	x	x		x	x	x
U. H	1	x			x		x		x
	2	x			x		x		x
	3	x			x		x		x
	4	x			x		x		x
	5	x			x		x		x

In spite of knowing that most grants or outright funds available at all of the focus institutions are merit-based, the majority of student interviewees recommended that the grant schemes focus more on students' needs and socio-economic status, as the least advantaged people should be aided first. One student pointed out:

“Having a considerable number of merit-led scholarships, the university should increase and focus more on the need-led grants and loans to assist low-income students, especially those who are ineligible for or who are unsuccessful applicants of the government loans.”

(Student 4/University C, 2nd July 2004, 3 pm)

Like the staff interviewees, most student interviewees agreed that both the government and the university loan programmes should be need-led rather than merit-led. They believed that loans, in comparison with grants and other kinds of student aid programmes at their institutions, are the main source of funds that meaningfully helps enhance educational opportunity for able but economically disadvantaged people who would like to go to universities. However, some interviewees, especially those who ranked GPAs and academic performance as the most important criterion for targeting any loans and grants to students (with reference to table 4.10), claimed that, apart from financial need, academic ability should also be regarded as a crucial indicator of students’ intention and determination in their studies, as well as an effective instrument to identify economically disadvantaged people who deserve assistance either from the universities or from the government. One respondent claimed:

“To motivate students to concentrate on their studies and to help boost up their academic ability, the university should also focus on GPAs and scholastic achievement of grant and loan applicants.”

(Student 1/University E, 15th July 2004, 10 am)

Based on the interviews of students in this case study, most student interviewees seemed to be quite satisfied with the operation of loan and grant schemes, as well as other kinds of student aid programmes within the focus institutions. Nevertheless, some of them pointed out that, to develop equity in Thai higher education, there should be some improvements in the government loan programme. Such improvements mainly concerns the flexibility in the criterion on parents’/guardians’ earnings and the consideration of family expenses and debt burden alongside incomes, the more effective inspection system of the real socio-economic status and financial need of students (which may require additional means-tested indicators such as family conditions, number of dependents in family and the information and details on other extended family members, except parents/guardians,

who could cover tuition fees and cost of living for students), as well as the adjustability of loan allocations that should be based on the real tuition and fees for each programme of study at each institution (where the loan recipients are studying). This perfectly coincides with what recommended by most of the staff interviewees, regarding the development of the government loan scheme for university students. Moreover, some student interviewees suggested that the focus universities and the government should provide more alternatives and ways out (either in the form of university loans, work-study programmes, part-time employment or emergency grants) for able but economically disadvantaged students, especially those from remote and rural areas, who are unsuccessful in the application for the government loans and the university scholarships.

In this study, the researcher asked the respondents whether or not they agreed that, in Thai higher education, loans can provide more assistance to a larger number of students than can grants or outright scholarships. The respondents expressed their initial opinions as demonstrated in the table below (4.12). There were some follow-up discussions afterwards.

Table 4.12

Student respondents' beliefs and their attitudes towards loans			
Institutions		Loans can provide more assistance to more students than can grants and outright funds.	
		Agree	Disagree
U. A	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4	x	
U. B	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4	x	
	5	x	
U. C	1	x	
	2	x	
	3		x
	4	x	

Student respondents' beliefs and their attitudes towards loans			
Institutions		Loans can provide more assistance to more students than can grants and outright funds.	
		Agree	Disagree
U. D	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4		x
U. E	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4		x
U. F	1	x	
	2	x	
	3		x
	4		x
	5	x	
U. G	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4		x
U. H	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4		x
	5	x	
Total		28	7

From table 4.12, the majority of interviewees believed that loans can provide more assistance to more students than can grants and outright funds. One typical loan taker said:

“Student loans have made me feel more independent and more concerned about the value of funds I’ve got for my study and my future career. Moreover, they’ve instilled into me and many of my friends more cost-consciousness and responsibility in the use of funds for our utmost benefits...”

(Student 4/University A, 5th July 2004, 3 pm)

Another loan taker added:

“In my opinion, student loans have advantages above grants and other kinds of financial support as they seem to be more flexible in terms of students’ academic performance. The eligibility for loans is not limited to only those with scholastic achievement or with high GPAs. Also, they tend to have fewer requirements and conditions...”

(Student 2/University B, 6th July 2004, 11 am)

However, due to lack of knowledge about student aid schemes in Thai higher education, some students, especially the non-takers of loans, expressed their negative views on loans. One non-taker of loans argued:

“I don’t think that loans could help students in a more equitable manner than can outright funds. I guess well-targeted grants might be able to assist economically disadvantaged people better than can loans. Through a grant or outright scholarship scheme, students wouldn’t have to be committed to any burden or to be bound to repay any debt afterwards.”

(Student 4/University F, 14th July 2004, 2 pm)

By comparing the advantages and disadvantages of educational loans to those of bonded or outright grants, most student interviewees indicated that, in spite of incurring future debts, loans can help widen opportunities and access to universities for a large number of able but economically disadvantaged people who would like to participate in higher education. Through a loan scheme, the universities and the government can apply the revolving funds (collected from the old borrowers who have graduated and paid out their debts) to assist the next generations of disadvantaged people or loan takers who are from low-income families. Some interviewees noted that, through such a financial aid scheme, students tend to feel more committed to finish their studies within time and to find a job as soon as possible, upon their leaving university, in order that they would be able to repay their debts by the due dates. Most interviewees, especially those who are taking loans, believed that a loan scheme could help instil into students more self-discipline and responsibility in managing their tuition fees and living expenses. (These interview results agree with what was stated by Woodhall, 1987). In addition, most respondents indicated that loan recipients should be proud of themselves as they could be independent and could pay for their education by themselves, even in the form of future debts.

Most interviewees who are taking loans stated that they are not afraid of educational loans. Most of them believed that, when being in paid employment upon the completion of their studies, they would be able to pay back all the loans within the repayment period. They seemed to be confident that, for them, it would take less than 15 years to repay all the loans.

For the future shift from the present government loan programme to *ICL* or *Income-Contingent Loans* in Thai higher education (as cited in an official bulletin published in 2004 by the Office of the Student Loans Fund of Thailand, on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of its foundation), the majority of student interviewees agreed with the ICL principles regarding the flexibility of its criteria on family incomes and repayment conditions. They believed that ICL would help provide more educational opportunities and help widen access to higher education for the economically disadvantaged whose parents'/guardians' earnings exceed 150,000 baht (£2,000) a year but with lots of dependents and burden. Moreover, it tends to be adjustable to borrowers' future incomes and their ability to pay. Most interviewees believed that it could help relieve excessive debt loads on low-income borrowers. One respondent said:

“I think ICL tends to be fairer than the present mortgage plan as it seems to be more reasonably adjusted to the borrower's real earnings and his or her ability to pay. Also, it's likely to help widen access to higher education for low-income people who would like to go to universities or colleges.”

(Student 1/University C, 2nd July 2004, 10 am)

Another respondent added:

“In my opinion, ICL seems to be more flexible and fairer than the present scheme as it will help widen access and provide more educational opportunity for the economically disadvantaged whose parents' or guardians' income exceeds what defined by the present government loan programme.”

(Student 2/University E, 15th July 2004, 11 am)

However, some interviewees disagreed with the ICL scheme, that is supposed to cover only tuition and fees. They claimed that such a scheme may be suitable for only some middle-class people who can cover the cost of living and miscellaneous expenses for their children or dependents. It might not be practical for some low-

income people (the least advantaged), especially those from rural and remote areas, who are in great need of assistance and for students who cannot depend at all on their parents/guardians and who need to work as well as to live by themselves. Being uncertain about either the principal or the rate of interest (under the ICL scheme) which tends to mirror the rate of inflation or to be contingent upon economic circumstances that are quite unstable in Thailand, some interviewees did not agree with the application of such a scheme as they remained unsure whether or not it would really help lessen an excessive debt burden per annum on low-income borrowers. One respondent argued:

“I don’t agree with the introduction of ICL into our institution. I think the present mortgage plan seems to be more suitable and explicit for us. For the mortgage-type plan, we’ve known the exact amount and percentage of debt that needs to be due each year. But, under the ICL system, the amount of loans to be paid back each year remains unclear to us as it’s supposed to mirror the rate of inflation at the time of each payment. Amidst such unstable economic circumstances in our country, I’m afraid that the application of ICL might bring in excessive debt loads rather than equality of educational opportunity for low-income people.”

(Student 2/University F, 14th July 2004, 11 am)

Thus, prior to the promulgation of the ICL system, most interviewees recommended that the government and the focus institutions clarify the ICL repayment conditions as well as prepare a variety of grants or other kinds of financial aid schemes to support the least advantaged students or those who are in great need of financial aid.

As suggested by Friedman (1963, 1980) and by a few of the staff interviewees in this case study, the shift from the supply-side to a demand-side funding system might be an effective strategy to help improve equality of opportunity as well as to help strengthen the bonds between the loan/grant recipients and the owners of funds. To this point, it is intriguing to explore the student interviewees’ opinions on such an idea. Initially, the researcher asked the respondents whether or not they think it is fairer that the government or a fund-making body directs funds to students rather than through the university. The table below (4.13) shows the students’ opinions about it. After that, there were some follow-up discussions.

Table 4.13

Student respondents' views on the shift from a supply-side to a demand-side funding system			
Institutions		To promote equality of educational opportunity in Thai private higher education, the government or a funding body should allocate grants / loans.....	
		Directly to students	Through universities
U. A	1	x	
	2	x	
	3		x
	4	x	
U. B	1	x	
	2	x	
	3		x
	4	x	
	5	x	
U. C	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4	x	
U. D	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4	x	
U. E	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4		x
U. F	1	x	
	2		x
	3	x	
	4	x	
	5		x
U. G	1	x	
	2	x	
	3	x	
	4	x	

Student respondents' views on the shift from a supply-side to a demand-side funding system			
Institutions		To promote equality of educational opportunity in Thai private higher education, the government or a funding body should allocate grants / loans.....	
		Directly to students	Through universities
U. H	1	x	
	2		x
	3	x	
	4		x
	5	x	
Total		28	7

Based on table 4.13, to promote equality of opportunity in higher education, most student interviewees agreed that the government or a funding body should direct grants and loans to students. For instance, one typical respondent claimed:

“I agree that a demand-side funding system should be introduced into Thai higher education. I believe that it would lead to better benefits for both students and universities. It would be great if students had more freedom to choose universities that offer programmes of study in accordance with their interest and ability. Also, this funding system is supposed to motivate the universities or colleges to concentrate more on student need and to actively upgrade their quality in order to attract more students from divergent socio-economic and family backgrounds.”

(Student 3/University C, 2nd July 2004, 2 pm)

Most interviewees believed that the demand-side funding system, if well-operated and equipped with reliable databases storing universities' and students' profiles, would benefit both universities and students. In such a system, the students will have more freedom to choose any institutions and fields of study in accordance with their real interests and abilities. At the same time, the universities will need to continuously upgrade their quality and to compete with other institutions for more students and more supporting funds from the government and other fund-making bodies which will come together with students who take loans/grants. Nevertheless, to make the funding system more effective, most interviewees suggested that the universities should cooperate with the government and the fund-making bodies in setting up and developing a suitable approach to monitor the application of loans/

grants in order to assure that the loans/grants are used for educational purposes and necessary things only. Being in doubt about the effectiveness of the demand-side funding system, some interviewees did not agree with it. They were afraid that such a system might lead to a phenomenon in which a huge number of loan/grant recipients choose to go to a few prestigious universities rather than the less famous ones. One respondent argued:

“I don’t think that the shift to a demand-side funding scheme would function effectively in Thai higher learning. In my views, it’s more convenient for students to apply for and obtain any grants or loans through universities that seem to have closer relationship with them than the government or other fund-making bodies do. Even worse, under the demand-side funding system, it’s risky that grants or loans are abused for non-educational purposes. This may reflect the malfunction of such a funding scheme.”

(Student 5/University F, 14th July 2004, 3.30 pm)

Some interviewees also claimed that, due to their closer relationship with students, universities are supposed to be the best coordinators between the government and the fund-making bodies as well as students who deserve divergent kinds of loans/grants.

Some staff interviewees noted that, apart from equity, their institutions should also be concerned about efficiency as well as academic ability and other qualifications of students who deserve their support. On this matter, it is worth examining the student interviewees’ views on the possibility of the development of equity, while maintaining quality, in Thai private higher education.

Initially, the researcher asked the respondents if they agreed that the promotion of equity could undermine quality in Thai private higher education. In this regard, the respondents were told that quality and efficiency are synonyms. In this study, the researcher defined quality as academic excellence and competence in research as well as in the provision of academic and student services of the focus institutions. The table below (4.14) shows the respondents’ initial ideas about this. Then, there were some follow-up discussions.

Table 4.14

Student respondents' viewpoints on the development of equity within the focus institutions			
Institutions		The promotion of equity (or equality of educational opportunity) could undermine quality in private higher education.	
		Agree	Disagree
U. A	1		x
	2		x
	3		x
	4		x
U. B	1	x	
	2		x
	3		x
	4		x
	5		x
U. C	1		x
	2		x
	3		x
	4		x
U. D	1		x
	2	x	
	3		x
	4		x
U. E	1	x	
	2		x
	3		x
	4	x	
U. F	1		x
	2		x
	3	x	
	4		x
	5		x
U. G	1		x
	2		x
	3		x
	4	x	

Student respondents' viewpoints on the development of equity within the focus institutions			
Institutions		The promotion of equity (or equality of educational opportunity) could undermine quality in private higher education.	
		Agree	Disagree
U. H	1		x
	2		x
	3		x
	4		x
	5		x
Total		6	29

Based on table 4.14, the majority of student interviewees did not agree that the promotion of equity could undermine quality in Thai private higher education. One typical student claimed:

“I don't think that the promotion of equity will have any effects on the development of quality. In my view, economically disadvantaged students with high potential and perseverance could become part of the improvement of quality of an institution...”

(Student 3/University A, 5th July 2004, 2 pm)

Most interviewees believed that equity could be developed alongside efficiency, both within private and public universities. They emphasised that assisting and widening access to higher education for able but economically disadvantaged people should be regarded as one of the prime missions of the focus institutions, as the disadvantaged with perseverance and strong determination in their studies could become part of the development of efficiency. However, those who agreed with the above statement warned that the improvement of equity could undermine quality if the focus institutions did not appropriately maintain the balance between these two components (equity and efficiency). For instance, if the universities assisted a large number of disadvantaged people, regardless of their academic ability, both the institutions and those students might face an insurmountable problem of overpopulation of unsuccessful students who could not finish their studies while wasting grants or being in an excessive debt burden. One respondent said:

“I’m afraid that the improvement of equity could sometimes undermine quality. If grants or loans aren’t well-targeted or go to those who lack commitment in their studies and who aren’t likely to repay their debt, it may bring in insuperable problems both to the university and to students themselves. Those who tend to face the most serious problem are the ones who study with no aims and no ideas when to graduate while their debt becomes accumulative...”

(Student 2/University D, 9th July 2004, 11.30 am)

Therefore, they recommended that the universities select to support only economically disadvantaged people who prove qualified for higher education and who are likely to finish their studies within time.

Regarding a concept on the application of a *top-up fees* or *users-pay* policy to help improve equity amongst the users and non-users of higher education in the country, most student interviewees in this case study, who seem to come from middle-income backgrounds and who may lack some knowledge of higher education funding, disagreed with it. For instance, one respondent argued:

“It’s unfair for students, especially those from lower middle-income families, who need to bear additional costs of higher education. In my opinion, a top-up fees policy seems to bring in negative rather than positive outcome. If introduced into Thai higher education, it would have a serious impact on the majority of university or college students who tend to come from middle-class backgrounds. As a result, there would be a larger number of students who encounter difficulties. So, I think, instead of unfairly shifting the burden to students, they’d better raise supplementary funds from other sources of finance, such as taxes on luxurious items, specially arranged or extra-curricular activities and charitable foundations or philanthropists, to solve the problem...”

(Student 4/University H, 16th July 2004, 3 pm)

In spite of being students in private institutions who normally need to cover the full fees which are two times higher than those paid by their peers in public institutions, they did not think that such a policy could be used as an effective strategy to promote equity. Instead of raising tuition fees, some interviewees suggested that the government and the universities should collect funds from other sources (e.g. taxes collected from unnecessary and luxurious goods/imports as well as charities and other types of fund-raising activities) to develop national education system, to upgrade the quality of educational institutions as well as to assist the least advantaged who would like to participate in higher education. Nevertheless, some interviewees

agreed with the above-mentioned policy and expressed their understanding in its principles and objectives. One respondent said:

“Notwithstanding my empathy for students, I agree with the introduction of a top-up fees policy into a higher education system. I think it’s fairer that those who fully benefit from higher education pay for the costs of their higher learning without shifting any burden to low-income people who or whose children don’t take part in this level of education.”

(Student 3/University B, 6th July 2004, 1.30 pm)

Should the top-up fees policy be introduced into Thai higher education, most interviewees recommended that the government and higher education institutions be transparent about the application of funds (collected from university students) which are expected to be used in the national interest only. Moreover, they suggested that the government and universities prepare the ways out and provide any kinds of student aid schemes (either in the form of loans, grants or emergency funds) for disadvantaged students from middle-income families, especially those from lower middle-class backgrounds, who tend to be the ones who will be seriously affected by the application of the top-up fees policy.

4.8 Conclusion

From the interviews of both staff and students in this case study, we have learnt that socio-economically disadvantaged students should not only be defined as those who are from low-income families or those whose parents’ or guardians’ income is not more than 12,500 baht (about £167) a month or 150,000 baht (approximately £2,000) a year or even 25,000 baht (about £333) a month or 300,000 baht (approximately £4,000) per annum. As noted by many staff and student interviewees, apart from family earnings and assets, there are many factors which should not be overlooked and should be included in the means-tested indicators of economically disadvantaged or needy students. These components include essential family expenses which are supposed to be compared with and subtracted from family earnings per annum, number of dependents (especially those who are studying at different levels of education), debt burden (especially inevitable burden), family conditions (divorced or united parents), the stability and security of parents’ or

guardians' occupations, and other factors. Hence, this case study tells us that we could not judge things and people from only one of their aspects or dimensions.

In conclusion, the qualitative results, derived from various sources of evidence, in this case study are connected to institutional oriented hypotheses 1-4 as well as student-oriented hypotheses 8 and 10 (10.3-10.5 and 10.7-10.8), cited in Chapter 3 and in the sections regarding objectives of the interviews of staff and students in this chapter. Such qualitative results are used to support the above-mentioned hypotheses.

With reference to hypothesis 1, in view of most of the staff and student interviewees, the government policy on access and equality of opportunity in higher education has been properly translated into action through the loan and grant schemes, as well as other kinds of student aid programmes operated in the focus institutions. Most of the focus institutions tend to provide educational opportunity and financial assistance for able but economically disadvantaged students, through a variety of student aid schemes. However, as noted by some staff and student interviewees, to turn the aid schemes fairer and more effective, the targeting plans of some grants and the government loans in all of the focus universities should be slightly justified (i.e. through the more thorough inspection of financial need and the allocation of loans/grants based on different programmes of study as well as dissimilar needs of students) to assure that the loans/grants are suitably targeted to those who are really in need of them.

The result shown in table 4.8 corroborates hypothesis 4.3 and demonstrates that, according to most staff interviewees in this case study, the focus universities need assistance and cooperation from the government and other funding bodies (either private or public) in establishing and developing additional student aid schemes (i.e. in the form of outright bursaries, supporting grants and low-interest loans) to widen access and educational opportunity to able but low-income students (especially those who cannot get into public universities) so that they can further their studies at the focus institutions if they would like to. Moreover, the majority of staff interviewees noted that, to make the government loan programme more effective, they need collaboration from the government and the related units in the adjustment of the loan

size to suit dissimilar needs of students in divergent programmes of study from different institutions as well as in the expedition of loan allocation to their universities so that the funds will go to their students at the right time (generally prior to the beginning of June of each academic year) when students have to register and pay for fees and miscellaneous items.

With reference to table 4.13, the majority of student interviewees agreed that, to promote equality of opportunity in higher education, the government or a funding body had better direct grants and loans to students rather than through the universities. This corroborates hypothesis 10.7. However, most interviewees suggested that, to effectively operate such a funding system, the government and the fund-making bodies should collaborate with the universities in establishing and developing a befitting approach to monitor the use of loans/grants in order to ensure that the loans/grants are applied for educational purposes only.

The results shown in tables 4.6 and 4.10 support hypotheses 3 and 10.3 which state that, for most staff and student interviewees, family income is the most important criterion for targeting loans/grants to students. Nevertheless, most of them noted that family earnings are to be combined with other factors, like family expenses, burden and number of dependents in family, to help identify socio-economic status of people and their financial need.

With reference to hypothesis 2, the results shown in tables 4.7 and 4.11 corroborate the suggestion that most grants and scholarships in all of the focus institutions, except two of them (Universities D and G), are merit-based, despite most staff and student interviewees suggested that they should be more need-led. In contrast, the loans available at each focus institution are need-based rather than merit-based.

The results shown in tables 4.4 and 4.12 corroborate hypotheses 4.1 and 10.4 which indicate that, from viewpoints of the staff interviewees as well as most student interviewees, a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants and other kinds of outright funds.

Based on the result demonstrated in table 4.5, most staff interviewees agreed with the application of income-contingent loan scheme or ICL in Thai private higher education. From the interviews of students, most of them also agreed with this scheme. This supports hypotheses 4.2 and 10.5. However, some staff and student interviewees suggested that the government and related units should clarify its targeting plan as well as repayment conditions prior to the real use of ICL.

From the interviews and observations of students, it turned out that the majority of loan takers are those whose parents/guardians are the owners of small business or freelancers (the self-employed) with low or unstable incomes (not more than 150,000 baht or £2,000) a year and those whose parents/guardians are low-ranking government officials or permanent employees with lots of dependents and debt burden. Thus, they seem to be really in need of financial aid and to be less advantaged than their peers who do not take any loans/grants and whose parents/guardians are businesspersons or the owners of big or medium for-profit business. Hence, this corroborates hypothesis 8.

With reference to tables 4.9 and 4.14, the majority of staff and student interviewees believed that the promotion of equity should not undermine quality and that equity could be developed, alongside efficiency, in Thai private higher education. Therefore, hypotheses 4.4 and 10.8 are supported. Nevertheless, based on the documents and archival records concerning various types of funds offered to students each year as well as on the interviews and observations of some staff and student interviewees, it turned out that, despite their concerns about the improvement of equity, most of the focus institutions, in practice, seem to regard efficiency and academic ability of their students as priority.

In spite of the wealth of data provided by the interview techniques, we are aware of some discernible drawbacks of the qualitative approach. For instance, in this case study, the four main disadvantages of interviews (as mentioned in Chapter 3) are the unavoidable subjectivity and bias of some interviewees, the representativeness of student interviewees, the reliability of the interview findings (which is limited by the small number of student respondents, or only four or five of them from each focus institution who could be reached and who could fully and voluntarily participate in

the interviews) as well as the time and budgetary constraints (e.g. the researcher could not be in more than one place at the same time to interview hundreds or thousands of students). Accordingly, student interviewees, in this case study, might not be able to represent the overall population of students in all the focus institutions.

Apart from the interviews and observations of a sample of student respondents, the researcher applies questionnaires, completed by a large number of students who are expected to represent each of the focus institutions, as an additional source of evidence to supplement the qualitative findings. We turn to these results now.

Chapter 5

Questionnaire Results

5.1 Introduction

From the interviews of staff and students in Chapter 4, we have learnt the in-depth information and details on the equity policy and a variety of student aid programmes practised and operated in the eight focus institutions, as well as the interviewees' viewpoints on such policy and programmes. Although there is a richness of information obtained through this qualitative approach, one of its discernible weaknesses for this case study is the non-representativeness of student interviewees, that may have an effect on reliability of the qualitative data. Thus, this research requires some quantifiable data, extracted from a larger number of participants who could be regarded as representatives of a wider population from the eight focus sub-cases, in order to help enhance reliability of the interview results and to corroborate the theory, concepts and hypotheses concerning the possibility of the development of equity in Thai private higher education. Accordingly, a quantitative survey was conducted with, on average, 377 students from each focus institution (totally 3,016 students from all eight sub-cases) who could be recognised as representatives from their universities, based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) criterion on the determination of sample size for the quantitative study.

Nevertheless, in spite of being endowed with a higher degree of reliability and representativeness of the sample population, some phenomena in quantitative study or the questionnaire results (i.e. low-income students' decision to further their higher education at private institutions as well as additional information and details on other sources of their financial support, apart from loans and grants) require clarifications and explanations from the qualitative or interview data. Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative findings may be recognised as complementary parts in this research.

5.2 Aims of Questionnaire

The questionnaire, designed for this case study, mainly aims to

- explore students' attitudes towards Thai private higher education, equality of educational opportunity in private universities for socio-economically disadvantaged students and student aid schemes provided and/or operated by the focus institutions under the government support.
- examine the following student-oriented hypotheses (5-10), cited in Chapter 3:

Hypothesis 5 The following factors have an effect on the student respondents' decision to participate in higher education: parents' education, one or more (extended) family members who graduated with a university degree (or equivalent) and permanent places of residence. (Tables 5.9-5.11)

Hypothesis 6 Parents' earnings have an effect on the student respondents' decision to study at particular institutions. (Table 5.1)

Hypothesis 7 The following factors have an effect on the student respondents' decision of taking loans: programmes of study, length of programmes, parents' income, number of assets, number of dependents in family, number of dependents in family who are studying and parents' occupations. (Tables 5.2-5.8)

Hypothesis 8 The present grant and loan recipients (the focus group) at each institution are really in need of funds and are economically less advantaged than their peers who are non-takers of grants and loans (the control group). (Tables 5.4, 5.5 and 5.13)

Hypotheses 9 The following factors have an effect on the student respondents' fear of loans: parents' or guardians' income and gender of respondents.
(Tables 5.13 and 5.14)

Hypothesis 9.1 Higher-income students are less afraid of loans than their lower-income peers.
(Table 5.13)

Hypothesis 9.2 Female respondents are more afraid of loans than male respondents.
(Table 5.14)

Hypotheses 10 From viewpoints of the student respondents:

Hypothesis 10.1 In their opinion, economically disadvantaged students are not only those whose parents' or guardians' income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month).
(Table 5.16)

Hypothesis 10.2 The eligibility for loans should not be limited only to those whose parents' or guardians' income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month), in accordance with the government criterion on family income.
(Table 5.16)

Hypothesis 10.3 Family income should be the most important criterion for the universities or the government to offer grants and loans. (Table 5.16)

Hypothesis 10.4 A loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner

than can grants and full or partial tuition waivers. (Table 5.16)

Hypothesis 10.5 An income-contingent loan (or ICL) scheme is going to be more effective than the present mortgage-type plan, in terms of the development of equity in Thai private higher education. (Table 5.16)

Hypothesis 10.6 The focus universities need assistance and cooperation from the government and/or external bodies in the promotion of equity in private higher education. (Table 5.16)

Hypothesis 10.7 It is fairer that the government or a funding body (either public or private) allocates either grants or loans directly to students rather than to universities. (Table 5.16)

Hypothesis 10.8 It is possible that equity (or adequacy of educational opportunity) is not incompatible with quality in Thai private higher education. (Table 5.16)

The above hypotheses have developed from the universal theory and concepts on the development of equality of educational opportunity through financial aid programmes (focusing on educational loans) for higher education students, mentioned in Chapter 2.

5.3 Presentation of questionnaire results

The following tables (5.1-5.17) demonstrate the questionnaire results, regarded as a significant source of evidence to test the above-mentioned hypotheses as

well as to corroborate the theory and concepts under investigation. The last tables (5.18.1-5.18.14) show consistency between the findings of all eight sub-cases.

Table 5.1

Table 5.1 demonstrates the numbers/percentages of all respondents, classified by parents' or guardians' incomes and institutions. (The figure in parentheses, under each number, is the percentage of respondents.)

Correlation between institutions and parents'/guardians' income						
Institutions	Parents'/guardians' income/month (Thai baht)					Total
	≤ 12,500	12,501 – 25,000	25,001 – 75,000	75,001 – 100,000	>100,000	
U. A						
% within name of institution	146 (38.6%)	47 (12.4%)	129 (34.1%)	27 (7.1%)	29 (7.7%)	378 (100.0%)
% within parents'/guardians' income/month	(11.0%)	(9.3%)	(15.4%)	(16.7%)	(16.1%)	(12.6%)
U. B						
% within name of institution	233 (62.1%)	58 (15.5%)	67 (17.9%)	17 (4.5%)	0 (0.0%)	375 (100.0%)
% within parents'/guardians' income/month	(17.6%)	(11.5%)	(8.0%)	(10.5%)	(0.0%)	(12.5%)
U. C						
% within name of institution	227 (59.9%)	73 (19.3%)	68 (17.9%)	8 (2.1%)	3 (0.8%)	379 (100.0%)
% within parents'/guardians' income/month	(17.1%)	(14.5%)	(8.1%)	(4.9%)	(1.7%)	(12.6%)
U. D						
% within name of institution	191 (51.2%)	81 (21.7%)	85 (22.8%)	8 (2.1%)	8 (2.1%)	373 (100.0%)
% within parents'/guardians' income/month	(14.4%)	(16.1%)	(10.2%)	(4.9%)	(4.4%)	(12.4%)
U. E						
% within name of institution	31 (8.2%)	43 (11.4%)	173 (46.0%)	53 (14.1%)	76 (20.2%)	376 (100.0%)
% within parents'/guardians' income/month	(2.3%)	(8.5%)	(20.7%)	(32.7%)	(42.2%)	(12.5%)
U. F						
% within name of institution	130 (34.7%)	66 (17.6%)	130 (34.7%)	17 (4.5%)	32 (8.5%)	375 (100.0%)
% within parents'/guardians' income/month	(9.8%)	(13.1%)	(15.6%)	(10.5%)	(17.8%)	(12.5%)

Correlation between institutions and parents'/guardians' income						
Institutions	Parents'/guardians' income/month (Thai baht)					Total
	≤ 12,500	12,501 – 25,000	25,001 – 75,000	75,001 – 100,000	>100,000	
U. G	215 (57.2%)	65 (17.3%)	74 (19.7%)	11 (2.9%)	11 (2.9%)	376 (100.0%)
% within name of institution	(16.2%)	(12.9%)	(8.9%)	(6.8%)	(6.1%)	(12.5%)
% within parents'/guardians' income/month						
U. H	154 (40.8%)	71 (18.8%)	110 (29.2%)	21 (5.6%)	21 (5.6%)	377 (100.0%)
% within name of institution	(11.6%)	(14.1%)	(13.2%)	(13.0%)	(11.7%)	(12.5%)
% within parents'/guardians' income/month						
Total	1327 (44.1%)	504 (16.7%)	836 (27.8%)	162 (5.4%)	180 (6.0%)	3009 (100.0%)
% within name of institution	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)
% within parents'/guardians' income/month						

$\chi^2 = 566.525, df = 28, p < 0.05$

N.B. £1 was equal to 75 baht as of 1st of September 2004.

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between parents' or guardians' earnings and the respondents' decision to go to particular institutions.

Table 5.1 shows the divergence of parents' or guardians' incomes between respondents from different institutions. From this, we could notice that:

- The highest proportion of students from high-income families are in University E.
- The highest proportion of students from middle-income families are in Universities A, F and H.
- The highest proportion of students from low-income families are in Universities B, C, D and G.
- In all the sub-cases, except University E, the highest proportions of respondents are from low-income families.

Based on the above table, parents' incomes have an effect on the respondents' decision to study at particular institutions.

N.B. With reference to table 5.1 showing the number of respondents from each focus institution under each level of parents' or guardians' incomes, we could notice that most students of University E are from pretty high-income backgrounds. That is probably because University E is the only international institution in this study that charges the highest rates of tuition fees (as shown in table 3.2/Chapter 3).

Table 5.2

Table 5.2 demonstrates the numbers/percentages of all respondents, divided by their programmes of study and the decision of taking or not taking grants/loans.

Correlation between programmes of study and decision of taking loans					
Programmes of Study		Groups of respondents			Total
		those who are taking loans or both loans and grants	those who are taking grants /scholarships only	those who are <u>not</u> taking any grants/ loans	
Science/ Medical Sciences/ Engineering/ Agriculture/ Architecture	% within programme of study	384 (57.0%)	60 (8.9%)	230 (34.1%)	674 (100.0%)
	% within groups of respondents	(26.4%)	(35.7%)	(16.5%)	(22.4%)
Social Sciences (except Law)/ Humanities	% within programme of study	937 (44.7%)	97 (4.6%)	1061 (50.6%)	2095 (100.0%)
	% within groups of respondents	(64.4%)	(57.7%)	(76.3%)	(69.5%)
Other (i.e. Law, IT)	% within programme of study	135 (55.1%)	11 (4.5%)	99 (40.4%)	245 (100.0%)
	% within groups of respondents	(9.3%)	(6.5%)	(7.1%)	(8.1%)
Total	% within programme of study	1456 (48.3%)	168 (5.6%)	1390 (46.1%)	3014 (100.0%)
	% within groups of respondents	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 67.703, df = 4, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between the programmes of study and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Table 5.2 reveals that most loan or loan and grant recipients, as well as most of those who are non-takers of loans/grants, are students of social sciences and humanities, which seem to be the majority of all respondents in this case study. However, we can notice that, in this case study, most students of science, medicine, engineering and other fields of study are loan/grant takers, while most of those in social sciences and humanities are non-takers of loans/grants. Therefore, the programmes of study have an effect on the respondents' decision of taking loans.

Table 5.3

Table 5.3 shows the numbers/percentages of all respondents, divided by the length of their programmes of study and their decision of taking or not taking loans.

Correlation between length of programmes and respondents' decision of taking loans				
Length of Programmes (years)	Groups of respondents			Total
	those who are taking loans or both loans and grants	those who are taking grants/scholarships only	those who are <u>not</u> taking any grants /loans.	
< 4	425 (67.5%)	17 (2.7%)	188 (29.8%)	630 (100.0%)
% within length of programme	(29.2%)	(10.1%)	(13.5%)	(20.9%)
% within groups of respondents				
4	1011 (43.9%)	141 (6.1%)	1153 (50.0%)	2305 (100.0%)
% within length of programme	(69.4%)	(83.9%)	(83.0%)	(76.5%)
% within groups of respondents				
> 4	21 (26.6%)	10 (12.7%)	48 (60.8%)	79 (100.0%)
% within length of programme	(1.4%)	(6.0%)	(3.5%)	(2.6%)
% within groups of respondents				
Total	1457 (48.3%)	168 (5.6%)	1389 (46.1%)	3014 (100.0%)
% within length of programme	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)
% within groups of respondents				

$\chi^2 = 130.138, df = 4, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between the length of programmes of study and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Based on table 5.3, we could notice that the programmes which require a shorter time of study (or less than four years) tend to have quite a large number of loan takers, in comparison with the number of those who are not taking any loans/grants. The normal programmes of four years have the similar proportions of the first (those who are taking loans or both loans and grants) and the last (those who are not taking any loans/grants) groups of respondents. The programmes that require longer time of study (or over four years) are likely to have more non-takers of loans/grants, rather than those who are loan/grant takers. So, in this case study, it turns out that the length of programmes has an effect on the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

N.B. Through the comparison between the numbers/percentages of respondents in the first and the last groups of respondents (loan or loan and grant takers and non-takers of loans/grants, respectively) in the programmes of study which require less than four years, it indicates that the first group is larger than the last one. In the normal programmes of study, which take four years, the numbers of the respondents in both groups are quite similar or about the same. Most respondents in the programmes which require more than four years are not likely to take any loans/grants.

Table 5.4

Table 5.4 demonstrates the numbers/percentages of all respondents, classified by parents' or guardians' earnings (per month) and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Correlation between parents'/guardians' income and respondents' decision of taking loans				
Parents' or guardians' income (baht/month)	Groups of respondents			Total
	those who are taking loans or both loans and grants	those who are taking grants/ scholarships only	those who are <u>not</u> taking any grants/ loans.	
≤ 12,500 % within parents'/ guardians' income/ month % within groups of respondents	1044 (78.7%) (71.7%)	47 (3.5%) (28.1%)	236 (17.8%) (17.0%)	1327 (100.0%) (44.1%)
12,501 – 25,000 % within parents'/ guardians' income/ month % within groups of respondents	215 (42.7%) (14.8%)	40 (7.9%) (24.0%)	249 (49.4%) (18.0%)	504 (100.0%) (16.7%)
25,001 – 75,000 % within parents'/ guardians' income/ month % within groups of respondents	164 (19.6%) (11.3%)	63 (7.5%) (37.7%)	609 (72.8%) (43.9%)	836 (100.0%) (27.8%)
75,001 – 100,000 % within parents'/ guardians' income/ month % within groups of respondents	24 (14.8%) (1.6%)	11 (6.8%) (6.6%)	127 (78.4%) (9.2%)	162 (100.0%) (5.4%)
>100,000 % within parents'/ guardians' income/ month % within groups of respondents	9 (5.0%) (0.6%)	6 (3.3%) (3.6%)	165 (91.7%) (11.9%)	180 (100.0%) (6.0%)
Total % within parents'/ guardians' income/ month % within groups of respondents	1456 (48.4%) (100.0%)	167 (5.6%) (100.0%)	1386 (46.1%) (100.0%)	3009 (100.0%) (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 1008.369, df = 8, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between parents' or guardians' incomes and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

The above table shows that most loan (or loan and grant) recipients are those whose parents' or guardians' earnings are not more than 12,500 baht/month or 150,000 baht/year (from low-income backgrounds). Should parents' or guardians' earnings become higher, the number of loan or loan and grant takers tends to be smaller. Also, in this study, the highest proportion of respondents from the lowest-

income families are loan or both loan and grant takers, while the highest proportions of those from higher-income backgrounds (or those whose parents' or guardians' earnings are higher than 12,500 baht/month) are non-takers of loans/grants.

Therefore, parents' or guardians' earnings have an effect on the respondents' decision of taking loans.

5.3.1 Classification of parents'/guardians' socio-economic status

In accordance with what was suggested by many academics and researchers (e.g. Woodhall, 1987, Tekleselassie, 2001, and Ziderman, 2003), besides parents'/guardians' earnings, family status and assets should be regarded as a crucial factor to be included in a set of means-tested indicators to help identify financial need of students.

From her experience as a participant of a home visit programme, arranged by the office of student welfare of a public university (to explore the household assets and the real financial status of a number of loan and grant takers) in academic year 1994-1995, and from her discussions with some academics, resource persons and government officials in charge of the government loan programme at two prestigious Thai public universities and at the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education of Thailand, the researcher has developed a list of assets, that were included in a checklist produced by the above-mentioned institution which organised the home visit plan. Also, as recommended by the resource persons at those two public institutions and at the Ministry of Education, the researcher has established a set of marking criteria in order to classify parents' or guardians' socio-economic status/number of assets of the respondents in this case study. Such marking criteria are based on the value as well as the number of each item or asset owned by each family, as follows:

Assets	house	land	car	computer	motor-cycle	air-conditioner	washing machine	mobile phone
Point (s)	20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6

Assets	Video / VCD/DVD player	TV	fridge	stereo / radio	home phone	microwave	electric fan
Point (s)	4	1	1	1	1	1	1

The next step was for the researcher to estimate the basic needs of ordinary people or even those respondents (in the research) who are from the least advantaged families. As suggested by the resource persons of the above-mentioned two institutions and by the government officials (in charge of student loans) at the Ministry of Education, the basic needs, normally, consist of (at least) all the one-point items (= six points), a four-point item, a six-point item, an eight-point item, a ten-point item, and a 12-point item. Thus, in total, a respondent from a low-income family should have 46 points or below ($6 + 4 + 6 + 8 + 10 + 12 = 46$). For respondents who are supposed to come from upper middle-class or high-income families, all points of all the items in the above tables (as well as on the list in the questionnaire) are added up, with a double score on the first item of the highest value (40 points for two houses). Thus, in total, a respondent from a high-income family should have 134 points or over. From this, the range of points, from 46 to 134, is divided into three additional categories (derived from $\frac{134 - 46}{3} = 29$ points). So, in this research,

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parents' or guardians' status may be classified as follows:

- 46 points or below - a low-income (the least advantaged) family
- 47 – 75 points - a lower middle-class (less advantaged) family
- 76 – 104 points - a middle-income or middle-class family
- 105 – 133 points - an upper middle-class (more privileged) family
- 134 points or over - a high-income (the most privileged) family.

Table 5.4.1

Table 5.4.1 shows the linear relationship between parents' or guardians' income and parents' or guardians' socio-economic status (/number of assets).

Relationship between parents'/guardians' income and parents'/guardians' status		
Variables	Parents'/guardians' income/month	Parents'/guardians' status
Parents'/guardians' income/month		
Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.549**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
No. of respondents	3009	3009
Parents'/guardians' status		
Pearson Correlation	0.549**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
No. of respondents	3009	3016

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), $r = 0.549$ ($-1 < r < 1$), $n = 3009$, $p < 0.05$.

From the correlation coefficient test shown in table 5.4.1, we may conclude that parents' or guardians' income (recognised as an independent variable) and parents' or guardians' status/number of assets (regarded as a dependent variable) are positively correlated (when parents'/guardians' earnings increase, their status tends to become higher). This signifies that parents'/guardians' income could allow prediction of parents'/guardians' socio-economic status/number of assets. Accordingly, we could apply the above-mentioned criteria (in 5.3.1) to classify socio-economic status of the respondents in this research.

In this regard, it is worth probing into the correlation between parents' or guardians' socio-economic status and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Table 5.5

Table 5.5 demonstrates the numbers/percentages of all respondents, classified by parents' or guardians' status and assets and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Correlation between parents'/guardians' status/number of assets and respondents' decision of taking loans				
Parents'/ guardians' status	Groups of respondents			Total
	those who are taking loans or both loans and grants	those who are taking grants/ scholarships only	those who are <u>not</u> taking any grants/ loans.	
low-income (the least advantaged)	258	10	55	323
% within parents'/guardians' status	(79.9 %)	(3.1%)	(17.0%)	(100.0%)
% within groups of respondents	(17.7%)	(6.0%)	(4.0%)	(10.7%)

Correlation between parents'/guardians' status/number of assets and respondents' decision of taking loans				
Parents'/ guardians' status	Groups of respondents			Total
	those who are taking loans or both loans and grants	those who are taking grants/ scholarships only	those who are <u>not</u> taking any grants/ loans.	
lower middle-class (less advantaged) % within parents'/guardians' status	444 (76.8%)	19 (3.3%)	115 (19.9%)	578 (100.0%)
% within groups of respondents	(30.5%)	(11.3%)	(8.3%)	(19.2%)
middle-class % within parents'/guardians' status	355 (67.5%)	22 (4.2%)	149 (28.3%)	526 (100.0%)
% within groups of respondents	(24.3%)	(13.1%)	(10.7%)	(17.4%)
upper middle-class (more privileged) % within parents'/guardians' status	203 (46.6%)	28 (6.4%)	205 (47.0%)	436 (100.0%)
% within groups of respondents	(13.9%)	(16.7%)	(14.7%)	(14.5%)
high-income (the most privileged) % within parents'/guardians' status	198 (17.2%)	89 (7.7%)	866 (75.1%)	1153 (100.0%)
% within groups of respondents	(13.6%)	(53.0%)	(62.3%)	(38.2%)
Total % within parents'/guardians' status	1458 (48.3%)	168 (5.6%)	1390 (46.1%)	3016 (100.0%)
% within groups of respondents	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 848.187, df = 8, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between parents' or guardians' status/number of assets and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Based on table 5.5, when the parents' or guardians' status (/number of assets) becomes higher, the number of loan or loan and grant takers tends to become lower. On the contrary, the number of non-takers of loans/grants becomes higher when the parents' or guardians' status is higher. Also, we can notice that the highest proportions of respondents, who are classified as the least advantaged (or low-income students) and who are recognised as less advantaged (or lower middle-class) students, are loan or loan and grant takers. In contrast, the highest proportion of those, classified as the most privileged (or high-income students), are non-takers of loans/grants. This means that the parents' or guardians' status and number of assets have an effect on the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Table 5.6

Table 5.6 presents the numbers/percentages of all respondents, classified by the number of dependents in family and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Correlation between the number of dependents in family and respondents' decision of taking loans				
Number/ Percentage of dependent(s) in family	Groups of respondents			Total
	those who are taking loans or both loans and grants	those who are taking grants/ scholarships only	those who are <u>not</u> taking any grants/ loans.	
≤ 4 % within number of dependents in family % within groups of respondents	1231 (48.4%) (84.4%)	138 (5.4%) (82.1%)	1173 (46.1%) (84.4%)	2542 (100.0%) (84.3%)
4 % within number of dependents in family % within groups of respondents	114 (41.6%) (7.8%)	19 (6.9%) (11.3%)	141 (51.5%) (10.1%)	274 (100.0%) (9.1%)
5 % within number of dependents in family % within groups of respondents	55 (51.9%) (3.8%)	6 (5.7%) (3.6%)	45 (42.5%) (3.2%)	106 (100.0%) (3.5%)
> 5 % within number of dependents in family % within groups of respondents	58 (61.7%) (4.0%)	5 (5.3%) (3.0%)	31 (33.0%) (2.2%)	94 (100.0%) (3.1%)
Total % within number of dependents in family % within groups of respondents	1458 (48.3%) (100.0%)	168 (5.6%) (100.0%)	1390 (46.1%) (100.0%)	3016 (100.0%) (100.0%)

$$\chi^2 = 12.867, df = 6, p < 0.05$$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between the number of dependents in family and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Based on table 5.6, we can notice that, if there are four or fewer dependents in family, the proportion of loan or loan and grant recipients and the proportion of non-

takers of grants/loans are not very different. However, when the number of dependents in family goes up to five or over, the proportion of loan or loan and grant recipients is likely to become higher than the proportion of those who are not taking any grants/loans. Also, the proportion of non-takers of loans/grants tends to become continuously lower when the number of dependents in family increases.

Therefore, in this study, the number of dependents in family has an effect on the respondents' decision of taking loans.

Table 5.7

Table 5.7 demonstrates the numbers/percentages of all respondents, divided by the number of dependents in family who are studying and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Correlation between the number of dependents studying and respondents' decision of taking loans				
Number/ Percentage of dependents studying	Groups of respondents			Total
	those who are taking loans or both loans and grants	those who are taking grants/ scholarships only	those who are <u>not</u> taking any grants/ loans.	
< 4	1329 (48.5%)	150 (5.5%)	1259 (46.0%)	2738 (100.0%)
4	90 (46.2%)	15 (7.7%)	90 (46.2%)	195 (100.0%)
5	15 (34.1%)	3 (6.8%)	26 (59.1%)	44 (100.0%)
> 5	24 (61.5%)	0 (0.0%)	15 (38.5%)	39 (100.0%)
Total	1458 (48.3%)	168 (5.6%)	1390 (46.1%)	3016 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 9.495, df = 6, p > 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, the p-value is 0.148 (> 0.05). It signifies that, in this case study, there is no relationship between the number of dependents in family who are studying and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Based on table 5.7, the number of loan or loan and grant recipients and the number of non-takers of grants/loans are about the same or not really different, regardless of the number of dependents in family who are studying. So, in this

research, the number of dependents in family who are studying does not have any effect on the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

N.B. In this case, the reason why the number of dependents in family who are studying does not have any effect on the respondents' decision of taking loans might be that there are some other factors, apart from parents' or guardians' incomes and assets, which help support the respondents or their brothers and sisters while studying. Such factors might affect the respondents' or their brothers' and sisters' decision of not depending on parents' or guardians' funds in the payment of their tuition and fees. The above-mentioned factors are supposed to be scholarships, grants and loans (offered to the respondents themselves or to their brothers and sisters who are studying), as well as supporting funds from any relatives from their extended families (who are not their parents or guardians) or from their own brothers and sisters who are in regular paid employment.

Tables 5.8

Table 5.8.1

Table 5.8.1 presents the numbers/percentages of all respondents, classified by father's occupation and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Correlation between father's occupation and respondents' decision of taking loans				
Father's occupation	Groups of respondents			Total
	those who are taking loans or both loans and grants	those who are taking grants/scholarships only	those who are <u>not</u> taking any grants/loans.	
government official/school teacher/university staff/officer of a state enterprise	118 (23.9%)	47 (9.5%)	329 (66.6%)	494 (100.0%)
employee of a private company/organization	152 (44.6%)	22 (6.5%)	167 (49.0%)	341 (100.0%)
businessperson/owner of business/freelancer	664 (44.8%)	73 (4.9%)	746 (50.3%)	1483 (100.0%)
general employee/agriculturere/farmer/gardener	265 (82.3%)	10 (3.1%)	47 (14.6%)	322 (100.0%)
Other	258 (69.0%)	16 (4.3%)	100 (26.7%)	374 (100.0%)

Correlation between father's occupation and respondents' decision of taking loans				
Father's occupation	Groups of respondents			Total
	those who are taking loans or both loans and grants	those who are taking grants/scholarships only	those who are <u>not</u> taking any grants/loans.	
Total	1457 (48.3%)	168 (5.6%)	1389 (46.1%)	3014 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 346.908, df = 8, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between father's occupation and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

From table 5.8.1, we have learnt that:

- Most respondents whose fathers are government officials, school teachers, university staff or officers of state enterprises are non-takers of grants/loans.
- The numbers of loan or loan and grant recipients and of non-takers of grants/loans, whose fathers are employees of private companies/organisations, businesspersons, owners of business or freelancers, are not very different. From the interviews of staff and students, the researcher learnt that most loan or loan and grant recipients have fathers who are just the owners of small business or domestic industry or in self-employment with low or unstable earnings per annum. In general, their fathers tend to be in capacity of affording the education of their children or dependents, with quite limited funds and abilities. The majority of non-takers of grants/loans tend to be those whose fathers are businesspersons or the owners of big and/ or medium for-profit business or national/international industry.
- Most respondents whose fathers are general employees, agriculturers/farmers or gardeners are loan or loan and grant recipients.
- In the questionnaire, the researcher provided a space to be filled in by respondents whose fathers' occupations are different from what were given by the researcher. It turns out that, for other occupations or other conditions of fathers, the majority of respondents are loan or loan and grant recipients. Most of them tend to be those whose fathers are house husbands, ill, dead, divorced/estranged from their spouses, or have not been in connection with their spouses and children.

Thus, based on the above table, father's occupation has an effect on the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Table 5.8.2

Table 5.8.2 shows the numbers/percentages of all respondents, divided by mother's occupation and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Correlation between mother's occupation and respondents' decision of taking loans				
Mother's occupation	Groups of respondents			Total
	those who are taking loans or both loans and grants	those who are taking grants/scholarships only	those who are <u>not</u> taking any grants/loans	
government official/ school teacher/ university staff/ officer of a state enterprise	47 (17.4%)	28 (10.4%)	195 (72.2%)	270 (100.0%)
employee of a private company/organisation	96 (42.1%)	10 (4.4%)	122 (53.5%)	228 (100.0%)
businessperson/owner of business/freelancer	701 (45.7%)	85 (5.5%)	747 (48.7%)	1533 (100.0%)
general employee/ agriculturere/farmer/ gardener	248 (82.1%)	7 (2.3%)	47 (15.6%)	302 (100.0%)
Other	366 (53.7%)	38 (5.6%)	278 (40.8%)	682 (100.0%)
Total	1458 (48.4%)	168 (5.6%)	1389 (46.1%)	3015 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 260.503, df = 8, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between mother's occupation and the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Much the same as table 5.8.1, table 5.8.2 indicates that:

- The majority of respondents whose mothers are government officials, school teachers, university staff or officers of state enterprises are non-takers of grants/loans.
- Like in the father's case, the numbers of loan or loan and grant recipients and of non-takers of grants/loans, whose mothers are employees of private companies/organisations, businesspersons, owners of business or freelancers, are not really different. From the interviews of staff and

students, it is likely that mothers of most loan or loan and grant recipients are just the owners of small business or domestic industry or in self-employment with low or unstable earnings per annum. Generally, such mothers tend to be in capacity of affording the education of their children or dependents, with quite limited funds and abilities. The majority of non-takers of grants/loans tend to be those whose mothers are businesspersons or the owners of big and/or medium for-profit business or national/international industry.

- Most respondents whose mothers are general employees, agriculturists/farmers or gardeners are loan or loan and grant recipients.
- In the questionnaire, the researcher provided a space for those whose mothers' occupations are different from what were given by the researcher. It turns out that, for other occupations or other conditions of mothers, the majority of respondents, whose mothers are housewives, ill, dead, divorced/estranged from their spouses or have not been in connection with their spouses and children, are loan or loan and grant recipients. (The number of loan or loan and grant recipients is quite larger than the number of those who are not taking grants/loans.)

Hence, based on table 5.8.2, mother's occupation has an effect on the respondents' decision of taking or not taking loans.

Tables 5.9

Tables 5.9 (5.9.1 and 5.9.2) aim to explore the effect of parents'/guardians' education on the respondents' education and their decision to participate in higher learning.

Table 5.9.1

Table 5.9.1 presents the numbers/percentages of all respondents, divided by father's and the respondents' education. In this regard, we need to combine some categories (i.e. primary education, no education and other) to eliminate the cells with insufficient cases.

Correlation between father's education and respondents' education				
Father's education	Respondents' education			Total
	Completed secondary school (or equivalent)	University degree (BA, BS or equivalent)	Non-formal education/ Certificates/ Professional training school/Other	
Primary school/No education/Other (other qualifications, death or loss of connections)	611 (69.5%)	32 (3.6%)	236 (26.8%)	879 (100.0%)
Completed secondary school/ Lower-level secondary school	907 (76.1%)	63 (5.3%)	222 (18.6%)	1192 (100.0%)
University degree (or equivalent)/Post-college degree beyond BA or BS)	567 (86.4%)	38 (5.8%)	51 (7.8%)	656 (100.0%)
Non-formal education/Certificates/ Professional training school	213 (74.7%)	10 (3.5%)	62 (21.8%)	285 (100.0%)
Total	2298 (76.3%)	143 (4.7%)	571 (19.0%)	3012 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 93.057, df = 6, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between father's education and the respondents' education.

From the above table, most respondents are secondary school leavers (completed secondary school-level). Some respondents obtained non-formal education, higher certificates or certificates of achievement, prior to registering in the focus institutions. In majority, their fathers attained secondary school-level education (equivalent to grade 12) or the lower level of secondary school education. Some respondents, who are secondary school leavers, have fathers who obtained a university degree (BA or BS) or equivalent, or a post-college degree (Masters, Ph.D. or a degree beyond BA and BS). Thus, when fathers attained secondary school-level education or beyond, their children or dependents (the respondents) would also complete the same level of education or non-formal education with certificates/higher certificates. However, there are a considerable number of secondary school leavers or those with certificates/higher certificates, whose fathers obtained primary school-level education or no education. Most respondents who have no information about their fathers' education (due to death or no connection) or whose fathers obtained other educational qualifications also completed secondary school-level education.

Based on table 5.9.1, the father's education has an effect on the respondents' education.

Table 5.9.2

Table 5.9.2 demonstrates the numbers/percentages of all respondents, divided by mother's and the respondents' education.

Correlation between mother's education and respondents' education				
Mother's education	Respondents' education			Total
	Completed secondary school (or equivalent)	University degree (BA, BS or equivalent)	Non-formal education/ Certificates/ Professional training school/Other	
Primary school/No education/Other (other qualifications, death or loss of connections)	737 (69.2%)	34 (3.2%)	294 (27.6%)	1065 (100.0%)
Completed secondary school/ Lower-level secondary school	867 (78.1%)	66 (5.9%)	177 (16.0%)	1110 (100.0%)
University degree (or equivalent)/Post-college degree beyond BA or BS)	473 (88.1%)	32 (6.0%)	32 (6.0%)	537 (100.0%)
Non-formal education/Certificates/ Professional training school	221 (73.9%)	11 (3.7%)	67 (22.4%)	299 (100.0%)
Total	2298 (76.3%)	143 (4.7%)	570 (18.9%)	3011 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 125.856, df = 6, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between mother's education and the respondents' education.

Almost the same as in table 5.9.1, based on table 5.9.2, the majority of respondents are secondary school leavers (completed secondary school-level).

Some participants obtained non-formal education, higher certificates or certificates of accomplishment, prior to registering in the focus institutions. Most of such respondents have mothers who completed secondary school-level education (or equivalent to grade 12) or the lower level of secondary school education. Some

secondary school leavers have mothers who obtained a university degree (BA or BS) or equivalent or a post-college degree (Masters, Ph.D. or a degree beyond BA and BS). Therefore, when mothers attained secondary school-level education or beyond, their children or dependents (the respondents) would also complete the same level of education or non-formal education with certificates/higher certificates. However, there are quite a large number of secondary school leavers or those with certificates/higher certificates, whose mothers obtained primary school-level education or no education. Like in the father's case, most respondents who have no information about their mothers' education (due to death or no connection) or whose mothers obtained other educational qualifications also attained secondary school-level education.

So, the above table shows that the mother's education, like the father's, has an effect on the respondents' education.

Table 5.10

Table 5.10 shows the numbers/percentages of all respondents who decided to go to the focus institutions, classified by the number of (extended) family members with a university degree (BA, BS or equivalent).

Correlation between the number of (extended) family members with a university degree (or equivalent) and respondents' decision to take part in higher education					
Number of (extended) family members with a university degree (or equivalent)	None	1-2 people	3-4 people	5 people or over	Total
Number/Percentage of respondents	999 (33.1%)	1055 (35.0%)	477 (15.8%)	485 (16.1%)	3016 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 397.501, df = 3, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between the number of (extended) family members with a university degree or equivalent and the respondents' decision to participate in higher education.

Based on the above table, the majority of respondents (who decided to go to universities), or 2,017 of them in total or about 67% of all respondents in this research (in this eight sub-cases study), are from the (extended) families which have at least one or more people with a university degree (BA, BS or equivalent).

Thus, the number of (extended) family members with a university degree or equivalent does affect the respondents' decision to participate in higher education.

N.B. In the modern Thai society, people do not have many (more than two or three) children. The extended family system tends to become less dominant, in comparison with in the ancient time. However, based on the above table, we could notice that some Thai people (quite a large number of them in this eight sub-cases study) have begun to realise the value of higher education, through the support of their children or dependents in higher education.

Table 5.11

Table 5.11 presents the numbers/percentages of all respondents who decided to further their studies in the focus institutions, divided by the respondents' permanent places of residence.

Correlation between permanent residence (in Bangkok or upcountry) and respondents' decision to take part in higher education						
Permanent residence	Bangkok and peripheral provinces	Central provinces	Northern provinces	Northeastern provinces (Isaan)	Southern provinces	Total
Number/ Percentage of respondents	1518 (50.4%)	466 (15.5%)	179 (5.9%)	298 (9.9%)	553 (18.3%)	3014 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 1876.733, df = 4, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between the respondents' permanent places of residence and their decision to take part in higher education.

Based on table 5.11, the majority of respondents (who decided to further their education at universities), in this research, are originally from or permanently live in Bangkok (the capital city) and peripheral areas (near Bangkok). A considerable number of respondents are from the southern and the central provinces. Some of them come from the northeast and the north of Thailand.

Therefore, the above table demonstrates that permanent places of residence have an effect on the respondents' decision to participate in higher education.

Prior to the exploration of some factors that may have an effect on the respondents' fear of loans, it is intriguing to learn some initial information on the feelings towards loans of all respondents (either male or female from all levels of income and socio-economic backgrounds) in this case study.

Table 5.12

Table 5.12 shows the numbers/percentages of all the respondents, classified by their feelings towards (educational) loans.

Respondents' feelings towards loans			
Respondents' feelings towards loans	Fear	Not fear	Total
Number/Percentage of respondents	1087 (36.1%)	1925 (63.9%)	3012 (100.0%)

*From the binomial test, $p = 0.000 (< 0.05)$.

From table 5.12, the numbers as well as the percentages of participants who are afraid of and who are not afraid of loans are quite different, with a larger number of those who are not afraid of loans.

To this point, it is worth probing into some factors or variables which might have an effect on the respondents' feelings towards loans.

Tables 5.13

Tables 5.13 (5.13.1 and 5.13.2) aim to examine the correlations between parents' or guardians' earnings/status/number of assets and the respondents' feelings towards loans.

Table 5.13.1

Table 5.13.1 presents the numbers/percentages of all respondents, divided by their parents' or guardians' earnings (per month) and their feelings towards loans.

Correlation between parents' income and respondents' feelings towards loans			
Parents' or guardians' income (baht/month)	Respondents' feelings towards loans		Total
	Fear	Not fear	
≤ 12,500 % within parents'/guardians' income/month	363 (27.4%)	963 (72.6%)	1326 (100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(33.4%)	(50.2%)	(44.1%)
12,501 – 25,000 % within parents'/guardians' income/month	186 (36.9%)	318 (63.1%)	504 (100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(17.1%)	(16.6%)	(16.8%)
25,001 – 75,000 % within parents'/guardians' income/month	361 (43.3%)	472 (56.7%)	833 (100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(33.2%)	(24.6%)	(27.7%)
75,001 – 100,000 % within parents'/guardians' income/month	87 (53.7%)	75 (46.3%)	162 (100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(8.0%)	(3.9%)	(5.4%)
>100,000 % within parents'/guardians' income/month	89 (49.4%)	91 (50.6%)	180 (100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(8.2%)	(4.7%)	(6.0%)
Total % within parents'/guardians' income/month	1086 (36.1%)	1919 (63.9%)	3005 (100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 98.418, df = 4, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between parents' or guardians' earnings and the respondents' feelings towards loans.

With reference to table 5.13.1, the majority of respondents, whose parents' or guardians' income is equal to or below 12,500 baht a month or 150,000 baht a year (low-income families), are not afraid of loans. Despite the similarity between the numbers of those who are afraid of and those who are not afraid of loans at the same level of parents' or guardians' income of over 100,000 baht a month or 1,200,000 baht a year (high-income families), the proportion of respondents who are not afraid of loans tend to become lower when parents' or guardians' earnings are higher than 12,500 baht a month.

The consideration and analysis of the above findings is based on the comparison between the number/percentage of low-income respondents (whose parents' or guardians' income is below or equal to 12,500 baht a month or 150,000 baht a year) and the number/percentage of upper-income respondents (whose parents' or guardians' earnings are higher than 12,500 baht a month), who are not afraid of loans.

Therefore, parents' or guardians' earnings have an effect on the respondents' feelings towards loans (based on the above table) as well as their decision of taking loans (based on table 5.4).

Table 5.13.2

Table 5.13.2 shows the numbers/percentages of all respondents, classified by their parents' or guardians' status/number of assets and their feelings towards loans.

Correlation between parents' status/number of assets and their feelings towards loans			
Parents'/ guardians' status	Respondents' feelings towards loans		Total
	Fear	Not fear	
low-income (the least advantaged)	88	235	323
% within parents'/guardians' status	(27.2%)	(72.8%)	(100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(8.1%)	(12.2%)	(10.7%)
lower middle-class (less advantaged)	154	424	578
% within parents'/guardians' status	(26.6%)	(73.4%)	(100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(14.2%)	(22.0%)	(19.2%)
middle-class	164	360	524
% within parents'/guardians' status	(31.3%)	(68.7%)	(100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(15.1%)	(18.7%)	(17.4%)
upper middle-class (more privileged)	154	282	436
% within parents'/guardians' status	(35.3%)	(64.7%)	(100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(14.2%)	(14.6%)	(14.5%)
high-income (the most privileged)	527	624	1151
% within parents'/guardians' status	(45.8%)	(54.2%)	(100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(48.5%)	(32.4%)	(38.2%)
Total	1087	1925	3012
% within parents'/guardians' status	(36.1%)	(63.9%)	(100.0%)
% within respondents who are afraid/not afraid of loans	(100.0%)	(100.0%)	(100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 85.566, df = 4, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between parents' or guardians' status/number of assets and the respondents' feelings towards loans.

Based on table 5.13.2, the highest proportion of respondents who are afraid of loans are from high-income families. We could notice that the number/percentage of participants who are afraid of loans is likely to decrease when parents' or guardians' status and assets are lower. Also, in this study, the proportion of respondents from low-income families who are not afraid of loans is much higher than the proportion of those from the same socio-economic background who are afraid of loans.

So, in this research, parents' or guardians' status/number of assets have an effect on the respondents' feelings towards loans (based on the above table) as well as their decision of taking loans (with reference to table 5.5).

N.B. For the criteria on the classification of parents' or guardians' status and number of assets, please refer to 5.3.1 (the classification of parents'/guardians' socio-economic status).

Table 5.14

Table 5.14 demonstrates the numbers/percentages of all respondents, divided by their gender and their feelings towards loans.

Correlation between respondents' gender and their feelings towards loans			
Gender	Respondents' feelings towards loans		Total
	Fear	Not fear	
Male	292 (31.3%)	642 (68.7%)	934 (100.0%)
Female	795 (38.3%)	1283 (61.7%)	2078 (100.0%)
Total	1087 (36.1%)	1925 (63.9%)	3012 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 13.668, df = 1, p < 0.05$

From the Chi-Square test, we may conclude that there is some relationship between the respondents' gender and their feelings towards loans.

Based on table 5.14, the majority of both male and female respondents tend to be those who are not afraid of loans. However, based on the comparison between the proportions of male and female participants who are afraid of loans, it turns out that male respondents are less likely to be afraid of loans than their female peers. (The proportion/percentage of male respondents who are afraid of loans is 0.3 or 31.26% of the total number of male respondents in this case study, while the proportion/percentage of female participants who are afraid of loans is 0.4 or 38.26% of the total number of female respondents in this research.)

Thus, in this case study, the respondents' gender has an effect on their feelings towards loans.

Table 5.15

Table 5.15 demonstrates the numbers/percentages of all respondents, divided by the main reasons why they are afraid of loans (for those who are afraid of them). (The reasons stated below were the answers the researcher gave to the respondents. However, they were allowed to give free answers and express their own views.)

Reasons why respondents are afraid of loans	
Reasons	Number/Percentage of respondents
1. Loans incur debts and might mark them out in their peer groups.	67 (6.2%)
2. Loans incur debts and may bring discredit on their families.	35 (3.2%)
3. Loans incur debts and cannot guarantee success in their education and in their future careers.	308 (28.5%)
4. Loans incur debts and tend to bring in unexpected difficulties.	568 (52.5%)
5. Other	82 (7.6%)
6. No answer	22 (2.0%)
Total	1082 (100.0%)

Based on table 5.15, from all respondents who are afraid of loans, the majority of them point out that loans incur debts and tend to bring in unexpected difficulties. A considerable number of them indicate that loans incur debts and cannot guarantee success in their education and in their future careers. For other reasons, the respondents are afraid of loans owing to more than one or all the reasons listed in the above table. In spite of being the loan takers, some of them are still afraid of debts. However, they need to take loans to finance their study in a private institution. Some are afraid that they will not be able to pay out all their debts by the due dates. A number of them are afraid that they will not get any job after graduation and, consequently, will not be able to repay their debts. Some do not want to be committed to any debt burden, as it is bound with their future jobs and salaries/wages, which could not be guaranteed by anything. (If they took up the loans, nothing could guarantee that they will get a job which would enable them to pay out all the debts without difficulties.)

Table 5.16

Table 5.16 shows the numbers/percentages of all respondents who agree or disagree with statements 17-30 in the questionnaire. Moreover, it demonstrates the average values, SD (Standard Deviation) as well as the meanings of all the respondents' viewpoints. (The figure in parentheses, under each number, presents the percentage of participants who strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each statement.)

Respondents' viewpoints on private higher education								
<i>Statement</i>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly agree</u>	Don't know	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning
17. <i>Private higher education should be only for high-income people.</i>	626 (20.8%)	1978 (65.6%)	319 (10.6%)	53 (1.8%)	40 (1.3%)	1.93	0.62	Disagree

Respondents' viewpoints on private higher education								
Statement	<u>Strongly disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly agree</u>	Don't know	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning
18. <i>Private</i> higher education should be made more accessible to young people of disadvantaged background or low-income family.	64 (2.1%)	164 (5.4%)	1671 (55.4%)	1074 (35.6%)	43 (1.4%)	3.26	0.66	Strongly agree
19. Socio-economically disadvantaged students are <i>not</i> only those whose parents' (or guardians') income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month).	179 (5.9%)	1004 (33.3%)	1241 (41.1%)	329 (10.9%)	263 (8.7%)	2.63	0.78	Agree
20. The government should consider parents' (or guardians') income the most important criterion to offer a loan or a grant to a student.	129 (4.3%)	546 (18.1%)	1591 (52.8%)	692 (22.9%)	58 (1.9%)	2.96	0.77	Agree
21. The eligibility of loans should <i>not</i> be limited only to students whose parents' (or guardians') income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month).	197 (6.5%)	905 (30.0%)	1252 (41.5%)	534 (17.7%)	127 (4.2%)	2.74	0.84	Agree

Respondents' viewpoints on private higher education								
Statement	<u>Strongly disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly agree</u>	Don't know	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning
22. Each <i>private</i> institution of higher education should establish more student grant or loan schemes, or Hardship Funds, to support socio-economically disadvantaged but academically qualified students.	47 (1.6%)	71 (2.4%)	1155 (38.3%)	1710 (56.7%)	31 (1.0%)	3.52	0.63	Strongly agree
23. Each <i>private</i> education institution should apply and emphasise a loan scheme rather than a grant scheme to support socio-economically disadvantaged students.	75 (2.5%)	430 (14.3%)	1337 (44.3%)	1058 (35.1%)	115 (3.8%)	3.17	0.77	Agree
24. In higher education (in general, both public and private), a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants, debt remission, or lower tuition fees.	43 (1.4%)	293 (9.7%)	1719 (57.0%)	751 (24.9%)	208 (6.9%)	3.13	0.65	Agree

Respondents' viewpoints on private higher education								
Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning
25. The ceiling or maximum amount of loans allocated to each student should not exceed 100,000 baht per year.	115 (3.8%)	498 (16.5%)	1580 (52.4%)	488 (16.2%)	334 (11.1%)	2.91	0.73	Agree
26. A loan or grant recipient should be allowed to be in paid employment while studying.	40 (1.3%)	180 (6.0%)	1855 (61.6%)	825 (27.4%)	113 (3.8%)	3.20	0.60	Agree
27. To effectively operate a student aid (loan/grant) scheme, <i>private</i> institutions of higher education need cooperation and support from the government.	13 (0.4%)	132 (4.4%)	1893 (62.8%)	790 (26.2%)	185 (6.1%)	3.22	0.54	Agree
28. The promotion of equity also helps promote quality in <i>private</i> higher education.	13 (0.4%)	92 (3.1%)	1859 (61.7%)	962 (31.9%)	85 (2.8%)	3.29	0.54	Strongly agree
29. To promote equity in <i>private</i> higher education, the government should allocate funds (loans or grants) directly to students rather than to institutions.	34 (1.1%)	355 (11.8%)	1689 (56.1%)	728 (24.2%)	207 (6.9%)	3.11	0.65	Agree

Respondents' viewpoints on private higher education								
Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning
30. An <u>income-contingent</u> loan scheme or a graduate tax system should be introduced and set up in <u>private</u> higher education.	142 (4.7%)	512 (17.0%)	1633 (54.2%)	466 (15.5%)	258 (8.6%)	2.88	0.74	Agree

Based on table 5.16, most respondents disagree that private higher education should be only for high-income people. Most participants strongly agree that private higher education should be made more accessible to young people of disadvantaged background or low-income family, and that the private institutions of higher education should establish more student grant or loan schemes or hardship funds to support socio-economically disadvantaged but academically qualified students. Also, most of them strongly agree that the promotion of equity also helps promote quality within the private institutions of higher education. The majority of respondents agree that socio-economically disadvantaged students are not only those whose parents' or guardians' income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year. Accordingly, most of them agree that the eligibility of loans should not be limited only to students whose parents' or guardians' earnings do not exceed 150,000 baht a year. However, the majority of respondents agree that the government should consider parents' or guardians' income the most important criterion to offer loans or grants to students. Most participants agree that the private institutions of higher education had better apply and emphasise the loan schemes rather than the grant schemes to support socio-economically disadvantaged students, and that a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants, debt remission, or lower tuition fees. In this regard, they also agree that the ceiling or the maximum amount of loans allocated to each student should not exceed 100,000 baht per year. The majority of respondents agree that the loan or grant recipients should be allowed to be in paid employment while studying. Most participants agree that, to effectively operate the

student aid (loan/grant) schemes, the private institutions of higher education need cooperation and support from the government. In terms of the funding system, most respondents agree that, to promote equity (or equality of educational opportunity) in private higher education, the government should allocate funds (either loans or grants) directly to students rather than to the institutions. For the loan system, most of them agree that an income-contingent loan or a graduate tax scheme should be introduced and set up in Thai private higher education.

N.B.

- Criteria for the identification of the respondents' viewpoints on the above statements are as follows:

3.26 - 4.00 - Strongly agree

2.51 – 3.25 - Agree

1.76 – 2.50 - Disagree

1.00 – 1.75 - Strongly disagree

(*0.75 is added to each range: $4-1 = 3$, $\frac{3}{4} = 0.75$.)

- All the respondents were informed that an “income-contingent” loan scheme is a system in which a student borrower, after his/her graduation, will be bound to pay back his/her loan with a low interest rate through the income tax, when his/her salary reaches a taxable amount or the national average income.

- £1 was estimated at 75 (Thai) baht as of 1st September 2004.

Table 5.17

With reference to the last statement or statement 30 in table 5.16 (as well as in the questionnaire), table 5.17 demonstrates the numbers/percentages of all participants, divided by the main reasons why they agree that an income-contingent loan scheme (or ICL) should be set up in private higher education (for those who agree with the above-mentioned statement). Again, all the reasons stated below were given by the researcher. However, the respondents were allowed to give free answers and express their own ideas.

Reasons why respondents agree with ICL (Income-Contingent Loans)	
Reasons	Number/ Percentage of respondents
1. ICL helps relieve an excessive debt burden that may crop up after graduation.	411 (19.6%)
2. It is fairer that the users of higher education have to pay for their own study.	274 (13.1%)
3. ICL encourages a higher level of participation in higher education from low-income people.	555 (26.5%)
4. ICL is more flexible and reasonably geared to each individual's ability to pay, in comparison with other repayment systems.	796 (38.0%)
5. Other	47 (2.2%)
Total	2096 (100.0%)

From the above table, the majority of participants agree with the introduction of an ICL scheme into Thai higher education as it is more flexible and reasonably geared to each individual's ability to pay, in comparison with other repayment systems. A large number of them agree that such a scheme helps encourage a higher level of participation in higher education from low-income people. Some of them believe that it could help relieve an excessive debt burden that may crop up after graduation. Some think that it could help develop fairness as, through the scheme, the users of higher education have to pay for their own study. For other reasons, a number of respondents agree with more than one or all the reasons listed in the above table.

Tables 5.18

Tables 5.18 (5.18.1-5.18.14) aim to test consistency between the results obtained from all the eight sub-cases or the eight focus institutions. The following tables present the comparison between the average values of viewpoints of respondents (with reference to table 5.16 and statements 17-30 in the questionnaire) from each institution.

Table 5.18.1 Statement 17 : Private higher education should be only for high-income people.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	2.0427	Disagree
University B	1.9133	Disagree
University C	1.9813	Disagree
University D	1.9241	Disagree
University E	1.9946	Disagree
University F	1.9727	Disagree
University G	1.7796	Disagree
University H	1.8522	Disagree

From table 5.18.1, most respondents from all the focus institutions disagree with the above statement.

Table 5.18.2 Statement 18 : Private higher education should be made more accessible to young people of disadvantaged background or low-income family.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	3.2070	Agree
University B	3.1851	Agree
University C	3.2386	Agree
University D	3.2270	Agree
University E	3.3110	Strongly agree
University F	3.2880	Strongly agree
University G	3.2846	Strongly agree
University H	3.3588	Strongly agree

Table 5.18.2 reveals that the majority of participants from the first four focus universities (Universities A, B, C and D) agree with the above statement. Most respondents from the last four institutions (Universities E, F, G and H) strongly agree with it.

Table 5.18.3 Statement 19 : From the view of respondents, socio-economically disadvantaged students are not only those whose parents' (or guardians') income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month).

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	2.6185	Agree
University B	2.6706	Agree
University C	2.6211	Agree
University D	2.6163	Agree
University E	2.5265	Agree
University F	2.4882	Disagree
University G	2.7725	Agree
University H	2.6695	Agree

Based on table 5.18.3, most respondents from all the focus institutions, except University F, agree with the above statement. For University F, although the average value shown above reveals that the majority of participants there do not agree with statement 19 (in the questionnaire), it nearly reaches the lowest average value (2.50), defined by the researcher as those who agree with it. Thus, we may conclude that most respondents from all the focus institutions (in this research) agree with the above statement.

Table 5.18.4 Statement 20 : The government should consider parents' (or guardians') income the most important criterion to offer a loan or a grant to a student.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	3.0081	Agree
University B	3.0108	Agree
University C	2.9733	Agree
University D	2.9479	Agree
University E	2.8649	Agree
University F	2.9945	Agree
University G	2.9784	Agree
University H	3.0081	Agree

From table 5.18.4, most participants from all the focus institutions agree with the above statement.

Table 5.18.5 Statement 21 : The eligibility of loans should not be limited only to students whose parents' (or guardians') income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month).

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	2.7170	Agree
University B	2.7818	Agree
University C	2.7541	Agree
University D	2.7950	Agree
University E	2.5755	Agree
University F	2.7331	Agree
University G	2.7885	Agree
University H	2.7306	Agree

Table 5.18.5 shows that the majority of respondents from all the focus institutions agree with the above statement.

Table 5.18.6 Statement 22 : Each private institution of higher education should establish more student grant or loan schemes, or Hardship Funds, to support socio-economically disadvantaged but academically qualified students.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	3.4933	Strongly agree
University B	3.5120	Strongly agree
University C	3.5535	Strongly agree
University D	3.5364	Strongly agree
University E	3.5496	Strongly agree
University F	3.4973	Strongly agree
University G	3.4973	Strongly agree
University H	3.5040	Strongly agree

Table 5.18.6 reveals that most respondents from all the focus institutions strongly agree with the above statement.

Table 5.18.7 Statement 23 : Each private education institution should apply and emphasise a loan scheme rather than a grant scheme to support socio-economically disadvantaged students.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	3.1685	Agree
University B	3.2757	Strongly agree
University C	3.2105	Agree
University D	3.1167	Agree
University E	3.0056	Agree
University F	3.1236	Agree
University G	3.3096	Strongly agree

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University H	3.1035	Agree

From table 5.18.7, the majority of participants from the focus institutions agree with statement 23 (in the questionnaire), except those from Universities B and G, who strongly agree with it.

Table 5.18.8 Statement 24 : In higher education (in general, both public and private), a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants, debt remission, or lower tuition fees.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	3.1768	Agree
University B	3.1750	Agree
University C	3.1453	Agree
University D	3.0667	Agree
University E	3.0332	Agree
University F	3.1014	Agree
University G	3.2306	Agree
University H	3.1220	Agree

Table 5.18.8 demonstrates that the majority of participants from all the focus institutions unanimously agree with statement 24 (in the questionnaire).

Table 5.18.9 Statement 25 : The ceiling or maximum amount of loans allocated to each student should not exceed 100,000 baht per year.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	2.8698	Agree
University B	3.1086	Agree
University C	2.9157	Agree
University D	2.9077	Agree
University E	2.8773	Agree
University F	2.7867	Agree
University G	2.8873	Agree
University H	2.9209	Agree

Based on table 5.18.9, most respondents from all the focus institutions agree with statement 25 (in the questionnaire).

Table 5.18.10 Statement 26 : A loan or grant recipient should be allowed to be in paid employment while studying.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	3.1726	Agree
University B	3.2000	Agree
University C	3.2582	Strongly agree
University D	3.1120	Agree
University E	3.2222	Agree
University F	3.2422	Agree
University G	3.1222	Agree
University H	3.2273	Agree

From table 5.18.10, the majority of participants from all the focus institutions agree with the above statement, except those from University C, who strongly agree with it.

Table 5.18.11 Statement 27 : To effectively operate a student aid (loan/grant) scheme, private institutions of higher education need cooperation and support from the government.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	3.1599	Agree
University B	3.2609	Strongly agree
University C	3.2067	Agree
University D	3.1903	Agree
University E	3.1424	Agree
University F	3.2600	Strongly agree
University G	3.3086	Strongly agree
University H	3.2541	Strongly agree

Table 5.18.11 demonstrates that most participants from Universities A, C, D and E agree with statement 27 (in the questionnaire). The majority of respondents from Universities B, F, G and H strongly agree with it.

Table 5.18.12 Statement 28 : The promotion of equity also helps promote quality in private higher education.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	3.2396	Agree
University B	3.2027	Agree
University C	3.3043	Strongly agree

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University D	3.3187	Strongly agree
University E	3.3315	Strongly agree
University F	3.3460	Strongly agree
University G	3.2610	Strongly agree
University H	3.3024	Strongly agree

Table 5.18.12 reveals that most respondents from all the focus institutions strongly agree with statement 28 (in the questionnaire), except those from Universities A and B, who just agree with it.

Table 5.18.13 Statement 29 : To promote equity in private higher education, the government should allocate funds (loans or grants) directly to students rather than to institutions.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	3.0548	Agree
University B	3.0616	Agree
University C	3.0871	Agree
University D	3.0860	Agree
University E	3.1777	Agree
University F	3.0740	Agree
University G	3.1944	Agree
University H	3.1344	Agree

From table 5.18.13, most respondents from all the focus institutions unanimously agree with statement 29 (in the questionnaire).

Table 5.18.14 Statement 30 : An “income-contingent” loan scheme or a graduate tax system should be introduced and set up in private higher education.

Institutions	Average values	Meaning
University A	2.7849	Agree
University B	2.8213	Agree
University C	2.9159	Agree
University D	2.8571	Agree
University E	2.8109	Agree
University F	2.9261	Agree
University G	3.0057	Agree
University H	2.9086	Agree

Based on table 5.18.14, the majority of participants from all the focus institutions agree with statement 30 (in the questionnaire).

5.4 Additional comments from questionnaire respondents

In this case study, 425 respondents from all the focus institutions (14% of total or on average 53 respondents from each university) provided some additional comments and suggestions on what should be undertaken or carried out by the focus institutions in order to achieve the goal of the improvement of equity within their universities. The respondents were invited to do this at the end of the questionnaire, and were given space to write answers.

The majority of respondents (158 or 37.18% of them) suggest that the focus institutions should provide more educational opportunities to qualified but economically disadvantaged people to study at their institutions. They ought to offer more grants and loans to low-income or disadvantaged students with good academic performance, after thorough inspection of their qualifications, parents' or guardians' earnings and family backgrounds. In this regard, student aid schemes may be divided into three types: outright scholarships as an incentive for disadvantaged students with good academic performance, grants for the least advantaged and loans for those who are in need of them in any case. Some further recommend that there should be various types of grants and loans (which could be more than two or three) adjusted to meet different needs of students, based on their divergent parents' or guardians' economic backgrounds, occupations, number of dependents in family and special circumstances (e.g. illness or disability of any family members). Apart from financial needs, students' academic performance or GPAs (grade point averages), their intention, determination and readiness to study at university level as well as behaviour should also be taken into account. So the universities and the government could be assured that their human resource investments are not in vain.

A considerable number of respondents (136 or 32% of them) recommend that the means-tested indicators and the targeting procedures of any loans and grants need to be developed. Regarding the means-tested indicators, they indicate that family expenses and existing debt burden, family conditions (whether their parents are united

or divorced), number of dependents in family as well as comments from student advisers or tutors ought to be recorded and considered, alongside family incomes, academic ability and other qualifications, prior to targeting grants and loans to appropriate persons. To improve the targeting procedures of loans/grants, they emphasise that there should be a more intensive and thorough inspection of qualifications, financial status and parents' or guardians' incomes as well as occupations of grant/loan applicants (especially those whose parents or guardians are businesspersons or freelancers with unidentifiable earnings), in order to assure that the loans and grants really serve needy and qualified people with strong determination in their study. To facilitate the targeting procedures, they claim that the focus institutions, with cooperation from the government, may establish databases storing information and details on students' family backgrounds, their programmes of study, a brief summary of their routine and favourite hobbies (to be used for the examination of their lifestyles), their aspirations and future plans upon the completion of their courses and degrees as well as what they expect from educational loans (to be applied for further development of the student grant/loan schemes as well as the cost recovery system).

Although being quite satisfied with the promotion of equity through the student aid schemes within their institutions, some respondents (approximately 80 or 18.82% of them) think that there should be some improvements in the operation of grant/loan programmes as well as the cost recovery system. They recommend that the universities and the government should allocate funds to loan recipients, based on their institutions (either private or public), their programmes of study, the estimated prices of learning equipment to be used for their mandatory courses and standard cost of living (including accommodations for those who are from upcountry) in Bangkok and other big cities. They further suggest that the process of transferring loans (for monthly expenses) to students' bank accounts should be expedited, especially in the first two months of each semester (normally, during June – July for the first semester and November –December for the second semester). Therefore, the loan recipients could be assured that they have sufficient funds, at least to pay for indispensable items, like books, stationery, learning equipment and rent for those who are from upcountry and need to live in flats. Moreover, a first-come-first-served strategy, being used by the universities for the allocation of loans to students, should be

revised. They claim that, through the application of such a strategy, loans may not reach or may not be able to fully serve those who are in great need of them. Also, the universities ought to put more efforts in publicising news about any loans and scholarships to all students in all schools and departments. In addition, there should be a monitoring scheme to ensure that loans/grants are used for academic purposes or for necessary things (e.g. accommodations and medical care) only. Concerning the cost-recovery system, they recommend that the universities should more actively cooperate with the government in establishing and developing a more effective loan collection scheme so that there will be more revolving funds for the next generations of loan recipients. In this regard, apart from the introduction of a repayment scheme that is contingent upon the real incomes of borrowers or their average incomes per annum (income-contingent loans) and that is linked with the national tax system, they suggest that the current repayment period (15 years, plus the two years of grace period after their graduation) should also be shortened. Moreover, they recommend that there should be a kind of incentives for those who repay their debts within the due date (on 5th July of each year), i.e. in form of one per cent discount of interest for the year in which the on-time repayments take place (currently applied by the government).

In addition, a number of respondents (51 or 12% of them) provide other noteworthy comments and suggestions. Some of them suggest that the focus institutions, in cooperation with the government and/or other public and private sectors, should establish jobs or the opportunities in getting careers for loan recipients after their graduation in order that they would be more likely to repay their debts within time and within the due date (5th July of each year). They claim that the government should allocate loans to each institution, based on its estimated number of students (input) each year. Also, the government should keep an eye on those universities that inappropriately use the government loans as an advertisement for the promotion of their institutions. Some respondents recommend that, apart from the government loans, each private university ought to have its own loan scheme (currently operated in some focus institutions) for helping its low-income students who are not successful in the application for the government loans or those disadvantaged who are really in need of financial assistance but ineligible for the government loans.

5.5 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter testifies to the links between the questionnaire results and the student-oriented hypotheses 5-10, mentioned in Chapter 3 and in the introduction of this chapter. Such links are analysed through the application of the pattern-matching strategy, in which the results, presented in the above tables (from 5.1 to 5.16), are matched with and used to corroborate each hypothesis. The last two main tables (5.17 and 5.18, 5.18.1 – 5.18.14), respectively, explore the reasons why respondents agree with ICL (the income-contingent loan scheme) and show consistency between the findings of all eight sub-cases (all eight focus institutions), through the comparison between the average values of viewpoints of respondents from all the focus universities.

From the questionnaire results, we may conclude that the result demonstrated in table 5.1 corroborates hypothesis 6, which states that parents' or guardians' earnings affect the respondents' decision to study at particular private institutions.

With reference to hypothesis 7, the results shown in tables 5.2 to 5.8 (5.8.1 and 5.8.2) prove that the following variables are correlated with and have an effect on the respondents' decision of taking loans:

- programmes of study;
- length of programmes;
- parents' or guardians' incomes;
- parents' or guardians' status/number of assets;
- number of dependents in family;
- parents' occupations.

The only one factor which does not seem to be correlated with or to have any effect on the respondents' decision of taking loans is the number of dependents in family who are studying.

With reference to hypothesis 5, the results demonstrated in tables 5.9 (5.9.1 and 5.9.2) to 5.11 show that the following variables are correlated with and have an effect on the respondents' decision to take part in higher education:

- Parents' education
- Number of people with a university degree (or equivalent) in their (extended) families
- Permanent places of residence.

With reference to hypothesis 8, tables 5.4, 5.5 and 5.13 (5.13.1 and 5.13.2) demonstrate that most of the present grant/loan recipients of all the focus institutions, in this research, are from low-income or disadvantaged families. They are likely to be economically less advantaged, with less fear of loans, in comparison with respondents who are taking neither grants nor loans, with more fear of loans. Therefore, most loan/grant takers (most members of the focus group), in this research, tend to be in need of loans/grants. However, for the more in-depth analysis of financial needs, some respondents suggest that the government and all the focus institutions should also consider additional evidence or means-tested indicators (e.g. family expenses and debt burden, parents' or guardians' income tax reports or official income slips and bank statements or savings accounts, as well as special circumstances such as illness and disability of any family members) to further examine and classify the degrees of needs.

The results shown in tables 5.13 (5.13.1 and 5.13.2) contradict with hypothesis 9.1, which says that the respondents from higher-income families are less likely to be afraid of loans, in comparison with their peers from lower-income families. On the contrary, in this case study, it turns out that the respondents from low-income (or the least advantaged) families are less likely to be afraid of loans than those from higher-income backgrounds. These findings also contradict with what was claimed by a number of the critics of student loans (as mentioned in Woodhall, 1987 and 1992b), who assumed that loans tend to bring in fear of debts and might deter low-income people from participating in higher education.

The result demonstrated in table 5.14 corroborates hypothesis 9.2, which states that gender of respondents has an effect on their feelings towards loans. Male respondents are less likely to be afraid of loans, in comparison with their female peers.

The results shown in table 5.16 support hypotheses 10.1-10.8 which, respectively, indicate that:

- The majority of participants agree that economically disadvantaged students are not only those whose parents' or guardians' income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month). Some of them point out, in some spaces provided on the last page of the questionnaires, that other factors, such as family expenses, debt burden and number of dependents in family, should also be considered alongside earnings.
- Most respondents agree that the eligibility for loans should not be limited only to those whose parents' or guardians' income does not exceed 150,000 baht/ year (or 12,500 baht/month).
- The majority of participants agree that family income should be the most important criterion for the universities or the government to offer loans/ grants.
- Most respondents believe that a loan system could provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants, full or partial tuition waivers as well as other types of student aid programmes.
- The majority of participants believe that an income-contingent loan (or ICL) scheme would work in Thai (private) higher education.
- Most respondents agree that the private universities (in this research) need assistance and cooperation from the government and/or external bodies in the promotion of equity in (private) higher education.
- The majority of participants (in this research) think that it would be fairer that the government or a funding body (either public or private) allocates either grants or loans directly to students rather than to the universities (the focus institutions).

- Most respondents (in this research) believe that equity (or adequacy of educational opportunity) is not incompatible with quality in Thai (private) higher education.

The research results (presented in this chapter and Chapter 4) and their connections with the research questions (mentioned in Chapter 3) as well as the theoretical perspectives concerning the promotion of equity and the development of student aid programmes for university/college students as well as the possibility of the development of equity in higher education markets (cited in Chapter 2) will be analysed and further discussed in Chapter 6 (discussion and conclusion).

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

As cited in Chapter 1, the focus and motivation of this case study has been to:

- study the policies and administrative strategies taken by the eight focus institutions to establish and maintain fairness and equality of educational opportunity, in conformity with the government policy on access and equity in Thai higher education;
- investigate their implementation plans, i.e. grant and loan schemes as well as other student aid programmes, used for promoting equity and encouraging able but socio-economically disadvantaged people to participate in higher education;
- examine the roles of the focus institutions and to learn how they promote and support access and equity in Thai higher education;
- explore students' views on the promotion of equality of educational opportunity within the focus institutions through a variety of student aid schemes and through the national student loan programme under the government support.

The theoretical perspectives on the promotion of equity in higher education markets as well as the international experiences concerning student aid programmes, mentioned in Chapter 2, have demonstrated that equity could be developed through the improvement and justification of student assistance projects within each institution. In comparison with scholarships, grants and tuition waiver, student loans are regarded as the most effective and practical approach in the improvement of access and equity in higher education. Apart from promoting equality of educational opportunity between users of higher education from divergent socio-economic

backgrounds, they also help establish fairness between users and non-users of higher education. According to the international perspectives outlined in the literature review, student loans are expected to help reduce public expenditure and relieve taxpayer burden on the non-users of this level of education. They well correspond and conform to the cost-sharing and the benefit (users-pay) principles which, respectively, suggest the transfer of a portion of the costs of higher education from taxpayers or the government to students and/or parents and necessitate greater contributions from parents and students in higher education funding. Through the loan schemes, the government and universities can assist a larger number of qualified but economically disadvantaged people who would like to take part in higher education. These international perspectives are supported by the interview results (presented in Chapter 4) which reveal that, from the view of staff and student respondents in this case study, loans tend to have fewer conditions and requirements, especially in terms of scholastic achievements and fields of study or special skills in particular areas, as compared to grants, tuition waiver and other kinds of student aid programmes. In coincidence with the international perspectives on student loans explored in Chapter 2, the qualitative findings (discussed in Chapter 4) imply that, through the student loan programme, the government and the focus universities tend to be able to expand access to higher education for new borrowers from low-income background in a more effective and equitable manner than can other kinds of financial assistance schemes, that are not always forthcoming. Nevertheless, most staff and student respondents pointed out that the government loan programme (operated within their institutions) needs some improvements, especially in terms of the flexibility in the criterion on parents'/guardians' income and the robustness of the inspection system of the real financial need, alongside academic ability, of students. This fits in with what was stated by Ziderman (2003), who recommends that the student loan scheme in Thailand should be amended and justified so that it could be more financially viable and could finally achieve the twin goals of increasing cost recovery and improving equity.

Moreover, the interview and questionnaire results of this case study agree with what was stated by a number of educationists and economists (cited in 2.10/Chapter 2), who suggest that, amongst different types of loans, the *income-contingent* scheme, in which the student borrower (upon his/her leaving university) repays a proportion of

his/her earnings through the income tax or social insurance contributions when his/her income reaches a taxable amount or the national average earnings, seems to be an effective means which could help relieve an excessive debt burden on low-income borrowers. The majority of staff and student respondents in this study believed that such a loan scheme could help encourage participation from low-income people as it is reasonably geared to the borrower's ability to pay. Some of the staff respondents thought that this scheme could also help reduce the default rates as it will be linked with the national income tax system. This agrees with what was indicated by some economists and educationists (i.e. Barr, 2001, Chapman and Ryan, 2002, and Johnstone and Aemero, 2001), who proposed the application of the income contingency plan in higher education. However, as noted by Chapman and Ryan (2002) and Johnstone and Aemero (2001), we should keep in mind that the income-contingent loan scheme will be effective only on the condition that the income tax or social security system is sufficiently robust and reliable.

The international perspectives on the possibility of the development of equity in higher education markets, through student aid programmes (cited in Chapter 2), have triggered interests in the exploration of the promotion of equity in a specific context of Thai private higher education. The research framework focuses on the study of the measures and strategies or the *safety net* developed and practised by the eight leading private universities in Thailand to operate the student loan scheme under the government support and to improve equality of educational opportunity as well as to widen access to higher education for able but economically disadvantaged people, in conformity with the government policy on access and equity in this level of education. Such perspectives on the development of equity have also motivated the researcher to probe into staff's and students' (or stakeholders') attitudes towards the operation of student assistance projects and the government loan programme within their institutions.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, this case study was carried out at the eight focus institutions which have the largest numbers of students, in comparison with other private universities in the country. It mainly concerns the in-depth study of each of the eight sub-cases as an instance of the phenomenon in which various kinds of student aid programmes have been improved in line with the promotion of equity and

access in higher education. The research examines five questions that are divided into institutional focused and student-focused. The questions are:

Institutional focus

1. To what extent do private higher education institutions focus on low-income or socio-economically disadvantaged students?
2. What are the private universities doing in order to support higher education students from low-income background in conformity with the government policy on access and equity in Thai higher education, in particular with reference to their implementation plans and strategies?
3. What are the private universities' policies or measures on collaborations and partnerships with their public counterparts, the public and the private sectors, as well as overseas institutions/international organisations, to promote and support equity in higher education?

Student focus

4. What are students' attitudes towards a student loan scheme managed by private institutions as well as the criteria used for the selection of loan recipients?
5. Are the present loan and grant recipients at each institution really in need of funds and economically less advantaged than their peers who are not taking any loans and grants?

To respond to the above queries, the researcher applied the mixed-methods approach and triangulation (the use of multiple sources of information: staff and student interviews, student questionnaires, documents, archival records and observations) to extract as many details as possible on the particular characteristics of some loan and grant schemes as well as staff's and students' (or insiders') attitudes towards the student aid programmes operated within their universities. The

information and details derived from divergent sources of evidence are checked against and used to supplement each other to maximise the accuracy of the research data as well as to enhance the *strength in reality*, that is one of the most critical characteristics of a case study, as noted by Cohen *et al* (2000).

Chapters 4 and 5 present the interview and other qualitative findings as well as the questionnaire results, respectively. In accordance with *Friedman's (1980) concept* of the possibility of the development of *equity* in education markets, the research findings (both qualitative and quantitative) have corroborated the efficiency of such a concept in the focus institutions, as an instance of Thai higher education markets. The results reveal that all the focus institutions do focus on economically disadvantaged students, on the condition that they have proved academically qualified for higher education. To support able but low-income students, the focus universities have provided a number of supporting grants (mostly in the form of tuition waiver, tuition reduction or pocket money) and earmarked emergency funds for needy students. In collaboration with state enterprises and the private sector (i.e. industry/business, private and international companies), some of the focus universities have arranged work-study programmes, part-time jobs and internships to assist able but economically disadvantaged students in particular programmes of study that match the interest of each partner company/organization.

Moreover, all the focus institutions have participated in the government loan programme, which aims to promote access and equity in higher education throughout the country. In most of the focus universities, government-sponsored student loans serve as the principal source of finance for able but economically disadvantaged students, while most university grants can be limitedly awarded to only some groups of students and are likely to have more requirements in terms of academic performance, programmes of study and special skills in particular areas. Apart from the government loans, some focus universities also have their own loan schemes that mainly aim to help needy students who are unsuccessful in the application for the government loans and university grants. From this case study, most of the focus institutions tend to apply loans as a main source of finance to assist able but low-income students and grants as a principal instrument to maintain efficiency or to motivate students to concentrate on their studies and to upgrade their skills in

particular areas corresponding to their interests. Most student respondents in this research seem to be quite satisfied with the student loan scheme operated by the focus institutions. In this case study, the majority of student respondents who are loan or both grant and loan recipients are likely to come from lower-income background, in comparison with their peers who are non-takers of loans and grants. However, to improve effectiveness of the loan programme, most student respondents suggested that, in the selection of loan recipients, other factors such as family expenses, debt burden and family conditions (i.e. united or divorced parents/guardians) should be considered alongside family earnings. Also, most of them recommended that the amount of loan allocated to each student should be based on the real tuition and fees of his/her programme of study.

This chapter will further discuss the research results demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5 and their links with the research background and questions (cited in Chapters 1 and 3) as well as the theoretical perspectives (mentioned in Chapter 2) on the development of equality of educational opportunity through student aid schemes as well as the possibility of the development of equity in higher education markets.

6.2 Ways towards the development of equity in higher education

In conformity with the government policy on access and equity in higher education, the focus universities have developed a variety of student aid programmes befitting different needs of students with dissimilar abilities from divergent socio-economic backgrounds. In most sub-cases (or most institutions), loans can assist students on a larger scale and in a more equitable manner than can grants (that are quite limited and are not always forthcoming), work-study projects and other kinds of student aid schemes that are normally bound with a number of conditions (i.e. high scholastic achievements, students' knowledge and special skills in particular areas and specific interests of the fund-making bodies). Thus, in this case study, student loans seem to be the primary component to improve and sustain equity in the focus institutions. They could be regarded as the principal bank of educational opportunity for able but economically disadvantaged people (especially those who could not get into public universities) and for students from middle-income families, whose parents/guardians are agriculturists or farmers/general employees/the owners of small

business/freelancers (or the self-employed) with unstable and unidentifiable incomes or whose parents/guardians are low-ranking government officials/permanent employees with lots of dependents and debt burden, including those who fall into unexpected financial crisis.

Based on an official bulletin issued by the Office of the Student Loans Fund of Thailand (2004), starting from the academic year 2005-6, the present government-sponsored mortgage-type loan scheme, covering both tuition fees and living cost, will be converted to the *income-contingent loan* programme (or *ICL*), which will be applied to only higher education students and will cover only tuition and education-related fees. In this new scheme, the borrower, upon leaving university and entering into employment, will have to repay his/her loan through the income tax, when his/her income reaches a taxable amount which is estimated at 10,000 baht (about £133) a month or 120,000 baht (about £1,600) a year. Loans under the ICL scheme are supposed to be free of interest, with the principal adjusted to the rate of inflation (or customer price index) on each date of repayment. The repayment period will be flexibly geared to the borrower's real future earnings and his/her ability to pay. Through the income-contingent system equipped with the efficient income tax machinery, the *Australian Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS)*, which is the original model of the mentioned ICL plan, has achieved its twofold goals of raising revenue for higher education and increasing participation from people of all socio-economic backgrounds (as indicated by Chapman and Ryan, 2002). Despite its great success in Australia, we cannot take for granted that the income-contingent or ICL scheme will also function well in Thailand, where people's sources of income, especially of those who are not government officials and are not in regular paid employment, are quite multiple, variable, sometimes unreported and undetectable. Johnstone (2004a) indicates that this could bring in losses from the income-contingent loan scheme or repayment shortfalls that reflect losses from the income tax collections. Therefore, the shift to the income-contingent system of loans for higher education students in Thailand will require more effective revenue identification and income tax collection mechanisms to ensure that costs to be recovered from high-income borrowers who are businesspersons and who have several sources of earnings will not be, at the end, unfairly borne by lower-income borrowers who are government officials and who are in regular paid employment. This will be a

challenging task for the Office of the Student Loans Fund in cooperation with the national revenue department and other related bodies.

Apart from the government-sponsored loans, the focus institutions, in cooperation with the public and private sectors (i.e. state enterprises, industrial and business companies), have demonstrated their endeavour to maximise equity through the development of a variety of student aid schemes, e.g. tuition waiver, fees reduction, partial grants, university grants and work-study projects. Some of these aid programmes could be used as subsidiary components or supplementary parts to loans for the least advantaged (recognised as the minority of higher education students) whose parents/guardians could not bear any of the tuition fees and living cost and for needy students who are ineligible or unsuccessful in the application for the government loans.

In this research, all the data derived from the focus institutions (through documentation and archival records) as well as staff and student respondents (through interviews, questionnaires and observations) reveal the similarities and differences between the facts and the insiders' perspectives or subjective views of staff interviewees (practitioners/service providers) and student respondents (service users) on the improvement of equity in higher education markets through various types of student aid programmes.

6.3 Discussion of university staff/administrators' views on the promotion of equity in private higher education

In this case study, the interview data extracted from ten staff respondents (at least one and sometimes two from each focus institution) reflect their common beliefs and opinions on the improvement and justification of student aid programmes to efficiently respond to the needs of economically disadvantaged students and to effectively develop equity within the focus universities. In the interviews, the majority of staff respondents emphasised their institutions' concerns about the expansion of higher education, in accordance with the government policy on access and equity, as well as their endeavours to support economically disadvantaged students and academically qualified secondary school leavers from low-income

backgrounds, who would like to go to universities. To promote such an equity policy, the focus institutions have participated in the government loan programme. At the same time, they have also developed a number of grant and work-study schemes to assist economically disadvantaged students who could not cover all the costs of tuition fees and maintenance as well as those with special interests/skills in particular areas. Some of the focus institutions have taken part in the Raja Prachanukroa Foundation Project, under the royal patronage of His Majesty the King. Through such a project, they have offered some outright funds (normally in the form of tuition waiver throughout a programme of study at a private institution of higher education) to widen access to their universities for low-income secondary school graduates with high scholastic achievements from remote and rural areas nationwide. In addition to the government loans, some institutions have or are planning to have their own loan schemes, which aim or will be expected to assist students whose parents or guardians fall into financial problems and to serve as an alternative for economically disadvantaged students who are unsuccessful in the application for the government loans as well as for needy students who fail to meet the requirements of the government loan programme (i.e. those whose parents'/guardians' incomes exceed the ceiling defined by the national Office of the Student Loans Fund). These university loans are or will be adjustable to the different needs of loan takers. They could be also applied to supplement the grants, students'/parents' contributions and, sometimes, the government loans for the least advantaged students whose parents or guardians could not bear any costs of tuition fees and maintenance as well as to assist needy students who are not eligible for other kinds of student aid schemes. This corresponds to the *top-up loan* principle, mentioned in Woodhall (1989).

However, from the comparison between the interview data and the information derived from other sources of evidence: documents and archival records (as cited below table 4.1 in Chapter 4), it comes to light that, in most of the focus institutions, a small number of grants are available to economically disadvantaged students, while a larger number of scholarships are awarded to students with high scholastic achievements or those with special skills in particular areas, consistent with the interests of each institution. Moreover, in the course of interviews, some staff respondents addressed the importance of academic ability and GPAs that should be taken into account alongside financial need prior to targeting any grants and loans to

students. In other words, loans and grants should be given to students only on the condition that they are likely to succeed in their higher education and to repay the loans after the completion of courses/degrees. This implies their belief that, in the expansion of higher education markets, equity should be improved alongside efficiency (defined by the researcher as academic excellence either of the institutions themselves, of their academic staff or of their students). Also, it shows that, notwithstanding their concerns about equity, most universities are likely to give priority to efficiency or students' academic ability in developing and maintaining the prestige of their institutions. It also brings to light the attempts to generate good images and positive impressions in front of the researcher of some staff respondents who tried to convince the researcher that their institutions give the same weights of importance to equity (or the enhancement of educational opportunity for able but low-income people, regardless of wealth and socio-economic status) and efficiency (or academic excellence of their universities and their students). This is likely to be because of power relations, when the researcher has to communicate with the renowned or high-ranking people from the well-known bodies/organisations.

Regarding the prospective shift from the mortgage-type to the income-contingent or ICL loan scheme, most staff respondents agreed that repayments should be adjusted to the borrower's real earnings or his/her future economic circumstances and should be linked with the income tax system. They believed that the ICL scheme, without criterion on family earnings, would assist and help widen access to higher education for a larger number of economically disadvantaged people, especially those whose parents or guardians are government officials or employees with lots of dependents and burden but with income exceeding the ceiling (150,000 baht or about £2,000 a year) defined by the present government loan scheme. Since the repayments will be related to the borrower's real income, ICL could help relieve debt burden per annum for low-income borrowers, especially for those whose qualifications or higher education degrees do not produce an appropriate or an expected level of earnings. Moreover, as income-contingent loans will cover only tuition fees, the new scheme will help impede the abuse of loans for non-educational purposes. In spite of the advantages of ICL in many ways, some staff respondents, especially those who did not agree with the new scheme, claimed that it might not be applicable to the least advantaged who could not contribute to any costs of their tuition fees and living,

especially low-income people from upcountry or rural areas who do not have any relatives/friends to live with in Bangkok and who will need monthly expenses to pay for their accommodations and miscellaneous items as well as those whose parents/guardians are farmers/agriculturers or general employees with low and unidentifiable earnings. Nevertheless, based on the international perspectives on higher education students, as noted by Woodhall (1989), Barr (2001) and Johnstone (2003a), and from the researcher's experience and discussions with the administrators and staff in charge of student loans from each focus institution, the majority of university students tend to come from middle and upper middle-income families. Therefore, it is unlikely that they and their parents/guardians could not share or could not contribute to any costs of higher education or any of tuition fees and living cost.

Prior to the promulgation and the application of ICL in Thai higher education, most of the staff respondents suggested that the government and the related offices cooperate with the focus institutions in the provision of grants, work-study programmes and top-up loans (which cover the costs, either fees or living expenses, that could not be borne by students and their parents/guardians) for the least advantaged, who seem to be the minority of higher education students. In addition, some effective publicity campaigns should be conducted, under collaborations between the government, higher education institutions and other related bodies, in order to clarify to university staff, in charge of student loans, and students of each institution as well as to the wider public the ICL objectives, its principles, the method of repayment and, if possible, the simplest way to calculate or estimate the amount to be paid out each year (as a proportion of total earnings) when the borrower reaches each level of taxable income (the creation of effective communication between the policy makers, practitioners at each university and students who are or who would be the loan takers).

In terms of the shift from the supply-side to the demand-side funding system as a strategy to promote equity as well as to enhance competitiveness and efficiency of higher education institutions, a few staff respondents agreed with its principle on the grounds that the demand-side funding system could open more opportunities for secondary school leavers or would-be higher education students to choose to go to institutions that have subject areas corresponding to their abilities and interests. At

the same time, it could be another approach to help create the bonds between the loan/grant recipients and the lenders/owners of funds as well as to help instil into the borrower the responsibility to pay out the loans. Nonetheless, some staff respondents, in spite of accepting the benefits of such a funding system, claimed that, without effective data storage, operating and targeting plans, the funds that are supposed to be directed to students may be abused or used for non-educational purposes. At present, due to lack of an office or a body that could efficiently and willingly take responsibility for setting up and developing such plans, they did not believe that the demand-side funding system, which appears good in theory, could be easily translated into practice in Thai higher education.

6.4 Discussion of students' attitudes towards equity in private higher education

Apart from the interviews of staff and the collection of other sources of evidence, the researcher elicited qualitative information from the interviews of 35 students (four or sometimes five from each of the focus institutions) and quantitative data from the questionnaires completed by 3,016 students (on average 377 of them from each university). Both types of data are used to supplement each other. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the qualitative data help explain some phenomena in the quantitative study, rendering the numerical results more comprehensive and intelligible. The quantitative data add weight to some qualitative findings and help prevent the qualitative information from being regarded as the presentation of prejudiced views of a group of informants or of the researcher's idiosyncratic opinions.

From the interviews of students, the researcher obtained some crucial information concerning their beliefs and viewpoints concerning their decision to go to private universities, their attitudes towards economically disadvantaged people and student aid programmes operated within the focus institutions as well as their views on the top-up fees (or users-pay) policy and a shift from the mortgage-type to the income-contingent loan (ICL) scheme. Notwithstanding the wealth of information extracted from student interviewees, reliability of the qualitative findings is limited by

non-representativeness of the student interviewees (only 35 from all the focus universities). Most student interviewees (19 of them) were opportunistically picked out, while only 16 were randomly selected by the researcher. Hence, the qualitative results (presented in Chapter 4) need to be checked against and supplemented by the quantitative findings (shown in Chapter 5).

In exploring the primary reasons why they chose to study at private universities, most student respondents pointed out that, in comparison with public institutions, private universities tend to have more flexible plans in student admissions and offer more options of courses and degree programmes as well as student aid schemes which are adjustable to the needs of students, either full-time or part-time, from divergent socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, private universities, from viewpoints of some respondents, could be regarded as an alternative for those who are not successful in the entrance examinations and cannot go to public institutions. This mirrors the capacity of private universities, above their public counterparts, in the expansion of higher education as well as in the promotion of access and equity, from the common beliefs, perspectives and experiences of student respondents in this case study. Also, with reference to table 5.1/Chapter 5, it is interesting to note that the respondents' decision to study at particular universities is affected by their parents'/guardians' earnings. Thus, parental contribution seems to be one of the most critical private sources of revenue for higher education markets in this case study.

Based on the quantitative results shown in table 5.16/Chapter 5, most students from all the focus institutions disagree that private higher education should be only for high-income people. They strongly agree that private higher education should be made more accessible to young people of disadvantaged backgrounds or low-income families. They think that private institutions, in cooperation with the government, should assist some able but economically disadvantaged students who are facing difficulties or any kinds of problems during their studies at universities as well as those qualified but low-income secondary school leavers (who would like to go to universities), through various kinds of university grants/loans and the government loans.

In this research, most student respondents, both in the qualitative and the quantitative studies, agree that socio-economically disadvantaged students should not only be defined as those whose parents' or guardians' income does not exceed 150,000 baht (about £2,000) a year or 12,500 baht (approximately £167) a month. This indicates that only parents' or guardians' income could not point out the real family conditions, social status and needs of students. In the interviews, some student respondents noted that, apart from family income, other factors such as family expenses, family conditions (divorced or united parents/guardians), number of dependents in family and debt burden should also be regarded as components in identifying students' socio-economic status and financial need. However, there are a considerable number of those (more than 1,000 of them) who do not agree with the majority and who argue that loans or grants should be limited only to those whose family income does not exceed a certain level of earnings, defined by the government. Nonetheless, based on the questionnaire results, most respondents agree that the government and universities should consider parents' or guardians' income the most important criterion to offer loans or grants to students. In spite of its inability to be used as a sole criterion for identifying the real socio-economic status and financial need of students, (to participants) parents' or guardians' income may still be recognised as the main indicator of students' needs (probably the best and the most concrete indicator, in comparison with other factors, at present).

In terms of student financial support, the majority of student interviewees and questionnaire respondents believe that, in higher education, loans can assist students on a larger scale than can grants, scholarships and other types of financial aid schemes. Although a loan scheme tends to be bound with lots of commitments and might lead to an excessive debt burden, most students believe that loans could provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants and other kinds of student aids, like debt remission and lower tuition fees. As a result, the majority of respondents (over 2,000 of them) agree that each private institution should apply and emphasise a loan rather than a grant scheme to support socio-economically disadvantaged students. From the interviews of administrators and staff, in charge of grants/loans, as well as students from each focus institution, grants and outright funds could assist only hundreds of disadvantaged students, while loans could help more than 1,000 of them a year. Through the loan programmes, most student interviewees

indicated that costs recovered from the old borrowers (who have finished their studies and have entered into employment) can be used to further fund the new borrowers and other needy people who may not be able to continue and complete their programmes of study without financial support. In addition, most respondents noted that student loans could imbue students with self-discipline and cost-consciousness. Being more self-disciplined and cost-conscious, they would put in greater efforts to graduate within time, in order to avoid having unexpected higher amount of debt or having an excessive debt burden upon their leaving universities/colleges, and would become more thoughtful about their future careers and plans after graduation. However, due to lack of knowledge and understanding of higher education funding and cost-sharing principle, some student respondents did not agree that loans can assist a larger number of students and can more effectively help improve equity in higher education than can grants and outright scholarships. Such lack of knowledge about cost-sharing or users-pay/benefit principle and higher education funding may have an effect on most student respondents' negative views against the top-up fees policy. This implies a need for an effective publicity campaign to be carried out, under the cooperation between the government, universities and the mass media, to impart to students/parents and other stakeholders of higher education the knowledge of the above-mentioned principle as well as its objectives and goals.

For the maximum amount of loans to be allocated to each student or loan recipient, most student respondents (over 1,500 of them) agree that the ceiling of loans (for undergraduate students) should not exceed 100,000 baht (about £1,333) a year. In general, this amount seems to be sufficient for studying in Thai universities (both private and public), though it requires more than that to study in some private institutions and some of the focus universities. The average cost of tuition in the focus institutions falls between 20,000 baht (about £267)/semester and 40,000 baht (about £533)/year (for students of social sciences, arts and humanities), and between 30,000 baht (approximately £400)/semester and 60,000 baht (approximately £800)/year (for students of engineering, IT, architecture, medical and health sciences). Should the ceiling be over 100,000 baht (or £1,333)/year, part of the loans might be used for other purposes, inconsistent with the objectives and goals of the government loan scheme. However, from the comments and interviews of staff and students, 100,000 baht might not be able to cover both tuition and living cost of students,

especially those disadvantaged who are from upcountry and need to rent flats and live by themselves in a big city like Bangkok. Although such a ceiling might be appropriate for the majority of participants, it should be slightly more flexible for the above group of students from outside Bangkok and for those who study in some specific fields (e.g. medical and health sciences, engineering, IT and architecture) in particular institutions (e.g. Universities A, E and F), who are supposed to require more than 100,000 baht a year for their tuition and fees, learning equipment and living expenses.

In terms of the upcoming switch from the present loan (flexibly mortgage-type) scheme to the ICL (Income Contingency), most questionnaire respondents (more than 1,500 of them) agree that an income-contingent loan or graduate tax (that is supposed to be switched off when the borrower pays out his/her loan) system should be introduced and set up in Thai higher education. The majority of them believe that such a system (ICL) would be more flexible and reasonably geared to each individual's ability to pay, in comparison with other repayment systems. A large number of them (555 students) think that ICL would help encourage higher level of participation in higher education from low-income people. From the interviews of students as well as administrators/staff in charge of student loans, some agreed and some disagreed with ICL. In spite of its vagueness concerning the identification of a taxable amount of income and the correlation between the amount of debts to be repaid and the rate of inflation, the ICL supporters indicated that such a scheme would help develop the effectiveness of the student loan system in terms of control and monitoring of the use of loans by the universities. Since ICL is supposed to cover tuition and fees only, it would be unlikely that the loans are misused. However, those who did not agree with ICL claimed that, since this scheme covers only tuition, it might be suitable for only some groups of middle-income students whose parents/guardians could afford some of their costs of living and miscellaneous expenses. It might not be practical for those disadvantaged from upcountry who could not depend on their parents or guardians at all. Also, as the new system will be open to all users of higher education, regardless of family income, the loans might go to those who are not really disadvantaged, without effective operating and targeting plans. One of the non-supporters of ICL noted that, if ICL was really applied in Thai higher education, it would be difficult or quite a hard job for the government and

universities to raise a large sum of additional funds to sufficiently support the university loan takers who tend to become larger and larger in number. For this, should ICL be really introduced and applied in Thai higher education, the government, in cooperation with universities and probably the mass media, may need to set up the publicity campaigns to explain to practitioners in charge of loans at each institution, students/parents and other stakeholders of higher education the ICL principle, its regulations/method of repayment and the qualifications of people who are eligible for the loans (supposed to be higher education students, either full-time or part-time, of any programmes of study at any institutions which participate in the government loan scheme). Moreover, the government should become more transparent regarding the search for a larger amount of funds to support a larger number of loan recipients, throughout the debt-free period (four, five or six years of each programme of study, probably plus two years of grace period after graduation). Also, universities (either private or public) may need to raise additional sources of funds to assist the least advantaged loan takers (especially those from remote areas in upcountry) within their institutions who may not be able to afford the monthly expenses and some miscellaneous fees during their study.

To support and widen access to higher education markets for economically disadvantaged people, some student interviewees recommended that, apart from the government loan programme, the focus institutions should develop more financial aid schemes, either in the form of target grants, university loans or work-study programmes, to supplement the government loans and/or family/parental contributions for the least advantaged who have proved unable to contribute to any costs of their higher education and who seem to be the minority of university/college students. In targeting the government loans to students, some respondents suggested that parents'/guardians' expenses and existing debt burden should be considered in parallel with their earnings and that the assessment of financial need should include more means-tested indicators, e.g. family conditions (divorced or united parents/guardians), number of dependents in family and, if possible, additional information on other extended family members, except parents/guardians, who might be in capacity of covering tuition fees and living expenses for students. Some respondents emphasised that students' academic ability should also be taken into account

alongside financial need to assure that the loan recipients are likely to succeed in their higher education and will be able to pay back the loans.

Concerning the funding system, most student respondents (in the quantitative study) suggest that, to promote equity in private higher education, the government or fund-making bodies should direct loans and grants to students (demand-side funding) rather than through the universities (supply-side funding). The demand-side funding scheme seems to be more practical in view of most students, as it tends to offer them more freedom to choose subject areas and institutions in accordance with their interests and abilities. Moreover, it is likely to help motivate all higher education institutions to actively upgrade their quality and to compete for a larger number of student clients. Such an idea was agreed by most students who contributed to the interviews. However, despite its advantages, such a funding system still has some discernible weaknesses. Without effective inspection and monitoring schemes, once funds are directed to students, they might be abused or wrongly used for other purposes, unrelated to education and basic needs (e.g. housing and food). In terms of screening and targeting plans, there might be some problems concerning the selection of loan/grant recipients. Since the government and fund-making bodies are not so acquainted with students as the universities are, they might get some wrong information regarding students' personal details, their programmes of study and the exact tuition fees for such programmes. Without an effective operating system, the funds, supposed to be targeted to disadvantaged or needy students, might go to those who are not really in need of them. In this regard, some student interviewees, being aware of the above-mentioned drawbacks of the demand-side scheme, pointed out that Thai higher education might not be ready yet for such a funding system.

However, in coincidence with what was recommended by Ziderman (2003), should the demand-side funding scheme be introduced and used in Thai higher education, it is necessary that the government establish or assign a private or quasi-public central agency under supervision of the government (like in UK and USA), directly in charge of student aid programmes, to administer the scheme and distribute funds, either to qualified and needy students in their final year of studies at secondary schools, through each provincial school, or to qualified and needy applicants who are secondary school leavers. However, this central agency must create and develop good

relationships and connections with all main and provincial schools of the country in order to be well informed of family and academic background of each scholarship or loan applicant who is studying or just finished his/her study and would like to go to a university or a college. Also, to ascertain the impartiality and efficiency as well as to monitor the progress of the scheme, the government can set up a committee (from both private and public institutions) to examine and review the operation of this agency from time to time.

From this case study, the majority of staff and student respondents believe that equity could be effectively developed in Thai private higher education, through a variety of student aid schemes, focusing on loans. However, in targeting any loans and grants to economically disadvantaged students, academic ability or scholastic achievements should also be considered in parallel with financial need, to assure that the grants are not given in vain and that the loans will be repaid.

The quantitative results demonstrated in tables 5.4 and 5.5/Chapter 5 reveal that, through the loan-based student aid schemes under the government support, most of the focus institutions have been quite successful in the promotion of *equity* (defined by the researcher as *equality of educational opportunity* that does not exclude able but low-income people from higher education) within their universities. In this case study, the majority of student respondents who are loan/grant recipients tend to come from lower-income families, in comparison with the respondents who are not taking any loans and grants. In this research, most of the loan recipients and a few of the non-takers of loans, who are really from lower-income background, tend to do some term-time work to fund the rest of their tuition fees and the cost of living as well as to help their parents/guardians finance other dependents in family. From the interviews, the majority of them have parents/guardians who are the owners of small business (i.e. grocery shops, small bookshops, eating places) or in self-employment (freelancers/general employees) with low and unstable incomes and who are low-ranking government officials or permanent employees with lots of children, dependents and debt burden. They tend to be less advantaged than most of the non-takers of loans/grants, whose parents/guardians are businesspersons or the owners of large or medium for-profit enterprises.

Based on the quantitative results shown in tables 5.13.1 and 5.13.2/Chapter 5, it is noteworthy that the respondents from the lowest-income families are less likely to be afraid of loans, in comparison with their higher-income peers. This contradicts with hypothesis 9.1 and with what most people may assume that high-income people are supposed to have less fear of loans than those from low-income families. These counter-intuitive findings were explored by the researcher in the interviews of students. The suggestion was that the high-income respondents are afraid of loans because they have never experienced them. On the contrary, having taken loans for over two or three years, the low-income respondents tend to be less afraid of them.

However, from the interviews and observations of some loan takers, it turns out that some of them, even without the loans, could be able to cover the cost of living themselves. Having the loans, some of them own luxurious items, e.g. brand-new cars, laptop computers, lavish accessories and brand-name products. This could be noticed when they came for the interviews and informal meetings with the researcher out of the office hours and during some weekends. A few of loan takers inadvertently divulged to the researcher their plans to further their studies abroad upon the completion of their degrees in Thailand.

Thus, from this case study, the researcher has learnt that not all the loan recipients are from the least advantaged background and that not all of them are less advantaged than all of those who are non-takers of loans/grants. This signifies some weaknesses existing in the financial need assessment schemes as well as the targeting plans of loans/grants in some of the focus institutions. It also implies one of the disadvantages of quantitative approach in the in-depth study of some complex and delicate issues. That is why it also needs to be checked against and supplemented by the qualitative data in this research.

6.5 The link between research results, hypotheses and research questions

In this research, the qualitative and quantitative results obtained from all units of analysis (all the focus institutions, the government loan scheme, staff and student respondents from each institution) and sources of evidence (documents, archival

records, questionnaires, observations and responses from the interviews of staff and students) are used to support the hypotheses (both institutional and student-oriented), which have developed from the research questions, concerning the promotion of equity and student aid programmes within the focus institutions. The examined hypotheses, once proved to be *valid knowledge*, provide responses to all the research questions that, finally, help corroborate the theoretical perspectives and concepts cited in Chapter 2. This mirrors the main characteristics of this case study that is equipped with a *positivist* model, in which some theoretical perspectives are explored through the empirical research, based on *real practices*, social experiments (the establishment of causal relations and interrelations between variables and pieces of information) and the examination of some hypotheses to support the theory, regarding the possibility of the development of equity in a specific context of higher education markets.

6.6 Discussion on limitations of the research

As cited in Chapter 3, although this case study provides a wealth of in-depth knowledge based on the real practices and experiences in a specific context of private institutions, it has some drawbacks and limitations that should not be overlooked by readers and other researchers who may be interested in conducting the same or a similar kind of case study. Such limitations concern reliability of the qualitative findings, imperfections of quantitative study and probability sampling approach and external validity as well as generalisability of the research results.

The problems regarding reliability of the interview data and the qualitative findings result from three main factors: non-representativeness of student interviewees, subjectivity and bias of some staff and student interviewees as well as the attempts to generate positive images in front of the researcher.

One of the principal shortcomings of qualitative approach, in this case study, is non-representativeness of the student interviewees (only 35 of them from all the focus institutions), who could be able to fully contribute to the research. Another drawback concerns the subjective or biased views of some staff and student interviewees. Actually, it is quite difficult to separate all the subjective and biased views as well as the emic or insiders' ideas of informants from the interview data. To

deal with the problem, the researcher applied multiple instruments and sources of evidence: documents, archival records, observations and questionnaires (known as triangulation), to supplement and to check over the findings obtained from a single approach. However, some of the interview results, mirroring the common beliefs and perspectives on some abstract themes (i.e. equity in higher education and the development of equity in private higher education), are inevitably influenced by the subjective opinions and comments of some staff and student interviewees who may differently interpret things based on their own perceptions and experiences. The other significant weakness exists in some distorted information obtained from the interviews of some high-ranking administrative staff or renowned and powerful people in the focus institutions. Driven by their attempts to protect the prestige of themselves and their universities, those high-ranking and powerful people are likely to generate some impressive images and appearances in front of the researcher. To maintain the fame and to create the positive images of their institutions, they might try to conceal some factual information, that could disclose the drawbacks or unfairness of some student aid programmes under their supervision. Conducting research in the Thai society where hierarchy, seniority and concerns about face-saving (especially for high-ranking and senior people) exist, it is difficult for a young female researcher to challenge those high-ranking and powerful people on some data which are treated as strictly confidential within their institutions (i.e. some extra amounts of the government loans allocated to particular institutions that belong to powerful people who have links with the government, the details on a number of university president-sponsored grants and some supporting funds that have been offered to some students on a case-by-case basis as well as some types of bursaries that might be reserved for the offspring of people who have connections with each institution). Consequently, it is possible that some parts of the interview data are influenced by such distorted information, derived from *power relations* (when the researcher interviews the high-ranking and powerful people). To maximise reliability of the interview data, the researcher applied other sources of evidence such as additional documents and archival records from a unit in the Office of the Higher Education Commission, that is in charge of the government loans, to check against the information provided by those powerful people.

The imperfections of quantitative study result from the limitations of probability sampling method. To avoid the production of biased information, the researcher tried to apply probability sampling approach in the selection of all student respondents in this case study. However, from the application of such a sampling approach, the researcher encountered some problems, such as non-responses, unavailability of and inactive cooperation from some of the randomly selected questionnaire respondents and student interviewees. Owing to the limitations of probability sampling method plus time and budgetary constraints, the researcher was obliged to use non-probability approach or opportunity sampling in order to reach the expected sample size of student respondents for quantitative study and also to have more respondents who could contribute to the interviews. From the mixed sampling approach, the researcher has 2,480 randomly and 536 opportunistically selected questionnaire respondents as well as 16 randomly and 19 opportunistically chosen for qualitative study. Consequently, the application of non-purely probability sampling method or the data obtained from respondents who are not randomly chosen might minimally affect the representativeness of the sample population in this research.

The other limitation of this case study is the *problem of external validity* or the difficulty of generalising the research findings to other contexts or other cases. Being aware of this limitation, the researcher has tried to enhance generalisability of the research results, through the application of the multiple-case study logic (recommended by Yin, 1994), focusing on replications of the findings in eight sub-cases or eight institutions, regarded as the largest leading private universities in the country with greater than 10,000 undergraduate students (at present). To prevent herself from being prejudiced and subjective, the researcher has endeavoured to maintain the distance between herself and the research informants by emphasising probability sampling approach for the selection of student respondents in this case study. To develop transferability of the qualitative findings, the researcher has put in efforts to create thick description on the government loans and other student aid schemes operated within all the focus universities.

From this research, all the eight focus sub-cases produce the same findings. Such findings meaningfully corroborate the efficiency of the universal perspectives on the possibility of the development of equity in a specific context of Thai higher

education markets. Also, they attest to the *real* existence of equity and *safety nets*, in parallel with the development of a *student loan programme* under the government support, in Thai private higher education. Moreover, since the primary measures concerning the operation and the repayment system of the government loans are spelt out by the national Office of the Student Loans Fund, the principal information on the government loan scheme tends to be transferable between the eight focus institutions and may be generalisable to other private institutions in the country. This implies that the research approaches and results of this case study might be applicable and generalisable to other large private higher education institutions in the country, which have about or more than 10,000 students and which participate in the government loan programme.

Nevertheless, as mentioned in Chapter 3, in spite of the same results yielded by all the eight focus universities and the possibility of their generalisability or transferability to other large cases in similar circumstances (with the same or similar numbers of students), it does not guarantee that the research methods and findings of this case study can be generalised to or will be viable in smaller private institutions with smaller numbers of students. In other words, the researcher might not have come to the same or similar results if she had conducted the same kind of case study, using exactly the same methods and strategies applied in this research, in smaller private universities.

6.7 The links between three key elements in the study

Based on its strength in reality, this case study mirrors the *real* connection between the government policy on access and equity in Thai higher education, student aid programmes operated within the focus universities and the international perspectives on the development of equity in higher education markets, cited in Chapter 2. It seems that the universal concepts on the two tiers of equity between the users of higher education and between the users and the non-users of this level of education (as raised by West, 1988 and 1995b), lie in the Thai government policy on higher education reform embodied in the Ninth National Development Plan of Thai Higher Education (from 2002 to 2006), accentuating access and equity as well as the need for additional non-governmental revenues or private resources from people who

directly benefit from higher education. To promote both tiers of equity, the government has tried to develop student aid plans, with emphasis on loans, and to encourage the privatisation of public universities as well as the expansion of private higher education institutions in the country. In conformity with the government policy on access and equity, many private universities have taken part in the government loan programme and have developed various kinds of student financial support for able but economically disadvantaged students or would-be students in their institutions. The focus universities in this research are eight of the most crucial and intriguing instances of those private institutions with a variety of student aid schemes.

As indicated by Achava-Amrung (2001) and Varghese (2001), the government-sponsored student loan scheme in Thailand was established amid the growth of higher education markets. Since the beginning of its operation in 1996, the programme (known as the deferred payment plan) has been continuously expanded to relieve the financial burden on economically disadvantaged university or secondary school students and to widen access to upper secondary and post-secondary education for able but low-income people. Apart from its role in the enhancement of equity between the users of higher education, the loan scheme, in accordance with the international concepts proposed by many philosophers, educationists and economists in Chapter 2, could be used as a vehicle to improve equity between the users and the non-users of tertiary education. In accordance with what was stated by Johnstone (2001a), student loans could be regarded as an approach to promote the cost-sharing/users-pay system or the shift of at least some costs of higher education from taxpayers or the non-users of higher education to students and/or their parents/guardians. In such a system, university students and/or their parents/guardians are expected to contribute to, at least, some of the costs of their higher education on the grounds that the majority of them tend to come from middle or upper middle-income families and are likely to enjoy private benefits (in the form of higher than the national average earnings and better opportunities to get highly paid jobs) upon the completion of their degrees. Therefore, if well-operated, the student loan programme, as suggested by Woodhall (1992a), could become a crucial instrument to develop a more equitable cost-sharing or users-pay system than can other types of student aid schemes in higher education.

In accordance with the universal perspectives on the advantages of student loan schemes (mentioned in Chapter 2), the research findings in Chapters 4 and 5 have corroborated the efficiency of Friedman's liberal idea of the possibility of the development of equity in higher education markets. Also, they have attested to the facts that loans could assist a larger number of students (especially those from low-income families) than can grants and other types of student financial support. This signifies that loans, in comparison with other kinds of student aid programmes, could more effectively lead to the development of equity, at least in a specific context of Thai private higher education. However, to promote equity, it seems that most of the focus institutions still need support and cooperation from the government in the provision of student loans as well as in the development of the cost recovery system.

6.8 Towards equity in Thai Higher Education

As cited above, the research results in Chapters 4 and 5 have supported that equity could be effectively developed within the focus institutions, through various types of student aid programmes, focusing on loans. In most of the focus institutions, it seems that the government loans are the primary source of finance for able but low-income students and would-be students as well as for some of those from middle or upper middle-income families who may unexpectedly fall into financial hardship or whose parents/guardians may face any insurmountable problems or difficulties (i.e. bankruptcy, unexpectedly serious illness and an excessive debt burden) that prevent them from being able to cover all the tuition fees and living expenses or even to contribute to some of the costs of higher education for their children.

In short, the research findings of this case study have demonstrated that, both in theory and in practice, to achieve equity in higher education, student loans tend to be one of the most crucial means to foster the cost-sharing or users-pay system, through the enhancement of higher education students' and/or their parents'/guardians' contributions in the form of deferred payment or future earnings. Also, based on the qualitative results of this case study, loans have been regarded (by staff and student respondents) as a practical instrument which can effectively help a large number of students in each focus institution (over 1,000 of them a year).

Moreover, the qualitative findings have demonstrated that the focus institutions, as eight instances of private universities in Thailand, have shown their endeavours to respond to the government policy on access and equity, by developing various kinds of student financial support to assist economically disadvantaged students and to open more educational opportunities for able but low-income people who would like to take part in higher education. So far, they have been successful, at a certain level, in the development of equity within their institutions. This has been shown in tables 5.4 and 5.5/Chapter 5, demonstrating that the majority of loan or loan and grant recipients in this case study are from lower-income families, in comparison with their peers who are not taking any loans and grants. However, from the view of most staff and student respondents in this research, the focus institutions may need to improve some targeting strategies (i.e. the assessment of ability to pay and financial need as well as the adjustment of means-tested indicators) of the government loans and some of the university grants/loans in order to improve equity and to assure that loans/grants are targeted to those who are really in need of them.

In spite of their independence from the government (in terms of administration and human resource management), private universities, according to the majority of staff and student respondents in this study, still require collaboration from the government, especially in terms of student loans and other kinds of student aid schemes. This reflects their common beliefs that the promotion of equity in Thai higher education should not be only an institutional or organisational policy, but also a national policy. To promote equality of educational opportunity in higher education, it requires active cooperation from all stakeholders (e.g. the government, both private and public higher education institutions and students) of this level of education.

Nevertheless, based on table 2.2/Chapter 2 (demonstrating percentage of the Thai government educational expenses divided by level of education and socio-economic status of beneficiaries), there are not many economically disadvantaged people (especially those from low-income families) who have an opportunity to participate in higher education. This information implies that the real barriers to higher levels of education in the country as well as the problems of access and equity may not entirely exist within the higher education system itself. In coincidence with

what was recommended by Barr (2001), to eliminate or diminish such barriers, additional resources are required to strengthen lower levels of education (primary and secondary schools), that is where more crucial barriers and the roots of problems take place. This means that, to improve access and equity in higher education, the cost-sharing or users-pay system should be introduced, in parallel with the expansion of private higher education and the loan-based student aid schemes, to help decrease taxpayer burden or government expenditure and transfer public resources to the lower levels of education as well as to increase private resources from students and/or their parents/guardians.

6.9 Summary, final comments and suggestions for further research

This research mainly concerns the exploration of the *development of equity* in Thai private higher education and the study of the creation and improvement of *student financial support programmes* or *safety nets* in Thai higher education markets. Its primary objective is to explore the role of private universities in the promotion of equality of educational opportunity, in conformity with the government policy on access and equity in higher education, and to find out whether or not such safety nets really serve economically disadvantaged students or low-income people who would like to participate in higher education.

Based on the research motivation and the theoretical perspectives on equity in higher education (cited in Chapters 1 and 2), the researcher applied the case study approach, equipped with triangulation and multiple methods (mentioned in Chapter 3), to discover the *reality of equality of opportunity* in a specific context (or eight instances) of Thai higher education markets (shown in Chapters 4 and 5). In accordance with the research findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5, this chapter has come to the conclusion that equity does exist and has been developed in the focus institutions. To improve equity, the focus universities have applied various kinds of student aid programmes, with emphasis on loans, to assist economically disadvantaged students or low-income people who would like to take part in higher education, on the condition that they are academically qualified for post-secondary education and are likely to pay back the loans. Based on the research results of this case study, student loans, under the government support, tend to be the principal

source of finance for low-income students. Thus, in theory as well as in practice, loans have proved to be able to help higher education students on a larger scale than could scholarships, grants and other kinds of student aid schemes. In the near future, the introduction of an income-contingent loan scheme (ICL) into Thai higher education is expected to be able to enhance equity and to widen access to post-secondary education for a larger number of students, regardless of their family incomes. As its repayment system will be adjustable to the borrower's real future earnings and his/her ability to pay, such a scheme is supposed to invite more participation or investments from low-income people who would like to go to universities. However, to effectively operate the ICL scheme, we need the reliable income report and income tax machinery for the collection of loans and the publicity campaigns (under the collaborations between the government, the universities and the mass media) which help explain to practitioners, students and their parents/guardians as well as the wider public the ICL principle, the repayment method and the calculation of the amount to be repaid each year (as a proportion of the total income) when the borrower's earnings reach each level of the national average or taxable income.

From the in-depth study of the promotion of equality of educational opportunity within the eight focus institutions, some meaningful lessons emerge for the improvement of equity in Thai private higher education which suggest that, to accomplish equity in higher education, a private institution should:

- cooperate with the government and the related offices in the improvement of the student loan programme in line with the cost-sharing or users-pay system;
- develop other kinds of its student aid schemes, i.e. university grants/loans, work-study programmes and internships/fellowships, either as alternatives for economically disadvantaged or needy students who are unsuccessful in the application for the government loans or as the top-up funds to fill in the gaps between the government loans and students' and/or their parents'/guardians' contributions or between some partial grants and students' and/or their parents'/guardians' contributions for the least advantaged,

who seem to be the minority of higher education students;

- establish and develop partnerships with the government, the public and the private sectors, industry/business companies or other fund-making bodies (i.e. in the form of student loan/grant schemes, contracted research, academic links or exchange of knowledge and staff as well as internships/joint activities), that are likely to become stakeholders of higher education and to take part in or contribute to any kinds of student financial aid plans operated by the institution.

Eventually, this case study has accomplished its principal goal of the corroboration of the international perspectives and ideas concerning the possibility of the development of equity in a specific context of Thai higher education markets. The research findings of this study are expected to serve as a useful instance for the development of student aid schemes as the means to promote equity in Thai private higher education. Also, as mentioned in 3.18/Chapter 3 and in the discussion on limitations of the research (6.6/Chapter 6), they might be generalisable to similar cases of other large private higher education institutions, with large numbers of students (over 10,000), in the country. However, additional case studies and larger scale research, concerning the promotion of equity through student financial support in higher education markets, need to be conducted in other private universities (either within or outside the country) to re-examine and to supplement the results provided by this research as well as to further explore the development of equality of educational opportunity in private higher education.

Apart from the study of the policy on access and equity practised in higher education markets, this research also calls for further investigations into the reasons for taking loans of higher education students as well as future study concerning the effects of the introduction of the new loan system (ICL) on low-income students' decision to participate in higher education and to go to private universities. This further research is supposed to usefully provide additional ideas on future development of the government and the university loan programmes, in parallel with other kinds of student aid schemes, in order that they will be more responsive to the dissimilar needs of students from divergent socio-economic backgrounds and will

effectively help widen access to higher education for able but low-income people who would like to participate in this level of education. Thus, this case study can meaningfully serve as a stepping-stone to other research on the promotion of access and equity in line with the development of various types of financial aid programmes, focusing on student loans, in higher education markets.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Percentage of Employed Labour Force, aged 15-59, by Level of Education and Economic Sector: Year 1999

Level of Education/ Economic Sector	Pre-primary/ No Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education		Higher Education	Total (%)
			Lower Secondary Education	Upper Secondary Education		
1. Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting and Fishing	5.9	81.0	8.3	3.8	1.0	100.0
2. Mining and Quarrying	0.8	81.9	7.8	4.3	5.2	100.0
3. Manufacturing	1.9	53.9	19.9	14.7	9.6	100.0
4. Construction, Repair and Demolition	3.3	71.6	13.1	5.6	6.4	100.0
5. Electricity, Gas, Water and Sanitary Services	0.3	31.5	16.9	21.7	29.6	100.0
6. Commerce	2.7	51.2	17.2	13.5	15.4	100.0
7. Transport, Storage and Communication	1.9	56.1	18.9	11.7	11.4	100.0
8. Services	1.5	29.9	14.4	13.5	40.7	100.0
9. Other (activities not clearly and adequately described)	3.3	26.7	16.7	13.3	40.0	100.0
Total (%)	3.4	57.4	13.7	10.0	15.5	100.0

Source: National Statistics Section, Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, 2002

Percentage of Employed Labour Force, aged 15-59, by Level of Education and Economic Sector: Year 2000

Level of Education/ Economic Sector	Pre-primary/ No Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education		Higher Education	Total (%)
			Lower Secondary Education	Upper Secondary Education		
1. Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting and Fishing	9.3	78.5	8.0	3.2	1.0	100.0
2. Mining and Quarrying	5.8	61.5	7.7	9.6	15.4	100.0
3. Manufacturing	4.2	52.9	19.8	13.9	9.1	100.0
4. Construction, Repair and Demolition	5.7	71.9	10.9	5.7	5.8	100.0
5. Electricity, Gas, Water and Sanitary Services	1.4	36.0	15.2	19.7	27.7	100.0
6. Commerce	5.6	52.0	15.0	13.0	14.4	100.0
7. Transport, Storage and Communication	2.9	54.9	16.2	13.0	13.1	100.0
8. Services	2.6	29.3	14.4	13.6	40.1	100.0
9. Other (activities not clearly and adequately described)	-	44.4	11.1	5.6	38.9	100.0
Total (%)	5.9	57.0	12.9	9.6	14.5	100.0

Source: National Statistics Section, Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, 2002

Percentage of Employed Labour Force, aged 15-59, by Level of Education and Economic Sector: Year 2001

Level of Education/ Economic Sector	Pre-primary/ No Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education		Higher Education	Total (%)
			Lower Secondary Education	Upper Secondary Education		
1. Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting and Fishing	5.8	82.0	6.9	3.6	1.6	100.0
2. Mining and Quarrying	0.8	58.9	13.7	12.1	14.5	100.0
3. Manufacturing	1.8	55.6	16.4	14.1	12.2	100.0
4. Construction, Repair and Demolition	3.0	68.0	12.3	8.0	8.6	100.0
5. Electricity, Gas, Water and Sanitary Services	0.0	20.1	12.7	23.9	43.3	100.0
6. Commerce	2.5	51.8	14.5	14.0	17.2	100.0
7. Transport, Storage and Communication	1.1	57.2	15.9	12.5	13.3	100.0
8. Services	0.5	15.5	10.4	10.9	62.6	100.0
9. Other (activities not clearly and adequately described)	5.4	75.6	10.6	5.0	3.4	100.0
Total (%)	3.2	57.6	11.4	9.7	18.1	100.0

Source: National Statistics Section, Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, 2002

APPENDIX 2

Number of new and old (government) loan recipients from eight focus institutions (from 1996 – 1997)

Names of Institutions	Academic year 1996			Academic year 1997			Total		
	New recipients	Old recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	New recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	Old recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	All recipients	Amount of loans (baht)
University A	241	-	17,489,660	828	81,150,000	234	22,742,150	1,062	103,892,150
University B	318	-	26,464,804	870	82,777,498	304	29,225,104	1,174	112,002,602
University C	730	-	55,845,000	910	81,129,595	534	47,675,200	1,444	128,804,795
University D	331	-	22,534,250	898	72,781,794	351	29,387,939	1,249	102,169,733
University E	111	-	8,491,500	303	27,291,500	107	9,736,400	410	37,027,900
University F	770	-	57,890,700	1,621	159,665,120	723	70,168,470	2,344	229,833,590
University G	346	-	26,041,500	1,000	97,108,380	345	33,406,100	1,345	130,514,480
University H	231	-	14,506,740	661	46,547,250	193	14,467,650	854	61,014,900

Sources: OHEC (Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education of Thailand) and all the focus universities

N.B. - £1 was equal to 75 (Thai) baht as of 1st Sep. 2004.

Number of new and old (government) loan recipients from eight focus institutions (from 1998 – 1999)

Names of Institutions	Academic year 1998			Academic year 1999			Total			
	New recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	Old recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	New recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	Old recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	All recipients	Amount of loans (baht)
University A	1,189	104,526,400	791	75,875,990	898	74,100,850	1,574	143,331,880	2,472	217,432,730
University B	1,181	75,325,844	1,236	113,850,782	767	52,399,556	2,713	224,920,776	3,480	277,320,332
University C	1,221	61,794,200	1,227	110,657,900	1,375	63,540,500	2,535	196,463,950	3,910	260,004,450
University D	1,353	59,491,600	1,163	98,215,800	891	70,871,400	2,016	141,893,519	2,907	212,764,919
University E	564	52,232,900	375	35,446,950	394	29,172,550	859	79,216,450	1,253	108,389,000
University F	1,939	104,698,765	2,389	223,502,680	1,331	98,029,020	5,063	399,606,152	6,394	497,635,172
University G	1,607	143,950,000	1,304	127,913,007	738	70,029,200	2,621	249,681,275	3,359	319,710,475
University H	1,468	85,995,165	759	54,515,120	1,302	81,380,895	1,842	128,156,630	3,144	209,537,525

Sources: OHEC (Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education of Thailand) and all the focus universities

Number of new and old (government) loan recipients from eight focus institutions (from 2000 – 2001)

Names of Institutions	Academic year 2000				Total			Academic year 2001				Total	
	New recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	Old recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	All recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	New recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	Old recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	All recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	
University A	749	43,514,985	1,943	170,743,140	2,692	214,258,125	1,211	90,826,000	2,353	201,998,632	3,564	292,824,632	
University B	587	34,185,600	3,496	295,290,522	4,083	329,476,122	871	62,459,200	4,021	345,565,190	4,892	408,024,390	
University C	1,516	56,857,756	4,389	340,474,232	5,905	397,331,988	1,840	85,706,480	6,148	486,211,624	7,988	571,918,104	
University D	824	35,793,100	2,380	187,711,754	3,204	223,504,854	922	57,874,600	2,663	200,140,030	3,585	258,014,630	
University E	213	16,637,300	995	88,615,900	1,208	105,253,200	307	30,155,400	869	78,995,790	1,176	109,151,190	
University F	843	51,674,200	6,770	573,156,015	7,613	624,830,215	1,437	98,633,770	7,634	655,627,932	9,071	754,261,702	
University G	443	35,777,620	2,688	257,563,240	3,131	293,340,860	755	72,619,090	2,429	231,158,550	3,184	303,777,640	
University H	673	35,910,368	2,442	159,533,666	3,115	195,444,034	774	52,615,890	2,030	131,811,768	2,804	184,427,658	

Sources: OHEC (Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education of Thailand) and all the focus universities

Number of new and old (government) loan recipients from eight focus institutions (from 2002 – 2003)

Names of Institutions	Academic year 2002				Total			Academic year 2003				Total	
	New recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	Old recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	All recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	All recipients	New recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	Old recipients	Amount of loans (baht)	All recipients	Amount of loans (baht)
University A	833	60,025,450	3,147	267,250,786	3,980	327,276,236	459	41,256,250	3,218	270,713,843	3,677	311,970,093	
University B	399	23,478,000	4,445	380,553,270	4,844	404,031,270	390	24,280,900	3,824	329,356,212	4,214	353,637,112	
University C	1,163	33,950,600	7,347	526,979,193	8,510	560,929,793	1,012	40,123,892	6,703	475,746,941	7,715	515,870,833	
University D	575	27,693,400	3,546	275,488,680	4,121	303,182,080	550	32,336,023	4,071	299,077,640	4,621	331,413,663	
University E	191	16,312,600	731	66,350,200	922	82,662,800	211	16,906,000	641	55,216,550	852	72,122,550	
University F	616	35,304,000	9,172	790,580,829	9,788	825,884,829	536	39,826,340	9,531	840,440,758	10,067	880,267,098	
University G	262	24,172,400	2,705	258,642,445	2,967	282,814,845	275	25,508,610	3,124	293,422,550	3,399	318,931,160	
University H	910	35,451,960	1,836	123,107,035	2,746	158,558,995	531	37,886,500	1,742	107,410,078	2,273	145,296,578	

Sources: OHEC (Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education of Thailand) and all the focus universities

Government loans to be allocated to new/old recipients from eight focus institutions

Names of Institutions	Amount of loans (part I) – (baht)	Amount of loans (part II) – (baht)	Total (baht)
University A	77,412,800.00	193,526,033.00	270,938,833.00
University B	211,197,942.00	107,551,800.00	318,749,742.00
University C	422,210,148.00	191,474,400.00	613,684,548.00
University D	278,356,955.00	118,862,000.00	397,218,955.00
University E	48,199,815.00	22,412,500.00	70,612,315.00
University F	737,331,294.00	222,026,000.00	959,357,294.00
University G	251,442,135.00	91,813,600.00	343,255,735.00
University H	107,718,465.00	58,106,000.00	165,824,465.00

Source: OHEC (Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education of Thailand)

N.B. The information given above is only the estimated amount of government loans, to be allocated to new/old recipients from each of the focus institutions, for academic year 2004-2005. The exact numbers of both new and old recipients were in the process of consideration (by each focus institution), as of 31st July 2004.

APPENDIX 3

Questionnaire: Students' Attitudes towards Thai Private Higher Education

This questionnaire is part of the Ph.D. research on "Equity & Social Justice in Thai Private Institutions of Higher Education".

**The questionnaire is anonymous. So please feel free to provide the truth.
All your answers will be strictly kept in confidence.**

Part 1: Programme of study

1. Name of institution: _____
Title of the programme taken: _____
Length of the programme: _____
You are in Year _____ of the programme.

2. For your programme of study, are you taking _____ ?

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| 1) a loan | 2) a grant / scholarship |
| 3) both | 4) neither of them |

3. What is your main source of funds for study? _____

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1) funds from parents / family | 2) working full-time or part-time |
| 3) a grant / scholarship | 4) a loan |
| 5) other (Please specify.): _____ | |

Part 2: Personal and Social Characteristics

4. What is your gender? _____

Male Female

5. Age? _____

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1) Under 18 years old | 2) 18-21 years old |
| 3) 22-25 years old | 4) Over 25 years old |

6. What is your highest level of education attained? _____

- 1) Completed secondary school (equivalent to grade 12)
- 2) University graduate (4 years degree)
- 3) Non-formal education, certificates or higher certificates
- 4) Technical or professional qualifications / vocational training school
- 5) Other (Please specify.): _____

7. What is your father's highest level of education attained? _____

- 1) Completed secondary school (equivalent to grade 12)
- 2) University graduate (4 years degree)
- 3) Post-college graduate (degree beyond BA or BS)
- 4) Non-formal education, certificates or higher certificates
- 5) Technical or professional qualifications / vocational training school
- 6) Other (Please specify.): _____

8. What is your mother's highest level of education attained? _____

- 1) Completed secondary school (equivalent to grade 12)
- 2) University graduate (4 years degree)
- 3) Post-college graduate (degree beyond BA or BS)
- 4) Non-formal education, certificates or higher certificates
- 5) Technical or professional qualifications / vocational training school

6) Other (Please specify.): _____

9. How many people in your (extended) family, including yourself, graduated with a university degree (BA or BS)? _____

- 1) None
- 2) 1-2
- 3) 3-4
- 4) 5 or over

10. What is your father's occupation? _____

- 1) a government official, a school teacher, a university staff
- 2) an officer of a state enterprise
- 3) an employee of a private company/organisation
- 4) a businessperson, an owner of business, a freelancer
- 5) other (Please specify.) : _____

11. What is your mother's occupation? _____

- 1) a government official, a school teacher, a university staff
- 2) an officer of a state enterprise
- 3) an employee of a private company/organisation
- 4) a businessperson, an owner of business, a freelancer
- 5) other (Please specify.) : _____

12. What is your approximate gross parents' (or guardians') income per month? _____

- 1) 12,500 baht or below
- 2) 12,501-25,000 baht
- 3) 25,001-50,000 baht
- 4) 50,001-75,000 baht
- 5) 75,001-100,000 baht
- 6) over 100,000 baht

13. What are the assets your family owns? How many of them? Please put a \checkmark in front of the item(s) which is (/are) your family possessions.

<i>Item</i>	<i>No. of item</i> (in total)
1) <input type="checkbox"/> house	_____
<i>What type of house?</i>	
1.1) <input type="checkbox"/> detached with _____ storey(s)	_____
1.2) <input type="checkbox"/> terraced with _____ storey(s)	_____
1.3) <input type="checkbox"/> flat/apartment/condominium (en-suite)	_____
1.4) <input type="checkbox"/> flat/apartment/condominium (shared bathroom)	_____
1.5) <input type="checkbox"/> dormitory (en-suite)	_____
1.6) <input type="checkbox"/> dormitory (shared bathroom)	_____
1.7) <input type="checkbox"/> other (Please specify.) _____	_____

<i>Item</i>	<i>No. of item</i> (_____ acres)
2) <input type="checkbox"/> land	_____
3) <input type="checkbox"/> car	_____
4) <input type="checkbox"/> motorcycle	_____
5) <input type="checkbox"/> television	_____
6) <input type="checkbox"/> fridge	_____
7) <input type="checkbox"/> stereo/radio	_____
8) <input type="checkbox"/> video/DVD player	_____
9) <input type="checkbox"/> air-conditioner	_____
10) <input type="checkbox"/> electric fan	_____
11) <input type="checkbox"/> computer	_____
12) <input type="checkbox"/> telephone	_____
13) <input type="checkbox"/> mobile	_____
14) <input type="checkbox"/> washing machine	_____
15) <input type="checkbox"/> microwave	_____
16) <input type="checkbox"/> other (Please specify.) _____	_____
17) <input type="checkbox"/> other (Please specify.) _____	_____

14. How many people in your household (including yourself) are depending on parents' (or guardians') funds? _____
15. How many people in your household (including yourself) are studying? _____
16. What is your permanent address? Please specify the district and the province (e.g. "Pathumwan, Bangkok"). _____
- _____

Part 3: Students' attitudes towards (private) higher education

How much do you agree with each of the following statements?
Please read each statement carefully and indicate whether and how much you *agree* or *disagree* with it by making a cross (x) in the appropriate box.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
17. <i>Private</i> higher education should be only for high-income people.					
18. <i>Private</i> higher education should be made more accessible to young people of disadvantaged background or low-income family.					
19. Socio-economically disadvantaged students are <i>not</i> only those whose parents' (or guardians') income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month).					
20. The government should consider parents' (or guardians') income the most important criterion to offer a loan or a grant to a student.					
21. The eligibility of loans should <i>not</i> be limited only to students whose parents' (or guardians') income does not exceed 150,000 baht a year (or 12,500 baht a month).					
22. Each <i>private</i> institution of higher education should establish more student grant or loan schemes, or Hardship Funds, to support socio-economically disadvantaged but academically qualified students.					
23. Each <i>private</i> education institution should apply and emphasise a loan scheme rather than a grant scheme to support socio-economically disadvantaged students.					

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
24. In higher education (in general, both public and private), a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can grants, debt remission, or lower tuition fees.					
25. The ceiling or maximum amount of loans allocated to each student should not exceed 100,000 baht per year.					
26. A loan or grant recipient should be allowed to be in paid employment while studying.					
27. To effectively operate a student aid (loan/grant) scheme, <i>private</i> institutions of higher education need cooperation and support from the government.					
28. The promotion of equity also helps promote quality in <i>private</i> higher education.					
29. To promote equity in <i>private</i> higher education, the government should allocate funds (loans or grants) directly to students rather than to institutions.					
30. An* <i>income-contingent</i> loan scheme or a graduate tax system should be introduced and set up in <i>private</i> higher education. (<i>*If you do not agree with this statement, please go to 32.</i>)					

***Note:** An “*income-contingent*” loan scheme is a system in which a student borrower, after his/her graduation, will be bound to pay back his/her loan with a low interest rate through the income tax, when his/her salary reaches a taxable amount or the national average income.

31. If you agree with statement 30, why? _____

- 1) This system helps relieve an excessive debt burden that may crop up after graduation.
- 2) It is fairer that the users of higher education have to pay for their own study.
- 3) It encourages a higher level of participation in higher education from low-income people.
- 4) It is more flexible and reasonably geared to each individual's ability to pay, in comparison with other repayment systems.
- 5) Other (Please specify.): _____

Part 4: Personal attitudes towards loans

32. Are you afraid of loans? _____

Yes

No

****If "no", go to 34.***

33. If you are afraid of loans, what are the main reasons? _____

- 1) Loans incur debts and might mark me out in my peer group.
- 2) Loans incur debts and may bring discredit on my family.
- 3) Loans incur debts and cannot guarantee success in my education and in my future career.
- 4) Loans incur debts and tend to bring in unexpected difficulties.
- 5) Other (Please specify.): _____

34. If you have additional ideas, opinions or comments on any plans or measures which should be taken and carried out by the *private* higher education institutions in order to achieve the goal of the promotion and the maintenance of equity and social justice within their institutions, please write your views and comments in the space provided below.

****In this research, some student informants will be asked to come for an informal interview, to be arranged on campus. Should you not mind cooperating in the interview, please fill in your name (or false name), contact no. and e-mail (for further appointment).**

Name _____ Tel. _____ E-mail: _____

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation.

APPENDIX 4

Questions for Interviews of Administrative Staff (from each focus institution)

Introduction:

Good Morning, Mr./Ms. ...(name)... Thank you very much for your dedication of time to my interview. I'm Nuntarat Charoenkul, a Ph.D. student from the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, England. I'm glad to meet you. I'm conducting my doctoral research on "*Equity in Thai Private Higher Education*". The main objectives of my research is to study policies and strategies taken by Thai private universities to create and maintain equity, alongside quality, and to help socio-economically disadvantaged students, who would like to participate in higher education, have more access to their institutions. Having heard from President ...(name)... of your full knowledge in the student aid programmes and support services operated within ...(name of the university)... , I was wondering if you could answer the following questions.

Questions:

- (F.) 1. How long have you worked here?
- (F.) 2. How many grants does the university award to students per year?
- (F.) 3. In majority, what type of grants are they? (Are they bonded scholarships or outright funds?)
- (F.) 4. How many loans does the university offer to students per year?
- (F.) 5. What kind of loans are they? (Are they mortgage or income-contingent loans? What is the repayment system of loans?)
- (S.) 6. What do you think about an income-contingent loan scheme or a graduate tax system? Is such scheme appropriate for (or is it going work in) Thai higher education? Why?
- (F.) 7. Besides grants and loans, are there any other types of student aid schemes for needy students? (If yes, what are they?)
- (F.) 8. What is the university's most important criterion to offer a grant to a student?
- (F.) 9. What is the university's most important criterion to offer a loan to a student?
- (S.) 10. Supposed that one day, a large group of students come to see you and protest or complain that these criteria are not suitable and are not fair for all students, how are you going to cope with this? What are you going to say and explain to them?
- (S.) 11. If you were an authorised person to make any amendments or modifications of the criteria and the targeting plans concerning the offer of grants and loans, what would you like to do? Why?
- (F.) 12. Generally, are most grants, loans and other types of funding, offered and operated by the university, merit-led or need-led?
- (S.) 13. Don't you think that the funding system should be need-led rather than merit-led? (Why do you think so?)
- (S.) 14. Have you heard about the government policy on equity and fairness in higher education? Could you please tell me your opinion about it? Is there anything

wrong with it? Do you *think it is going to work well in private higher education*? Can you think of any measures or programmes *that are better and more practical than that*?

- (F.) 15. Does the university have any implementation plans, collaborative programmes or partnerships to assist socio-economically disadvantaged but qualified students who would like to participate in higher education? (If yes, what are they? If no, do you have any ideas or any plans in mind about it yet?)
- (S.) 16. In higher education, from your experience, do you agree that a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can other types of funding, like grants and full or partial tuition waivers?
- (S. 17. To effectively operate the student aid schemes within your institution, do you &F) think the university still needs assistance and cooperation from the government? (If yes, in which way?)
- (S.) 18. Is it possible that the promotion of equity could undermine quality in private higher education? Do you think that is true or not? Why?
- (F.) 19. In the future, does the university have additional plans to help promote and maintain equity, as well as to encourage higher participation from economically disadvantaged but qualified college-age people?

Those are all the questions I have. Thank you very much for your time and kind cooperation.

Note: F. stands for factual questions, S. for subjective questions.

APPENDIX 5

Questions for Interviews of Students (from each focus institution)

Introduction:

Hello! Thank you very much for your dedication of time to my interview. I'm Nuntarat Charoenkul, a Ph.D. student from the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, England. You can call me "P'Dom" (my nickname). I'm glad to meet you. I'm conducting my doctoral research on "*Equity in Thai Private Higher Education*". This research aims to explore students' attitudes towards Thai Private Higher Education. I've got your name and e-mail from the university staff in charge of student affairs. However, I'd like to know more about you? May I know your name again, please? (Or, alternatively, you can provide a nickname or even a false name, which shouldn't be so hard to recall, please...)

Questions:

- (F.) 1. Would you please introduce yourself? What's the programme you're taking? Which year are you in?
- (S.) 2. Why did you decide to further your study at university?
- (S.) 3. Why did you choose to study here? Are there any special reasons?
- (S.) 4. What income do you expect per month after your graduation?
- (F.) 5. For your programme of study, are you taking grants or loans?
- (F.) 6. What are your sources of funds for study?
- (S.) 7. In your opinion, which criterion should be the most important for the university or the government to offer a grant or a loan to a student? Why?
- (S.) 8. Do you think that the university should provide more grants and loans for economically disadvantaged students? Why?
- (S.) 9. Do you think that the funding system should be more need-led or merit-led? Why?
- (S.) 10. Do you think that the university should emphasise a loan rather than a grant scheme to support economically disadvantaged students? Why?
- (S.) 11. In higher education, do you agree that a loan system can provide more assistance to more students in a more equitable manner than can other types of funding, like grants and full or partial tuition waivers?
- (S.) 12. Do you think that an income-contingent loan scheme or a graduate tax system should be introduced and set up in private higher education? Why?
- (*Note: An "*income-contingent*" loan scheme is a repayment system in which a student borrower, after his or her graduation, will need to pay back his or her loan with a very low interest rate through the income tax, when his or her salary reaches a taxable amount or the national average income.)
- (S.) 13. Don't you think that it's fairer that the government or a funding body (either public or private) allocate funds (either grants or loans) directly to students rather than to the university? Why?
- (S.) 14. Is it possible that the promotion of equity could undermine quality? Do you

think it's true or not? Why?

(S.) 15. Are you afraid of loans? Why?

Questions to be addressed to students who're taking loans:

(F.) 15a. Have your family ever had any bad experience or problem of loans?
(If yes, could you tell me in brief? How do you feel?)

(S.) 15b. How long will it take you to repay all the loans?

(Show him/her the news on Student Fury against Premier Blair's top-up fees policy, translated into Thai. Let him/her skim it for a few minutes.)

This situation took place in England, where the top-up fees (or users-pay) policy has been highly discussed amongst students, educators and politicians. According to this policy, universities are allowed to raise the tuition fees up to £3,000 (or approximately 210,000 baht) a year (currently it's around £2,800 or approximately 196,000 baht per annum). However, there will be some grants (either full or partial, but mostly partial) and loans earmarked for needy students or low-income people who would like to go to universities. A large number of students are opposed to this policy. This girl, Julia Prague, as a student representative from a middle-class family, is the one who's seriously against it. She claimed that middle-class students also need some loans and grants to further their studies. She pointed out that this policy will put most burden on middle-class students and, finally, will discourage the middle-classes (who're the majority of students) from participation in higher education.

(S.) 16. What do you think about it? Was she right? Do you think who's wrong? If you were in a position to be able to vote for either of them, whom would you go for, the girl or Premier Blair? Why?

(S.) 17. In your opinion, if this or a similar kind of policy were introduced into Thai higher education, would it work? What would happen? Why do you think so?

(S.) 18. If you were an authorised person, what would you do to improve student aid programmes (or to promote and maintain equity and fairness) within the university?

Those are all the questions I have. Thank you very much for your time and kind cooperation. I wish you success in your study as well as personal life. Good luck!

Note: F. stands for factual questions and S. for subjective questions.

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BLAIR HIT BY STUDENT FURY



Angry: Julia Prague says she has already run up £10,000 debts

Clash on TV over crippling burden of tuition fees on the middle classes

By Graeme Wilson
and Sarah Harris

**TONY Blair met students
last night to discuss uni-
versity tuition fees - and
reaped the whirlwind.**

One after another, they confronted
the Prime Minister over his plans
for £3,000-a-year top-up fees.

A GCSE pupil bluntly called him a
'liar'. And a furious second-year medical
student accused him of victimising
middle-class families.

Julia Prague, 19, from London, said she
had already run up debts of £10,000 and
would graduate owing at least £30,000.

Mr Blair was clearly rattled by the tele-
vised grilling. Asked if he would still be
in Number 10 by the end of next week,
after the tuition fees vote and the report
Turn to Page 6, Col. 3



Taken aback: Mr Blair

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APHEIT	Association of Private Higher Education Institutions of Thailand
BERA	British Educational Research Association
HE	Higher Education
HECS	Australian Higher Education Contribution Scheme (since 1997)
HELB	Kenyan Higher Education Loans Board (since 1995)
ICL	Income-contingent loans
KTB	Krung Thai Bank Public Company Limited, a state-owned bank in charge of loan collection in Thailand (from 1998 to present)
MOE	Ministry of Education of Thailand
MOF	Ministry of Finance of Thailand
MUA	Ministry of University Affairs of Thailand (now merged as the Ministry of Education)
NEC	National Education Commission
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHEC	Office of the Higher Education Commission (Ministry of University Affairs)
ONEC	Office of the National Education Commission
ONSEDC	Office of the National Social and Economic Development Commission
OSLF	Office of the Student Loans Fund of Thailand (since 1998)
SLS	Student Loans Scheme
SLSB	Student Loans and Scholarships Bureau
SLSC	Student Loans Scheme Committee