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## Confucius Institutes: Chinese Soft Power in Thailand

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### Abstract

This research aims to study 1) the implementation of Confucius Institutes (CIs) in Thailand, and 2) to verify that Confucius Institutes are the Chinese soft power in Thailand. It is qualitative research adopting documentary research and in-depth interviews. The results of this research indicate that 16 Confucius Institutes have successfully established and promoted the Chinese language and culture. The implementation of CIs in Thailand consists of Chinese language teaching, cultural activities, International Chinese language scholarship, Chinese Language Proficiency Tests, and Chinese volunteer teachers. CIs in Thailand become the first largest CIs in Southeast Asia based on the number of CIs. From 2006-2021 more than 2,000 cultural activities were organized by CIs.

The research also reveals that Confucius Institutes are the Chinese Soft Power in accordance with Joseph S. Nye's concept of "soft power". CIs in Thailand have been regarded as an instrument for promoting and disseminating Chinese culture and values. Chinese soft power portrayed by CIs has operated through cultural cooperation at all levels; government, educational institutes, and individual levels. The Chinese language has increasingly influenced in Thailand. China successfully uses CIs as an instrument to cultivate its soft power in Thailand. Consequently, Chinese soft power under the implementation of CIs has played a vital role in enhancing friendship and collaboration between Thailand and China. Moreover, Confucius Institutes help to promote mutual understanding and friendship between people of the two countries.

### Introduction:

Over a decade, China has increasingly played a vital role in the international economy and politics. Although China has pursued its national interests through the exercise of "soft power", the fear regarding China's threat has been widely debated. The rising China has raised concern in the United States. China's threat initiative by the United States portrayed China

as a "public enemy" or a "common enemy" of the global community (Tangyuenyong, 2017). In response to this critique, Chinese policymakers propose the idea of "peaceful development" and "harmonious world". The Chinese leader, President XI Jinping has realized that soft power and national image building are essential for Chinese foreign policy. China's effort to disseminate Chinese language and culture turned to the establishment of Confucius Institutes (Cis).

The Confucius Institutes funded by the Chinese government have been established since 2004. The purpose of CIs is to promote Chinese language and culture. Since 2004, CIs have widespread increased across the region with a number of partnerships with universities in 146 countries, including in NATO member states. In 2020, there were 548 CIs at University and 1,193 Confucius Classroom (CCs) worldwide at primary and secondary schools. CIs have been regarded as part of Chinese soft power initiative. The CIs initiative takes on a number of measures which differentiate it from other cultural institutes because CIs become a structural unit of a host university, and employ a double directorship system (Confucius Institutes, 2022).

Recently, CIs have been criticized by Western scholars regarding the motivations, the procedures of installation in the host country and self-censorship over sensitively political aspect. In 2014 there were numerous scandals involving issues on censorship, academic freedom and the tough control exerted by Hanban (Office of Chinese language, Council International). As a result, Chinese soft power instrument under the Confucius Institute (CIs) has been criticized by Western medias and intellectuals as “sharp power”. Several countries demonstrate deep anxiety regarding rising China’s economic and military power in recipient states, especially in United States and other western countries. From Western scholars’ point of views, the Chinese government implements these sharp power instruments aimed at taking tight control over the public opinion. The executive summary of Chinese soft power and its implications for the United States noted that, “China in recent years has been pursuing national interest through its exercise internationally of soft power and economic power”. However, these critiques have not deterred China’s efforts to spread its soft power internationally. President Xi Jinping has launched a presentation of a “lovable” image of China that would create the balance between confidence and humility as a tool to win over friends. (Repnikova, 2022).

In contrast to United States and other western countries, Thailand has perceived CIs in the positive

way and welcomed CIs extensively. In 2006, CIs have been established in Thailand and funded by the Chinese government aimed at advocating Chinese language and culture. The friendship between China and Thailand have hampered the development of CIs. Thailand has embraced Chinese soft power by expanding CIs throughout the country. By 2017, Thailand becomes a regional forerunner by hosting 16 CIs at Thai universities as follows: Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart University, Khon Kaen University, Mae Fah Luang University, Chiang Mai University, Bansomdej Chaopraya Rajabhat University, Mahasarakham University, Prince of Songkla University at Phuket, Suan Dusit University Suphanburi Campus, Betong Municipality, Prince of Songkla University, Burapha University, Confucius Institute at Assumption University, Maritime Silk Road CI Dhurakij Pundit University, Huachiew Chalermprakiet University and Maritime Silk Road Phranakhon Rajabhat University.

CIs in Thailand are an example of successful Chinese soft power witnessed from the establishment of 16 CIs at host universities in Thailand with over a million students studying Chinese language. This research aims to study the implementation of Confucius Institutes (CIs) in Thailand and to verify that Confucius Institutes are the Chinese soft power in Thailand.

### Research Question:

Are Confucius Institutes in Thailand the Chinese soft power or sharp power?

### Research Methods:

This qualitative research employing secondary data, including Thai and English textbooks, official documents, academic reports, government publications and annual reports of CIs in Thailand. In - depth interview of 6 prominent scholars and executives were applied in the research. While the empirical data are Thailand-focused, this research scrutinize with a reflection on China’s soft power at large.

**Table 1**

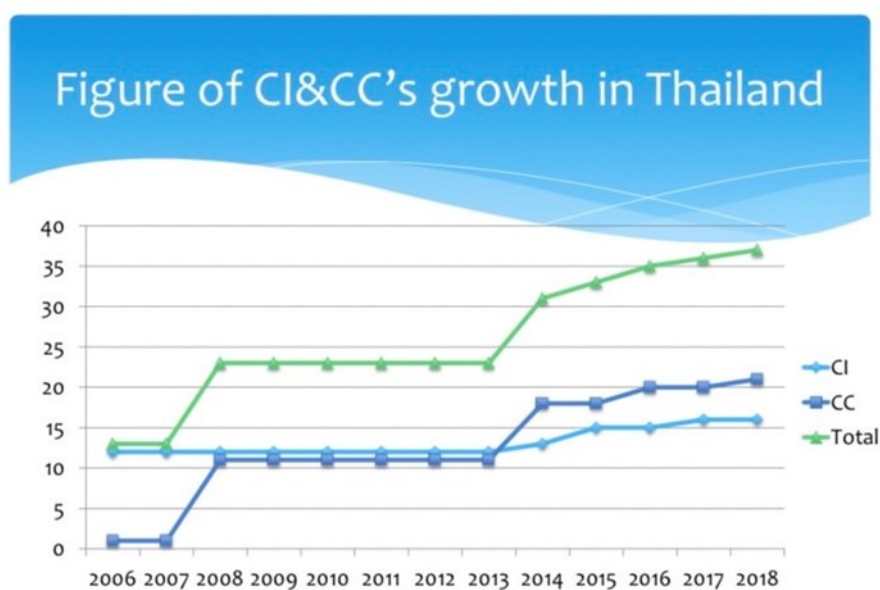
*List of CIs in Thailand*

CIs of Thailand (Chinese Partner)	Place	Established Year
Kasetsart University (Huaqiao University)	Bangkok	2006
Chulalongkorn University (Peking University)	Bangkok	2006
Khon Kaen University (Southwest University)	Khon Kaen	2006
Mae Fah Luang University (Xiamen University)	Chiang Rai	2006
Chiang Mai University (Yunnan Normal University)	Chiang Mai	2006
Bansomdej Chaopraya Rajabhat University (Tianjin Normal University)	Bangkok	2006
Maharakham University (Guangxi University of Nationalities)	Maharakham	2006
Prince of Songkla University (Guangxi Normal University)	Songkla	2006
Prince of Songkla University at Phuket (Shanghai University)	Phuket	2006
Suan Dusit University Suphanburi Campus (Guangxi University)	Suphanburi	2006
Betong Municipality (Chongqing University)	Yala	2006
Burapha University (Wenzhou University, Wenzhou Medical College)	Chonburi	2006
Confucius Institute at Assumption University (Tianjin Science & Technology University)	Bangkok	2014
Huachiew Chalermprakiet University (Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine)	Bangkok	2015
Maritime Silk Road CI Dhurakij Pundit University (Tianjin Normal University)	Bangkok	2015
Maritime Silk Road Phranakhon Rajabhat University (Dali University)	Bangkok	2017

Source: Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2019

**Figure 1**

*Number of CIs & CCs in Thailand from 2006-2018*



Source: Global Database of Minzu University of China, 2019

During the establishment of CIs in Thailand, different cooperative models and conditions can be found, with a joint venture structure between a Chinese university and Thai partner. Obviously, all Thai-host universities have Chinese study department. The CIs in Thailand have two functions; Chinese language and culture governed by Office of Chinese language, Council Inter national (Hanban). Hanban is an educational institute, which is affiliated to the Ministry of Education of China. All CIs in Thailand have been funded by both China and Thailand. Hanban has played a crucial role in providing the initial funding and pays for annual expenses within the duration of CIs contract. Hanban also provides textbooks, audio - visual materials and multimedia courseware for facilitating teaching and enhancing library collections. While the Thai host CIs supplied office, classrooms and libraries. The CIs in host universities are administered by Hanban. However, each CIs have their own decisions for teaching programs and cultural activities. Hanban is responsible for examining and approving implementation plans for annual projects, annual budgetary items and financial accounts of each CIS (Zhou, 2021).

The implementation of CIs in Thailand consists of Chinese language teaching, cultural activities, International Chinese language scholarship, Chinese language proficiency tests and Chinese volunteer teachers.

### 1. Chinese language teaching

CIs have provided Chinese language instruction and educational programs for Thai students and learners. Director of SEAMO Regional Center for Higher Education and Development points out that Chinese language is significantly influential in Thailand. Thai students aware of the importance of Chinese language. Thai learners realize that Chinese learning provide more opportunity for them to engage in job recruitment. Furthermore, Chinese language teaching fosters the cultural exchange and mutual understanding between people of China and Thailand. Chinese language has been widely welcomed by Thai witnessed from the increasing number

of Chinese classes in Thailand. The establishment of CIs into Thai universities and local community has impacted on the increase of Thai students studying Chinese language. Since 2010s Chinese language instruction in Thailand has been the 2nd popular language next to English. According to Hanban report the number of Thai students studying Chinese in 2015 has exceed 800,000 (Hanban, 2021).

Professor Fu Zhengyou, senior mentor of Confucius Institute, Chulalongkorn University represents that the increasing awareness of Thai people has affected in the appeal of learning Chinese. The popularity of Chinese learning has grown significantly which is demonstrated by the fact that all Thai-host universities have department of Chinese study. As a former CI director of Chulalongkorn University and has been in Thailand for 15 years, Professor Fu has the notion that the number of Thai students learning Chinese at the present time has increase to approximately one million. It can be said that CIs have great influence on Chinese language teaching in Thailand.

### 2. Cultural Activities

Cultural activities which organized by CIs in Thailand have related with Chinese traditions and arts. There are various activities such as Chinese New Year Festival, Chinese Poet's Day, Moon Festival, Chinese Painting Festival, Chinese Opera Festival, Guzheng Event, Chinese martial art Festival and Chinese Speech Contest.

### 3. International Chinese language scholarship

The CIs in Thailand have promoted friendship relations between China and Thailand through providing international Chinese language scholarship. CIs have provided scholarships to Thai students and teachers for studying Chinese language and conducting research. The scholarship composed of Confucius Institute Scholarships (CIS), CHINA-AUN Scholarships for ASEAN students, Belt and Road Initiative (BRS) scholarships and scholarships from Chinese government. In addition, there is a Chinese intern's program for teaching Chinese language in Thailand which collaborated between Suan Dusit University at Suphanburi Campus and Guangxi University.

#### 4. Chinese Language Proficiency Tests

The Chinese Language Proficiency Tests can be categorized into four types as follows; HSK HSKK YCT BCT.

- The HSK (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi) is an international standardized test to assess the Chinese language proficiency of non-native speakers. HSK test are organized globally on a regular basis. The test contents compound of daily life Chinese language, academic Chinese language and business Chinese language. Students who passed the test are awarded the relevant level of Chinese Proficiency Certificate.
- HSKK (Hanyu Shuiping Kouyu Kaoshi) is a Chinese Proficiency Spoken Test. It tests predominantly speaking skills. Students who passed HSKK will get HSKK certificate.
- YCT (Youth Chinese Test) is an international standardized test of Chinese language proficiency for young foreign students. The YCT consist of writing and speaking test. The writing test divide into four levels (YCT level I - IV). The speaking test divide from the YCT beginner level to YCT intermediate level.

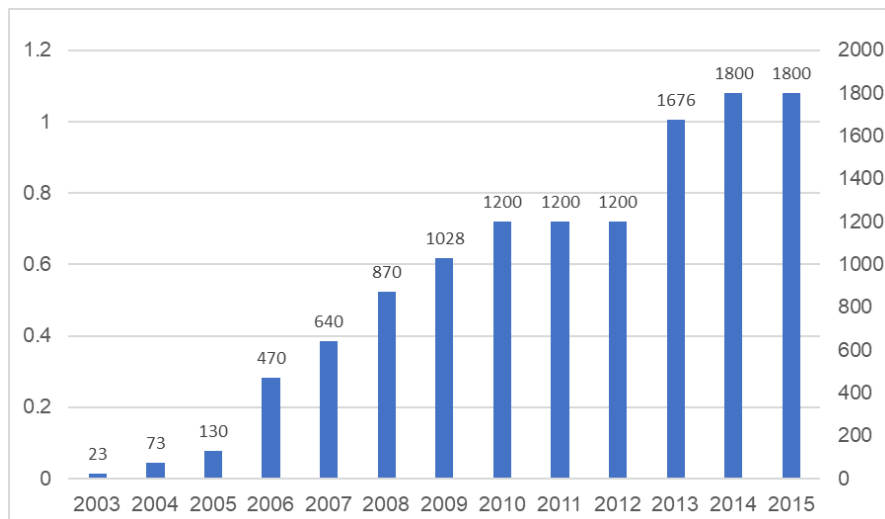
- BCT (Business Chinese Test) is an international standardized test designed to assess the Chinese-language proficiency of non-native speakers engaged in business activities. The BCT assesses Chinese-language ability in a wide range of business - related situations, daily life and social interactions. There are no restrictions on the candidates' age, education or time spent learning Chinese.

#### 5. Chinese volunteer teachers

The lack of qualified Chinese language teachers becomes a major obstacle for Chinese teaching in Thailand. To solve this problem, Ministry of Education of Thailand has requested China to supply over a thousand teachers from China to help teaching Chinese language in Thailand (Trisanawadee, 2020). Professor Fu explains that China has dispatched over 1,000 Chinese language teachers annually to Thai affiliated university and provided training programs for Thai teachers. CIs also operate exchange program regarding Chinese volunteer teachers which dispatched to Thailand about 1,500 to 1,600 annually under the cooperation between Ministry of Education in Thailand and China. The increasing Chinese volunteer teachers represent the growing demands for Chinese language study.

**Figure 2**

*Number of Chinese volunteer teachers in Thailand*



Source: Chinese Cultural Diplomacy towards ASEAN Countries: Case Study of Confucius Institutes in Thailand, 2020



The above data indicates that over a decade the number of Chinese volunteer teachers have increased every year and reached to over 1,000 in 2009. However, volunteer teachers are directly employed by Thai universities, only a few of them hired through Hanban's project.

### Confucius Institute Categories:

Confucius Institutes in Thailand can be categorized into 4 types regarding purpose of establishment.

1. Chinese language teaching - Confucius Institutes: CI of Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart University, Kon Kaen university, Mae Fah Luang University, Chiang Mai University, Bansomdej Chaopraya Rajabhat University, Mahasarakham University, Prince of Songkla University, Prince of Songkla University at Phuket, Burapha University and Suan Dusit University Suphanburi Campus.

2. Specific Confucius Institutes: CI of traditional Chinese medicine of Huachiew Chalermprakiet University and CI of business Chinese language at Assumption University.

3. CIs of Betong Municipality: the affiliated relations between Betong municipality and Chongqing university aimed at disseminating Chinese language and culture to Thai, Malaysian and other foreigner.

4. Maritime Silk Road Confucius Institutes are collaboration between network of university, governmental and private educational institute from China and Thailand. Dhurakit Pundit University is the cooperative unit of this group. Maritime Silk Road CIs consist of Dhurakit Pundit University, King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok and Phranakhon Rajabhat University.

It can be noted that some CIs organize business exchange program. CI at Khon Kaen University is successful in conducting China business trip for Thai entrepreneur and helps Chongqing Motorbike entered into Thai market. The two Maritime Silk Road CIs have become primary task of CIs in facilitating Thai enterprise and official to strengthen trade and

economic cooperation between China and Thailand. A variety of meeting such as "New Maritime Silk Road and Southeast Asia", "Belt & Road Initiative: Joint Conference of ASEAN CI", BRI and Great Mekong Sub-Regional Cooperation were organized. The Maritime Silk Road Phranakhon Rajabhat University has cooperated with Chinese investors located at Thai - Chinese Rayong Industrial Zone. Under this collaboration, the CI has to provide Chinese language training for Thai employees. It can be said that the Thai government has been involved in those commercial activities organized at CIs (Zhou, 2021).

### Analysis of Confucius Institutes: the Chinese Soft Power in Thailand:

According to Joseph S. Nye's concept of soft power, soft power can be defined as the capacity of nation to achieve desired objectives through attraction rather than coercion or payment. Nye differentiated between hard and soft power, he articulated hard power as drawing on inducement (economic channels) and coercion (military threats). On the contrary, soft power is co-optive power and relies on attraction. (Nye, 2005). Soft power resources include culture (in places where it is attractive to others), political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad) and foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority). Culture has frequently been regarded among the core foundations of soft power. Based on Nye's concept of soft power and the opinion of 6 scholars and executives profoundly affirm that Confucius Institutes are the Chinese Soft Power in Thailand.

China has pursued its national interests through the exercise of soft power with the image of a lovable China. Soft power transmitting has currently been a major concern of Chinese foreign policy. The intellectuals view that culture is the core resource of a state's power. China tends to emphasize on cultural dimension. Cultural power is notable in the implementation of the core Chinese soft power initiatives. As a result, Chinese leaders have expanded funding for the development of China's cultural soft power abroad.

The establishment of CIs has led China to engage with other countries including Thailand though promoting Chinese language and culture. It appears that Thailand is the successful area where China's use of soft power has been most significant. Chinese language and cultural activities employed by CIs have raised the appeal of Thai people of learning Chinese. As the Chinese cultural influence increase, the interest of Thai in studying Chinese as a second language expand. The current 16 CIs in Thailand represent that Thai people are interested in learning Chinese.

The research also reveals that China has made a successful effort to use CIs as an instrument to expand Chinese soft power in Thailand. The establishment of CIs can be explained that China uses soft power to increase China's attraction and appeal. Thus, soft power in this approach is associated with the establishment of CIs in Thailand. An analytical study of Chinese Soft Power based on Chinese language and culture finds that Chinese soft power under the implementation of CIs has played a vital role in enhancing friendship and collaboration between Thailand and China.

Associate Prof. Vorasakdi Mahatdhanobol, scholar at Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University asserts that CIs are the Chinese soft power in Thailand. The Chinese leader implements soft power for the purpose of elevating Chinese image in international communities alongside with its role as the rising economic major power. Chinese soft power under the implementation of CIs helps to promote mutual understanding between China and Thailand.

An analytical study of CIs in Thailand based on educational collaboration and cultural activities between China and Thailand indicates that the collaboration regarding Chinese language instruction has shown smooth and productive path with extensive official and unofficial relationship. The official channel initiated by both countries' public sector has been led by both countries' ministries of education, educational institutes, other governmental and non - governmental agencies. Consequently, China and Thailand relations

has become close (Trisanawadee, 2020). Moreover, the success of China's soft power in Thailand can be seen as the increasing number of Thai students studying in China. In 2010, Thai students were the fourth largest international student studying in China. After the Chinese government launched Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and announced its plan to increase scholarship and training program for students from the Mekong region (Nation, 2017). Later in 2018, Thai students were the second largest students in China with the number of 28,608 (Erudera, 2023). CIs as Chinese soft power in Thailand, has been widely welcomed by Thai. The cooperation between China and Thailand, in founding CIs into Thai local community provides the Chinese side with wider impact on Thai students interested in Chinese language and culture.

### **Analysis of Sharp Power through the Implementation of CIs in Thailand:**

The concept of sharp power emerged in November 2017, when Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig, the authors of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) Report described the meaning of "sharp power". Sharp power is the use of manipulative diplomatic policies by one country to influence and undermine the political system of a target country. According to NED report, Russia and China are authoritarian states, which use sharp power to manipulate their target states. The NED report also points out that the Russian state-sponsored RT News Network and the Chinese state-funded "Confucius Institute" are examples of sharp power. Since 2018 the term of sharp power has been widely used in articles, academic books, official government reports and media. In 2022 Kalpit A. Mankikar, the author of *China's Sharp Power: Blunting the World's Edge or a Moment of Global Awakening?*, gives the definition of sharp power. Sharp power is the ability of state to alter the behavior of other states through the manipulation of culture, education systems and the media to further its interests to curtail free expression.

Many scholars observed that China's soft power tools has grown dramatically. The Chinese soft power includes people-to-people exchanges, wide ranging cultural activities, educational program become challenging threat. They indicated that China has used cultural resource not only to attract others and promote its global image, but also to manipulate and pressure others. Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig criticized that Chinese soft power in the spheres of media, culture, think tanks and academic is not attraction or persuasion but aims at distraction and manipulation (Walker and Ludwig, 2017).

Amid the China's threat discourse, the negative perception of China among countries in North America and Europe has led to perceive Chinese sharp power. Confucius Institute have been criticized by Western intellectuals as China's sharp power which aimed to influence and undermine the political system of a target country. However, the discourse of Chinese sharp power has been disregarded in Thailand. There was no relations between CIs implementation and sharp power. There were neither evidence nor anxiety regarding espionage and intelligence. The CIs implementation which related to self-censorship, undermine Thai political system and socialist ideology have not been found in Thailand. The Thai government is committed to facilitate the establishment of CIs in order to pursue the bilateral arrangement of China-Thailand comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership. Moreover, Thai government and Thai people have not perceived Chinese soft power as a threat to Thai security. The attitude of Thais towards CIs can be illustrated in a positive way. Since 2001 the Office of the Basic Education Commission of Thailand has officially certified Chinese as a second language choice, the China's influence on Thai education has grown remarkably. It can be said that Thai CIs are more privileged than those in other ASEAN countries, in term of registered students, Chinese Language Proficiency Test Participants, local teachers training, variety of courses and cultural activities (Wu, 2018).

The Minister Counsellor, Office of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation at Royal Thai Embassy Brussels shares that there have been neither socialist ideology propaganda nor critiques about CIs mission in Thailand. The anxieties regarding CIs operation as a sharp power have not be found. He also affirms that the courses administered by CIs provided opportunities for Thai students to obtain standardized and professional which contribute to people - to - people relations with China. It can be said that people to people exchanges bring mutual understanding and subsequently can overcome political scandals and even oppose to the agenda of Chinese sharp power. Therefore, Confucius Institutes can be regarded as Chinese soft power acting in accordance with the official Chinese government.

Similarly, another Thai scholars also insist that there has been no scandal regarding the use of manipulative diplomatic policies by China in Thailand. There was no relations between CIs implementation and sharp power. Admittedly, the Chinese sharp power scandals can not be applied in the case of Thailand. All in all, China has done a great achievement in cultivating its soft power in Thailand.

## Conclusion:

According to the concept of soft power, CIs have proven to be Chinese soft power in Thailand. China has used CIs as an outstanding instrument for disseminating and cultivating soft power in Thailand. China's initiative to enhance Chinese soft power through the establishment of CIs in Thailand turns into a great success. The Chinese languages teaching, cultural activities, International Chinese language scholarship, Chinese Language Proficiency Test and training course for Chinese volunteer teachers under the implementation of CIs has fostered and promoted Chinese soft power in Thailand. It appears that Thailand is the successful area where China's use of soft power has been most significant.

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# The Factors and Challenges Influencing WEEE Management in Thailand: A Case Study of The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA)

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Waste Laws and Regulations

## Abstract

This research aims to 1) analyze the factors that contributed to the BMA's WEEE management and 2) discuss the challenges facing the BMA in WEEE management. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of shared responsibility between the BMA and private sector stakeholders. Enhancing competencies in legal, financial, human resource, and environmental management aspects is also highlighted. This research employs a qualitative approach to investigate the management of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) within the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). Interviews were conducted with 15 individuals from the government and private sectors involved in WEEE management to improve the efficiency of WEEE management. The study result indicates two primary objectives: firstly, to identify the factors that influence WEEE management practices, and secondly, to understand the challenges faced in this domain. These recommendations encompass advocating for robust legal frameworks, ensuring adequate allocation of resources, and fostering collaborative ties with private entities. This research contributes to a comprehensive framework catering to policymakers and practitioners. Its aim is to refine and optimize WEEE management practices in the specific context of Bangkok. The study suggests that the BMA should strengthen its cooperation with the private sector, adopt the principle of shared responsibility, and focus on improving its capabilities in legal, budgetary, workforce, and environmental management aspects. The study provides valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners to improve WEEE management in Bangkok.

## Introduction:

Waste of Electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) or e-waste is currently a major issue around the world. Due to the digital revolution and easy access to electronic equipment such as televisions, computers, batteries and cell phones, e-waste is one of the fastest

growing waste streams. Recently, The number of WEEE is growing at a rate of 3-5% per year, making it one of the fastest growing wastes in the world (Aboughaly & Gabbar, 2020; Shittu et al., 2021). According to the United Nations College, by 2021, the world has generated 52.2 million tons of e-waste per year (United Nation University, 2020).

Improper WEEE management practices can have serious consequences for human health and the environment because hazardous substances are harmful to human health and the environment. However, solving the WEEE problem requires a skilled workforce, adequate funding, and dedicated processes for the proper and safe recycling of WEEE prior to disposal (Kumar et al., 2017; National Science and Technology Development Agency, 2016). For example, the circular economy, which is considered a model for sustainable economic development, can be used to reduce WEEE and replaces previous EEE models, to ensure resource consumption efficiency (Pan et al., 2022; Shittu et al., 2021).

In Thailand, the expansion of the electronics sector is the root cause of the WEEE problem. About 82% of WEEE is generated in households, 14% in offices, and 3% in hotels or apartments. According to 2015 data from the Pollution Control Department, televisions, air conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines, and computers account for the majority of e-waste in Thailand (Wittaya-anumat, 2017). According to the Pollution Control Department (2020), Thailand communities generates an average of 380,605 tons per year, or an increase of approximately 2.2% per year. According to the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), there will be 13.42 million cell phones and about 3.65 million portable audio and video players (Pollution Control Department, 2020; Kiddee & Bunmak, 2016; Wittaya-anumat, 2017).

Local governments are responsible for managing e-waste within their boundaries. However. They face a number of important barriers, such as the lack of technical skills, poor infrastructure, inadequate funding, and insufficient community participation (Rautela et al., 2021). For example, Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, is the economic center of the country with a population more than 5 million people (Central Registration Office, 2021). The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), as a special authority in Bangkok, has regularly established rules for the collection of hazardous waste in the municipality, including WEEE. Bangkok alone has generated the largest amount of waste in Thailand every day, and the amount of waste in Bangkok is

increasing year by year. In 2020, it was 9,520 tons of garbage per day, 8,675 tons in 2021, and 9,000 tons in 2022 (Manatsanitwong, 2022).

Therefore, WEEE management is a complex and urgent issue in Bangkok. As the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) lacks essential expertise and procedures for effective WEEE disposal, management practices are of primary concern. This circumstance results in incorrect WEEE disposal rather than recycling due to lower remuneration for BMA cleaners and rubbish pickers compared to their colleagues in other local administrations. The BMA's efforts are further hindered by legislative restrictions, financial constraints, and a lack of qualified staff for efficient WEEE handling.

This study aims to examine the WEEE management challenges that the BMA is currently dealing with and the factors that contributed to the BMA's WEEE management. A comprehensive approach that bridges knowledge gaps, ensures equitable compensation, navigates legal complexities, and secures sufficient funding is needed to address these issues. Bangkok can only pave the way for responsible and sustainable WEEE management through such an all-encompassing strategy.

## Research Objectives:

### *This study aims to*

- 1) analyze the factors that contributed to the BMA's WEEE management.
- 2) discuss the challenges of the BMA in WEEE management.

## Concept and Theory:

### *The Concept of Garbage Politics*

Garbage politics is the use of garbage or waste management as a tool to gain political power. This phenomenon can manifest itself in a variety of ways, such as when politicians promise to improve waste management infrastructure or when citizen movements demand better waste management.

Waste management issues can also be used for political campaigns or to control local communities as the waste problem is pressing and can damage people's livelihoods (Mansell, 2023). Consequently, waste management is a major challenge for policy and urban planning, especially at the local level.

In developing countries, inadequate waste management infrastructure often leads to serious public health and environmental problems, making waste management a critical issue. Inefficient waste management influences voters, especially at the local level (Pongsawat, 2019). Moreover, politicians use the issue of waste management in their election campaigns. An important case study is the Bangkok governor's election in 2022, in which many candidates showcased their policies on public services, energy, and the environment. Most of them focuses on increasing green space and addressing waste issues, including waste segregation and revenue generation (PPTV, 2565; Bangkok Business, 2022).

#### ***Political Structure of The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA)***

Bangkok was governed as a special local government organization, namely, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). This unique characteristics or elements of local government body differs from those of other local government organizations (Smith, 2019). A special local government organization is typically located in an economically prosperous area, such as a densely populated urban area or a popular tourist destination.

Bangkok is a metropolitan area which is characterized by economic prosperity, function as a hub of government agencies, and high population density, which includes a large number of migrants (Briffault, 1995). Consequently, local government organizations in the capital city must adopt a unique organizational structure compared to other forms of local government (Wilson & Game, 2011). The governor of Bangkok is acting in accordance with government policy, Cabinet decisions, and the directives of the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior. According to the Revolutionary Council Announcement

No.218 and the Provincial Administration Statute, the Bangkok Governor has the powers and duties under the Municipal Law, Sanitary Law and other laws. As the superior of all Bangkok officials and employees, the governor supervises the four deputy governors who act as deputy governors in carrying out the administration of Bangkok on behalf of the governor (Kokphon, 2004).

#### ***The Principle of Environmental Management***

Environmental management is the methodical and strategic approach used by businesses, governments, and people to address and reduce the environmental effects of their operations, goods, or services. It includes a variety of methods for reducing pollution, preserving ecosystems, and making the most effective use of resources. In Environmental management, Chris Barrow (2018) examines concepts and ethics pertaining to the environment and human well-being as well as environmental issues in development and the emergence of environmental management are all given a brief overview (Barrow, 2018).

In terms of WEEE management, the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) principle includes designing products considering environmental impact (Eco-Design), ensuring financial responsibility for end-of-life management, developing policies for effective collection and recycling, promoting consumer awareness and education, and enforcing compliance through regulatory means (Walls, 2006). These policies promote efficiency, encourage responsible use, provide simple disposal methods, educate the public, and align with federal regulations to better manage electronic waste (Manomaivibool & Vassanadumrongdee, 2011).

Moreover, the concept of shared responsibility (SR) emphasizes the group and collaborative efforts of numerous stakeholders, including governments, businesses, consumers, and civil society, in addressing complicated and urgent issues, particularly those related to the environment and sustainability. Jacobs and Subramanian (2011) investigate the effects of mandates for product recovery and shared accountability along a supply chain on the economy and environment.

The findings are important for businesses that anticipate or are already subject to product recovery legislation as well as for social planners who aim to balance the negative effects of such legislation on the economy and the environment and ensure its fairness (Jacobs & Subramanian, 2012). Using EPR or SR for the WEEE system helps reduce the environmental impact of electronic waste, improves conservation, and creates a more circular economy by encouraging people to consider the life cycle of WEEE.

**Categorization of WEEE**

According to the EU Directive (2012/19/EU), electronic waste, or e-waste, refers to discarded electrical and electronic devices, including a wide range of items such as computers, refrigerators, and mobile phones, when they reach the end of their usable lifespan (European Commission, 2012). In the EU Directive, Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) was classified into the 10 following categories:

- 1) Large Household Appliances: This includes major appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, ovens, and air conditioners.
- 2) Small Household Appliances: It covers smaller appliances used in households, such as toasters, coffee makers, irons, and vacuum cleaners.

3) IT and Telecommunications Equipment: This category comprises items like computers, laptops, printers, telephones, and communication equipment.

4) Consumer Equipment: It includes electronic devices used for entertainment, like televisions, radios, cameras, and musical instruments.

5) Lighting Equipment: This category encompasses all types of lighting products, including lamps and luminaires.

6) Electrical and Electronic Tools: It covers tools and equipment used for various purposes, such as drills, saws, and sewing machines.

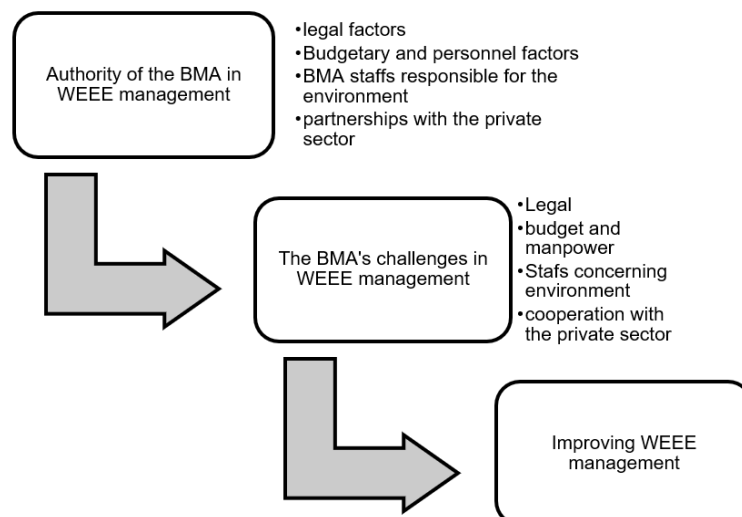
7) Toys, Leisure, and Sports Equipment: This category includes electronic toys, gaming consoles, sports equipment, and other leisure items.

8) Medical Devices: It covers electronic medical devices like medical monitoring equipment and laboratory instruments.

9) Monitoring and Control Instruments: This category includes devices used for measuring and controlling purposes, such as thermostats and smoke detectors.

10) Automatic Dispensers: It includes automatic machines like vending machines and cash dispensers.

**Figure 1**  
*Conceptual framework*



Source: Researcher, 2022



## Research Methodology:

In this study, research employed a qualitative research design using a case study for a comprehensive and detailed understanding of social issues (Creswell, 2018; Neuman, 2014). The qualitative approach also provides opportunity for researcher to explore the experiences and events in the study area, understand the perspectives of those living in the area, and interpret the social reality under study. Semi-structured interview was used to allow the researcher to directly observe the local community, engage in discussions, and inquire about participants' everyday actions (Neuman, 2014).

### *The sample group*

The researcher conducted a semi - structured interview with 15 representatives from both the government and private sectors. A purposive sampling method was used to select five participants from three government agencies: the Bangkok Environment Department, the Provincial Electricity Authority at Headquarters, and Advanced Info Service, the largest GSM mobile phone operation and digital service provider in Thailand. The selection criteria were intended to ensure that the characteristics of the participants matched the target population and that they were willing to participate in the survey.

### *Research Method*

The researcher used a qualitative research approach by using semi - structured interviews for data collection. Moreover, the researcher strategically utilized the triangulation method, specifically employing the data triangulation technique, which involved the integration of multiple data sources to enhance the validity and comprehensiveness of the study's findings (Abdullah, 2019; Strijker et al., 2020). In this case, the researcher conducted interviews with a total of 15 participants, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and insights. The semi - structured interview with open - ended questions was conducted with five representatives from each agency involved in WEEE management. Each interview lasted about 45 minutes and was divided into three parts.

Part 1 general information about the organization.

Part 2 the role of the organization in dealing with WEEE management.

Part 3 the process of WEEE disposal concerning the organization's responsibility.

Participants were purposively selected based on their knowledge, skills, and experience related to the research topic, as well as their willingness to cooperate in the interview process (Bouma, 2000; Neuman, 2014). The sampling criteria aimed to meet the research objectives and ensure that participants were free to express their opinions. The data obtained from the study are securely stored on the researcher's computer, with numerical codes assigned to access the information to ensure information security. In order to conceal the identity of informants, study reports do not include the real names or locations of participants.

## Research Results:

The results of this study show that there are several factors that contributed to the management of WEEE in Bangkok. These include (1) legal factors, (2) Budgetary and personnel factors, (3) the BMA staff responsible for the environment, and (4) partnerships with the private sector.

### *Legal factor*

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) exercises administrative control over Bangkok as a legal entity, as stipulated in the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Act (No. 6) B.E. 2562 (2019). Under its mandate, the BMA is empowered to regulate waste management in accordance with four different laws and regulations.

1. Cleanliness and Orderliness Act B.E. 2535 (1992).

2. Bangkok Metropolitan Ordinance on Service Rates and Criteria, Procedures and Conditions for Exemption or Reduction of Service Fee B.E. 2544 (2001).

3. Bangkok Metropolitan Regulations on Criteria for Manure and Sewage Management of Premises and Public Health Services B.E. 2545 (2002)

4. Public Health Act B.E. 2550 (2007)

The complexity and antiquity of laws have made the WEEE management and regulation a challenge. In the absence of specific legislation on WEEE management in Thailand and Bangkok, the BMA has resorted to enforcement of numerous existing regulations in the national level. However, the effectiveness of these measures to successfully manage and contain WEEE remains limited.

Besides the legal challenges, this study also examines the capabilities of the BMA, a special local government organization, to respond to environmental

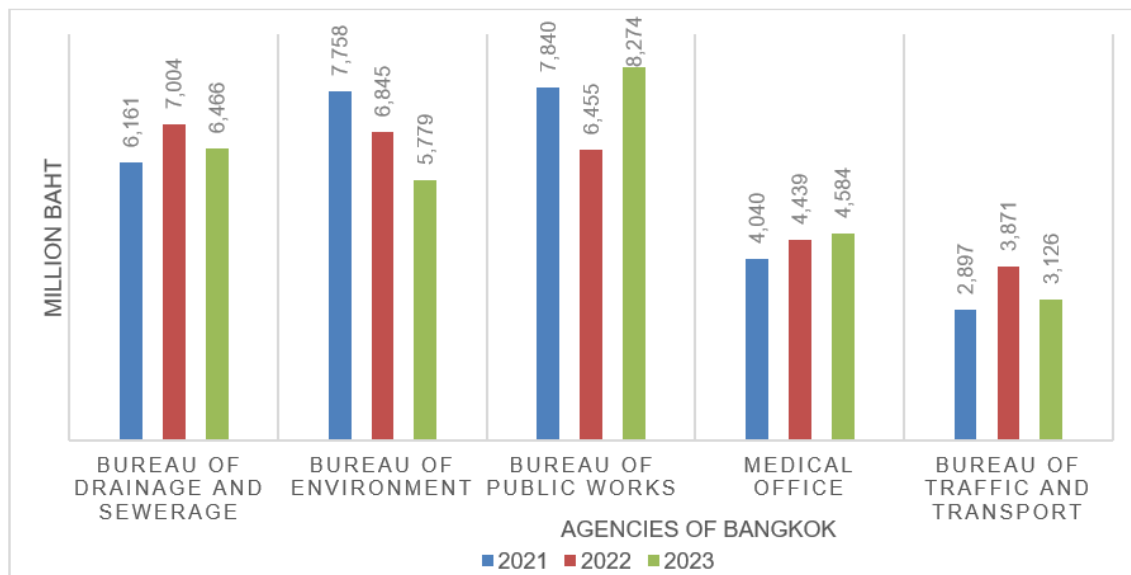
management at the local level. This assessment focused on three critical aspects, namely the potentials of the BMA in terms of budget and staff allocation, the BMA staffs responsible for the garbage collection, and BMA’s ability to partner with the private sector.

**Budget allocation**

There are budgetary hurdles in hazardous waste and WEEE management that require significant financial commitment. The BMA has a steady revenue stream from taxes, fees, real estate, utilities, commercial activities, and other sources. Additional revenue, consisting of accrued payments and loans taken out by the BMA and other government agencies, is another source of income (Kokphon, 2004).

**Figure 2**

*The top 5 offices in the BMA with the most budget allocations between 2021-2023*



Source: (Royal Gazette, 2021; Congressional Budget Office, 2022; Draft Municipal Ordinance of Bangkok on Expenditure Budget for the Fiscal Year 2023)

The first challenge relates to budget allocation and the organization's workforce potential in Bangkok. The budget allocated for the Bureau of Environmental in 2021 is 7,758 million baht. This budget decreases in 2022 and in 2023 respectively, making it the third largest budget recipient after the Bureau of Public works and the Bureau of Drainage and Sewerage as shown in Figure 1 above.

For the cost breakdown, the BMA allocated more than 11,980 baht/ton for hazardous waste management in 2017. However, it generates revenue of 535 million baht and 527 million baht from waste collection fees in 2019 and 2020, respectively. Therefore, budget allocation is an important factor for waste management, especially WEEE in Bangkok.

### *BMA staffs responsible for the garbage collection*

The BMA garbage collectors are responsible for cleaning and sweeping a particular area. They play a critical role in maintaining public safety in the area. In contrast, waste collection and disposal activities also pose significant risks to their life and property, particularly garbage collection along roadways. These activities are considered dangerous, as traffic accidents occur frequently, especially during nighttime operations. Only in 2022, three accidents involving waste pickers occurred in Bangkok. The career's environment poses significant hazards and carries a high risk of property damage and loss of life.

In addition, the BMA cleaners and waste pickers are inadequately equipped with protective equipment for the nature of their work. Moreover, the quantity of this equipment is insufficient for WEEE. Importantly, the wages and benefits for these workers are lower than those for general cleaning personnel and workers in other areas of local government. The BMA personnel whose work involves collecting sewage or solid waste receive salary which ranges from 8,690 to 9,400 baht per month. This rate is comparatively lower than the salary of general employees (building cleaning) and employees of other local governments, who receive salaries ranging from 9,000 to 18,000 baht. The latter also receive additional compensation for health risks from the Ministry of the Interior (Interview, 20 November 2022). Their salary is inconsistent with the hazardous nature of their work.

This factor was recognized in the context of the garbage policy, in which Bangkok governor candidates advocated their political campaign for social security of the BMA garbage cleaners. The current Bangkok governor, Dr. Chadchart Sittipunt, emphasized that the BMA cleaning staff must have proper protective equipment, such as duty uniforms, protective hoods, hygienic masks, gloves, sturdy and durable garbage baskets, and carts for garbage transportation. In addition, they should receive compensation and benefits commensurate with the hazardous nature of their work, such as wage compensation, social benefits, medical care, health insurance or accident insurance (Sittipunt, 2022).

### *Partnerships with private sector*

According to the principle of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), the effectiveness of WEEE management requires partnerships with the private sector, especially the implementation of a sorting system for different types of solid waste. EPR principle requires manufacturers and importers of electronic products to be responsible for the collection and recycling of their products at the end of their life, and other Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directives must also be fully implemented. As a result, the BMA has sought collaboration with various sectors to overcome these constraints. In 2017, the Pollution Control Department of the Environment Bureau signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on a cooperation project between the public and private sectors with department stores, educational institutions, and the Thai Trade Center Association to collect hazardous waste and waste from electrical and electronic products in the community. This cooperation led to the establishment of additional channels for the separation of hazardous waste by setting up drop-off points for five types of waste, including cell phone batteries, cell phone remnants, batteries, fluorescent tubes, and containers contaminated with hazardous substances such as aerosol cans. Drop-off sites were located in 3,815 participating department stores or grocery stores in 43 districts of Bangkok (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, 2017; Kongphet, 2017).

Moreover, Bangkok has proposed a plan for the private sector to take over garbage collection and disposal for a period of 2-3 years under a 5-year contract. However, due to a budget of 1,000 million, the plan is currently under consideration by the Bangkok City Council. The private sector is allowed to operate waste disposal facilities such as On Nut Waste Management Center, Nong Khaem Garbage Disposal Center, and Sai Mai Waste Disposal Center for the purpose of waste disposal (Interview, 20 November 2022; Manatsanitwong, 2022).

In addition, the BMA has authorized the private sector to collect waste and construct two new waste incinerators and waste-to-energy plants under the private contract project of C & G Environmental Protection (Thailand) Company Limited and New Sky Energy (Thailand) Co. However, the project is currently under review by the National Anti - Corruption Commission (NACC) office (Interview, 20 November 2022; Manatsanitwong, 2022). The building transparent cooperation with the private sector in waste management therefore remains a critical aspect of solving Bangkok's WEEE problem. This includes the need to reduce landfilling to 30% in order to achieve the waste management efficiency target, as well as the pending audit of the waste incineration project by the National Anti - Corruption Commission Office. In order to improve waste separation, the BMA schedule waste collection appointments with its residents by day and by type to achieve better waste segregation.

Regarding to the cooperation with the private sector, the BMA has a cooperation agreement in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Shell Company of Thailand Limited, an energy company, to implement a service station project to facilitate the collection of hazardous waste. To this end, the points of hazardous waste collection, including WEEE, have been established at all 106 Shell petrol stations around Bangkok. In addition, the District Office has supported this project by providing four types of waste garbage cans, namely hazardous waste bins, recycling bins, food waste bins, and general waste bins. This initiative aims to encourage public participation in solving environmental problems through the collective action of waste separation. Prior to the implementation of this project, hazardous waste was collected by employees for sanitary disposal. Therefore, this project also promotes behavioral change towards proper WEEE management. (Interview, 20 November 2022).

In 2022, a collaboration was initiated between various sectors, including government, business, and civil society, to address the problem of plastic waste and sustainable waste management. Agencies involved in this partnership include the Environmental

Protection Agency, the Environmental Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University, the Confederation of Thai Industries, Dow Thailand Group, the Institute of Packaging and Recycling Management for the Environment (TIPMSE), and the Petrochemical and Materials Technology Center of Excellence. This public - private partnership (PPP) aims to solve the plastic waste crisis in a sustainable way (Interview, 25 November 2022).

State - owned enterprises, moreover, have participated in the WEEE management. According to information obtained from interviews with officials at the Provincial Electricity Authority Headquarters (PEA), the PEA has as placed a transparent bin outside the office for the WEEE disposal such as flashlights and unused batteries. The PEA has also installed waste stations in the office and implemented a "Green Office" project that mandates waste separation on each floor and in each building. At PEA headquarters, waste is separated into hazardous waste and recyclable waste before being transported to Bangkok District Office for disposal.

Following the interview with 5 representatives of Advanced Info Service (AIS), the electronic equipment manufacturers have joined the WEEE management efforts as part of the principle of shared responsibility (SR) in practice. AIS, along with other entities such as the Provincial Electricity Authority, the Thai Association of shopping malls, petrol stations, and mobile phone operators, is contributing to the WEEE management efforts in accordance with government policy (Interview, 20 November 2022). In addition, AIS has worked with the Thai Post Office to ensure the proper disposal of WEEE through the "Leave" campaign under the "Thai People without E - Waste" project. AIS properly recycles and disposes of WEEE in accordance with international standards. Between January and March 2022, about 7,600 pieces of WEEE and about 30,700 pieces of postage containing WEEE were collected through AIS. In total AIS collected more than 38,300 pieces of WEEE by March 2022 (Interview, 25 November 2022).

## Research Discussion:

The result showed that the WEEE management in Bangkok faces several challenges, namely (1) legal challenges, (2) budget challenges, (3) challenges of the BMA staffs (4) management challenges in terms of promoting collaboration.

### *Legal challenges*

The BMA faces challenges related to the creation of laws and regulations relating to WEEE management. The local government were not empowered to create its own regulation. Thus, it must rely on the Public Health Act B.E. 2535 (1992), which authorizes local authorities to the operation of waste management. Therefore, the BMA continues to face legal limitations. It does not have the authority to issue its own regulations. On March 17, 2015 (2015), the Cabinet approved the Integrated Waste Management Strategy for Electrical and Electronic Equipment 2014-2021, which empowers local authorities to manage WEEE, especially a special local government organization such as the Bangkok Municipality and Pattaya City, which have a system to sort and collect 10 types of WEEE<sup>1</sup> (Wittaya - anumat, 2017).

However, the interview data shows that Bangkok, as a special local government organization, does not have a specific law for WEEE management. In addition, the Thai government has yet to implement laws and regulations for WEEE management, which causes problems in managing WEEE at national level and imported e-waste from abroad. Instead, a number of environmental laws are enforced, leading to difficulties in their implementation and enforcement (Nakornchan & Sopha, 2018). In this regard, the Pollution Control Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has been working to promote the (draft) End-of-Life Product Management Act for Electrical Appliances and Electronic Equipment in accordance with the Basel Convention (Nueangnong, 2019). If it is

passed, the legislation will be useful in forcing manufacturers and importers of electronic equipment to take responsibility for the proper disposal of their products after they have been used as intended.

In 2020, Thailand attempted to pass a draft of the Waste Management of Electrical and Electronic Equipment and Other Products Act B.E. ... proposed by the Pollution Control Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources. However, the draft has not yet been approved by the Cabinet and is currently under consideration by the Commission (Pollution Control Department, 2021). So that, recently there is no direct WEEE management law in Thailand.

### *Budget challenges*

Financial challenges can impact the effectiveness of WEEE management, as WEEE disposal requires high levels of funding. There are costs associated with creating adequate WEEE collection system and building disposal infrastructure. The cost also involves procuring and maintaining vehicles and equipment for transporting WEEE, and building and operating facilities to treat and dispose of this waste. In addition, proper management of WEEE requires appropriate transportation and disposal processes, systems, and standardized locations to avoid negative health and environmental impacts. However, hazardous waste disposal facilities in Thailand are mainly located in the central and eastern regions, resulting in costly transportation, insufficient disposal of hazardous waste and WEEE, and improper recycling of some electrical and electronic products.

Moreover, the budget includes expenditures on public education campaigns, as well as enforcement costs and penalties for improper or illegal WEEE disposal. In addition, the BMA needs to consider the financial impact on the public and businesses to adequately dispose of WEEE, which may include the cost of recycling fees or other expenses borne by consumers or businesses.

<sup>1</sup> which are (1) television (2) refrigerator (3) air conditioner (4) personal computer (5) telephone (6) fluorescent lamp (7) video camera (8) printer and fax machine (9) Portable audio/video equipment and (10) dry batteries.

### *Challenges for BMA staff responsible for environmental management*

In practice, the BMA does not have staff directly in charge for environmental management with knowledge of WEEE separation. The BMA collected WEEE as hazardous waste and disposed of it in only two ways: WEEE is either (1) disposed of by a private company in a secure landfill or (2) sold to an antique shop and shipped to recycling facilities in the country and abroad. The failure to separate WEEE from hazardous waste highlights the limitations of the BMA's environmental potential due to the lack of the system of sorting electronic components and the lack of skilled and knowledge staff to provide adequate sorting, unloading, and retrieval services. As a result, there is no standardized WEEE management system or facility capable of sorting, handling, and disposing of electronic waste in the BMA's waste collecting system (Jarusombat, 2011).

Environmental issues remain the top priority for the BMA, but the budget for contracting private companies concerning waste collection and disposal is limited. With a budget of over 1,000 million baht, the BMA does not have a system for sorting electronic components collected from WEEE in municipality, nor does it have the infrastructure to collect and treat WEEE. Furthermore, there is no recycling market in Bangkok for EEE items, such as batteries and fluorescent tubes. Bangkok residents do not know where to dispose of WEEE or how to dispose of them properly. Although the BMA has a project called #waste-separation to prevent WEEE from being mixed with hazardous waste, those responsible for environmental management in Bangkok still do not know how to dispose of WEEE properly (Khaikham, 2022). Additionally, the salary of the BMA cleaners and waste pickers is comparatively lower than that of employees of other local governments. As a result, Bangkok residents and the BMA staff are not aware of the importance of a proper WEEE management system and the environmental and health risks associated

with it. This leads to improper disposal of WEEE instead of proper recycling or treatment.

### *Challenges in building collaboration with the private sector*

Although the BMA has waste collection and disposal centers in Bangkok and surrounding areas, it still faces significant challenges in establishing partnerships with the private sector to collect and transport WEEE from other parts of the country. This can result in WEEE being sent to landfills instead of being properly recycled or treated. Consequently, WEEE management process in Bangkok is not technically proper and is not yet realizing its full potential to solve environmental problems. Therefore, solving the Bangkok waste problem through a private contract project to collect waste and build waste incinerators or waste-to-energy plants is fraught with challenges, including the pending review of the waste incineration project by Thailand's Office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission.

In addition, Thailand lacks a comprehensive national WEEE management system. Bangkok has implemented many projects such as the "3R" (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) campaign and the #waste-separation project, but WEEE management has not been uniformly regulated or enforced at the national level. This may lead to differences in the handling and disposal of WEEE in different regions of the country.

In addition, the BMA has not implemented the principle of shared responsibility (SR), although the private sector is willing to work with the government. Moreover, Bangkok residents are enthusiastic about not disposing of their WEEE until they are sure it will be properly disposed. There are also initiatives such as cell phone manufacturers and EEE importers paying for the disposal of cell phones and batteries. These companies are required to register waste and unused materials management (such as Factory Types 105 and 106) service providers established between 2015 and 2019.

One such provider is Total Environmental Solutions<sup>2</sup> (TES) Thailand for recycling of all kinds of WEEE and Electronics waste. In addition, the BMA has also established agreements with two mobile network operators, Advanced Info Service Public Company Limited (AIS) and Total Access Communication Public Company Limited (Dtac), to set up collection points for WEEE at various branches in shopping centers around Bangkok before forwarding WEEE to TES (Dtac, 2563; ThaiPublica, 2019; Bangkok Business, 2020).

These collaborations show that the private sector is willing to work with the Bangkok government for WEEE management in a clean and safe manner. However, the practical implementation of WEEE management remains challenged by other factors such as budget limitations, lack of knowledge, and inadequate guidelines for proper WEEE disposal.

## Conclusion:

The investigation into WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) management issues in Bangkok highlights a complex problem that requires urgent attention and purposeful action. The identified problems converge to underscore the need for a comprehensive strategy. Due to the absence of specific legal frameworks tailored to WEEE management, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) relies on broader waste management regulations. This hampers effective processes and sustains improper disposal of electronic waste.

Furthermore, tight financial constraints and a shortage of qualified personnel worsen the situation. Limited funding constrains the BMA's ability to implement effective strategies, and a lack of skilled workers complicates WEEE management. The socio - economic gap between BMA cleaners and waste collectors and their counterparts in other local governments exacerbates this issue, leading to inefficient waste handling practices that compromise the environment.

Building cooperative partnerships with the private sector poses a significant challenge. Concerns arise that electronic waste might end up in landfills instead of being properly recycled due to the BMA's struggles in establishing meaningful collaborations for WEEE collection and transportation from different areas. This undermines efforts towards sustainable waste management and sustains adverse environmental impacts.

### *This research suggests as follow*

1. The BMA still faces challenges in several areas, including (1) legal challenges, (2) budget challenges, (3) challenges for the BMA staff responsible for WEEE management, and (4) challenges in building collaboration with the private sector. Therefore, the BMA should focus on improving its capabilities in these areas to effectively manage waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE).

2. The BMA should strengthen its cooperation with various private sectors, such as waste collection companies and towing companies. A specialized WEEE management company can provide a WEEE management system that ensures safety and relies on modern technologies to sort, disassemble, treat, and recycle valuable electronic components in accordance with appropriate WEEE management practices.

3. The BMA should adopt the principle of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) or shared responsibility (SR). This involves encouraging manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers, governments, and consumers to take responsibility for their respective roles in WEEE management.

### *Conflicts of Interest*

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The founding sponsors had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, and in the decision to publish the results.

<sup>2</sup> The company was only one-stop e-waste management in Thailand that meets standards. It has over 38 factories in 20 countries around the world

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# Knowledge Management and Organizational Cooperation Affecting on Public Sector Management Quality: The Case Study of the 4th Administrative Area of Probation Office

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was threefold: firstly, to examine the level of perception regarding knowledge management, organizational cooperation, and quality of public sector management; secondly, to identify the components of knowledge management and organizational cooperation that impact the quality of public management; and thirdly, to propose suggestions on knowledge management, organizational cooperation, and public management quality. This study involved a quantitative approach, and its sample consisted of 217 civil servants. Data was collected through 5-point Likert scale questionnaires, and the gathered data was analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and multiple regression analysis. The findings indicated that overall, participants had a positive perception of knowledge management, organizational cooperation, and public sector management. Furthermore, the independent variables significantly predicted public management quality with a predictive power of 84.4 percent, at a significance level of 0.05. The study concluded that employees should be familiar with performance evaluation criteria at individual, departmental, and organizational levels. It was also suggested that executives ensure resource availability to maintain organizational effectiveness.

## Introduction:

The fiscal year 2005 marked the initiation of knowledge management (KM) practices within government agencies in Thailand. By the subsequent year, these agencies systematically implemented and integrated KM into their strategies. In 2007, KM was promoted further to transform all government agencies into learning organizations, using knowledge exchange as a core process (Office of the National Institute of Government Development and Productivity Institute, 2006).

The Department of Probation initiated the incorporation of KM in the fiscal year 2006, launching the Department of Probation Knowledge Management Plan. This plan aimed to devise strategies for individuals or groups to utilize knowledge, skills, and experience in their work effectively, and promote knowledge exchanges and application. By 2020, the Department had also adopted the Probation 4.0 concept, signifying a transition towards an era of high-performance, modern operations that respond to public needs.

Within this context, organizational cooperation emerged as a critical success factor. The civil servant participation is integral for knowledge exchange, contributing to efficient government work performance. Cooperation facilitates sustainable relationships and resource sharing, thereby enhancing the capacity to build relationships and acknowledge the benefits of shared resource scopes (Thepkaiwan, 2011).

Moreover, the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission adopted a comprehensive evaluation concept, which assesses government organizations across four dimensions: effectiveness per government action plan, service quality, efficiency of official operations, and organizational development. This evaluation provides insights into organizational strengths and improvement opportunities, ultimately serving the people's happiness and national benefit (Office of the Public Sector Development Commission, 2014).

This research seeks to contribute to the promotion and development of the Department of Probation's KM practices and inter - organizational cooperation. The study will examine the extent of knowledge management in each process, cooperation level in KM, quality of public administration, and influential factors predicting the quality of public administration. The study will also provide insights and suggestions for enhancing KM and organizational cooperation to improve the quality of public administration in Probation Area 4.

### Research Objectives:

- 1) to examine the level of perception regarding knowledge management, organizational cooperation, and quality of public sector management.
- 2) to identify the components of knowledge management and organizational cooperation that impact the quality of public management.
- 3) to propose suggestions on knowledge management, organizational cooperation, and public management quality.

### Literature Review:

This research study integrates four primary concepts and theories: Knowledge Management, Organizational Cooperation, Quality of Public Management, and the specific context of the Department of Probation and Probation Region 4.

#### *Knowledge Management*

Marquardt & Reynolds (1994) define KM as the organization and use of essential information, news, and knowledge. KM activities involve acquiring, storing, and maintaining knowledge in a manner accessible to all, thereby facilitating the achievement of organizational objectives. Kermally (2002) emphasizes KM's role in creating an environment within an organization conducive to knowledge creation, transfer, and sharing. Akaraborworn (2009) and Chookiat (1998) further highlight the process of collecting scattered knowledge from individuals or documents, transforming it into a system that allows universal access, and leveraging it for collective knowledge and operational efficiency. In summary, KM entails an organized system, supported by technology, that efficiently manages and shares knowledge within an organization.

#### *Cooperation in the organization*

Marquardt & Reynolds (1994) define KM as the organization and use of essential information, news, and knowledge. KM activities involve acquiring, storing, and maintaining knowledge in a manner accessible to all, thereby facilitating the achievement of organizational objectives. Kermally (2002) emphasizes KM's role in creating an environment within an organization conducive to knowledge creation, transfer, and sharing. Akaraborworn (2009) and Chookiat (1998) further highlight the process of collecting scattered knowledge from individuals or documents, transforming it into a system that allows universal access, and leveraging it for collective knowledge and operational efficiency. In summary, KM entails an organized system, supported by technology, that efficiently manages and shares knowledge within an organization.

### *Quality of Public Sector Management*

The Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (2014) strategized to develop the Thai bureaucratic system from 2003 – 2007, aiming to enhance processes, working methods, and government agency standards. A collaborative study project with the National Institute of Productivity Enhancement was launched to improve government agencies' performance quality. The project developed quality criteria for public sector management, designed to assess organizational strengths and improvement opportunities effectively. These criteria are based on an organizational audit guideline, comprising seven categories that outline how an organization of excellence should operate.

#### *Context of the Department of Probation and Probation Region 4*

Thailand first introduced its probation system for juvenile offenders in 1952, subsequently expanding to adult offenders. The Central Probation Office, a division-level agency under the Ministry of Justice, was established following the Criminal Code Probation Procedure Act B.E. 2522 (1979). The system has been continually extended, resulting in the Central Probation Office's authority and responsibilities broadening. Consequently, the Central

Probation Office was promoted to the "Probation Department" on March 15, 1992 (Department of Probation, 2018). Currently, the Department of Probation operates according to the Probation Act B.E. 2559 (2016). Administrative divisions include ten districts, with the Probation 4<sup>th</sup> district comprising twelve Probation Offices (Probation Department, 2022).

### **Research Methods:**

#### *Population and sample*

This study targets practitioners in the Probation Office Area 4. The population comprises 366 civil servants, government employees, and temporary staff across 12 provincial probation offices (Department of Probation, 2022). A stratified random sampling technique was adopted, yielding a sample of 217 respondents selected randomly, following Yamane's (1967) principle.

#### *Research Instruments*

The study utilizes questionnaires featuring a five-level estimation scale. This scale gauges the level of knowledge management, organizational cooperation, and public sector management quality. Higher scores indicate a higher level, with '5' being the highest and '1' the lowest. A total of 39 items were included in the questionnaire, with an obtained reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of .98. The research also employed the correlation coefficient method for variable consistency analysis and multiple regression methods to examine the independent variables' predictive capability.

#### *Data Collection*

The researchers distributed questionnaires related to knowledge management, cooperation, and quality of public sector management to personnel in the Probation Office District 4. A total of 217 questionnaires were disseminated using stratified random sampling. The sample was divided among provincial probation offices as follows: Khon Kaen (39), Udon Thani (23), Sakon Nakhon (21), Mahasarakham (20), Kalasin (19), Roi Et (18), Nakhon Phanom (16), Loei (15), Mukdahan (14), Nong Khai and Bueng Kan (11), and Nong Bua Lamphu (10).

## Results and Discussion:

**Table 1**

*Levels of Agreement on Knowledge Management within the Organization*

Dimension	Comments on knowledge management	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Variation
1	Knowledge Identification	4.19	0.61	Agreed
2	Knowledge Creation and Acquisition	4.00	0.68	Agreed
3	Knowledge Organization	3.85	0.74	Agreed
4	Knowledge Codification and Refinement	3.82	0.76	Agreed
5	Knowledge Access	4.04	0.73	Agreed
6	Knowledge Sharing	3.72	0.81	Agreed
7	Learning	4.08	0.71	Agreed
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Table 1 presents an overview of opinions on knowledge management in the organization. The average score was 3.96, indicating a high level of agreement. Considering individual dimensions, the order from the highest to the lowest agreement was as follows:

Knowledge Identification (4.19), Learning (4.08), Knowledge Access (4.04), Knowledge Creation and Acquisition (4.00), Knowledge Organization (3.85), Knowledge Codification and Refinement (3.82), and Knowledge Sharing (3.72).

**Table 2**

*Levels of Agree on Cooperation within the Organization*

Dimension	Comments of cooperation	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Variation
8	Goal	3.93	0.74	Agreed
9	Leader/executive,	4.13	0.77	Agreed
10	Communication/Coordination	4.01	0.71	Agreed
11	Resource sharing	4.02	0.76	Agreed
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Table 2 reveals a high level of agreement on cooperation within the organization, with an average score of 4.02. Examining individual dimensions, the level of agreement, from highest to lowest, was

as follows: Leader/ Executive (4.13), Resource Sharing (4.02), Communication/Coordination (4.01), and Goal (3.93)

**Table 3***Levels of Agreement on Public Sector Management*

Dimension	Comments on Public Sector Management	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Variation
12	Leadership	4.21	0.65	Agreed
13	Strategic planning	4.10	0.74	Agreed
14	The client and stakeholder	4.03	0.75	Agreed
15	Measuring, analytics knowledge management	4.03	0.74	Agreed
16	Personnel	3.98	0.74	Agreed
17	Operation	3.88	0.72	Agreed
18	The output	4.00	0.71	Agreed
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Table 3 shows a high level of agreement on the quality of public sector management, with an average score of 4.03. Regarding individual dimensions, the level of agreement, in descending order, was as follows:

Leadership (4.21), Strategic Planning (4.10), Client and Stakeholder Engagement (4.03), Measurement, Analytics, and Knowledge Management (4.03), Output (4.00), Personnel (3.98), and Operations (3.88).

**Table 4***Analysis of Variance in Predictive Variables Affecting Public Sector Management Quality*

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	59.661	1	59.661	419.264	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	30.594	215	.142		
	Total	90.255	216			
2	Regression	74.747	1	74.747	1036.323	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	15.507	215	.072		
	Total	90.255	216			
3	Regression	76.391	2	38.195	589.570	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	13.864	214	.065		
	Total	90.255	216			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Management

b. Predictors: (Constant), cooperation in the organization

c. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge Management, Cooperation in the organization

d. Dependent Variable: Public Sector Management Quality

Table 4 indicates the test results of three regression equations. The results suggest that:

In Equation 1, Knowledge Management significantly predicts the Quality of Public

Sector Management at the 0.5 level.

In Equation 2, Cooperation within the Organization significantly predicts the Quality of

Public Sector Management at the 0.5 level.

In Equation 3, Knowledge Management and Cooperation within the Organization

jointly predict the Quality of Public Sector Management, which is statistically significant at the 0.5 level.

**Table 5**

*Analysis of Multiple Correlation Coefficients*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.813	.661	.659	.37722
2	.910	.828	.827	.26857
3	.920	.846	.845	.25453

Table 5 illustrates the influence of a group of independent variables across three equations. Equation 1 suggests that the Knowledge Management variables can predict 65.9% of Public Sector Management. Equation 2 demonstrates that the Collaboration variables can

account for 82.7% of the variation in Public Sector Management. Finally, Equation 3 shows that a combination of Knowledge Management and Organizational Cooperation variables can predict 84.5% of Public Sector Management.

**Table 6**

*Analysis of Regression Coefficients for Each Principal Variable Affecting Public Sector Management*

Predictive variables Quality of Public Sector Management	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Beta		
<b>Knowledge Management</b>				
Knowledge Identification	0.019	0.019	0.505	0.614
Knowledge Creation and Acquisition	0.023	0.024	0.568	0.570
Knowledge Organization	0.040	0.046	0.913	0.362
Knowledge Codification and Refinement	0.059	0.070	1.443	0.150
Knowledge Access	0.023	0.026	0.531	0.596
Knowledge Sharing	-0.002	-0.003	-0.059	0.953
Learning	0.051	0.056	1.193	0.234
<b>Cooperation in the organization</b>				
Goal	0.293	0.306	5.584	0.000
Leader/ Executive	0.131	0.157	3.354	0.001
Communication/ Coordination	0.136	0.150	2.891	0.004
Resource sharing	0.200	0.237	5.526	0.000

$N=217$  ;  $*p < 0.05$   $R^2 = .852$  Adjusted R Square = 0.844 Durbin-Watson = 2.026



Table 6 displays the results from the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. The most influential predictor is found to be Goal-setting, with a regression coefficient of 0.306. This is followed by Resource Sharing (regression coefficient: 0.237), Leader/Executive's influence (regression coefficient: 0.157), and Communication/Coordination (regression coefficient: 0.150). This analysis confirms that the cooperation variables in the organization have a greater predictive impact than the group of Knowledge Management variables.

### Conclusion:

This study examined opinion levels on knowledge management and found that both overall and individual aspects of these opinions in the Probation Office, District 4, were high. Similarly, the level of opinions about cooperation within the organization and public sector management were also high. The analysis of knowledge management and cooperation within organizations revealed their impact on the quality of public sector management. Among the elements of cooperation, goals, resource sharing, leadership, and communication and coordination could significantly predict the quality of public sector management in the Probation Office, District 4.

Knowledge management, which transforms individual knowledge into organizational knowledge, enhances decision-making effectiveness and innovation. This is in line with research by Sangkaphan (2019), Chansawang (2016), Kanha (2015), and Aumpornwetch, et al. (2017).

Likewise, organizational cooperation is a critical factor influencing the quality of public sector management, supporting the research of Jumpang et al. (2012). The success of an organization is predicated on the cooperation of its employees in various activities to achieve the organization's goals.

The research findings align with those of Nootdechanan (2015), who found that factors like system readiness, shared values and organizational culture, personnel engagement, and clarity of organizational structure influence organizational development success.

### Theoretical recommendations:

This research indicated that cooperation within the organization, comprising goals, leadership/executives, communication/coordination, and resource sharing, serves as a moderating variable interacting with independent variables. These cooperative variables affect the relationship between knowledge management and public sector management quality. Thus, any research considering this situation should account for the influence of the moderating variable, which could otherwise lead to deviations from the actual results (Kanjanawasee & Soipetkasem, 2014).

### Practical recommendations:

1. Establish knowledge management as one of the department's policies and strategic plans, encouraging all offices to conduct formal and consistent monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, systematic and standardized training at the departmental level can help promote knowledge management.

2. The Department of Probation should facilitate knowledge exchange between personnel from different offices to enhance knowledge and promote continuous activities.

3. Regarding the dimension of knowledge management, leveraging technology in work processes can streamline management, speed up work, and alleviate workload issues, leading to greater satisfaction and cooperation among personnel.

### Suggestion for Future research:

1. Future research could employ in-depth interviews or qualitative data collection to supplement research with executive samples, knowledge management implementers, and general employees within the organization.

2. Future researchers may consider various concepts and literature reviews on organizational effectiveness as guidelines for assessing organizational effectiveness within different conceptual frameworks.

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# The Policy Implementation of e-Health in the Central Chest Institute of Thailand

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## Abstract

Most countries worldwide are embracing electronic health (e-Health) policies to tackle healthcare challenges, including the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand. This article aims to investigate the implementation of e-Health Policy and analyze the factors influencing its success at the Central Chest Institute of Thailand. This qualitative study employs documentation, in-depth interviews with key informants, and a semi - structured interview method. Thirteen staff members from the Health Information Technology and Medical Records Working Group, as well as health information technology executives, were interviewed as key informants. The data were analyzed descriptively. The findings reveal that the e - Health policy implementation process occurs at the Micro-implementation level, involving three stages: 1) The mobilization stage, which includes policy consideration and support from within and outside the organization; 2) The delivery of implementation stage, where the policy is tailored to suit the implementers in each unit; and 3) The institutionalization stage, during which the institute incorporates the policy into routine tasks and involves implementers in planning. The factors influencing the implementation of the e - Health policy consist of three main aspects: communication, organizational competency, and the supportive cooperation of implementers. In conclusion, the case study on e-Health policy in Thailand highlights the significance of factors such as policy acceptance, continuity in action plans, effective communication, organizational competency, and collaboration among implementers. The proper implementation of these factors can greatly enhance the success of policy implementation. Conversely, overlooking these factors may lead to failure in implementing e - Health policies.

## Introduction:

Currently, the world is advancing towards the era of Industry 4.0. E-health innovation is a policy aimed at addressing healthcare challenges in modernization. Many countries have attempted to implement it into practice, but it remains a challenge despite having evidence regarding the factors of success and failure. There are various factors that contribute to the success of e-Health implementation, which vary across countries worldwide. These factors include short- and long-term funding, organizational factors, and political or legislative aspects in Low - Resource Countries (Archer et al., 2021). Additionally, institutional characteristics and healthcare manager characteristics strongly influence e - Health adoption in Ghana (Kesse - Tachi et al., 2019). Furthermore, a study by Obstfelder et al. (2007) identified six characteristics for successful implementation: 1) Clearly stated local service delivery problem, 2) Recognition of telemedicine as a benefit, 3) Perception of telemedicine as a solution to political and medical issues, 4) Collaboration between promoters and users, 5) Addressing organizational and technical arrangements, and 6) Consideration of the future operation of the service.

On the other hand, factors contributing to failure in e - Health implementation include the relationship between doctors and patients, concerns about violating data privacy, and a lack of government regulations, creating obstacles in the adoption of e-Health systems in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Alanezi, 2020). Similarly, the study by Granja et al. (2018) found that workflow and cost were frequently mentioned as contributing to failure. Although many factors influence the implementation of e - Health policies, these factors vary based on the region and context of the countries. However, considering the benefits of e-Health for health management, it is crucial for us to overcome these challenges and make it a reality.

Thailand has been significantly improving its governmental operations by embracing digital technology. This is accomplished through the national digital economy and society development plan and

policy spanning over 20 years (2018-2037), legislated by the Development of Digital for Economy and Society Act of 2017 (Digitality for Economy and Society Act, 2017). Consequently, the healthcare sector has undergone reforms and restructuring. The Ministry of Public Health of Thailand has introduced the e-Health Strategy (2017-2026), in alignment with the WHO's e-Health concept (2016) (Witookkollachit, 2017). This strategy employs Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems to efficiently and universally deliver equitable and safe healthcare services to the population. In an effort to implement this strategy effectively, the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand has endeavored to translate it into a practice hierarchy. Within this hierarchy, the component for services and applications in e-Health has developed the Smart Hospital Strategy for implementation.

The Central Chest Institute of Thailand is a medical institution overseen by the Department of Medical Services under the Ministry of Public Health. It is dedicated to implementing policies in line with its mission and is an advanced hospital that specializes in Heart and Lung Treatment. The institute has implemented initiatives in the Smart Hospital Strategy, such as Electronic Medical Records (EMR), Telemedicine, Que System, and Electronic Document Management System (E-sarabun). This research aims to identify the processes and factors contributing to the successful implementation of such policies in Thai hospitals and regional institutions. The findings of this research will serve as a guideline for future strategies in implementing healthcare information technology policies in other healthcare facilities, ultimately leading to more successful outcomes.

## Theoretical in policy implementation:

After a thorough study and examination of policy implementation, the author defines it as the process by which responsible organizations implement policies and effectively utilize resources to achieve policy objectives. This crucial process, as conceptualized by Chandarasorn (2000), comprises both Macro- level and micro-level. Specifically, focusing on the micro-implementation process, it involves the assessment

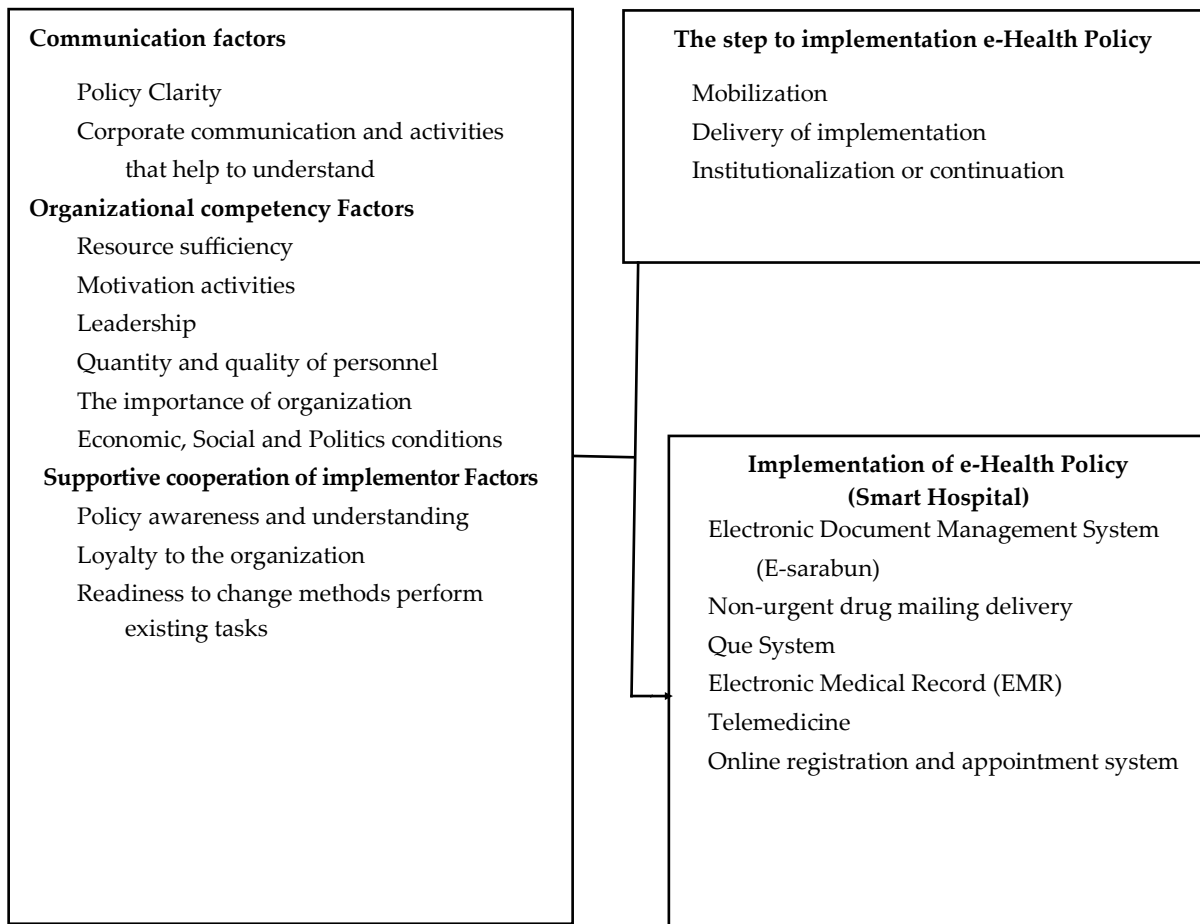
of receiving or losing benefits from the policy, which is further divided into three essential parts. Firstly, "Mobilization" entails policy adoption and the quest for support. Secondly, "Deliver Implementation" covers the necessary modifications to projects for implementers who have already accepted intensive action. Lastly, "Institutionalization" or "continuation" encompasses efforts to ensure the policy's seamless adoption and acceptance into the daily responsibilities of the implementer. Understanding and effectively navigating these aspects of policy implementation are vital in achieving successful policy outcomes and further advancing the objectives set forth.

In addition, various factors exert an influence on the success of policy implementation, prompting the development of several models to study this complex process. One such model is the "Interaction Between Factors" model (Edwards III, 1980), which delves into the relationship between different factors impacting policy implementation, including communication, resource, dispositions, and bureaucratic structure. Another significant model is the "Policy-Program-Implementation Process" model (Alexander, 1985), which defines policy implementation as the continuous transformation of intentions into activities, involving four distinct steps. Firstly, stimulating factors entail raising awareness of problems, clarifying issues, and considering policy development directions. Secondly, policy steps involve directives from policymakers to implementers, specifying objectives and methods to achieve them, which are inherently interconnected. Thirdly, plans encompass the specification of targeted interventions, which may include regulations, projects, and policy specifications. Lastly, policy implementation comprises a set of actions that follow the devised plan. In this model, the various steps are influenced by intricate factors at connecting points (links), where each connecting point may present multiple alternative paths. The "Decentralized" model (Cheema et al., 1983) shifts its focus to the performance of local organizations and comprises four variable groups: environmental conditions, inter-organizational relationships, organizational resources, and operational unit characteristics and competencies. Moreover, the "Policy Implementation Process" model by Van Meter and

Van Horn (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975, cited in Chandarasorn 2008) offers a comprehensive framework by integrating variables from other studies, emphasizing three main factors crucial for successful policy implementation: effective communication, organizational competency, and collaborative support from implementers. These models collectively aid policy researchers in understanding the intricate relationships between variables and provide valuable insights into how policies can be effectively implemented. Additionally, the success or failure of a policy hinges on its inherent value, with external factors also playing pivotal roles as determinants. Yavapraphas (2009) identifies eight key determinants, including policy characteristics, policy objectives, political feasibility, technical validity or policy theory, adequate resources, characteristics of the implementation unit, attitudes of policy implementers, and the interconnectedness between various mechanisms. By considering these factors and employing the insights gained from the models, policymakers can pave the way for more successful and effective policy implementation.

## Research Methods:

This study is a qualitative research endeavor that targets government officials and public health workers affiliated with the Central Chest Institute of Thailand. The key informant group consists of 13 personnel from the Institute, who serve on the Health Information Technology and Medical Records Steering Committee, as well as executives involved in the administration of Health Information Technology. This group includes three executives: the Deputy Medical Director, who chairs the Information Technology Committee of Health; the Deputy Director of Health System Development; and the Head of the Digital Medical Division. Additionally, there are ten members of the Health Information Technology and Medical Records Steering Committee. The research utilized in-depth interviews with a semi-structured format, incorporating the conceptual framework (Figure 1) for primary data collection. Additionally, documents from various sources, including articles, research papers, and online media, were analyzed to supplement the primary data as secondary data sources.

**Figure 1***Conceptual framework*

## Data analysis:

The analysis process is as follows: first, the author utilized the information obtained from the interviews (which were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim) and reviewed the documents to organize and summarize the key messages separately. Next, the author grouped the information, separating each issue, by comparing the similarities and differences of each interviewee before conducting further analysis. Subsequently, the obtained information was compared with related documented information, such as concepts and theories, to identify similarities and differences. These processes were checked for reliability through data and theory triangulation. Finally, the research results were summarized and descriptively interpreted.

## Results and Discussion:

### Result

A total of 13 key informants were interviewed, with an average interview duration of 30 minutes. The documents were compiled from multiple sources, including the official performance report and online documents.

The organization has developed six modules for the Smart Hospitals, and the progression of their success is described in Table 1.

**Table1***Smart Hospital System and Progression of Success*

System	Progression
Electronic Document Management System (E-sarabun)	The system is a part of regular work and is adaptable/flexible.
Non-urgent drug mailing delivery	The system is a part of regular work and is adaptable/flexible.
Que System	The system is a part of regular work and is adaptable/flexible.
Electronic Medical Record (EMR)	The system is currently undergoing operation and improvement.
Telemedicine	The system is currently undergoing operation and improvement.
Online registration and appointment	The system is in the testing phase and has started its operation.

### *The level of success or progress of e-Health policy at the Central Chest Institute of Thailand*

Based on the evaluation of key performance indicators by the Ministry of Public Health, the Smart Hospital aims to achieve success in five aspects: smart place, smart tool, smart services, smart outcome, and ultimately, a smart hospital. In 2022, the Ministry set specific targets for institutes outside the control of the office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Health, requiring a minimum of 2 out of 3 smart tools and at least four smart services to be implemented in over 90% of units.

It was found that the Central Chest Institute of Thailand has achieved the indicators concerning smart tools, with 1 out of 2 already implemented and another one currently in progress. The implemented smart tools include 1) a queue display screen at the doctor's examination room and 2) at least one online queue notification channel. As for smart services, the Institute has implemented 3 out of 4 indicators, and the implementation of the remaining one is currently underway. The implemented smart services include 1) electronic medical records (EMR); 2) computerized physician order entry (CPOE); 3) appointment scheduling; and 4) an e-payment system.

The evaluation of the e-Health policy of the Central Chest Institute of Thailand indicates the current level of progress observed. The assessment by key informants follows a scoring system ranging from 1 to 5, where a score of 1 represents failure, 3 indicates moderate progress, and 5 represents complete success. It was found that nine individuals, accounting for 69 percent, perceived the progress to be around

3. The main contributors who rated the progress higher than 3 were three individuals, accounting for 23 percent. Additionally, one individual rated the progress with a score of 2, representing 8 percent of the respondents.

In summary, the success or progress of the e-Health policy at the Central Chest Institute of Thailand is moderate. The institute has successfully met the evaluation criteria and demonstrated flexibility in ongoing system improvement.

### *The policy implementation process*

The document review and in-depth interviews revealed that policy implementation at the Central Chest Institute of Thailand occurs at the micro-level. Therefore, we analyzed the data in three distinct stages: 1) mobilization; 2) delivery implementation; and 3) institutionalization or continuation.

The mobilization stage is divided into two sub-stages. Firstly, the Policy adoption stage evaluates the extent to which policies have been adopted by the Central Chest Institute of Thailand. This stage involves the recognition of the importance of utilizing information technology as an existing asset by the institution and its leaders. They also understand the urgency of implementation and align with the organization's goals, which facilitates the smooth execution of policies without encountering significant resistance. Secondly, the Seeking support process entails the institute receiving strong support from both internal and external organizations. However, despite the support, there has been no involvement of the implementers in the formulation or design of the Smart Hospital system.



The delivery of the implementation stage involves the author finding that the Central Chest Institute of Thailand employs a strategy of translating e - Health policies into actionable practices by empowering the implementers with decision - making authority to determine the appropriate implementation methods within their respective units. This approach ensures that the practices align with the needs of both the implementers and the recipients of services at each point of care. As a result, policy implementation does not follow only a standardized approach but instead considers the unique characteristics of each situation.

For the institutionalization or continuation stage, it has been found that the Institute has made efforts to ensure sustainability by striving for continuity

in its projects, even beyond the end of the policy period, which is projected to be until 2027. Recognizing that the policy's success relies on long-term, enduring actions, the institution has integrated various e - Health initiatives into its regular operations. There is a continuous development process that actively involves the implementers and fosters increasing acceptance. These efforts contribute to the policy's sustainability within the organization.

*The factors affecting the success of e-Health policy implementation.*

The results of the data analysis on factors affecting the success of the implementation of the e-Health policy are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Data analysis of factors affecting the success of policy implementation*

Factor	Analysis results	Number of contributors (%)
<b>1. Communication Factors</b> 1.1 Policy Clarity 1.2 Corporate communication and activities that help to understand	1. Objectives, content, and indicators at the national level are clearly defined.	Document
	2. There are instructions and targets communicated through a command system.	12 (92%)
	3. The clarity of the policy objectives has been diminished or reduced to implementers.	11 (85%)
	4. Clear indicators have not been initially established.	5 (38%)
	5. The communication between the executives and the implementers is in clear and sequential command instructions.	13 (100%)
	6. Regular meeting activities are conducted.	12 (92%)
<b>2. Organizational competency Factors</b> 2.1 Resource sufficiency 2.2 Motivation activities 2.3 Leadership 2.4 Quantity and Quality of personnel 2.5 The importance of organization 2.6 Economic, Social and Politics conditions	1. The policy resources are sufficient.	9 (69%)
	2. Motivational activities utilize a supportive system from the upper level (mentoring system).	10 (77%)
	3. There is no motivation in terms of evaluation, rewards, or penalties for the implementer.	6 (46%)
	4. The leaders possess knowledge and skills.	11 (85%)
	5. The leaders lack decisive decision-making abilities and skills in motivating others.	6 (46%)
	6. The staff members possess abilities and skills.	12 (92%)

**Table 2 (continued)***Data analysis of factors affecting the success of policy implementation*

Factor	Analysis results	Number of contributors (%)
<b>2. Organizational competency Factors (continued)</b>	7. There is a lack of personnel with specialized knowledge and expertise in advanced information technology.	6 (46%)
	8. The organization exhibits a high level of formality and complex hierarchy.	Document
	9. The communication between departments is formal and professional.	11 (85%)
	10. The level of operational units' activities is becoming less formal.	11 (85%)
	11. The Central Chest Institute of Thailand is an important institution.	Document
	12. Economic and social factors pose significant challenges in the overall operations of the institution.	8 (62%)
	13. The COVID-19 situation has been a driving force in pushing policy initiatives.	5 (38%)
<b>3. Supportive cooperation of implementer Factors</b> 3.1 Policy Awareness and understanding 3.2 Loyalty to the organization 3.3 Readiness to change methods perform existing tasks	1. The awareness and understanding of the policy among the implementer are still insufficient.	10 (77%)
	2. Personnel are loyal to the organization.	11 (85%)
	3. There is still limited readiness among the staff members to change their existing work practices.	8 (62%)
	4 Lack of motivation for change.	13 (100%)

***Problems, obstacles, and observations discovered from the study*****1. Communication factors**

1.1 The policy's clarity level has decreased, leading to a lack of overall understanding.

1.2 In the initial stage, there are no clear indicators or goals of policy at the organizational level.

**2. Organizational competency factors**

2.1 There needs to be more motivation regarding evaluation, rewards, or penalties for the implementer.

2.2 Leaders need to make more decisive decisions and demonstrate better motivational abilities.

2.3 There is a lack of personnel with specialized knowledge and expertise in advanced information technology.

2.4 The current economic and social changes pose challenges and obstacles.

**3. Supportive cooperation of implementer factors**

3.1 The awareness and understanding of the policy among implementers still need improvement.

3.2 There is a hierarchical structure with decision - making relying heavily on top - level management, requiring more participation.

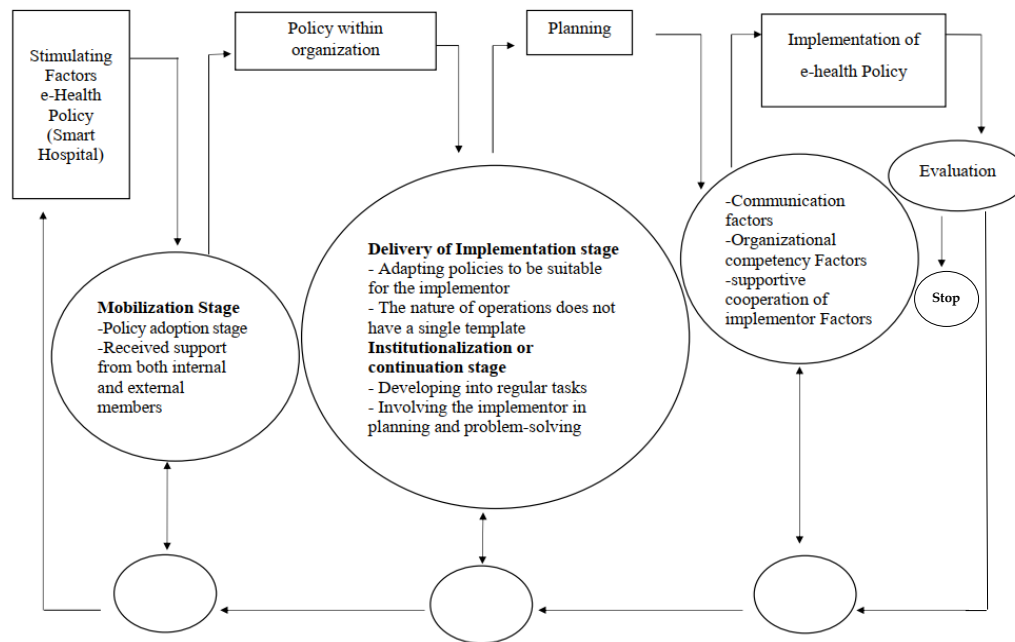
3.3 There is a lack of motivation for change within the organization.

***Analyzing the findings of research using the policy implementation model***

Based on the review of documents and research findings on implementing the e-Health policy at the Central Chest Institute of Thailand, it can be explained using the Policy-Planning-Implementation framework (Alexander, 1985). This framework comprises stimulating factors, policy, planning, and policy implementation. The framework is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Guidelines for Implementation of e-Health Policy of the Central Chest Institute of Thailand



Link 1 (Stimulating - Policy): This connection represents the consideration and solicitation of policy ideas and support (mobilization stage) within the policy formulation stage. It involves the assessment of policy options and seeking support from various stakeholders.

Link 2 (Policy-Planning): This connection involves the transformation of policy into a suitable plan and ensuring that the implementers are compatible with the policy (delivery of the implementation stage). It also includes establishing a sustainable and coherent policy framework (Institutionalization stage).

Link 3 (Planning - Implementation): This connection consists of factors that influence the successful implementation of policy. These factors bridge the planning and implementation stages and significantly impact the ultimate success of policy implementation. In this study, three main factors were identified: communication, organizational competency, and supportive cooperation of the implementer.

It is important to note that the factors within each of the three links have varying degrees of influence on the overall process. Additionally, the cumulative effect of these factors contributes to the success of policy implementation.

## Discussion:

### *The implementation process of e-Health Policy of the Central Chest Institute of Thailand*

The implementation process of the e - Health policy in the Central Chest Institute of Thailand can be further discussed based on the concept of micro-implementation proposed by Chandarasorn (2000) as follows:

1. Mobilization stage: The Central Chest Institute of Thailand strongly focuses on integrating technology into their leadership practices and recognizing its importance. This aligns with the organization's objective of acknowledging and prioritizing policies from central authorities that align with their goals and needs, as it is crucial for successful policy implementation. Additionally, support from various sectors further contributes to the success of policy implementation.

2. Delivery of Implementation stage: The Central Chest Institutes in Thailand are highly proficient in implementing behavioral modifications for both implementers and projects. Each unit can adapt independently. The theory behind these modifications is that the behavior of professionals should align with policies, or policy adjustments should align with behaviors. This approach ensures minimal resistance to policy implementation.

### 3. Institutionalization or continuation stage:

The Central Chest Institute of Thailand has implemented policies in their regular work and is constantly developing them to encourage practitioner participation. This approach aims to ensure that policies are sustainable within the organization by promoting continuity and integration. The idea is that when policies become a part of practitioners' routine work, they are more likely to follow them willingly, which supports policy sustainability.

#### *The factors affecting the success of implementing e-Health policies.*

In this study, clear communication is crucial for effectively implementing e-Health policies. It is important to have well - defined objectives, goals, and content at the national level, accompanied by clear communication from central to government agencies. Explicit instructions and activities that promote understanding contribute to consistency and successful policy implementation. The communication factors outlined by George C. Edwards (1980) support this notion, stating that clear, accurate, and consistent communication increases the likelihood of successful policy implementation. Communication errors in policy conveying are a fundamental cause of implementation failure, highlighting the impact of direct and indirect communication on policy implementation. The study's findings align with Termme (2016), which also emphasizes the significance of communication in policy implementation. The clarity of objectives, goals, and policy structure was found to significantly influence successful implementation, as corroborated by the research of Tongkow (1991) and Pilun (2006).

However, despite their adherence to instructions, this study found a need for overall understanding among implementers at the Central Chest Institution of Thailand. This deficit in comprehension may hinder effective communication, ultimately affecting the success of implementing e-Health policy and may lead to control problems, as highlighted in the research by Chandarasorn (2000). The study revealed that the extent of control problems depends on the ability of responsible agencies to translate policies into practical

guidelines that align with policy objectives and have clear objectives for policy activities. The study also emphasized the importance of clearly defining the desired outcomes of policy activities and the extent to which the policy activities align with the policy's objectives. Additionally, the level of control problems is influenced by the degree to which the implementing units have clear directives that align with the policy. This suggests that the lack of overall understanding among implementers may result in a disconnect between the policy's objectives and the practical implementation guidelines. This discrepancy can lead to difficulties in effectively controlling and implementing the e-Health policy. It is crucial to address this issue by providing comprehensive training and support to ensure that implementers understand the policy and its practical implications.

Regarding the organizational competency factor, this study demonstrated several factors that supported the successful implementation of the e-Health policy. These factors align with the study conducted by Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), which identified various factors influencing policy implementation, including the quantity and competence of personnel, decision - making hierarchy, political resources, organizational resilience, internal communication openness, and formality of policymakers and stakeholders. The Institution had sufficient resources, including hardware, software, and personnel, for implementing the e-Health policy. Motivated activities were observed within the institution, driven by competent leadership and strong support from higher - level institutions. The organizational structure followed a formal government system with a hierarchical chain of command and formal and informal communication among personnel. However, the study also highlighted areas where improvement is needed. The Central Chest Institute of Thailand needed more motivation regarding evaluation, rewards, or penalties for implementers. The study by Chandarasorn (2008) emphasized the importance of motivation in policy implementation, suggesting that rewards and performance evaluations can enhance organizational competence. Additionally, leaders were found to need more decision-making skills and motivational abilities.

To achieve successful policy implementation, the organization must possess appropriate leadership qualities and utilize positive motivational approaches, as indicated by the integrated model proposed by Chandarasorn (2008) and supported by the studies conducted by Thongchomphu (2015) and Chumnual (2010).

Furthermore, the study identified a need for more personnel with specialized knowledge and expertise in advanced information technology as a factor affecting organizational competence, which is crucial for policy implementation. Adequately qualified personnel are necessary to effectively implement policies, as discussed in the study by Chandarasorn (2000). Finally, external factors such as current economic and societal changes can drive and hinder policy implementation. Quick identification and resolution of issues through effective prevention and intervention are essential to contribute to the success of policy implementation. This finding aligns with the study by Kummak (2011), which states that economic, social, and political conditions influence the success and effectiveness of policy implementation.

The supportive cooperation of implementer factors plays a significant role in the successful implementation of policies. According to the study, the author found that most personnel in the Central Chest Institute of Thailand are well-intentioned towards the organization. However, they need to gain awareness and understanding of the policies implemented by the executives and be ready to change existing work practices. This impacts the successful implementation of policies and aligns with the study conducted by Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), which found that the effectiveness of policy implementation depends on the cooperation of the practitioners. The level of cooperation depends on their goodwill towards the organization and their readiness for change. It is also important for practitioners to understand the standards and objectives of the policy in order to foster cooperation. However, practitioners may reject a policy if it contradicts their values or interests, which can be addressed by involving them in the stages of setting goals and objectives of the policy. In addition, a study by Chandarasorn (2008) on the process model of

the government system found that the failure of policy implementation in the government system is not due to ineffective management but rather because policy-makers or administrators do not understand the actual implementation situation. Imposing new policies that affect or change civil servants' daily routines often yields ineffective results. Therefore, it is important for civil servants or practitioners to accept or adapt to the policy and the implementation approach as a part of their daily duties. Based on the study of the implementation of e - Health at the Central Chest Institute of Thailand, it was found that there needs to be more awareness and understanding of the policy among practitioners, which can affect the policy's success.

Furthermore, the readiness for change is an important factor in the ability to implement and adapt to new policies, as identified in a study by the Society for Human Resource Management (2005, cited in Reuangkoon, 2013). According to this study, the readiness for change is influenced by three factors: 1) effective and credible leadership; 2) the motivation of individuals within the organization to change; and 3) the organizational hierarchy. This study found that the readiness for change is low due to two conditions that need to be developed: motivation and organizational hierarchy. Firstly, in terms of motivation, the impact of motivation is significant in driving individuals to change. If the motivation stems from dissatisfaction with the organization's current situation and a desire to improve, it will catalyze change. Therefore, if communication can be established to show employees how the existing policy can improve their work, it will lead to more change. Secondly, in terms of organizational hierarchy, the Central Chest Institute of Thailand has a complex hierarchical structure, where decision-making often rests with high-level executives and is then cascaded down, potentially involving individuals who are not directly involved in the work that needs to be changed. This can lead to resistance. Reducing hierarchy can increase readiness for change or create opportunities for collaboration among different units and levels of personnel. This can facilitate a smoother implementation process.

## Conclusion:

E-health policy brings about transformative changes in the healthcare system, enabling healthcare providers to enhance access, responsiveness, speed, safety, and efficiency of care delivery. The successful implementation of such policies is crucial and necessary. This study examines the actual implementation of certain e - health policies, specifically the case of Smart Hospitals in Thailand, using the Central Chest Institute of Thailand as a case study. The study identifies key factors and strategies that contribute to the success of implementing e - health policies in other hospitals. It starts with policy acceptance, followed by translating the policy into an action plan that ensures continuity and ultimate effectiveness. The transformation from planning to practice requires addressing essential factors, namely communication, organizational competency, and supportive cooperation of implementer factors. If these factors are successfully addressed, implementing e - health policies can yield positive outcomes. However, deficiencies in these factors may lead to delays or failures in implementing e - health policies.

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## Strategic Human Resources Management as a Factor of Universities Competitiveness in Thailand

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### Abstract

Thailand's universities are undergoing modernization to integrate better into the global education landscape. However, many universities still struggle with low efficiency and effectiveness in their management approaches, resulting in a significant competitive disadvantage. This study seeks to identify strategic human resource management (HRM) issues in universities and explore ways to enhance their competitiveness. There are two research questions: RQ1: What strategic human resource management is needed for universities' competitiveness? RQ2: To what extent does the implementation of strategic human resource management affect university competitiveness? This study employed a qualitative research design that involved semi-structured interviews with 20 HR professionals from various universities. Data analysis used content analysis alongside Nvivo software analysis. The results indicate that recruitment and selection procedures require adequate training, while individual development plans (IDP) and reward incentives, including fair pay, are necessary. The contemporary notion of strategic HRM has significant implications for management and academia. This study concludes that integrating strategic management theory into best practices for HRM is crucial for enhancing competitiveness in universities. Future research should consider moderating factors, such as workplace culture, organizational climate, and the state of the labor market.

### Introduction:

Throughout history, it has been repeatedly observed that initiatives and advancements in education driven by government entities have seldom achieved success. One of the primary reasons behind this is the failure to consider the unique needs and interests of individual educational institutions, such as schools,

colleges, and universities, as well as those of faculty members. More recently, there has been a shift in the approach to strategic management prompted by the recognition of this lack of success. It is now increasingly acknowledged that there is a necessity for dialogue between educational institutions and society, considering the specific circumstances for strategic management within each institution.



Moreover, it is acknowledged that institutions must operate democratically with active participation and collaboration from society. Consequently, there is a departure from the notion that strategic management should be tied exclusively to comprehensive institutional reforms and a move towards establishing a connection between strategic management, the individual professional development of faculty and academic supporting staff, and the learning processes of students.

European higher education institutions (HEIs) presently navigate a fiercely competitive global landscape, grappling with challenges in managerial, academic, technological, and economic domains (Stukalina, 2010/1). Aligned with the Europe 2020 initiative, higher education occupies a pivotal position, contributing significantly to socioeconomic growth and development. The region's aspiration to evolve into a smart, sustainable, and inclusive economy is intricately linked to the transformative role of higher education. Serving as a catalyst for individual and societal progress, higher education profoundly influences innovation and research. Additionally, HEIs serve as crucial reservoirs of highly skilled human capital, indispensable for fostering growth and prosperity in knowledge-based economies.

Some universities prioritize addressing immediate internal challenges, driven by factors like budget cuts, declining demographics, and prolonged organizational restructuring (Poole, 2001; Shattock, 2000). Conversely, certain institutions, particularly in Russia, display limited adaptability, relying on emulating foreign management practices and strategies from successful participants in the education market. Only a small percentage of Russian higher education institutions, around 2 percent, have made significant strides globally, mainly those participating in the "academic excellence initiative." Strategic management is globally crucial for higher education institutions, including those in Thailand, directly impacting the quality of education. Effective strategic management practices enable institutions to set clear goals, make informed decisions, allocate resources efficiently, and adapt to changing educational landscapes. Crocco (2018) addressed issues in Thai universities, noting challenges in their competitive rather than collaborative treatment. However, all

universities, regardless of type, face the common challenge of improving education quality amid evolving market requirements, including issues related to workforce and academic support.

Strategic management theories offer valuable insights into devising new strategies in higher education institutions. However, these theories may not comprehensively address the complex challenges faced by educational managers. Modern universities are intricate organizations, influenced by a diverse range of contributing factors that influence educational management decisions. Hence, when formulating strategies, education managers must consider the organizational characteristics unique to this sector (Tavernier, 2005). Therefore, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive analysis of both conventional and innovative approaches that can be effectively applied by educational managers in the context of strategy development. By utilizing such tools, universities can significantly enhance their strategic adaptability and competitiveness (Shattock, 2010). The successful implementation of a strategic marketing approach is paramount for universities aiming to achieve prominent positions in the global education market and attain high academic rankings.

The existing literature lacks sufficient research on strategic human resources management (HRM) within the education management system, leaving a gap between the ideal and current state of strategic HRM. This study bridges this gap and contributes to both the literature and managerial practices. This research focuses on universities in Thailand and addresses the following contemporary challenges as the rationale for the study: the turbulent external and internal environment, intensified international competition, changing market requirements for university education, blurred boundaries of education demand, the need for innovation in response to technological advancements, knowledge obsolescence, and the increasing imbalance of internal interests. The formulated research questions aimed to explore how strategic HRM can help private universities navigate these challenges and improve recruitment, retention, and overall human resource practices. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: What is strategic human resources management needed for universities' competitiveness

RQ2: To what extent is the implementation of strategic human resource management for university competitiveness?

## Literature Review:

### *The development of strategic management concepts in universities context*

Emerging in the late 1970s, strategic management is recognized for its adaptability in diverse situations, involving modifying an organization's direction, functions, and structure to achieve desired efficiency and quality in response to environmental changes. General strategic management theory encompasses goal formulation, strategic analysis, strategy development, implementation planning, strategic change, and strategic control (Hill et al., 2014; Freeman, 2010; Parakhina et al., 2010). In higher education, strategic management differs from its business counterpart, with a fragmented understanding of its nature, technology, and procedures. Scientific approaches to strategic planning and management in universities began to take shape in the early 1990s, primarily in industrialized developed countries. Scholars like E. Chaffee, M. Peterson, D. Bryson, B. Clarke, M. Cohen, J. March, E. Morgan, P. Lorange, S. Slaughter, and L. Leslie played significant roles in studying applied problems of strategic planning systems, with many being members of the academic community (Morgan, 2004; Dyson, 2004; Shattock, 2010).

Limited research has been conducted on university management in Thailand, particularly regarding practical implementation. Initial publications on the topic of strategic planning emerged in the journal "University Management: Practice and Analysis" between 2000 and 2010. However, these publications mainly provided reviews of specific university strategies, focusing on planned intentions rather than offering a comprehensive overview of the overall strategic development within the university. Consequently, they do not adequately reflect the actual experiences and practices of strategic

management in Thailand (Titov, 2008). It is worth mentioning the recommendations put forth by a group of international and Thai scholars (Veretennikova et al., 2008) as they provide valuable insights into strategic management. Their research stands out because of its comprehensive methodology, strong foundation, and coverage of a wide range of strategic management tools and methods. The suggestions offered by these authors were derived from the experiences of both Thailand and foreign universities in developing strategic plans for higher education institutions.

The diversity in strategic planning and management approaches is evident in the strategies implemented by prominent American universities like Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Virginia, English universities like Durham and Warwick, and Australian universities like Charles Sturt University (Clark, 1998; Antoinetti et al., 2002). These cases illustrate practices observed in North American and European universities, emphasizing their adaptability to changing environments. The variations in strategies and adaptations within these institutions highlight the diverse approaches employed in strategic planning and management in higher education. However, existing publications reveal a lack of extensive research on proactive responses to changes, particularly the adaptation of strategic management theory from business structures to educational institutions (Morgan, 2004; Dyson, 2004). The development of strategic management in universities is influenced by several factors.

1. Life cycle: Strategic planning in business typically spans three to five years, whereas universities often require longer planning cycles of five years or more.

2. Consensus: Unlike commercial organizations, where top-level management determines the general business model, effective planning in universities requires the participation of leading academic staff.

3. System of values: While commercial businesses prioritize profitability, the primary purpose of universities is social and focuses on teaching and education.

4. Consumers: The wide range of interests of university consumers, including individuals, society, and employers, complicates the process of balancing objectives and assessing their achievement.

5. Content of activities: Universities differ from standard commercial organizations in that they must address the inherent conflict between the conservative academic environment and the need for innovation.

These factors contribute to the unique challenges faced in developing strategic management at universities, highlighting the need for tailored approaches that consider the distinct nature and characteristics of educational institutions.

#### *Human resources management needs to be strategic in universities*

Human resource management strategy refers to a set of internal organizational strategies related to personnel management. Effectively implementing human resource management strategies in various scenarios can enable enterprises to efficiently utilize their employees to achieve organizational goals. Several scholars and experts have provided definitions of human resource management strategies, leading to attempts to classify these types. However, various scholars have proposed different classifications. For instance, Shattock (2010) introduced inducement, investment, and participation strategies, while Dyson (2004) identified accumulation, utilization, and facilitation as three other types of human resource management strategies. As a result, Edgar and Geare (2013) presented the development, motivational, reinforcement, and transfer strategies as dimensions of the human resource management strategy.

This study identified that research-intensive universities employ three main groups of ideal human resource management (HRM) practices to enhance research. These practices include (1) recruitment processes, (2) Individual development plan (IDP), and (3) rewards and benefits. This study also highlights the relevance of these practices for developing countries when formulating research enhanced HRM policies. These findings provide an analytical framework for investigating research enhanced HRM practices at prominent universities in Thailand (see Table 1).

#### *Recruitment process*

Both long-standing prestigious universities and newly established world-class institutions place great emphasis on recruiting academics, based on their research accomplishments and potential. Established research universities often evaluate candidates' proficiency in conducting high-quality research with a particular focus on their publication track records (Edgar and Geare, 2013). Some research - intensive universities have a thorough probationary process before granting full appointments, while others seek candidates with international research reputations to attract top talent on a global level (Taylor, 2006). To secure the appointments of highly qualified individuals, these universities are willing to provide competitive remuneration packages and additional benefits.

In their efforts to become world-class universities, emerging countries, such as China and India, have made significant changes to their employment policies. These changes were designed to prioritize candidates with overseas PhD qualifications or work experience (Wang et al., 2011). Attracting highly qualified foreign scholars to developing countries can be challenging because of factors such as lower pay, less favorable living conditions, and potential limitations in accessing national research grants and other funding sources. To counter these challenges, universities in these countries have actively sought to engage diaspora talented scholars and scientists working abroad, encouraging them to return and contribute to the academic development of their home countries (Jayaram, 2011; Postiglione, 2011; Wang et al., 2011). Although these policies have shown some success, they also present certain challenges.

One of the identified problems is the potential difficulty of retaining and integrating returning scholars into the local academic environment. Addressing cultural and institutional differences can also pose a challenge, as well as ensuring sustainable career development opportunities for academics (Jayaram, 2011; Postiglione, 2011; Wang et al., 2011). To fully leverage the potential of attracting and integrating diaspora scholars for research and academic development in their home countries, it is essential that universities

and policymakers address these challenges and create supportive frameworks. By doing so, they can foster a conducive environment for the growth and advancement of academia in emerging nations.

Implementing policies for the repatriation of foreign national academics presents specific challenges that should be carefully considered. While the recruitment of scholars from other countries has the potential to enrich a university's research environment and overall culture, the actual outcomes may not align with initial expectations. A case in point is the 111 Project at Peking University, as highlighted by Cai (2012). According to the study, the intended duration of 1-3 months for foreign national Chinese scholars to stay in China was often not realized due to their dual commitments to both their home institution overseas and Peking University. It is imperative for universities to ensure that the recruitment of distinguished scholars from abroad extends beyond symbolic representation and results in tangible impacts (Cai, 2012).

Universities aiming to enhance their research profiles with expatriate academics should streamline visa application procedures to prevent unnecessary bureaucracy, which could potentially hinder scholars' enthusiasm. Additionally, while attracting foreign scientists is valuable initially, developing countries' universities should prioritize nurturing their own highly qualified local researchers for long-term sustainability (Postiglione, 2013). This approach ensures the establishment of a lasting research culture within universities. By addressing these challenges and implementing suitable measures, universities can effectively leverage the expertise of repatriated academics while fostering the growth of their local research community.

#### ***Individual development plan (IDP)***

Establishing a well-structured staff R&D program is widely acknowledged as a crucial step in enhancing a university's research capacity. This process involves creating an environment that encourages continuous improvement in research skills and sustains academic motivation for research (Cooke and Green, 2000; Calma, 2010). Universities must take on the responsibility

of managing staff research careers institutionally, rather than relying solely on individual academics to seek development opportunities (Connell, 2004). Instead, universities should proactively provide and support staff members with opportunities for research development throughout their career trajectory.

The university's research office plays a crucial role in bolstering the informal research credentials of academics. It can coordinate research development workshops, aiding academics in diverse areas such as formulating research proposals, authoring publishable papers, managing research projects, and overseeing postgraduate research (Taylor, 2006). Furthermore, senior researchers can undergo training in research management skills, and early career researchers can receive mentoring support (Cheetham, 2007; Rath, 2009). Universities can also play a part in enhancing academics' formal qualifications by providing opportunities for pursuing Ph.D. degrees. These collective initiatives significantly contribute to the professional advancement and research capabilities of academics within the university context.

Significant insights have been gleaned regarding the transformation of academics from a teaching-centric to a research-oriented approach in research-emerging universities in developing countries. A case study by Li et al. (2013) focused on young faculty members in humanities and social sciences at Zhejiang University, China. The university underwent a higher education reform, transitioning from a guaranteed tenure system to a contract-based system that assesses faculty based on both quantitative and qualitative research and teaching indicators. The study highlighted challenges faced by faculty members in balancing external accountability and internal values, navigating new appraisal and promotion criteria, all while reconciling with the old system (Li et al., 2013).

For the establishment of effective research-enhanced human resource management (HRM) policies, the authors propose that universities offer sufficient support to help academics overcome transition challenges. These challenges encompass career fatigue for early- and mid-career academics, work-life balance

issues for female faculty, and job burnout and turnover concerns for those without a doctoral degree (Li et al., 2013). Addressing these issues enables universities to cultivate an environment conducive to research engagement and supports the professional growth and well-being of faculty members.

### *Reward and benefit*

To attract and retain talented academics, it is crucial to implement a reward system that acknowledges and incentivizes research. Such a system can significantly boost academic research output, shape work habits, and influence attitudes toward research, creating pressures that encourage career mobility. Developing countries' universities should prioritize a reward system that maximizes opportunities for international and local academics to contribute expertise locally. By creating incentives and recognizing research excellence, universities can attract and retain academics, facilitate knowledge exchange, and foster a vibrant research culture within the local academic community.

Universities can incentivize academic research by linking employment, promotion, and tenure to research outputs, using input and output performance indicators (Rhee, 2011; Taylor, 2006). Input measures include past research income, number of research students and staff, percentage of research-active staff, research funding applications, and success rates. Output measures encompass publications, citations, completed theses, patent applications, and academic distinctions. By utilizing these indicators, universities can establish a framework to reward academics for their research efforts and achievements.

Universities can recognize academics for research performance through financial and non-financial incentives. Non-financial rewards include managerial recognition, praise, acknowledgment in bulletins, and esteem at scientific conferences (Santo et al., 2009; Hedjazi and Behravan, 2011). Financial incentives encompass salary bonuses, expedited promotion, funding for travel and conferences, and additional research support (Taylor, 2006). For example, at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, a policy since 1999 offers a reward of approximately \$1480 USD for each

Science Citation Index (SCI)-indexed paper. This policy significantly increased the university's total SCI papers, reaching 2331 in 2007, aligning it with top 100 world-class universities (Wang et al., 2011).

Management should assess the effectiveness of rewards, considering that monetary incentives may primarily boost productivity and motivation, especially for staff with comparatively lower salaries. While salary, awards, and promotions are important, Hedjazi and Behravan (2011) emphasize that intrinsic pleasures associated with challenging work, intellectual accomplishments, engaging colleagues, and recognition truly motivate researchers. Universities should aim to create an environment fostering intrinsic motivation, providing opportunities for intellectually stimulating work, collaboration with inspiring colleagues, and recognition of contributions. While financial rewards have a role, understanding and nurturing inherent motivators are essential for researchers' excellence.

In a study comparing factors influencing faculty members' time allocation to teaching and research, Fairweather (2009) found that the most significant predictor is the actual reward in the form of basic salary. Additionally, Hedjazi and Behravan (2011) noted that faculty members tend to view financial rewards more positively than symbolic ones. It is crucial to recognize that the most effective combination of financial and nonfinancial rewards may vary for each individual. Moreover, an individual's preferences for rewards are likely to change over their lifespan (McKeachie, 1979, as cited in Bland and Ruffin, 1992).

Therefore, universities should not only offer preferred rewards but also allow researchers access to the rewards they prefer, recognizing that needs and preferences evolve over time (Bland and Ruffin, 1992). While rewards may involve financial remuneration, their true significance lies in acknowledging specialized expertise, intellectual capabilities, and value to colleagues (McKeachie, 1979, 1983, as cited in Postiglione, 2013). A mix of rewards tailored to individual preferences can enhance overall satisfaction and motivation among faculty members, fostering continued dedication to teaching and research.

To effectively motivate and retain talented researchers, universities can acknowledge and appreciate their unique contributions. While specific guidance for rewarding staff at emerging research universities in developing countries is limited, Li et al. (2013) provides suggestions. They propose involving discipline-specific experts, rather than relying solely on the Department of Human Resources, to determine the academic journals considered when evaluating faculty research outputs. This nuanced approach allows for a more precise assessment and recognition of research performance. Additionally, recognizing differences among academic disciplines, universities can establish varied teaching-research workloads for different fields. Rather than applying uniform research performance standards, universities can categorize lecturers into research-oriented, combined research and teaching, or teaching - oriented staff, setting corresponding expectations for research performance. By implementing these measures, universities can align the reward system with the unique characteristics of various academic disciplines, fostering an environment that supports research excellence and recognizes diverse faculty contributions (Li et al., 2013).

In summary, research - intensive universities enhance research performance through three key HRM policies: hiring talented academics, developing their skills, and rewarding achievements. These policies aim to cultivate a skilled and motivated research-focused academic staff. However, the university's context, influenced by external factors, plays a crucial role in decision - making. Salmi (2011) identified eight groups of external factors affecting research universities, with HRM significantly influencing factors 1 to 6. When evaluating research capacity building, it is vital to consider not only the three HRM policies but also key external factors shaping the tertiary education ecosystem. Recognizing and addressing these factors help bridge gaps in knowledge, particularly in establishing strategic human resources management in educational perspectives, especially in Thai universities, for national and international competitiveness.

## Methodology:

This study employed a qualitative research approach, using in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. The qualitative research methodology involves key stages: research design, data collection, data analysis, and report writing (Viphanphong et al., 2023). The primary objective is to understand decision-making processes and actions in a specific context, providing explanations for particular phenomena (Limna & Kraiwanit, 2022). In-depth interviews are valuable for eliciting comprehensive responses on specific research topics, obtaining detailed information to address research questions effectively (Moore, 2004; Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017; Limsakul & Kraiwanit, 2020). The methodology comprises four steps:

Step 1: Review the selected secondary data qualitatively through related literature.

Step 2: Assessing the relevant stakeholders qualitatively through in-depth structured interviews based on interview questions to assess the factors that influence strategic human resources.

Step 3: Analyzing the content of qualitative structure was used to synthesize the result

Step 4: Consolidating the findings from these results to identify the factors influencing strategic human resource management.

### *Data collection*

The study employed a qualitative method to conduct in-depth interviews and examine relevant documents from secondary data to obtain the primary data results. Purposive determination is a widely adopted qualitative research technique that involves the deliberate selection of a sample that would best suit the research questions based on the researchers' expertise. This method aims to gather comprehensive knowledge or phenomenon of interest (Siripipatthanakul et al., 2022). In this study, 20 participants in HR professional positions at private and public universities, including government, autonomous, rajabhat, and

rajamangala universities in Thailand, was selected using purposive sampling. To minimize bias, the study ensured representation from various university systems by including at least two universities from each system. This approach aimed to encompass a diverse range of perspectives and avoid favoring a specific university system. The data collection process employed three inclusion criteria: 1) they were in HR positions in those types of universities in Thailand,

2) they had been working at the university for at least five years of employment, and 3) they were at least senior or manager level. Using purposive sampling to determine the number of sample sizes, Creswell and Poth (2017) suggested that between 20–30 participants are sufficient for qualitative research methods and the theoretical saturation test. Hence, this study conducted 20 participants.

**Table 1**

*Participants' information*

Types of universities	Number of participants	Positions
<b>Government</b>		
- University 1	1	Senior HR officer
- University 2	2	HR Manager
- University 3	1	HR Manager
<b>Autonomous</b>		
- University 1	2	HR Manager
- University 2	2	HR Manager
<b>Rajabhat group</b>		
- University 1	2	HR Manager
- University 2	2	HR Manager
<b>Raja Mangala group</b>		
- University 1	2	Senior HR officer
- University 2	2	HR Manager
<b>Private</b>		
- University 1	2	HR Manager
- University 2	2	Associate Dean/ Dean
<b>Total</b>	20	

This study employed a self - administered approach to data collection. Initially, participants were invited through an invitation letter to obtain their consent. Subsequently, interviews were conducted using various methods, such as telephone, zoom conference, or face-

to-face, based on the convenience of the participants. The data obtained were in the form of voice recordings, which were then transcribed and analyzed to create memos and extract relevant content. The data collection phase spanned May 5th–31st, 2023.

The interview process primarily involved conducting in-depth individual interviews. These one-on-one interviews were chosen to ensure that the interviewees could freely express themselves without interference from their colleagues, thereby encouraging them to reveal more information. The interviews were structured around the following key questions: 1) Why do you believe that human resource management needs to be strategic? 2) According to your perspective, what is the most critical factor in strategic human resources management? 3) What is your approach or strategy in the recruitment process? 4) Do you think it is essential to disclose rewards and pay for job applicants to apply for posted positions? 5) How does management influence human resources policies? 6) Do you strongly support the idea that continuous learning and development should be provided to all the employees? 7) Can implementing a learning and development program, such as an individual development plan (IDP), significantly impact employee retention? 8). Finally, what suggestions or recommendations do you have regarding overall human resources management practices?

#### *Data analysis*

In this study, content analysis was used as a qualitative methodology, which entails a systematic and objective approach to describe and quantify particular phenomena based on verbal, visual, or written data (Namraksa & Kraiwanit, 2023; Woodeson, Limna, & Nga-Fa, 2023). The computer - assisted

qualitative data analysis tool NVivo was employed to aid in the organization and analysis of extensive datasets (Brandão, 2015). Consequently, both content analysis and NVivo were used to analyze the data collected in the study.

#### **Results:**

In total, the study conducted 20 interview sessions (see Table 3 for participants' information), each lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. After each interview, the materials were sorted, and memos were written in a timely manner. This process resulted in a substantial number of interview records, totaling approximately 6,000 words. Out of the 20 interviews, a random selection process was used to select two-thirds of the interview records, which equates to 14 interviews and approximately 4,000 words, analyzed in the NVivo software to extract the frequency word (see Figure 1). These interviews were coded to explore the various factors influencing the implementation of strategic human resources management. The remaining one - third of the interviews, comprising approximately 2,000 words, were set aside for specific purposes. It was used to test whether there might be any significant categories or factors that were not initially identified during the coding process, essentially conducting a theoretical saturation test. This approach helped ensure that the study captured a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and validated the findings.

**Table 2**

*Participants' information*

<b>Items</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
Gender		
- Male	4	20%
- Female	16	80%
Positions Level		
- Senior Officer	4	20%
- Manager	14	70%
- Management	2	10%



Items	No.	Frequency (%)
Year of services		
- 0 – 5 Year	2	10%
- 6 – 10 Year	12	60%
-10 year up	6	30%
Age		
- 25 – 35	4	20%
- 36 – 45	8	40%
- 46 – 55	5	25%
- 56 up	3	15%
Total	20	100%

Each respondent was interviewed to address the factors of strategic human resource management for competitiveness in the context of universities. The interviews aimed to gather in-depth insights and perspectives from each individual on this topic. The details are summarized as follows:

“In the context of universities, the most critical factor for strategic human resource management is the alignment of HR strategies with an institution's educational mission and long - term goals. Universities are unique organizations that primarily focus on providing high-quality education, research, and community engagement. Faculty Recruitment and Development: Hiring and retaining qualified faculty members who are not only experts in their fields, but also align with the university's values and commitment to education. Faculty development programs that support their teaching, research, and professional growth are essential” Respondent 1, interviewed on May 05, 2023.

“Staff Development and Training: Recognizing the crucial role of staff members in supporting the university's mission and investing in their development and training. This includes administrative staff, support personnel, and other non-faculty employees, and the training and development plan must be adequate for all levels of university employees.” Respondent 2, interviewed on May 06, 2023.

“Academic Freedom and Governance: Balancing the need for academic freedom with effective institutional governance and decision-making processes

to provide the flexibility of faculty to think differently with supportive from management as the individual development plan (IDP). Research funding to all faculty to develop themselves needs to be budgeted and open for all to propose the research project” Respondent 3, interviewed on May 10, 2023.

“Strategic Human Resources management in universities should be viewed as an integral part of the institution's overall strategic planning, contributing to the achievement of its educational mission, vision, and long-term objectives. By aligning HR strategies with the university's unique needs and values, universities can better attract, develop, and retain the talent required to thrive in the ever - changing landscape of higher education.” Respondent 4, interviewed on May 10, 2023.

“Supporting Educational Mission: Universities have a unique mission of providing high - quality education, research, and community engagement. A strategic HR approach ensures that the faculty and staff hired align with this mission and contribute effectively to the institution's academic excellence.” Respondents 5, interviewed on May 15, 2023.

“Attracting and Retaining Talent: Strategic HR management helps universities compete for top talent in academia. By developing attractive compensation packages, career development opportunities, and a supportive work environment, universities can better recruit and retain exceptional faculty and staff.” Respondent 6, interviewed on May 15, 2023.

“Succession Planning and Leadership Development: In the academic environment, strong leadership is crucial. A strategic HR approach includes succession planning and leadership development programs to ensure a continuous pipeline of qualified individuals for key leadership roles.” Respondent 6, interviewed on May 15, 2023.

“Building a Positive Campus Culture: A strategic HR approach contributes to building a positive campus culture that fosters collaboration, creativity, and a sense of community among faculty, staff, and students.” Respondents 7, interviewed on May 16, 2023.

“By adopting a strategic approach to human resources management, universities can create an environment where faculty and staff are empowered to excel, students thrive in their educational journey, and the institution can fulfill its mission of advancing knowledge and benefiting society as a whole.” Respondent 8, interviewed on May 22, 2023

“Implementing a learning and development program, such as the Individual Development Plan (IDP), can significantly impact employee retention in the university context. A well-designed IDP offers numerous benefits that contribute to employee satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty, thereby leading to higher retention rates. IDPs can positively influence employee retention in universities.” Respondents 9, interviewed on May 23, 2023.

“Enhancing Employee Engagement: Engaged employees are more committed to their work and the institution. IDPs offer a clear pathway for growth, enhancing employees' sense of purpose and engagement and leading to improved retention.” Respondents 10, interviewed on May 26, 2023.

“An effective Individual Development Plan (IDP) can have a substantial impact on employee retention in the university context. By supporting employees' growth and career aspirations, universities can create a more motivated, engaged, and committed workforce that is more likely to stay with the institution in the long term.” Respondent 11, interviewed on May 27, 2023.

“Competing for Top Talent: Universities often compete for top talent with other academic institutions and industries. Transparently disclosing compensation helps universities attract the best candidates who are looking for fair and competitive remuneration.” Respondent 12, interviewed on May 27, 2023.

“Enhancing University Reputation: A university that is open about its compensation practices is more likely to be perceived as a reputable and desirable employer. This can enhance a university's reputation and attractiveness to potential candidates.” Respondent 13, interviewed on May 31, 2023.

“It is important to remember that universities often have unique salary structures based on academic rank, tenure, and other factors. Providing a salary range or explaining how compensation is determined based on qualifications can also help maintain transparency, while considering the complexity of academic remuneration. Overall, transparency in disclosing rewards and pay is beneficial to both universities and job applicants. It helps create a fair, efficient, and positive hiring process that aligns with the principles of openness and integrity often associated with higher education institutions.” Respondent 14, interviewed on May 31, 2023.

Subsequently, data were extracted via open coding from the original statements obtained during the 14 interview sessions.

### *Open coding*

Open coding is a data analysis technique used to divide the collected data into manageable and analyzable segments. This process involves continuous abstraction, comparison, and brainstorming to extract concepts that represent the essence of those segments, extracted from frequency words. These concepts are further organized into categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). In the context of this study, the process of open coding led to the discovery of 14 categories. This discovery was made after multiple rounds of data comparison and analysis. Table 4 provides examples of how these categories were formed during the analysis. This table illustrates the steps taken to derive each category and the key elements that contribute to their

formation. This systematic approach ensures a comprehensive and organized understanding of the data, allowing researchers to draw meaningful insights from the collected information.

**NVivo Analysis**

Interviews and data analysis were conducted using NVivo software. A word-frequency query was executed in NVivo to enhance the comprehensibility of the results. This query allowed researchers to identify

the words most frequently used by respondents during their interviews. The word cloud in Figure 1 visually represents these frequently used words, providing a quick and intuitive way to grasp the main themes and topics that emerged from interviews. The larger the word appearing in the word cloud, the more frequently it was mentioned by the respondents, indicating its significance in the discussion. This method aids in summarizing and highlighting key findings derived from the interview data.

**Figure 1**

*A Frequency Words (Word Cloud)*



In the data analysis process, NVivo software was used to analyze the frequency of words. Subsequently, the data was categorized through initial open coding, wherein original statements were broken

down into segments and assigned descriptive labels or "codes." These codes were then subjected to axial and selective coding in the later stages of the analysis.

**Table 3**  
*Open coding*

No.	Categories	Original statements
1	Recruitment process	HR positions at universities need to adapt the recruitment process to align with the changing format. It is important to note that the recruitment process in universities can vary based on the specific policies and practices of each institution. Additionally, for faculty positions, universities may have tenure-track or non-tenure-track positions, which can influence the hiring process.
2	Competitiveness through strategic HRM	Universities need to compete not only nationally but internationally as well hence, put the right man into the right job. By integrating strategic HRM practices into their operations, universities can cultivate a strong institutional identity, attract, and retain top talent, foster a dynamic and innovative culture, and ultimately enhance their competitiveness in the academic and research spheres.

No.	Categories	Original statements
3	Management/leadership	Supportive and well-reputed of universities' management also impact high quality applicant. Effective management and leadership are essential for universities to maintain a thriving academic and research environment, attract top talent, adapt to changing circumstances, and fulfill their educational and societal responsibilities. Successful universities often have a strong synergy between their management and leadership functions, with both working collaboratively to achieve common goals.
4	Retirement plan/ provident	Employees look for security job and retirement plan to stay long with the organization. Retirement plans and provident funds are essential components of a comprehensive benefits package offered by universities to attract and retain talented faculty and staff. These plans provide financial security and peace of mind for employees as they plan for their retirement years. The specific details and features of retirement plans in universities may vary based on the institution's policies, regulations, and the prevailing retirement laws in the country or region.
5	Training and development	Training and development must be continued for the entire employment period of all employee. A well-structured training and development plan in universities not only enhances the skills and knowledge of faculty, staff, and administrators but also contributes to the overall quality of education, research output, and the institution's reputation in the academic community.
6	Career path	A clear and transparent career path will be most attractive for joining the organization. An effective and transparent career path in universities not only helps individuals plan and navigate their careers but also contributes to a positive work environment and the overall success of the institution by attracting and retaining talented individuals committed to the university's mission and values.
7	Annual increment	The clear policy of Increment structure, annual increments are an essential component of the compensation package in universities, and they play a role in recognizing employees' dedication and hard work while contributing to employee motivation, job satisfaction, and retention.
8	Personal development plan	Employees in both academic and supportive academic positions prefer to see the prospect of career promotion during their employment period. Creating and following a personal development plan in the universities' context empowers individuals to take ownership of their growth and career progression. It encourages a proactive approach to learning, supports academic success, and enhances the overall university experience for students, faculty, and staff. Universities often provide resources, counseling, and workshops to assist individuals in developing effective PDPs and achieving their personal and professional goal.
9	Facilities at the workplace	The working environment can impact work motivation. Providing quality facilities is essential for creating a positive and supportive work environment that fosters academic and research excellence and enhances the overall university experience for all members of the community.
10	Remote work	Since the outbreak, HR has received feedback and questions from applicants about remote work flexibility. It is essential for universities to carefully assess the feasibility and implications of remote work arrangements to ensure they align with the institution's goals and requirements.
11	Recognition program	This is to recognize employees and establish the engagement. Recognition programs in universities not only boost morale and motivation but also help retain talented faculty and staff and foster a sense of pride and loyalty within the university community. They play a significant role in nurturing a positive and supportive environment that fosters personal and professional growth for all members of the institution.
12	Management support	The vision of management can impact the capability of employee to work for organization. Management support is integral to creating an environment in which faculty, staff, and students can thrive and fulfill their potential. Effective management practices contribute to the university's reputation, academic excellence, and overall success in fulfilling its educational and research missions.

No.	Categories	Original statements
13	Financial aid program	The employee cooperative or any kind of funding for financial aid. Financial aid programs aim to make education more accessible and affordable for students from diverse economic backgrounds, enabling them to enroll, persist, and succeed in their academic pursuits.
14	Promotion	Job promotion in the universities' context refers to the advancement of faculty or staff members to higher positions within the university hierarchy. A promotion recognizes an individual's dedication, expertise, and contributions to the institution and typically comes with increased responsibilities, authority, and often higher remuneration. The promotion process in universities is usually guided by specific policies and procedures established by the university's human resources department or relevant administrative bodies. Here are the key aspects and considerations related to job promotion in universities.

Based on open coding, axial coding is used to reanalyze the extracted categories and discover the internal relations among these categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Through analysis, it was found that the

14 categories formed in open coding can be divided into three main categories, and their correspondence is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Axial coding*

Categories	Connotations statement
<b>1. Recruitment process</b>	The proper recruitment process in the university context involves systematic and fair procedures to attract and select qualified candidates for faculty, staff, and administrative positions. An effective recruitment process ensures that the university can hire the best-suited individuals to fulfill its mission and objectives. A well-structured recruitment process in the university context helps attract talented individuals who align with the university's values and contribute positively to its academic and research pursuits. It also demonstrates the university's commitment to fairness and excellence in hiring and helps build a strong and diverse workforce.
<b>2. Individual development plan (IDP)</b>	The procedure for an Individual Development Plan (IDP) in the university context involves a structured approach to help faculty, staff, and students identify their professional development goals and create a roadmap for achieving them. An IDP typically includes self-assessment, goal setting, action planning, and evaluation. The IDP process in the university context is designed to empower individuals to take ownership of their growth and career progression. It encourages a proactive approach to learning, supports academic success, and enhances the overall university experience for faculty, staff, and students. Universities may provide guidance, workshops, and resources to help individuals develop effective IDPs and achieve their personal and professional goals
<b>3. Reward and benefit</b>	Rewards and remuneration play a crucial role in the university context for both faculty and staff members. They are essential components of the overall compensation package that universities offer to attract, motivate, and retain talented individuals. rewards and remuneration are critical components of the university context as they attract and retain talent, motivate performance, recognize excellence, and support a positive work culture. By investing in competitive compensation packages and effective reward systems, universities can create a supportive and rewarding environment that enhances the overall success and reputation of the institution.

After the axial coding, selective encoding was performed. Its purpose is to explore the internal connections between various main categories and connect them together in a storyline. A theoretical saturation test was performed using the remaining one-third of the data. After the remaining data were encoded, the formed categories were included, and no new and important categories were formed. Subsequently, four interviewees were randomly selected for follow-up feedback. They did not mention any new critical views, and all indicated satisfaction. Therefore, the results found three key components of strategic human resource management in the educational context: an innovative recruitment process to select the right applicant for the right position, an individual development plan (IDP) with a transparent career path and promotion opportunities, and a reward and benefit structure to ensure justice and fairness for every employee at all levels.

## Discussion:

This study focuses on strategic human resource management in higher education in the context of universities. It explores the adaptation of strategic management theory from business structures to educational institutions, building on previous studies by Morgan (2004) and Dyson (2004). Dyson emphasized that the development of strategic management in universities faces complexities due to various factors, particularly the contrasting qualifications and job responsibilities of employees in academic and administrative roles within the university management structure. As a result, human resources play a crucial role in driving university competitiveness in the educational industry in Thailand and globally. The influence of this factor on strategic human resource management aligns with Edgar and Geare (2013), Jayaram (2011), Postiglione (2011), Wang et al. (2011), Cai (2012), and Li et al. (2013).

Academic and administrative employees have different perspectives on career paths. Academic staff focus on research and development skills, while administrative staff prioritize the job hierarchy.

By addressing these concerns, universities can create an environment that fosters research engagement and supports the professional growth and well-being of faculty members. The factors influencing strategic human resources management to be competitive, as found in this study, are consistent with previous research by Hedjazi and Behravan (2011), Li et al. (2013), and Salmi (2011). Salmi (2011) identified eight groups of external factors that directly influence research universities' ability to thrive, and HRM is one of them. The HRM factors found in this study consist of the recruitment process, individual development plan (IDP), and rewards and benefits, which are in line with previous research in the higher education context. This study argues that recruiting graduate applicants overseas can uplift universities' capabilities, considering the context of Thailand, where remuneration may not be as competitive as the business field (Vithayaporn, 2021). Cultivating academic faculty by offering scholarships to pursue doctoral degrees or gain post-doctoral experience would be attractive for developing long-term employability sustainability.

## Conclusions:

The results of this study address two research questions: The first question was: What strategic human resource management is needed for universities' competitiveness? Universities are facing challenges in improving the quality of education and the production of quality students, which require the integration of curricular, academic, and administrative perspectives. Therefore, human resource management in educational institutes, such as universities, should be more strategic, moving away from traditional approaches, and adopting a more corporate dimension. Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) plays a crucial role in enhancing universities' competitiveness by effectively managing and developing human capital. Through the implementation of effective SHRM practices, universities can attract and retain talent, foster a culture of innovation and excellence, and position themselves competitively in the higher education landscape.

To address the second research question - to what extent does the implementation of strategic human resource management affect universities' competitiveness? Several key factors have been identified. First, the recruitment process needs to be strategic in finding the right candidate for the right job, moving away from traditional recruiting methods to more modern and competitive approaches that align with universities' needs. Second, a clear and transparent individual development plan for employees at different levels provides motivation and encouragement, encouraging them to dedicate themselves to the university's success. Finally, rewards and benefits play a crucial role in engaging university employees. Attractive remuneration and work-life balance initiatives contribute to employee retention. Employees who are satisfied with their employment are more likely to perform effectively and contribute to the university's success.

Furthermore, governance in universities plays a crucial role in strategic human resource management (HRM) as it sets the framework and direction for how the institution manages its human capital. Effective governance ensures that a university's HR policies, practices, and initiatives align with its overall mission, vision, and strategic objectives. In summary, governance in universities plays a fundamental role in strategic human resources management by setting policies, aligning HR strategies with institutional goals, allocating resources, ensuring compliance, and promoting talent development and retention. This collaborative approach helps universities build a strong and capable workforce, supporting their mission of providing high-quality education and research.

Inevitably, the limitations of this study could arise from the fact that the effectiveness of SHRM practices can be influenced by various contextual factors including cultural, legal, and economic differences between countries. The findings from studies conducted in the Thai context may not be directly applicable to other countries, making it essential to conduct research specific to the local environment. Therefore, the recommendation for further research is to adopt a cross-sectional design that captures data at

a specific point in time. However, longitudinal studies that track changes over time would provide more insights into the long - term impact of SHRM on competitiveness.

### Contributions of The Study:

For practical contributions, it would likely provide practical recommendations for Thai universities to enhance their SHRM practices, emphasizing the creation of an environment that fosters research excellence, faculty development, and long - term employability sustainability. The study highlights that effective Strategic Human Resources Management is essential for Thai universities to enhance their competitiveness in the educational industry, both domestically and globally. Regarding academic contributions, there is a gap in the literature on the application of strategic management theory to management and business dimensions. Consequently, the theory of strategic management can be applied from the perspective of the educational industry.

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## “Good Citizenship”: The Ideals of Moral Politics and Democracy in the Short Stories of Phan Wan Fah Award Between 2016 to 2021

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### Abstract

The article focuses on analyzing social ideas and political ideologies in the Pan Wan Fah Award-winning short stories published between 2016 and 2021. It applies concepts from semiotics and textual analysis to interpret and analyze the signs within 77 short story texts of the Pan Wan Fah Award, considering both their literary and socio-political contexts. The results reveal that the signs in the Pan Wan Fah Award-winning short stories reflect the political ideologies of the state, such as royal democracy and moral politics, which are combined with the ideas of being a good citizen and liberal democracy. Additionally, the short stories of the Pan Wan Fah Award present the ideals of liberal democracy and active citizenship, including new common values in human rights, equality, and human dignity. However, there is also a struggle for the people's political ideology against the state, such as a fair and truly elected democracy as a hope for future politics, freedom, equality, and democracy, including resistance to state violence, suppression, and unjust power of authoritarianism.

### Introduction

The Phan Wan Fah Award is a literature competition for short stories and poetry in the political genre, organized by the Secretariat of the House of Representatives in Thailand. Its aim is to promote politics and governance in a democratic system with the King as the head of state. The competition encourages public participation, promotes understanding of rights, duties, and social responsibility, and develops citizens in a democratic system through literature

(The Secretariat of the House of Representatives, 2016). Since its inception in 2002, the competition has been held annually. However, it was suspended after the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) took control of the government in 2014, because the Secretariat of the House of Representatives wanted to adjust the Phan Wan Fah literatures in appropriateness with the current political situation (The Secretariat of the House of Representatives, 2014). Then, the Phan Wan Fah Award was resumed in 2016.

Despite changes in the award categories, such as the name being changed from "Pan Wan Fah Political Literature Award" to "Pan Wan Fah Literature Award" to "Pan Wan Fah Literature Award", the competition continues to focus on creating and revitalizing political literature as outlined in its 2004 and 2013 award principles. The competition awards 12 literature prizes, with the winner receiving 60,000 Baht, the runner-up receiving 40,000 Baht, and honorable mentions receiving 20,000 Baht. The competition aims to promote unity and citizenship in a democracy (The Secretariat of the House of Representatives, 2016). Its objectives include promoting and supporting politics and governance in a democratic system with the King as head of state which is reaffirming the royal-democracy ideology of Thai state; encouraging public participation and understanding of rights, responsibilities, and social equality, as well as citizenship in a democratic system through literature; supporting and appreciating valuable Thai literature that reflects democratic values; and strengthening unity and solidarity among people in the nation.

Each year, only 12 short stories are selected for the Phan Wan Fah Award, and each story must align with the principles and ideas of the Secretariat of the House of Representatives. The creation of citizenship in a democratic system is comprised of six characteristics: 1) self-responsibility and self-reliance; 2) respect for equality; 3) respect for diversity; 4) respect for others' rights; 5) respect for rules and regulations; and 6) responsibility to society and the collective (The Secretariat of the House of Representatives, 2023).

Therefore, even though the authors of short literature have the freedom to express their political and social views through their writing, their work must still be limited and constructed with elements of ideas and ideology under the guidance of the state. It is interesting to study how the short literature of the Pan Wan Fah Award have either fought against or collaborated with the ideology of the Thai state, and what ideas and ideologies are conveyed through these short stories. This can be achieved through semiotic and textual analysis in order to reflect social and political ideas and values that promote democratic governance

and good citizenship in accordance with international principles and contemporary values of Thai society.

### Objectives:

This article aims to study and analyze social and political ideologies through the short stories of the Pan Wan Fah Award from the years 2016-2021.

### Semiotics Approach:

This article utilizes semiotics and textual analysis as its methodology to investigate the political ideologies and ideas present in the short stories of the Pan Wan Fah Award between the years 2016 and 2021. Semiotics, which originated from the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure (1986), has been adapted to literary semiotics and cultural analysis. The study is influenced by the ideas of Roland Barthes, who developed the semiotic approach to cultural analysis, and focuses on how language constructs meaning and shapes cultural practices, particularly in relation to political ideologies.

Semiotics is a method of analyzing and understanding social and cultural practices by viewing language as a system of signs and seeking to uncover the rules or principles that lead to the process of signification. Through semiotic analysis, one can gain a better understanding of how signs convey meaning within a specific context (Peter, 1987). According to Saussure, the sign is the most basic unit of language, which is a complex and interconnected system of relationships between the "signifier" (the sign or medium) and the "signified" (the idea that the signifier wants to convey). Both parts make up the sign, and one cannot be missing. For example, the word "tree" in Thai is the signifier that leads to our thoughts about what we call a tree, which is the signified. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, determined not by individuals but by society or the linguistic community.

Linguistic community refers to the language system within a particular society or community. Various symbols expressed naturally and accepted by society in the form of shared practices or social

conventions are not intrinsically valuable but are created by society. The community or society is necessary in creating values for these symbols so that their value is based on their general use and acceptance, allowing them to represent ideas in a particular society (Saussure, 1986).

The arbitrary relation, a condition that is not natural but created by social forces, is related to the power that governs or ensures the stability of the status of these symbols in language, or what is known as "analogy" (Barthes, 1988). The meaning or signification of a sign is distinct from its value. For Saussure, the meaning of a sign is a matter of relations and distinctions. He called this type of meaning "diacritics" because he saw language as a system built up from the differences of its constituent parts, with the meaning of each constituent part determined by its place within or relation to the larger system. The uniqueness of language, therefore, is a matter of comparison and distinction (Charoensin-o-larn, 2002).

The semiotic approach considers all types of signs, not just linguistic ones, as significant components of communication and meaning - making. Even non-linguistic signs can play a vital role in conveying meaning in society. Semiotics views the units of meaning or signs as diverse and including all the objects that surround us in society. The meanings of these signs are determined by the codes or rules of each particular society, or in other words, the cultural system itself. As such, culture can be studied as a phenomenon of semiotics, and the various norms of culture can be studied as a matter of the expression of signs. Culture is thus seen as a system of communication, and not as something beyond the system of meaning - making. (Eco, 1976).

In Roland Barthes' concept of semiotics (1980), it often referred as "semiology" or semiotics approach which explores the study of signs and their meanings within cultural and social contexts. His approach involves analyzing how signs function in various systems of communication and how they shape our understanding of the world. One notable example of Roland Barthes' application of the semiotic approach is his analysis of a photograph of French politician and

cultural figure Charles de Gaulle. In his essay titled "The Photographic Message," (1961). Barthes examines the photograph as a sign system and explores the layers of meaning it conveys. Barthes begins by dissecting the various signifiers present in the photograph, such as de Gaulle's pose, facial expression, clothing, and the setting. He argues that these signifiers collectively construct a signified image of de Gaulle as a powerful and authoritative figure. The pose and facial expression, for instance, convey a sense of confidence and determination, while the formal attire symbolizes his status as a leader (White, 2012).

Barthes also emphasized that meaning is not inherent in signs but is constructed through a process of interpretation. Myth is a second order signification that conveys cultural meanings beyond the original, denotative meaning of a sign. In the case of a car, for example, it may signify wealth, status, or power in a particular cultural context. This cultural meaning is constructed through social norms and conventions, and it is reproduced and reinforced through various forms of communication, such as advertising and media representations. The study of semiotics, therefore, allows us to analyze and decode the cultural meanings embedded in various signs and symbols, and to understand how these meanings are constructed and perpetuated in society. This can help us to gain a deeper understanding of cultural practices, values, and beliefs, and to identify the ways in which they shape our perceptions and behaviors.

In Barthes' view, the function of myth is to subjugate and appropriate the denotation of objects, which refers to their literal or utilitarian meaning, and transform it into a new connotative meaning, which is a symbolic or ideological one. As such, myth constitutes a second-order semiological system that communicates meaning in a distinctive way by exploiting the pre-existing meaning of objects through appropriation. At the level of myth, meaning is conveyed through cultural beliefs that have been manipulated to appear natural or part of a deceptive process. However, the essence of the myth does not fully conceal anything; everything is presented openly before us. But because we are so accustomed to it, we fail to recognize it as

a cultural context, and instead, we are deluded into thinking that the values we hold are natural or a result of our common sense (Barthes, 2004).

Hence, the process of signification plays a crucial role in creating the codes or cultural norms that determine meaning. Roland Barthes argues that culture and ideology are the primary creators or determinants of meaning, including the unconscious or subconscious framework of understanding daily life in society, which is even more significant in perceiving the meaning of signs in society. The system of signification is what renders the perception of signs in society appear natural and normal, making it difficult to discern the connotation of signs. Alternatively, it can become a process of manipulation that distorts people's perception in society, leading to the creation of myths.

Therefore, semiotic approach recognizes that language, things, and culture are interconnected and that meaning is constructed through using of signs. These signs are not static or fixed, but are dynamic and evolve over time through the processes of communication and interpretation. Overall, the semiotic approach provides a powerful tool for analyzing and interpreting the complex and multifaceted meanings of signs in our everyday lives, and for understanding the role of culture in shaping our communication and meaning-making practices.

### Textual Analysis:

The concept of textual analysis is an approach to reading a text that Roland Barthes (2008) advocates for. This approach enables readers to create their own new texts through the work itself, which he refers to as "writerly text." The reason for this open approach is that a text arrives with a complete structure or code, making it a closed text that requires an open reading to uncover new meanings. By breaking the text into fragments, readers can examine the process of constructing various codes within the text to comprehend the ongoing process of meaning - making (significance) through writing and structuring the text. This approach allows the writer to distance themselves

from the text, giving it the qualities of an autonomous object or reality. The result of this reality-effect is that the things contained within the text become real. This type of reading is called "analyzing the text" because the text is the space constructed or produced from the relationship between the reader and the written work. In this sense, the text is a matter of production, but it arises from a grid of different codes or various sets of discourse interwoven within the text.

In this conceptual framework, the "work" refers to the tangible object or content that can be perceived as an idea, form, or expression, while the "text" is what exists within the work and is a matter of language. In textual analysis, language is a metalanguage for analysis, and meaning in the text is not static. Language can create its own meaning, and words in a language never lose their meaning. However, they can float and create new meanings for the text. Therefore, the text is a dynamic interplay of signs that both tremble and float to transform or create new meanings (Charoensin-o-larn, 2002).

Text can take many forms, including verse, sentence, or an entire book, and has its own system that is separate from the language system, such as rhetoric or writing. By examining the various structures and codes within the text that contribute to the creation of meaning, we can better understand the process of signification in the text. The goal of studying textual analysis is not to find a single, definitive meaning or to interpret the meaning of the text as hermeneutics does, but rather to study the endless process of signification within the text. This approach focuses on the mobile structuration of the text, rather than attempting to explain the entire structure of the work (Barthes, 2008).

To summarize, analyzing the short stories of the Pan Wan Fah Award using the lenses of semiology and textual analysis is a study of the process of significance within literary works. This involves examining the structures, codes, and underlying ideologies that guide the creation of meaning within the work, which are often shaped by the state and broader societal and historical contexts.

The process of significance is not static, but rather dynamic and can change over time. By decoding the text and examining the constructed reality within the work, we can better understand the structure, ideals, and ideologies that guide the meaning of literary works.

### Research Methods:

The research aimed to analyze the social ideals and political ideologies conveyed in the 77 Pan Wan Fah Award-Winning Short Stories published from 2016 to 2021 using semiology and textual analysis. The semiology analysis focused on identifying signs in the texts and transcribing their denotation and connotation. For example, signs such as land, family, and gun were analyzed. On the other hand, the textual analysis examined the literary, socioeconomic, and political contexts and events that influenced the meaning and significance of the signs, including the writing structure.

The content analysis was then applied to transcribe the political ideologies conveyed in the texts through the contextual structure of literacies, such as the characters, scenes, and behaviors or expressions of the characters. This enabled the identification of political ideologies, such as the concept of unity and good citizenship in a democratic society, which could be portrayed through a descriptive analysis of the characters and their actions with the contexts of literature.

**Table 1**

*Political Signs and connotation meanings within the Pan Wan Fah Award-Winning Short Stories between 2016 to 2021*

Titles of literary works	Signs	Connotation meanings	Literature contexts	Social and Political Contexts
Please maintain the rules and etiquette; The Western front remains unchanged; The carpenter's son with a disability in his leg; Who is wrong?; The old man and the fish in the stream; Dead-end alley; Power; Let's look back at the VAR footage again	Rules	Developing new guidelines and laws for the benefit of oneself and allies; and social laws and regulations	The creation of a mentality of fear that people are living in a state of constant anxiety and unease, which could lead to a lack of critical thinking and rational decision-making in society.; and the social division of conflicts among different groups of people, political parties, and political movements.	Contemporary Thai social and political conflicts, especially the red shirts and yellow shirts political conflicts after the military coup in 2006.

By applying these analytical approaches, the study aimed to decode the constructed reality and determine the structure, ideals, and ideologies that guide the meaning of the literary works. The research contributes to the understanding of the social ideals and political ideologies conveyed in literary works and their significance in society.

### Results and Discussion:

#### Political Signs and Meanings in Pan Wan Fah Award - Winning Short Stories

Semiology plays a crucial role in uncovering the political ideologies and meanings conveyed in short stories through signs. By analyzing the denotation and connotation of signs and examining the contextual structures in which they are situated, we can gain a deeper understanding of the social and political ideals that underpin the text. As this article demonstrates, certain signs such as rules, colors, and gun, are particularly salient in conveying political ideologies related to democracy, political conflicts, and violence. By paying attention to these signs and their contexts, we can reveal the underlying ideologies and beliefs that shape the meaning of literary works. The article concludes by highlighting some prominent political signs that often appear in texts, as follows:

Titles of literary works	Signs	Connotation meanings	Literature contexts	Social and Political Contexts
Please maintain the rules and etiquette; Pieces of conflict; Monkey City; Deception square; Unidentified night-darkened skeleton in the museum	Colors	All people; Unity; Political shirt colors; Political division; Different perspectives and opinions		
A photo that composition never perfect; Captain's cloak; Unidentified night-darkened skeleton in the museum; The Kilometer Zero of Democracy	Democracy monument	Political conflict and the spirit of democracy; and symbols of the struggle for democracy of people	During the October Era in 1976, Thai students escaped into the forests to avoid persecution. Meanwhile, a photo illustrates the diverse opinions and identities of people in society. The primary context is related to the missing student leaders during the university lockdown on October 6th, 1976, and the issue of mutual acceptance within families, including jealousy within families that reflects the problem of unity in both families and society.	1) The students' escape to the forest after the events of October 6th, 1976.; 2) The 2014 coup d'état that occurred on May 22, 2014, when the military staged a coup against the caretaker government, after months of political turmoil and protests in Thailand. The military declared martial law and suspended the constitution, dissolved the Senate and the House of Representatives, and detained many political figures.; 3) The drafting of a new constitution after the military coup in 2014, which was approved in a referendum in August 2016, despite widespread criticism from opposition groups who argued that the constitution would give too much power to the military and limit the rights and freedoms of citizens.; and 4) The 2019 general elections which was the first election held after the NCPO government was lifted. However, the election was controversial as many parties were banned or dissolved, and there was many criticizing about unfair electoral process.

Titles of literary works	Signs	Connotation meanings	Literature contexts	Social and Political Contexts
<p>The movement of ghost bones; Boonyuen's victory; The mystery of blind justice; Orders from the spirit; On the fault lines of the earth's crust; The Pumpkin's movement; Stains that have not yet faded away; Just a foot towel; Money City Tragedy on a patch of water in the night where the sound fades away"; The deceptive square; Backup keys; Deep beneath the surface of the earth; One kilometer pillar of democracy</p>	<p>Election</p>	<p>Rights and freedom of people; Exercising the rights of people; Voting of people in selecting political leaders; Participation of people in politics; Political games; Expressing the rights and duties of good citizenship; Equal rights; Democratic rule, and Hope of people's future.</p>	<p>Internal family conflicts; the village headman elections; Corruption issues in politics; Promoting the selection of good candidates or a good man to govern the country; A civic duties and responsibilities of Thai citizenship; and respect for democracy.</p>	<p>The current Thai politics appears in a semi-democratic governance which have an election and elected representatives. However, the political power is under a control of authoritarianism government or the authoritarian military government.</p>
<p>The carpenter's son with a disability in his leg; Heart to heart; Saraphee beat her teacher; Whatever; The selection: Human screening equipment</p>	<p>Good man</p>	<p>Good people in society or politics are those who are truly good; the virtuous citizens of the nation; Honest and upright person; A person who respect the laws and regulations of society; Person who have morality and ethics, and be trusted as a good man who can govern the country; A person who are those fulfill the expectations of society.</p>	<p>Political differences have caused the conflicts and tensions between people in society, from the village level to the national level. These differences can stem from conflicting ideologies, values, and beliefs about how the country should be governed. Additionally, conflicts may arise from disagreements about the distribution of political benefits, such as access to resources, power, and influence. These conflicts can lead to polarization, division, and even violence in extreme cases. It is important for individuals and society to learn how to manage these conflicts constructively and find ways to reconcile differences in order to promote unity and stability.</p>	<p>1). Political protests against Yingluck Shinawatra's government.; 2). Controversial debates emerged in Thai society regarding the definition of a 'good man' following the 2014 movements of the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC). The PDRC, who claimed to represent the virtuous masses, ignited political conflicts with the red shirts, yellow shirts, and other groups in Thai society.; 3). Political conflicts among the red shirts, yellow shirts, and PDRC groups erupted in Thai society during the movements of the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) in 2014.</p>
<p>Democracy in the funeral room; the Captain's Coat; Cold Hands</p>	<p>Bullet; Tank; Gun barrel; and Gunshot</p>	<p>The state resorted to violence to suppress the people</p>	<p>1). Political differences led to conflicts among the people, resulting in tension and violence between citizens and the state.; 2). Democracy is often invoked as a rhetorical tool to create political conflict, resulting in tragic deaths .</p>	<p>1).The Black May event on May 17, 1992, in Bangkok, Thailand, the event was triggered by the appointment of Suchinda Kraprayoon as the prime minister, despite his previous role in suppressing pro-democracy protests.</p>



Titles of literary works	Signs	Connotation meanings	Literature contexts	Social and Political Contexts
			from both the conflicts themselves and the state violence that ensues	His appointment led to protests and violence, including clashes between protesters and the military. The situation eventually escalated to the point where the military fired on protesters, resulting in many deaths and injuries.; 2). The coup

Note: Naijarun, K. & Jarernpanit, T. (2023). Phan Wan Fah Award B.E.2559 - 2564: Social Concepts and Ideological Cultivation Democratic Citizenship Through Contemporary Short Stories (Research Report). Phitsanulok: Pibulsobgkram Rajabhat University.

## Democracy, Moral Politics and Good Citizenship Ideologies:

Democracy, within the framework of liberal democracy ideology, prioritizes values such as freedom, equality, and equitable opportunities grounded in rights and laws. It emphasizes the active participation of citizens in democratic processes, particularly through elections, and the recognition of diverse opinions and minority voices. The core principle of democracy ideology places significance on individual freedoms and representative democracy, where the people hold democratic power and express their preferences through electing their own government. The state, in return, exercises power under the Rule of Law, ensuring that its authority does not violate the freedoms and private property of citizens. The state also carries the responsibility to serve its citizens (Wantana, 2015).

The state is governed based on the highest principles of the rule of law, with laws enacted and enforced without infringing upon the freedom of the people. Every individual enjoys equality and equal rights under the law, as well as access to justice. In this context, moral politics in theoretical perspective is related to state and social justice, where the values and principles of the rule of law shape the political beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of citizens. Moral politics also considers how individuals engage in moral reasoning

and deliberation when forming political opinions. This involves critically examining moral values, considering the ethical implications of policies, and engaging in public discourse to reach informed decisions based on a public consensus. John Rawls's work, specifically "A Theory of Justice" published in 1971, presents the concept of justice as fairness. Rawls argues for a social contract theory where individuals agree on principles of justice behind a "veil of ignorance." From this position, rational individuals would choose fair and impartial principles of justice. Rawls's work highlights the importance of fairness, equality, and individual rights in moral politics. He emphasizes the need to create a just society where everyone has equal access to basic liberties, and socioeconomic inequalities are justified only if they benefit the least advantaged. Rawls's theory provides a framework for moral reasoning and deliberation in political decision-making, urging individuals and policymakers to critically examine moral values and consider the ethical implications of policies in order to achieve a more just and equitable society (Wenar, 2021).

Good citizens are those who not only adhere to the principles of justice and fairness but also contribute to the establishment and preservation of a just society. Rawls emphasizes the significance of citizens' dedication to upholding equal fundamental liberties and promoting

the well-being of the least advantaged members of society (Wenar, 2021). These citizens respect and defend the equal political liberties and basic civil rights of all individuals, including the essential rights to freedom of speech, assembly, religion, and political participation. They are firmly committed to fairness and justice as guiding principles for societal arrangements. Additionally, they actively engage in democratic processes by exercising their right to vote, participating in public debates, and supporting political candidates and parties that align with the principles of justice and fairness.

The analysis of the Pan Wan Fah Award-Winning short stories explores the characteristics of Thai politics, specifically examining the concepts of unity, democracy, and good citizenship. Within these short stories, the ideology of democracy reflects a unique blend of royal-democracy ideology and moral politics. This ideology combines liberal democratic principles, such as civil rights, freedom, and equality, with the moral values and beliefs rooted in Thai tradition. The emphasis is placed on societal unity, the constitutional monarchy, and a democratic system in which the King serves as the Head of State, while also upholding morality and ethics of citizenship. This distinctive approach to democracy is often referred to as "Thai-style democracy," distinguishing it from the Western or liberal democracy ideals.

The concept of good citizenship portrayed in the Phan Wan Fah Award literature reflects individuals living in a democratic and liberal society. These citizens are expected to be aware of the principles of liberal democracy and to actively engage in governance within the framework of a new model of democratic governance. This model emphasizes a collaborative relationship between the state and civil society, where citizens play an active role. Good citizens in this context are those who not only exercise their own rights and freedoms but also fulfill their responsibilities as informed participants in the electoral process. They recognize the significance of elections and the selection of representatives. Additionally, they uphold principles such as equality, human rights, and non-discrimination, and refrain from engaging in

discriminatory practices. They also value and respect the diversity of thoughts, religions, ethnicities, and minority voices within society. The signs present in the literature, such as conflicts, violence, family disputes, the Democracy Monument, guns, and tanks, convey deeper connotations. These signs serve to underscore the importance of unity and democracy, as well as the need to respect the voices and rights of others within the societal fabric.

In literature, conflicts often emerge due to divergent political views, resulting in divisions among characters and varying levels of violence. These conflicts can occur within families, where differences in political opinions lead to discord. Additionally, political conflicts and violence stemming from wars and coups reflect the political landscape both within and outside the country. The use of signs in these stories serves the purpose of conveying the significance of respecting diverse perspectives, which is a vital element of democracy. It aims to foster a political consensus that reduces conflicts, promotes social harmony, and cultivates unity. The short stories in question reflect the concepts of democracy and citizenship through the incorporation of various signs. These signs highlight the importance of adopting a democratic mindset that respects freedom, differing opinions, minority voices, and human dignity. The stories emphasize the awareness of citizens in recognizing and fulfilling their rights and responsibilities, actively participating in politics, prioritizing collective benefits over personal interests, and exhibiting good ethics and solidarity. These ideas are communicated through diverse contexts, encompassing political, social, and economic conflicts and violence both in Thailand and abroad. The stories address the issues stemming from conflicts arising due to differences in opinion and the refusal to listen to each other's voices. They also touch upon social inequality, politics and the economy, and the corruption perpetrated by political and government authorities.

Indeed, the stories in the "Pan Wan Fah Award-Winning" literature serve as a reminder of the essential elements required for democracy and good citizenship.

They emphasize the importance of active participation, dialogue, and compromise to foster social harmony and the well-being of all members of society. The central idea of democracy aligns with the principles of liberal democratic ideology, which places emphasis on individual rights, equality, and participation in the democratic process, particularly through elections. Liberal democracy values the respect for and consideration of diverse opinions, as well as the significance of minority voices. At its core, liberal democracy upholds freedom and representative democracy, where the people possess the democratic power and express their commitment to selecting their government representatives. However, within the literature of the "Pan Wan Fah Award-Winning" stories, there is a presentation of moral politics and royal democracy, which attempts to merge with the ideology of liberalism and democracy. This blending has led the ideology of liberalism and democracy to deviate from its core principles, particularly towards authoritarianism. This deviation is especially notable after the coup d'état in 2006, which has influenced the power dynamics of Thai politics.

Moral Politics is an ideology deeply rooted in religious beliefs and charismatic power, which has been the foundation of Thailand's approach to power since ancient times. It integrates power, beliefs, and emotions into the political ideology. The charismatic power of the King and the influence of Buddhism are interwoven into Thailand's social and political system, along with the country's unique cultural identity and the hegemony of the ruling class (Jarernpanit, 2018). It is important to understand these dynamics within the context of the literature and the broader political landscape to grasp the complexities and nuances of democracy, citizenship, and the interplay between different ideologies.

The blend of moral politics, liberalism, and democracy in Thailand has created a complex and sometimes contradictory political landscape. On one hand, there has been a partial embrace of liberal democratic principles, with elections being held and democratic institutions established. However, on the

other hand, there has been a tendency towards authoritarianism, characterized by limitations on freedom of speech, assembly, and the press, as well as a lack of accountability among those in power. The enforcement of *lèse-majesté* laws, which criminalize criticism of the monarchy, has been used to suppress political dissent and silence minority voices. These factors have contributed to a polarized political culture that is prone to conflict and violence, as depicted in the "Pan Wan Fah Award-Winning" short stories. In Thailand, the concept of good governance has traditionally been associated with moral and virtuous politics, which places a strong emphasis on ethics and the importance of having virtuous leaders in positions of power. This ideology has merged with the royal-democratic system that was established following the events of October 14, 1973. During this time, the monarchy became a symbol of opposition against military dictatorship and a demand for a liberal democracy. This gave rise to the concept of democratic royalism, which emphasizes the significance of elections and a democratic system with the monarch at its center. The Thai elite has actively promoted these ideas and values, believing that the security and prosperity of the people, government, and nation can only be achieved if the country is governed by virtuous individuals rather than self-serving politicians (Winichakul, 2016). These dynamics shed light on the complexities and intricacies of the political landscape in Thailand, showcasing the interplay between moral politics, liberalism, and democracy, as well as the challenges and tensions that arise from such a blend of ideologies.

Indeed, Thai political preferences are deeply rooted in the power of the monarchy and the moral principles that underpin governance, whether in authoritarian or democratic forms. The concept of moral politics, which encompasses the religious and ethical dimensions of the state, has formed the bedrock of Thai society and politics. It has shaped collective consciousness, emotional and behavioral responses among the people, and has become a driving force behind a political culture that promotes integrity, transparency, opposition to corruption, and

the selection of honest politicians, particularly during elections. These themes are evident in various short stories within the Pan Wan Fah literature.

In addition to election-based democracy, which emphasizes the importance of citizens' awareness and consciousness of their rights and responsibilities in selecting competent leaders to govern the country, it is also essential to revisit the principles of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy places significance on the rule of law and the strength of the state through genuine mechanisms for checking state power and fostering political consensus among the people. This reflection of democracy in the context of literature aligns with the characteristics of moral democracy a democracy guided by ethics and morality rooted in virtue ethics, where good and honest individuals who are not corrupt govern under a moral political atmosphere. These perspectives underscore the intricate interplay between moral principles, democracy, and governance in Thailand, and how these dynamics are reflected in both the political landscape and the literature that portrays it.

Indeed, the literature of "Pan Wan Fah" underscores the significance of active and engaged citizenship in communities, going beyond mere voting. It emphasizes the importance of citizens holding elected officials accountable, participating in public forums, and advocating for their own rights and the rights of others. The stories portray citizens coming together to address problems and instigate positive changes in their communities, highlighting the potency of collective action and the power of the people within a democracy. These themes align with the ideals of participatory democracy, where citizens play an active role in shaping their communities and the political system.

Good citizenship and civic duties are integral to democratic governance, as they foster an engaged and responsible citizenry capable of holding leaders accountable and actively participating in the democratic process. By promoting the values of honesty, integrity, and transparency in both public and private spheres, the literature of "Pan Wan Fah" encourages citizens to take an active role in shaping the future of their country and working towards a more just and equitable society. This is particularly pertinent in a country like

Thailand, where the political landscape often experiences issues of corruption, nepotism, and abuse of power. By advocating for the values of moral democracy and good governance, the literary works of Pan Wan Fah provide a potent critique of the existing status quo while offering a roadmap for constructing a more democratic and just society.

Under the rule of law, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that its power is not used to violate the freedom and property rights of its citizens. The state must guarantee individual freedoms within the framework of the law and establish a system of checks and balances to prevent the abuse of power. Additionally, the legislative branch should be held accountable for the use of legislative power by having an independent bureaucratic power responsible for constitutional law and legal affairs. This separation ensures that bureaucratic power remains independent of political influence (Bobbio, 2006). The foundation of liberal democracy lies in the principle that the government should be accountable to its citizens and work in their collective interests while respecting individual rights and freedoms. This principle is crucial in building a just and equitable society.

The ideology of liberal democracy highlights the significance of three fundamental institutions for the sustainability of representative or parliamentary democracy. Firstly, a strong state is necessary, deriving its power from the consent of the people. Secondly, the rule of law plays a vital role in governance, upholding the supreme law and ensuring equal rights for every citizen. Lastly, mechanisms must be in place to hold leaders accountable, and government officials entrusted with power must act responsibly and uphold the principles of government and the rule of law. The Pan Wan Fah Award-winning short stories underscore the role of citizens in upholding the principles of liberal democracy. Citizens need to be aware of this ideology and actively engage in preserving their rights and freedoms, such as protecting the right to vote and elect representatives, and upholding principles of equality, humanity, and fairness. By doing so, citizens contribute to the sustainability of democratic institutions and the creation of a just and equitable society (Chenvidyakarn, 2020).

## Conclusion:

The short stories that won the Phan Wan Pha literary award during 2016 - 2021 were dominated by three themes: liberal democracy, moral politics, and good citizenship. These themes aimed to instill a sense of citizenship within a democratic system that values freedom, equality, honesty, and social responsibility. They emphasized the importance of individual awareness of rights and duties, the need for virtuous citizens, and the promotion of public interest. On the other hands, some short stories also criticize government policies and reflect the writers' response to the established ideology, creating a space for political struggle for freedom of expression, rights, and equality in Thai society.

Good citizenship, as reflected in the stories, is based on contemporary global and Thai principles and values. This includes understanding and fulfilling one's duties and responsibilities as a citizen, respecting human dignity and rights, promoting moral principles in everyday life, respecting differing opinions, reducing conflicts, and promoting unity in society. By promoting these values and principles through literature, the Pan Wan Fah Award-Winning short stories contribute to building a democratic and just society in Thailand.

The collection of Pan Wan Fah Award-Winning short stories serves as a valuable source of knowledge about Thai politics through literature, promoting liberal democratic governance. The stories highlight the importance of fundamental values such as freedom, equality, respect for human rights, and the participation of citizens in the political process. They stress the significance of democracy for the people, who are the true owners of state power, and emphasize that the state must respect the rights and power of its citizens and not use its governance power to violate their freedom.

Therefore, the short stories in the Pan Wan Fah Award reflect the dominant political ideology of the state within the signs in different contexts, such as moral politics, royal-democracy, and social ideals in good citizenship in democratic governance with the King as the Head of the State. It can be seen as a form

of "myth" according to Roland Barthes (1980), in which the ideas of morality and goodness become deeply ingrained in people's consciousness and democracy ideology and values. Similarly, Antonio Gramsci's concept of "cultural hegemony" suggests that politics of morality and goodness become the dominant culture in society (Gramsci, 1999). However, there are also attempts by some authors to propose new ideologies that prioritize principles such as freedom, equality, and democracy in liberalism ideal. These works also criticize the state's use of power and suppression and reject the state's attempts to promote a specific idea of goodness through literature. This can be seen as a competition for ideological territory or a "war of position" with the state.

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## Thailand's Climate Change Governance from the Polycentric and Zero-Emissions Society Perspective

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### Abstract

Thailand's climate change governance is assessed on the basis of the polycentric and the Climate Action Tracker (CAT) framework. This framework is a systematic approach to understanding current climate change governance and considers the aspects of key enabling factors for effective climate actions towards a zero emissions society. The results show that, over the last two decades Thailand has continually developed important elements of governance architecture to better manage climate change challenges. The orientation of Thailand's climate change governance has been steadily reformulated to move towards a polycentric mode, with diverse instruments formulated, cross - scale institutional arrangements and linkages established, multi - level actors, and different kinds of knowledge produced. One of Thailand's polycentric governance developments is a proactive engagement of public and private actors to enable more effective management of climate change. An additional CAT - based analysis consistently highlights that Thailand has advanced political commitments towards a zero - emissions society. Much progress can also be seen for the elements related to policy processes and stakeholder engagement, but the institutional framework regulating Thailand's governmental and ministerial processes for effective climate action is still weak. To advance towards more polycentric governance, Thailand should make efforts to focus on further strengthening existing mechanisms for climate change responses in the Paris Agreement (PA) regime, especially encouraging institutional reform and enhancing central - to - local coordination and decision - making processes. Moreover, stronger engagement of local - level actors provides a great opportunity to enhance polycentric governance and improve climate change responses at the front line.

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## Introduction

Climate change poses an unprecedented threat to societies around the world. The changes in the climate are widespread, rapid, and intensifying, and will increase with additional warming (IPCC, 2021, p.5). Therefore, climate change is undoubtedly one of the most daunting global challenges facing the international community in the 21st century. The global response to these great challenges is laid out in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Its ultimate objective is to achieve the stabilisation of greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference (United Nations, 1992, p.4). To further strengthen an internationally coordinated effort, the PA adopted in December 2015 provides essential building blocks for universal actions to address climate change. The agreement specifically established two long-term global goals: “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2° C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5° C, to significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change” (United Nations, 2015, p.3). The PA also defines a universal and obliged framework to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change. For the first time, all countries will develop plans on how to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and will communicate their ‘Nationally Determined Contributions’ (NDCs) to the Secretariat of the Convention (United Nations, 2015, p.3).

Climate governance is of vital importance for the effective management of anthropogenic-induced climate change to pursue low-carbon and climate-resilient development (IPCC, 2018, p.19; United Nations Children's Fund, 2020, p. 9). It is also a critical determinant for sustainable development, equity, poverty eradication, and climate actions because they circumscribe the processes through which these goals and how to attain them are articulated and contested (IPCC, 2018, pp.20-19). Climate governance is defined in the broadest sense as the instruments, institutions, mechanisms, and processes of interaction and decision-making among

diverse actors aiming at steering social systems toward preventing, mitigating, or adapting to the risks posed by climate change (Hufty, 2011, p.405; Fleurbaey et al., 2014, p.297; Allen et al., 2018, p.71). This definition goes beyond notions of formal government or political authority, and integrates other actors, networks, informal institutions, and incentive structures operating at multiple levels of society. At an international level, climate governance is organised via many mechanisms, including treaties and conventions, for example the UNFCCC and PA. National governments provide a central pivot for domestic governance in terms of coordinating, planning, determining policy priorities, and distributing resources. In addition, sub-national and local governments can play a key role in influencing mitigation and adaptation strategies through coordinating and developing effective local responses (Melica et al., 2018, p.729; Romero-Lankao et al., 2018, pp.586-587). Climate change governance for mitigation and adaptation generally involves individual and collective efforts by diverse social actors, both within and between different levels.

In this article, the mode of Thailand's climate change governance is presented on the basis of polycentric governance perspectives. With this conceptual framework, how Thailand's climate change implementation and governance have evolved over the last two decades - a period during which climate change has risen in prominence on the international agenda is reviewed and discussed. Finally, the country's ability and readiness to transform into a zero-emission society also assessed.

## Evolution of Thailand's climate change governance from polycentric perspective

### 1. Polycentric framework and assessment approaches

In the 1960s, the terminology of polycentricity was adopted in the context of metropolitan governance to describe a system of 1) many autonomous units



formally independent of one another, 2) choosing to act in ways that take account of others, 3) through processes of cooperation, competition, conflict and conflict resolution (Dorsch and Flachsland, 2017, p.48). The concept of polycentricity was subsequently used to analyze collective-action problems, initiated by a large-scale program of case and comparative studies of local common pool resources management. Later, the terminology was applied with regard to climate change, highlighting the potential to create and exploit co-benefits at multiple scales and levels to incentivize global commons management through climate mitigation and adaptation (Dorsch and Flachsland, 2017, p.49). Polycentricity was then accepted as a useful approach for understanding and improving efforts to reduce the threat of climate change (Dorsch and Flachsland, 2017, p.47). It has become common global-to-local system of climate governance with its own inherent logic, dynamics and stabilization mechanisms which offer opportunities for ambitious innovation - based climate strategies (Jänicke, 2017, p.108). However, the term is frequently employed as a metaphor to describe the empirical multitude of actors involved in natural resource, environmental, and climate governance at different scales. Polycentric governance and multi-level governance perspectives are closely related and some researchers consider multi - level governance a type of polycentric governance (Heinen et al., 2021, p.1). Polycentric governance perspectives on climate governance tend to emphasize the role of the local level and its capacity to self-regulate. In contrast, there is a tendency in multi-level perspective to study governance arrangements with formally interdependent actors (Heinen et al., 2021, p.2).

The polycentric framework was applied to assess the current domains and practices underlying Thailand's climate change governance. The concept of polycentricity offers descriptive value to understand horizontal and vertical differentiations of current climate change governance, and presents a multi-level and polycentric approach to enhance the design of the emerging national climate change governance architecture (Ostrom, 2014, p.97; Dorsch and

Flachsland, 2017, p.45; Arriagada et al., 2018, p.2; Heinen et al., 2020, p.1-2). Polycentricity has been increasingly recognised as a useful framework offering flexible solutions for generating effective responses to the multiple climate change challenges (Ostrom, 2014, p.97; Dorsch and Flachsland, 2017, p.45; Arriagada et al., 2018, p. ; Heinen et al., 2020, p. 1). According to Arriagada et al. (2018, p. 3), the polycentric framework consists of four domains: 1) relevant governance levels and corresponding roles; 2) cross-scale institutional linkages between multiple actors; 3) actors and their roles; and 4) knowledge production to improve efforts to reduce the threat of climate change. When combining these dimensions together, a continuum of governance modes ranging from state - centric to decentralized, bottom-up governing can be assessed by considering different aspects of the relationship between state intervention and societal autonomy. Within this framework, decentralized decisions can also be analyzed in relation to the polycentric approach and by highlighting local knowledge and territorial autonomy (Arriagada et al., 2018).

The research methodology mainly relies on qualitative approaches by collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to explore detailed insight regarding the evolution and current mode of Thailand's climate change governance. For obtaining such conclusions, a variety of related data is collected in a holistic, rich, and nuanced manner and findings are emerged through careful analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2021). Therefore, this study is primarily based on a literature review and document analysis (Gill et al., 2008; Bowen, 2009; Pardoe et al., 2018). A set of available peer-reviewed articles, international and national reports, and publicly published meeting documents, and relevant information and data from key governmental websites was compiled and reviewed. The important content and information in the third National Communication (NC) and Biennial Update Report (BUR) as the latest national reports submitted to the Secretariat of the UNFCCC (ONEP, 2018, ONEP, 2020a) were extracted. The main steps of qualitative method applied here include 1) preparation and exploration of collected data 2) content and textual analysis to describe

and categorize important ideas, concepts and developments, 3) interpretation of the results to draw key findings and developments analyzed from a number of reports and documents. As far as possible, the document analysis followed a systematic procedure (Prior, 2003; Gill et al., 2008) designed to examine the extent to which Thailand's climate change implementation and governance has developed over time. The authors' experience as a national negotiator for UNFCCC, and involvement with national and subnational-level climate change policy and strategy formulation and development help to elaborate and discuss the results.

## 2. Thailand's climate change governance mode

Key features of Thailand's climate change governance mode based on the polycentric framework are presented in the following subsections.

### 2.1 Relevant national and sub-national governance levels of global climate agreements

Thailand pays great attention to global efforts to address the climate change challenge and shows its commitment to climate actions as the nation ratified the UNFCCC in 1994, became a member of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) in 2002, and made a recent commitment under the PA in 2016 (ONEP, 2018, p.53; ONEP, 2020a, p.1). Thailand submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the Secretariat of the UNFCCC in 2015, in which GHG emissions will be reduced by 20-25% from the projected business-as-usual (BAU) level by 2030 (ONEP, 2015a; ONEP, 2020a, p.66). It was later updated to NDC in 2020 (ONEP, 2020a, p.66; ONEP, 2020b). By the end of 2021 and just prior to the start of the 26th session of the Conference of Parties (COP26), Thailand submitted its mid-century, long-term low GHG emission development strategy that sets targets for the country to achieve net-zero emissions by the latter half of the century (United Nations, 2021). At the World Leaders Summit during COP26, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha also expressed that Thailand is ready to upgrade the effort in the NDC to 40%, with adequate, timely, and equitable support of technology, finance and capacity building (Thai PBS World, 2021; The Nation Thailand, 2021).

The global agreement framework signed by Thailand provides a solid ground to develop the national governance architecture which promotes climate change mitigation and adaptation. Currently, the climate change issue in Thailand is addressed at the highest policy level under the National Strategy 2018 - 2037 to ensure a long-term continuity of

implementation alongside sustainable development considerations (ONEP, 2020a, p.66). In 2011, the Climate Change Master Plan (CCMP) 2015-2050 was subsequently developed to reflect Thailand's strategy on climate change mitigation, adaptation, capacity building, and cross-cutting issues. The CCMP laid out the country's vision to achieve climate-resilient and low-carbon growth by 2050 (ONEP, 2015b; ONEP, 2018, p.55; ONEP, 2020a, p.78).

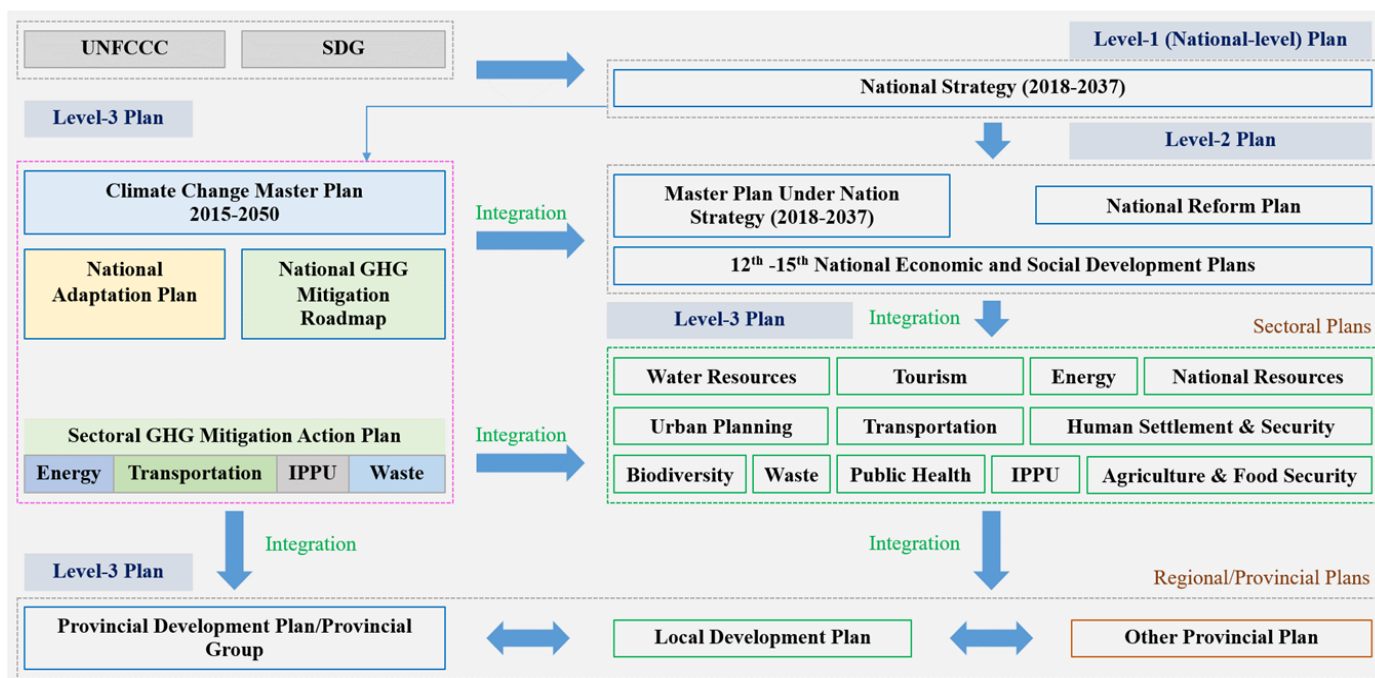
Thailand's major national climate change policies and plans were further formulated under the PA regime. To build adaptive capacity and enhance climate resilience, Thailand developed the first National Adaptation Plan (NAP) between 2015 and 2018 through a participatory process of extensive multi-stakeholder consultations (ONEP, 2018, p. 84). The NAP highlights climate impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation gaps and needs, and identifies adaptation measures covering six priority sectors including water resources management, agriculture and food security, tourism, public health, natural resources management, and human settlements and security (ONEP, 2020b, p.4-6; ONEP, 2020c).

An NDC Roadmap on Mitigation (2021-2030) was developed and endorsed by the Cabinet in 2017 to facilitate the achievement of the country NDC targets in the energy, transportation, industrial processes, and product use (IPPU) and waste management sectors (ONEP, 2020a, p. 71). The NDC Action Plan 2021-2030 also serves as a driven mechanism for an action plan to identify emission reduction targets for each measure in order to facilitate the relevant agencies achieve the target under the assigned mitigation measures. The NDC Action Plan has been approved by the NCCC and consists of 15 groups of mitigation measures (ONEP, 2020a, p. 71).

In 2021, the draft of the country's first ever climate change law was approved by the NCCC, aiming to enhance national climate change implementation and governance. The draft has since been presented to the cabinet for further consideration. The main important points of this law include the NCCC, CCMP, GHG data and reduction, climate change adaptation, and measures to promote climate actions and penalties. Thailand's overall climate change plans highlighting multi-level governance and linkages are presented in Figure 1. Figure 2 presents the timeline of major actions and events of Thailand's climate change implementation and governance in the context of the global agreement framework, national institutional framework, and national policies.

**Figure 1**

Thailand's overall climate change plans highlight multi-level governance and linkages. Modified from the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Plan (ONEP).



## 2.2 Cross - scale institutional arrangement and linkages

To effectively address climate change at the national and sub-national levels, cross-scale institutional arrangement has been steadily set up as an integral part of Thailand's climate change governance. Thailand adopted a whole - of-government approach, recognising that the responsibility does not lie with one or two ministries but instead requires the coordinated efforts of all ministries. The Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP) currently under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) was designated as a National Focal Point (NFP) of the UNFCCC in the late 1990s (Figure 2). The ONEP plays a central role in the overall coordination of many aspects of Thailand's climate change implementation. In 2007, the NCCC, as the apex of the institutional arrangement, was established in order to fulfill Thailand's commitments under the UNFCCC and to define national climate policies and mechanisms for implementation and international collaboration (ONEP, 2018, p. 24; Tambunlertchai et al., 2015, p.62). The NCCC is chaired by the Prime Minister

and has members from both the public and private sectors and experts from relevant agencies. The NCCC is currently composed of five sub-committees (Figure 3).

In 2007, the Thailand Greenhouse Gas Management Organization (TGO) was established as an autonomous public organisation, initially serving as a Designated National Authority (DNA) for Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in Thailand (Tambunlertchai et al., 2015, p. 64; TGO, 2021). The efficiency and effectiveness of TGO were later strengthened to extend its missions and mandate to support Thailand's GHG management in line with the evolving international climate change regime (TGO, 2021). The Climate Change Coordinator Officers (CCCOs) was also established in 2009 and are the senior officers responsible for communicating and coordinating climate-related efforts between their own agencies and the NCCC (Figure 2). A total of 30 agencies under 19 ministries and 11 non-ministerial governmental agencies such as the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) and the Bureau of the Budget with designated CCCOs indicates comprehensive

coverage of all government agencies, providing a national-level platform for coordinating climate-related activities (Tambunlertchai et al., 2015, p.62-63; CCMC, 2021).

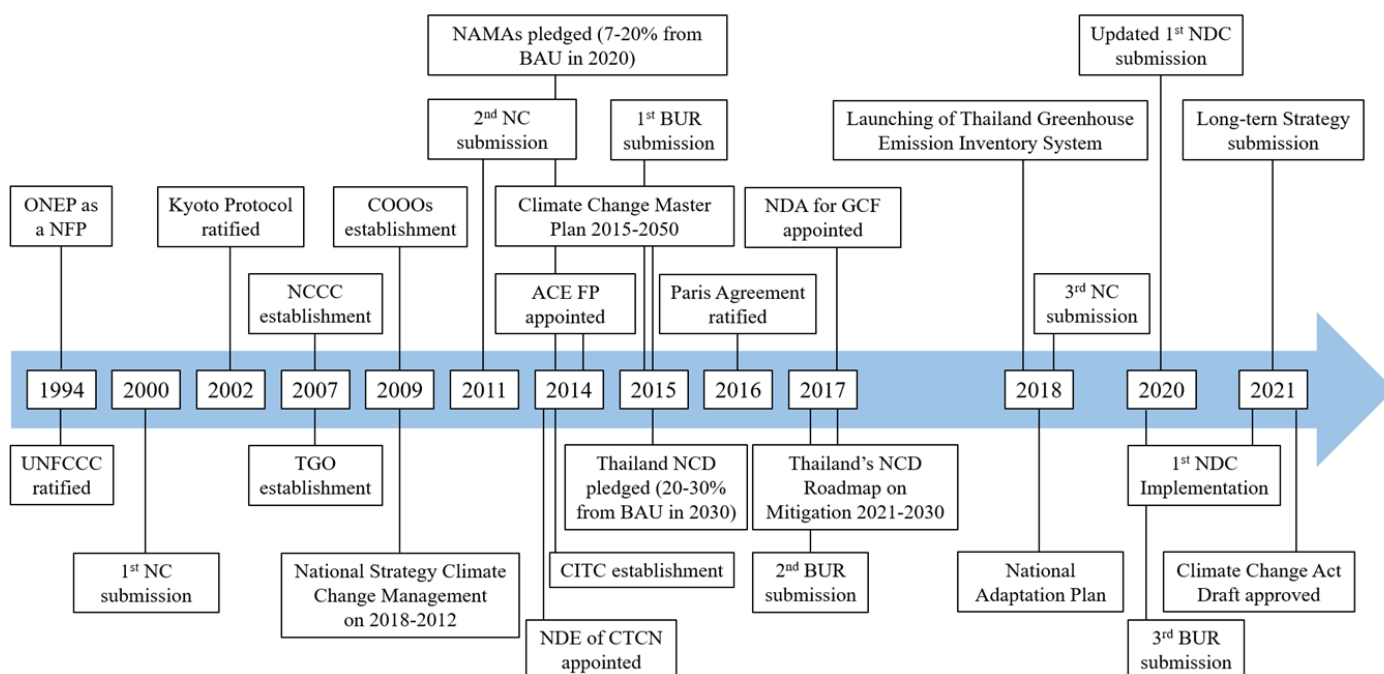
Other designated entities or bodies to facilitate and implement specific issues under the UNFCCC, KP, and PA umbrella were subsequently established. For example, the Department of Environmental Quality Promotion (DEQP) under the MONRE was appointed as a national focal point of Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) (ONEP, 2018, p. 105) in 2014 in order to systematically coordinate, foster, and enhance the ACE activity (education, training and public awareness) implementation (Figure 2). The ONEP was further appointed as the National Designated Authority (NDA) for the Green Climate Fund (GCF) in 2017 (Green Climate Fund, 2017). It serves as the main point

of contact between the country and the fund, providing broad strategic oversight of the GCF's activities in the country. Vertical coordination from central agencies to provincial and local organisations is usually conducted through the existing mechanisms and channels of line ministries or departments and regional or provincial offices of the MONRE (Regional Environment Office and Provincial Office of Natural Resource and Environment).

More recently, the Cabinet have a resolution acknowledging establishment of Department of Climate Change and Environment under the MONRE. This new institutional arrangement aims to effectively manage climate actions consistent with the Prime Minister's speech in the COP26 to ensure the achievement of national commitment targets.

**Figure 2**

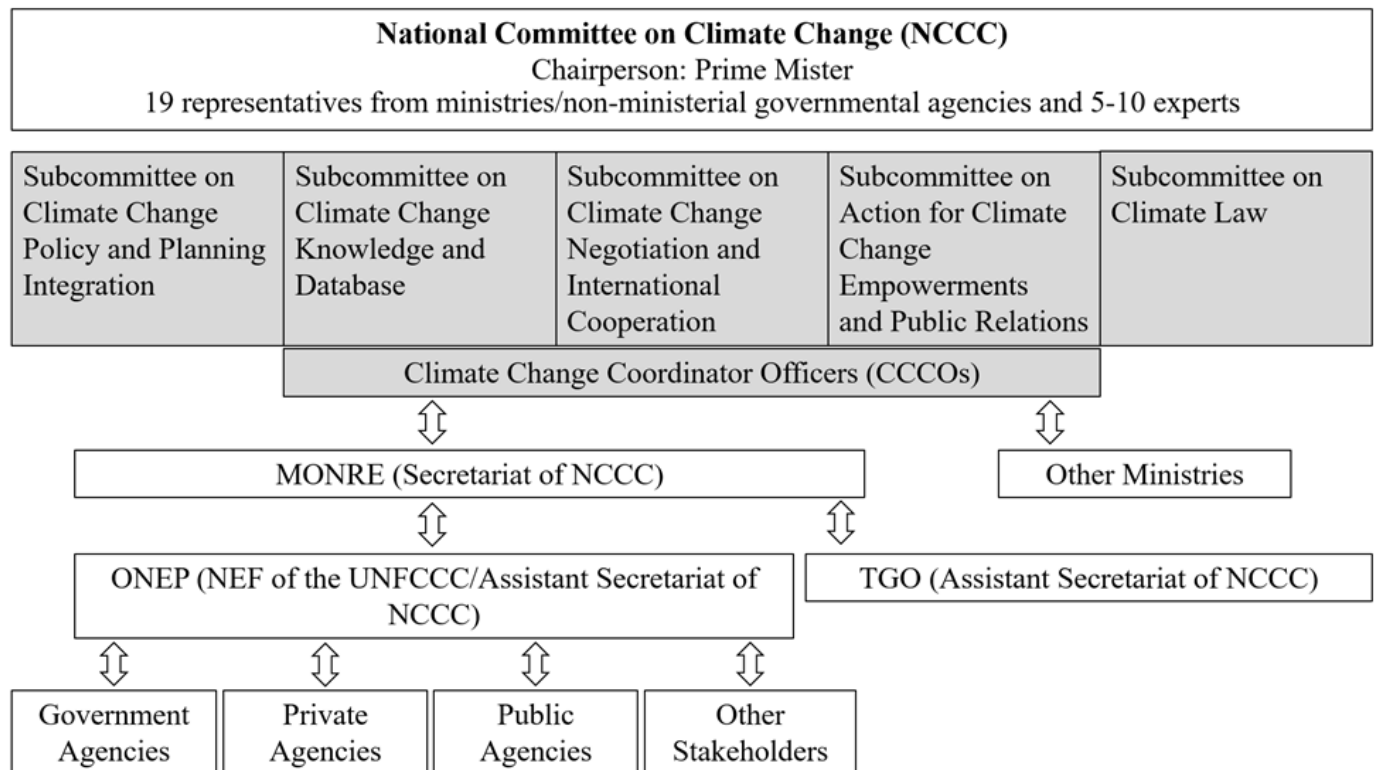
*Timeline of major actions and events of Thailand's climate change implementation and governance in the context of the global agreement framework, national institutional framework, and national policies*



NFP = National Focal Point, NC = National Communication; BUR = Biennial Update Report, ACE FP = ACE Focal Point  
 NDE = National Designated Entity, NDA = National Designated Authority

Figure 3

Structure of the NCCC and its sub-committees and linkages with relevant agencies and stakeholders.



### 2.3 Actors and their roles

In Thailand, multi-stakeholder engagement and broad public participation are key elements in good environmental and climate change governance and decision-making processes (ONEP, 2018, p.109). Governmental agencies, the private sector, civil society, and academia are the four main actors involved in the evolution and development of Thailand's climate change policies, plans, and projects at national, sub-national, and local levels (ONEP, 2018; ONEP, 2020a). ONEP, DEQP, TGO, Electricity Generating Public Company Limited (EGCO), Charoen Pokphand Group (CP Group), Siam Cement Public Company Limited (SCG), Thai Working Group for Climate Justice (TCJ), Thammasat University and Chulalongkorn University are examples of such main actors. Multi-stakeholder engagement and consultation in the formulation of climate change policies, strategies, plans, and actions can be increasingly seen as an important element of Thailand's climate change governance.

More than 40 governmental agencies were identified as key actors involved in Thailand's NAP implementation. Meanwhile, six leading governmental agencies were appointed to be responsible for GHG mitigation in five sectors. Multi - governmental

consultations and engagements are also important processes established during the formulation of CCMP, NAP, NC, and BUR preparation (ONEP, 2018; ONEP, 2020a; ONEP, 2020c). This highlights the importance of engaging key actors in the process of developing national climate change strategies and plans and in drafting the national reports as a mean of building national capacity and raising awareness of climate change related issues.

Private sector has long been engaged in Thailand's climate change implementation. For example, representatives of the private sector are designated as a member of the NCCC and its sub-committees. Currently, the private sector actively participates with the international community to take stronger action on climate change and sustainable issues, as more than fifty leading Thai corporations joined Global Compact Network Thailand (GCNT) (GCNT, 2022). GCNT is a local network of the UN Global Compact, forming a collaborative network of private companies working together to demonstrate that Thailand's private sector is on the lookout for sustainable ways to develop business and is ready to foster a collective and responsible awareness. Some leading Thai companies such as CP Group, EGCO, and SCG have announced their own net-zero goals to achieve carbon neutrality by the

middle of the 21st century in support of the global and national low - carbon society trend (GCNT, 2022). In addition, the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) has continuously collaborated with partners from public, private, and social sectors to develop a project to drive sustainable environment management, in compliance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Thailand Business News, 2021).

Civil society has developed diverse informal efforts to respond to climate change, forming a bottom-up element of Thailand's climate change governance. For example, the Natural Resource and Environmental Protection Volunteers are a large civil society network of MONRE and plays a crucial role in participating in a number of climate change actions covering broad vertical spectrums from national to community levels (ONEP, 2018, p.110). Moreover, the TCJ is a civil society network that plays an important role in the policy - making process of Thailand's climate change (TCJ, 2022). A number of NGOs in Thailand established the TCJ in 2008 with the intention to foster fair participation of civil society in solving global warming issues, with the main goal of raising public awareness and participation by taking climate justice, environmental, and social issues into account (TCJ, 2022).

Experts, researchers, and academics from various governmental agencies, research institutes, and universities also play an important role in producing scientific knowledge related to climate change, and engaging in the development of national climate change policies and plans and preparation of national reports. Thailand's First and Second Assessment Reports on Climate Change (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> TARC) are an example of up-to-date scientific knowledge produced by a group of experts and researchers (Limsakul et al., 2019). For formulating Thailand's mid-century, long-term low GHG emission development strategy, experts and researchers from a number of institutes also prepared the key information related to greenhouse gases emission pathway and the measures necessary for driving towards a zero emissions society (United Nations, 2021).

#### **2.4 Knowledge production**

Knowledge co-creation is a synergic approach that includes combining content and processes from multidiscipline and multi-actors to produce new ways of understanding (Arriagada et al., 2018, p.7). During the last two decades, different types of climate change knowledge including scientific, bureaucratic, and stakeholder knowledge have been steadily produced by a number of groups of actors to consistently generate

authoritative knowledge for relevant stakeholders and the general public. This will, in turn, create broad social perceptions and long-term and robust policies that improve implementation and governance.

To provide updated scientific information on key aspects of climate change in Thailand to relevant stakeholders and the general public, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> TARC were produced during 2010-2011 and 2015-2016 by a group of experts and researchers (Limsakul et al., 2019). Assessment methodologies of the IPCC were adopted to ensure integrity, balance, and clarity of scientific information on the current state of knowledge related to climate change in the context of Thailand. This best - available and most up-to-date scientific knowledge is fundamentally important to inform policy formulators and makers and other key stakeholders who have to mount an effective, progressive, and transformative response to the threat posed by climate change (Limsakul et al., 2019, p. 2). Climate change documents and materials in the local context have been made by the DEQP as part of an awareness-raising campaign and public participation activities [18]. In the course of preparation and development of NC, BUR, CCMP, INDC, NAP, NDC Roadmap/Action Plan, and the long-term low GHG emission development strategy, bureaucratic and systematic knowledge was generated and the main results and conclusions presented to provide an institutional support base for existing and future climate action and governance.

#### **Thailand's climate change governance assessment towards net-zero emissions**

The CAT assessment framework was applied to further assess the ability and readiness of the Thai government to enable the required economy - wide transformation towards a zero - emission society in pursuit of the PA objective (CAT, 2021, p.1). This framework assesses the aspects of governance covering key enabling factors for effective climate action which includes: 1) the government's political commitment to decarbonize; 2) the institutional framework put in place to achieve its emission reduction targets; 3) the processes established to develop, implement, and review mitigation policies; and 4) its ability and willingness to engage with relevant stakeholders on policy development (CAT, 2021, p. 2). The focus of the CAT's assessment framework is on the factors within the national governments, evaluating the government's capacity to plan, deliver, and monitor the transformational change necessary for a zero - emissions society, and whether they have

developed such plans and put in place the necessary framework to implement them (CAT, 2021, p. 1-2). In the assessment of the ability and readiness of Thailand's government to enable the transformation towards a zero emissions society, four categories of the CAT framework were further divided into criteria or success factors (CAT, 2021, p. 2). Summary of key points relevant to all criteria for each category drawn from document analysis was presented. Each category was subjectively assessed and given rating levels as poor, neutral, or advanced benchmark following the approach done for Australia and the Philippines (CAT, 2019a; CAT, 2019b).

The initial assessment based on the CAT framework indicates that Thailand has shown strong political commitment to simulate the economy-wide transformational changes required for increased climate mitigation ambition. Leadership from high-level government and leading institutions has been more active on scaling up climate action domestically and driving the transition to a low - emission, climate-resilient development. The quality of government decision making has also been strengthened to facilitate ambitious implementation of climate policies in order to provide resources and direction for lower - level government and can activate climate actions through mainstreaming, lesson - learning, and cooperation. Continued political will and momentum of Thai government, ratification and domestic implementation of the PA, formulation of updated NDC and Thailand's mid - century, long-term low GHG emission development strategy appear to be key factors underlying such strong political commitment. These determinants also provide specific frame of climate change governance in which policies, instruments and institutions have been developed in the last decade, as social-economic contexts of Thailand have been increasingly affected by climate change impacts while they are under pressing pressure from international trends that accelerate towards climate - resilient and low-carbon development.

Thailand's institutional framework for climate actions is strengthening, but effective coordination between ministries and between other levels of governments remains still weak. Private sector plays

an increasing role on climate change to deal with impacts arising from the implementation of various response measures. Likewise, research institutes and universities provide a wealth of knowledge that could inform policy - making decisions. However, mechanisms to directly link policymakers and the research community are not strong. Human resource constraints and insufficient budget and resources remain barriers to effective climate governance since there are few climate-related roles, high rates of staff turnover, and relatively small budgets.

Thailand has shown signs of much progress in terms of policy development, implementation, and review processes, but the nation urgently requires a defined Paris - compatible decarbonization pathway and the establishment of an enhanced transparency framework. Work is underway to upgrade the NDC targets, but this process has not yet been formalized into a permanent mechanism to ratchet up mitigation efforts. Moreover, the NDC targets, carbon neutrality, and net-zero GHG emission goals are not yet enshrined in law, and current policy measures need to be further strengthened to achieve the target.

Thailand encourages broad engagement of non-state actors through its participatory processes and undertakes more efforts to ensure a more just transition than simply focusing on the promotion of green jobs. Thai civil society organisations and private sectors are active on climate change and support GHG reduction policies, especially after the adoption of the PA. However, the general public's knowledge and understanding of the goals, importance, and details of the NDC targets, including carbon neutrality and net-zero GHG emission, need to be further improved. Climate change knowledge is publicly available as it has been compiled and assessed based on increasing body of research and studies. Table 1 presents a summary of key points assessed for each category of important enabling factors for effective climate action.

**Table 1**

Summary of key points for each category of important enabling factors for effective climate action. Each category was subjectively assessed and given rating levels, from “poor” indicating an area where the government is deficient and could do much to improve, “neutral” indicating that the government shows some level of readiness to decarbonise but improvement is still necessary, and “advanced” indicating that while improvement is possible and beneficial, this area of governance is functioning relatively well (CAT, 2019a; CAT, 2019b).

Category	Criteria	Summary of key points
Political commitment  Assessment level: <b>Advanced</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level government leadership</li> <li>• Quality of government decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At COP 26, the Prime Minister announced that Thailand is ready to upgrade its effort in Thailand’s NDC (20-25%) to 40% with adequate, timely, and equitable international support, and aims to achieve carbon neutrality in 2050 and a net-zero GHG emission in 2065.</li> <li>• A national framework for an energy plan sets the goal of energy transition to clean energy with renewable energy contributing to at least 50% of the power generation system, and reduce the use of coal and fossil fuels. This was approved by the Cabinet and the National Energy Policy Council.</li> <li>• Climate change is addressed at all three levels of policies and plans: the National Strategic Level (Level 1); the National Reform Plan on Natural Resources and Environment (Level 2); and the Climate Change Master Plan (Level 3).</li> <li>• Climate change is incorporated as a part of the national strategy developed under the National Strategy Preparation Act B.E. 2560 (2017), which has a monitoring mechanism and provisions on the responsibility of government agencies, if it is not followed.</li> <li>• Political commitment and support for the implementation of NDC goals are clearly determined in the energy sector through the preparation of the National Energy Plan Framework.</li> </ul>
Institutional framework  Assessment level: <b>Poor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective coordination</li> <li>• Knowledge infrastructure</li> <li>• Adequate resources and capacities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a national mechanism which is the NCCC chaired by the Prime Minister, acting as the central coordinating body between various ministries.</li> <li>• ONEP under MONRE has been designated as a NFP of the UNFCCC which has limited power to direct across ministries.</li> <li>• CCCOs have been appointed to communicate and coordinate climate-related efforts for relevant agencies, but their clear concrete work is still rarely seen.</li> <li>• There are no clear vertical mechanisms, coordinating from national level to sub-national/local levels where climate actions actually take place. This is a major weakness.</li> <li>• The private sector is increasingly active on climate change because of the major accelerating factors including the EU’s Carbon Boarder Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) which will have a substantial impact on the export sector.</li> <li>• Mechanisms for directly linking between policy makers and academics are not clear.</li> <li>• Systematic mechanisms for climate finance are still lacking. There are some operations in some organisations such as the Stock Exchange of Thailand (Green bond), Royal Forest Department (Regulation of carbon credit trading from reforestation), and the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (using trees as financial collateral).</li> <li>• The budget allocation system is still separated by ministries. Agenda-based budgeting is not allocated.</li> </ul>



Category	Criteria	Summary of key points
Policy process  Assessment level: <u>Neutral</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Paris-compatible emissions pathway</li> <li>● Transparency framework</li> <li>● Ratchet-up mechanism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Climate Change Act was drafted and arranged to listen to relevant stakeholders' opinions. It was approved by the NCCC and in the process of proposing a draft law to the Cabinet.</li> <li>● Thailand has been implementing the measures and actions under the PA including the mid-century, long-term low GHG emission development strategy which was already submitted to the Secretariat of the UNFCCC.</li> <li>● The mechanisms of NCCC and National Energy Policy Council are mainly used to formulate and develop climate change policies, strategies, and plans. Components of such committees mostly consist of governmental agencies.</li> <li>● In the preparation of policies, strategies, and plans, there is a process for hearing opinions from relevant sectors and the general public.</li> <li>● There are national and ministry-level mechanisms effectively driving for formulating policies and plans, but there are limitations in translating the plans into actions.</li> </ul>
Stakeholder engagement  Assessment level: <u>Neutral</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Level and scope</li> <li>● Just transition</li> <li>● Exogenous non-state interests and influence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The general public's knowledge and understanding of the goals, importance, and details of NDC targets, including carbon neutrality and net-zero GHG emission, need to be further improved.</li> <li>● However, relevant sectors show positive responses to carbon neutrality and net-zero GHG emission.</li> <li>● Thai civil society organisations are active on climate change, and the TCJ was established.</li> <li>● The TCJ has continually presented the campaign on "Justice and Climate Change", including the issue of fairness in the transition to a low-carbon society and to clean energy.</li> <li>● Thai private sectors support GHG reduction policies, especially after the adoption of the PA.</li> <li>● More than 20 large enterprises have announced a carbon neutral policy to adapt to environmental trade measures.</li> <li>● Academics and research funding agencies pay more attention to climate change research and study and continuously provide funding.</li> <li>● Climate change knowledge was compiled and assessed and two Thailand Climate Change Assessment Reports have been written.</li> </ul>

## Conclusions and recommendations

This article shows that over the last two decades, Thailand has continually developed governance architecture and improved institutional arrangements to better manage climate change challenges. The orientation of Thailand's climate change governance has been steadily reformulated to move towards a polycentric mode. Important policy instruments have been formulated to promote and facilitate the effective implementation of both climate change mitigation and adaptation at multiple levels and across sectors. These instruments have been integrated into the national strategy and national development plans. Cross - scale institutional arrangements and linkages have been synchronously established to enhance climate actions. It is found that coordination occurred mainly horizontally and between ministries and key governmental agencies. However, vertical coordination from central agencies to provincial and local levels remains weak and this area requires urgent improvement. Proactive engagement of a diverse array of public and private actors for more effective management of climate change is one of Thailand's polycentric governance developments. In particular, the private sector currently takes stronger action on climate change and sustainable issues, partly resulting from the collaborative international network initiated by the United Nations. In terms of knowledge production, different types of climate change knowledge have been produced to support public perception and robust policies that, in turn, strengthen implementation and governance. Nevertheless, the created knowledge remains largely formal and technical with limited inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge. Digesting this knowledge to more simplified version for the general public is further necessary to improve this angle of polycentric governance.

An additional analysis of the key enabling governance factors for effective climate actions based on the CAT assessment framework consistently indicates that Thailand has advanced political commitments towards ambitious climate mitigation and a zero - emission society. Overall, both the government and other political actors could make the transition to a zero-emission society a higher priority. The submission of the mid - century, long - term low GHG emission development strategy to the UNFCCC's Secretariat was the first step in the right direction. For policy processes and stakeholder engagement, much progress can be seen and they were consequently assessed to be at a neutral level. For

example, Thailand is well on the way to upgrading the NDC target and incorporating carbon neutrality and net-zero GHG emission goals into the draft climate change law. In addition, civil society and the private sector are actively engaged in climate change through participatory processes, support GHG reduction policies, and are working towards ensuring a just transition to low - emission and climate - resilient pathways rather than simply focusing on the promotion of green jobs. However, a defined Paris - compatible decarbonization and establishment of an enhanced transparency framework and ratchet - up mechanisms for ambitious mitigation efforts require urgent action. Institutional frameworks, regulation, and Thailand's governmental and ministerial processes for effective climate action, especially vertical coordination from national agencies to sub-national and local organisations, are the most important weak key enabling governance factors assessed in this study. Major barriers to effective climate governance to transition to a zero-emissions society include human resource constraints and insufficient budget and resources.

To advance towards a more polycentric approach to Thailand's climate change governance in the near future, efforts should focus on follow prioritized issues: 1) existing mechanisms and practices for climate change responses especially under the PA regime should be further strengthened and elaborated, 2) enactment of the approved climate change law should be accelerated to ensure that Thailand has legislation - based instrument to sustainably tackle climate change in the long run, and associated governance including institutes, mechanisms and various national plans deployed under this law is further strengthened and developed, 3) central-to-local coordination and decision - making that includes diverse social actors and multiple levels of governance should be enhanced through developing effective mechanisms including local capacity, and enabling environments, 4) communication channels and mechanisms among stakeholders and public should be fortified via combination of new innovation and technology and local wisdom. Moreover, stronger participation of local level actors would provide greater opportunities to enhance polycentric governance and improve climate change responses, given that local organizations play a unique role as key actors that are both directly affected by climate change and at the front line of climate actions.

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# The Influence of Political Institutions and Governance on Tax Progressivity in the East Asia-Pacific Region

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## Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between political institutions, governance, and tax progressivity within the East Asia - Pacific region. Tax progressivity is an important policy tool to promote more just societies and reduce income inequality. Political institutions have great influence in shaping tax policy and ensuring the progress of taxes and the configuration of the tax system. Level of enforcement and compliance with tax laws It all depends on the impact of political institutions. It was found that factors of governance and political institutions influence the progress and advancement of the personal income tax system. Political pressure, such as pressure from interest groups, can lead to changes that slow progressivity. Progressivity in the tax system tends to occur in countries with stable political institutions and a high level of democracy and transparency. On the other hand, corruption and the lack of strong political institutions can hinder tax progressivity. Strong administrative infrastructure and effective tax collection and enforcement mechanisms are essential to maintaining a progressive tax system. However, these institutions also face obstacles, such as resistance from the wealthy, a lack of technical expertise, and the need to balance interests and competitive priorities. This article explores the pursuit of tax progressivity in the East Asia-Pacific region and presents possible solutions that different countries can use. It can be used to enact progressive tax reform. Strengthening political institutions is a critical step toward tax advancement and the establishment of a fair, transparent, and accountable tax system in the East Asia - Pacific region.

## Introduction:

The global landscape is undergoing rapid and multifaceted transformations, driven by both internal and external factors. U.S. State Department (2012) defines 30 countries in East Asia and the Pacific, but in this article data can be found on 16 countries: Australia, Cambodia, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR,

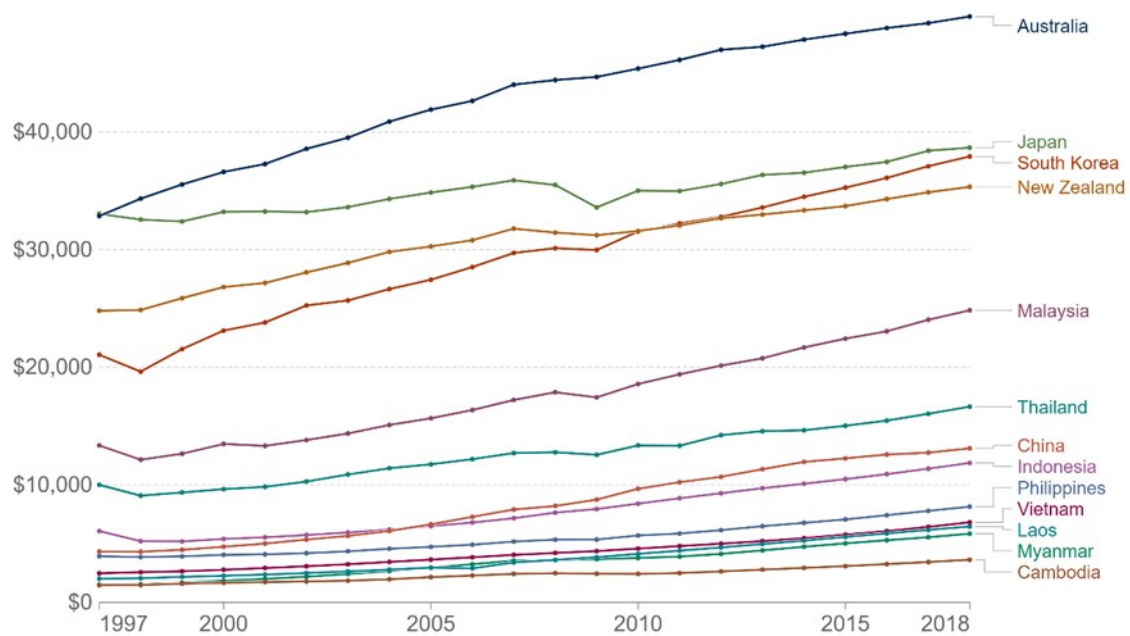
Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam. Within the East Asia-Pacific region, there has been a notable surge in economic growth over the past few decades. However, this progress has also been accompanied by an alarming rise in income inequality, which has emerged as a pressing concern in the region.

Despite the aspirations of each nation to foster development and ensure equitable well - being for its people, the persistent issue of inequality remains prevalent in Figure 1, demonstrates the economic growth achieved by each country, but it also reveals the persistent challenge of inequality. This issue holds significant importance, garnering attention from both individual countries and international organizations.

The reason behind such attention is that income distribution inequality negatively impacts economic growth and hampers a country's long-term economic and social progress. Consequently, the economic and social development of each nation within the region remains incomplete and hindered by this prevailing issue.

**Figure 1**

*Shows Economic Growth by GDP per Capita in 1997–2018*



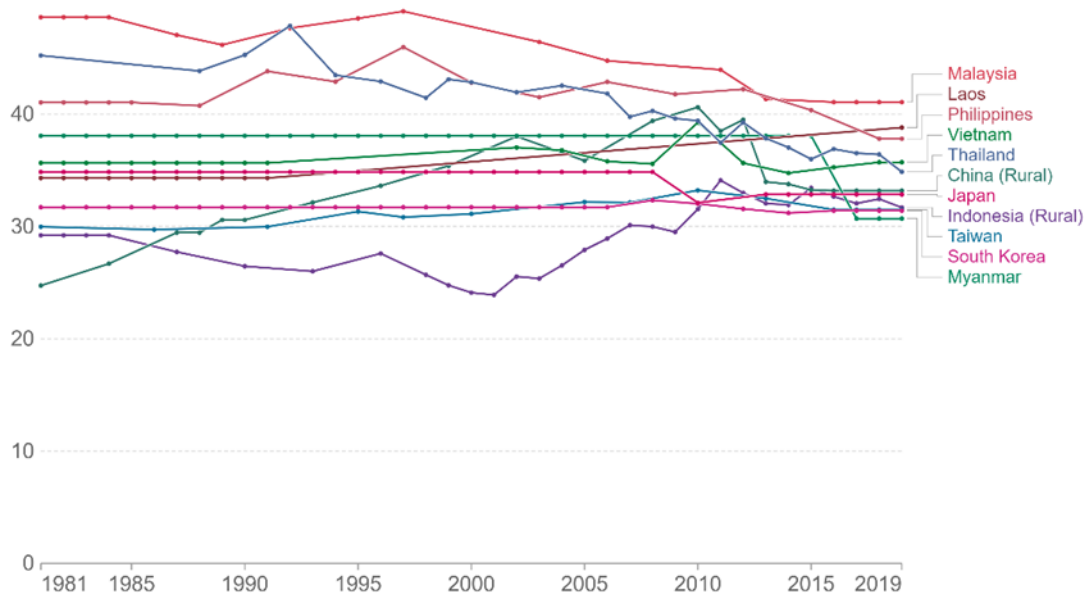
Source: Maddison Project Database 2020 cc.by OurWorldData (2021b)

When a government allocates a significant portion of the national budget to various development initiatives targeting the underprivileged or individuals with low incomes, it reflects a commitment to addressing inequality within the higher echelons of society. To effectively reduce inequality, it becomes imperative for governments to establish mechanisms and tools tailored to the specific needs of the target group, thereby fostering justice and sustainable equality. This is because income distribution serves as a gauge for assessing

social equality, economic parity, and well - rounded economic progress within a country. The Gini coefficient or Gini Index is a widely utilized method for measuring income distribution. It represents the ratio of income distribution on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 signifies perfect income equality among the entire population and 1 denotes absolute inequality. Alternatively, the Gini coefficient can be expressed as a percentage, providing a quantitative measure of income distribution, as depicted in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

Shows Income Inequality of the Gini Index, 1981-2019 Among ASEAN Countries Plus China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan



Source: PovCal (2021) cc.by OurWorldData (2021c)

Figure 2 presents the Gini coefficient data for ASEAN countries, China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan from 1981 to 2019, expressed as a percentage to measure income distribution. During this period, the values ranged between 20% and 60%, indicating varying degrees of income inequality. However, countries have made gradual adjustments to reduce income inequality, bringing the Gini Index to approximately 30 - 40 % despite sustained economic growth.

In the pursuit of reducing inequality and promoting social justice, tax reform has emerged as one approach to implement structural change aimed at promoting greater equality. Progressive tax rates are also known as tax progressivity, serving as a policy tool to address income inequality. Taxes play an important role in reducing inequality and creating a fairer society by contributing to the overall level of equality within a country. Most research on tax systems focuses mainly on tax reform in OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, particularly concerning governance related to tax progressivity. However,

there is limited research in East Asia-Pacific countries in this regard, so this study aims to examine and analyze political institutions and governance factors influencing progressive tax policies, where countries in East Asia and the Pacific, despite economic growth, still have inequality in income distribution. Therefore, it sheds light on the development concepts driving tax progress within the East Asia and Pacific region.

This article is obtained from the collection and analysis of information from reliable documents from various sources, including official documents of international organizations and highly reliable media, as well as academic articles in recognized databases for the content of the presentation, consisting of explaining the concept of tax policy, tax progressivity, political institutions, and governance factors influencing tax progressivity in the East Asia-Pacific tax system. This presents new theoretical knowledge in fiscal public policy on taxation systems and development strategies in developing countries by using tax progressivity as an important tool to reduce inequality and create justice in society.

## Tax Policy:

Taxes are indeed an important source of revenue for governments, enabling them to finance the administration of a country. Various types of taxes contribute to this revenue, including investment gains and profits, social security contributions, payroll and employee taxes, property tax, goods and services tax, and other forms of taxation. Proper collection and management of taxes are crucial for the country's overall development.

In recent years, many countries in the East Asia-Pacific region have experienced rapid economic growth. However, this growth does not always translate into increased income equality. Income inequality has emerged as a concern, prompting policymakers to explore tax policies as a means to promote a more equitable society and reduce income inequality. Implementing tax policies that effectively address these issues is a challenge, requiring careful consideration of several factors, such as the level of income inequality, the structure of the economy, and the political and social environment.

The concept of using tax policy to promote equality is not new and can be traced back centuries to the ideas of Adam Smith, an influential economist. In his book "The Wealth of Nations," Smith (1998) outlined four principles of good taxation: fairness, certainty, ease, and efficiency. Economists have further developed this concept through the notion of "Optimal Taxation theory," which aims to design tax systems that balance efficiency, equity, and competitiveness while contributing to the highest level of social welfare.

One notable contribution to the theory of optimal taxation is the work of Ramsey (1927). Ramsey proposed the idea of taxing goods and services with low elasticity of demand, meaning those for which consumer behavior is less affected by price changes. The rationale behind this approach is that taxing such goods will generate government revenue without significantly altering consumer behavior. In Ramsey's theory, taxes should be proportional to consumers' response to price changes of essential goods with inelastic demand, such as food and medical care, should be taxed at lower rates, while luxury goods

with more flexible demand, such as yachts and private jets, should face higher tax rates. This way, individuals who can afford to pay more will contribute more in taxes, while those with lower incomes are taxed at lower rates.

Ramsey also emphasizes the need to strike a balance between equity and efficiency in tax design. While a progressive tax system, which imposes higher rates on the rich, can reduce income inequality, it may also discourage economic growth by diminishing incentives for work and investment. On the other hand, fixed tax rates can stimulate economic growth, but it will cause low-income earners to pay the same taxes as high-income earners.

Ultimately, determining the most appropriate tax policy for a particular country or region in the East Asia-Pacific area requires careful consideration of these factors and trade-offs. Policymakers strive to find a balance between promoting equality, fostering economic growth, and ensuring efficiency in tax collection and utilization.

The concept of taxation has continued to evolve, and Mirrlees (1971) made significant contributions by suggesting that proper taxation should balance two objectives: increasing government revenues and promoting social welfare by reducing vulnerability. Mirrlees proposed a progressive income tax system, where individuals with higher incomes pay taxes at a higher percentage of their income. He also advocated for different tax rates on goods and services based on the price elasticity of demand. Essential goods with inelastic demand should face lower tax rates, while luxury goods with flexible demand should face higher tax rates. Mirrlees also highlighted the importance of simplicity, transparency, and the avoidance of economic distortions and tax evasion in the tax system.

Despite these advancements, debates still exist regarding the appropriate form of taxation, particularly in achieving a more equitable income distribution. Heathcote, Storesletten and Violante (2020) have tackled this issue by examining whether tax progressivity should respond to increasing income inequality in the United States.



They suggest a tax policy that strikes a balance favoring a more progressive approach if there is an increase in income distribution. A progressive income tax targets high earners to reduce income inequality. The proposed income tax policy aims to effectively address income inequality. This should be more responsive to higher levels of income inequality, making a progressive tax system more appropriate for an unequal society.

Heathcote, Storesletten, and Violante's research provides valuable insights into tax policy design that addresses the challenges posed by growing income inequality while promoting economic growth. Their work emphasizes the importance of considering differences in income and individual abilities. It opens up new avenues for research and development in the field of tax policy.

In Papanikolaou (2021) study on the impact of tax progressivity on income inequality, a cross - border cohort dataset covering 96 countries from 1960 to 2015 was utilized. The study revealed that tax progressivity contributes to a reduction in income inequality. However, the effect of tax progressivity on income inequality varies at different levels of progression. Papanikolaou discovered that the highest reduction in income inequality occurred at a moderate level of progressivity, while both low and high progressivity levels were associated with lower income inequality, albeit to a lesser extent.

Furthermore, the study demonstrated that the impact of tax progressivity on income inequality differs among various income groups and is contingent on the level of economic development within a country. This underscores the significance of tailoring tax policies to a country's specific socioeconomic conditions in order to achieve the desired outcomes in terms of income distribution and equality.

Taxes serve as the primary financial tool employed to achieve a fair distribution of income. Policy-makers must meticulously consider the distinct economic, social, and political factors present in each country and formulate tax policies that are well-suited to their particular needs and circumstances. By doing

so, they can strive to create a more equitable society through effective tax policy design.

### Tax Progressivity:

Tax policy refers to the decisions made by a government regarding the collection of taxes and the allocation of tax revenue. One aspect of tax policy is its influence on income tax progressivity, which can be achieved through the use of tax progressives, which involve imposing higher tax rates on individuals with higher incomes. This approach aims to reduce income inequality by ensuring that those who earn more contribute a larger percentage of their income in taxes. The concept of tax progressivity is based on the principle of affordability, which suggests that individuals with higher incomes should contribute more to society through taxes compared to those with lower incomes.

In terms of the relationship between tax progressivity and economic growth, a study by Greiner (2006) presented an internal growth model that incorporated public capital and a progressive income tax. The study demonstrated that more advanced tax schedules, which include higher progressivity, result in a larger ratio of public capital to private equity. However, the growth rate becomes less balanced due to the negative growth impact of the progressive tax system outweighing the indirect positive growth effect of increased public equity shares.

A progressive tax system operates by increasing the tax rate as income increases. This ensures that individuals with higher incomes pay a larger proportion of their income in taxes, aligning with the principle of ability to pay. The underlying idea is that individuals who earn more have a greater capacity to contribute financially to society. Tax progressivity has gained increasing attention as a policy tool for addressing income inequality over time. By implementing progressive tax systems, governments can promote fairness and redistribute wealth more equitably.

One of the primary advantages of a progressive tax system is its ability to address income inequality. By requiring high-income earners to pay a higher percentage of taxes, a progressive tax system helps redistribute wealth and narrow the income gap between the rich and the poor. This has significant social and economic benefits, including reducing social unrest and promoting political stability. Moreover, a fairer tax system contributes to a more stable and sustainable economy by ensuring that all citizens contribute their fair share of taxes. Governments can generate more revenue to fund public services and infrastructure, ultimately fostering economic growth.

Implementing a progressive tax system, however, can pose challenges. Political resistance from the wealthy, a lack of technical expertise, and dependence on tax revenues are some of the obstacles that countries may face. Despite these challenges, the potential benefits of a more advanced tax system in promoting a more equitable society make it an important policy tool that political institutions must consider.

The concept of a progressive tax system dates back to the early 20th century when it was first introduced in the United States. It is grounded in the principles of social justice, asserting that individuals with higher incomes have a greater responsibility to contribute to society. This understanding has led to an increasing recognition of progressive taxation as a vital policy tool for promoting a fairer society and reducing income inequality.

In the East Asia-Pacific region, rapid economic growth has been accompanied by increased income inequality. However, the degree of tax progressivity varies greatly among countries in the region. Some countries, such as Japan and South Korea, have highly progressive tax systems, while others like Indonesia and the Philippines have regressive tax systems, where lower-income individuals pay a higher percentage of taxes than higher-income individuals. The concept of progressive taxation has quickly spread to many countries in the East Asia - Pacific region and has gained importance as a policy tool in recent years.

Economic research on tax progressivity often focuses on measuring and calculating the degree of progressivity in tax systems. Kakwani (1977) introduced a new approach to measuring tax progressivity, which helps isolate the effects of taxes on income distribution. It has been demonstrated that the impact of taxation on income distribution is not solely determined by the level of progressivity but also influenced by the average tax rate. By using the proposed tax progress index and analyzing the properties of the index, the Gini Index fluctuates from +1 at the most progressive end to -1 at the tax regressive end. This allows for a comprehensive examination of the US tax progressivity.

Another area of research explores the structure of the tax system and its impact on progressive taxation. Gerber et al. (2018) examined the relationship between tax system structure and the ability to achieve a progressive tax system, using Kakwani's index but not considering pre - tax income distribution. Their findings indicate a decline in progressivity between 2000 and 2017. Additionally, the potential benefits of progressive income taxation may be diminished when value - added tax (VAT) is implemented due to increased uncertainty and potentially lower demand growth.

Rubolino and Waldenström (2020) discovered that tax breaks have a long-term positive effect on the top revenue share, primarily through the use of lower marginal tax rates. They also observed an increase in the share of capital income among the highest income earners following tax reforms. These findings suggest that tax avoidance behavior may contribute to some of the observed effects.

Overall, economic research on tax progressivity provides valuable insights into measuring and analyzing the impact of tax systems on income distribution. By understanding the structure and effects of tax policies, policymakers can make informed decisions to promote a fairer and more equitable society.

According to Gerber et al. (2020), increasing tax progressivity can help reduce pre-tax inequality. Additionally, a study by Heer and Rohrbacher (2021)

suggests that modifying the ideal progressivity of the US tax system, such as through a more equitable welfare function or addressing current levels of wage inequality, could have positive impacts on welfare and employment. Furthermore, Kakwani and Son (2021) explored the relevance of progressive tax measures in tax policymaking, finding that designing a progressive tax system is essential for optimizing social welfare, minimizing tax administration costs, and maximizing social returns through efficient allocation of tax revenues.

In the East Asia - Pacific region, achieving tax progressivity requires a multifaceted approach. First, countries should ensure that their tax systems are designed to be progressive, which includes establishing final tax rate structures and providing tax credits for low - income earners. Second, effective enforcement of tax systems is crucial, necessitating a reduction in tax avoidance and an increase in tax compliance. Third, tax systems should be transparent and accountable, ensuring that taxpayers understand how their taxes are utilized and that tax revenues benefit all citizens.

However, implementing tax reforms to achieve progressivity faces challenges, including the political will to initiate changes, particularly in countries heavily reliant on tax revenues. Additionally, the lack of technical expertise and resources for designing and implementing progressive tax systems poses another obstacle for many countries in the region.

Addressing these challenges and advancing tax progressivity requires concerted efforts from governments, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders. By prioritizing equity, transparency, and effective enforcement, countries can create fairer tax systems that contribute to social welfare gains and promote economic development.

### **Political Institution and Tax Progressivity:**

Political institutions are essential components of a functioning state, as they are responsible for making public policy decisions and wielding the power necessary to govern a country. These institutions have

the authority to formulate policies that shape the nation's development and allocate the national budget to serve the people. Economic policies, in particular, are greatly influenced by the various forms of political institutions present in a country. One significant aspect of economic policy affected by political institutions is income taxation, as they are responsible for collecting taxes to be utilized for the country's development.

Political institutions and their indicators have been defined in different ways by scholars. North (1991) defines institutions as man-made constraints that structure political, economic, and social interactions. These constraints encompass both unofficial restrictions such as boycotts, prohibitions, customs, traditions, and ethics, as well as formal rules like constitutions, laws, and property rights. On the other hand, Zaaruka and Fedderke (2011) define political institution indicators as composed of various factors, including property rights, political freedom, judicial independence, and political instability. Different classifications of political institutions based on these indicators have been shown to have a significant impact on economic policies, resulting in substantial variation.

Persson and Tabellini (2004) conducted research revealing that changes in governance and electoral reform often lead to trade-offs between accountability and representation. These trade-offs extend to the outcomes of economic policy, as they influence politicians' incentives to cater to the needs of specific groups of voters. In order to secure the support of a larger voter base, politicians are motivated to respond to the demands and preferences of these groups. This dynamic can shape economic policies in a way that aligns with the interests of influential voter groups.

Mutascu (2011) conducted research exploring the influence of political regimes on taxation. The study suggests that a substantial increase in taxation, without significant negative reactions from the population, is more likely to be implemented in countries with strong democratic or authoritarian political regimes. The nature of the political regime can affect the ability to enact and implement tax policies that aim to achieve greater progressivity.

Overall, political institutions have a crucial role in shaping tax policies and determining the level of tax progressivity. They are responsible for designing tax systems and setting tax rates, which directly impact the distribution of the tax burden among different income groups. The influence of political institutions on tax progressivity is complex and can be influenced by factors such as the design of the tax system and the nature of the political regime in a particular country.

Kenny and Winer (2006) conducted research on the role of political regimes and found that democracies tend to rely more on personal income tax compared to other regimes. This could be due to the fact that personal income tax relies more on voluntary compliance. Balamatsias (2018) also examined the relationship between regional democracy and national regimes and found a positive effect of democracy on direct taxes and the overall tax ratio. Furthermore, Profeta, Puglisi and Scabrosetti (2013) studied how political changes affect the composition and size of tax revenue and government spending.

Political factors can significantly influence personal income tax progressivity. Pressure from interest groups and stakeholders, such as wealthy individuals or corporations, may lead to changes in tax policies that reduce tax rates for high-income earners. These changes make the tax system less progressive by decreasing the level at which tax rates increase with income. In the United States, political factors have played a role in diminishing the progressivity of the federal personal income tax system. A specific example of this influence is the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, as highlighted by the Tax Foundation (2017). This act led to a reduction in the maximum marginal tax rate from 39.6% to 37%. As a result, high-income earners benefited from lower tax rates.

Administrative factors also impact the advancement of personal income tax systems. The efficiency and effectiveness of tax collection and enforcement mechanisms play a crucial role. If tax collection and enforcement are weak or inefficient, taxing high-income earners becomes more challenging, making the tax system less progressive. To enhance

the advancement of personal income tax, governments need to focus on reducing corruption, promoting effective tax and customs administration, and increasing revenue from less corruption-prone tax sources.

Comparing different countries, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden) have the most advanced personal income tax systems globally, according to Lines (2019). These countries have high tax rates, multiple tax brackets, and relatively few deductions and exemptions. The progressivity of their tax systems is driven by a combination of tax policies, political factors, and administrative factors. The Nordic countries prioritize reducing income inequality and promoting social welfare, backed by progressive taxation. They have a political culture that supports more progressive taxation, which contributes to the advancement of their tax systems. Additionally, their administrative infrastructure for tax collection and enforcement is robust, ensuring an efficient and effective tax system.

Xu and Cui (2009) found that China's personal income tax system has evolved since the 1980s and is considered progressive, with multiple tax brackets and a maximum tax rate of 45%. However, concerns about tax evasion and enforcement have raised questions about the advancement of the tax system in recent years. Reforms are being called for to enhance progressivity, particularly considering China's growing wealth inequality. Improving enforcement mechanisms and addressing tax evasion can contribute to making the tax system more progressive.

In conclusion, political institutions are crucial for making public policy decisions and exercising state power. They play a significant role in shaping economic policies, including income taxation. Different forms of political institutions, as indicated by various factors and indicators, can greatly influence economic policies. Furthermore, changes in governance and electoral systems can introduce trade-offs between accountability and representation, which in turn impact the outcomes of economic policies.

The relationship between political institutions and tax progressivity is indeed complex. Political institutions, including the constitution, judiciary, and legislative bodies, play a vital role in shaping tax policies and ensuring the achievement of tax progressivity. One of the keyways in which political institutions influence tax progressivity is through the enactment of tax laws.

Political institutions are responsible for designing tax policies and determining tax rates that are applicable to different income groups. The design of a tax system can have a significant impact on the level of tax progressivity achieved. For instance, a highly progressive tax system ensures that individuals with higher incomes pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes compared to those with lower incomes. The extent to which tax progressivity can be achieved largely depends on how the tax system is structured, and this design process is largely influenced by political institutions.

### Governance and tax progressivity:

Good governance is a fundamental principle of sustainable development that encompasses various dimensions, including the economy, politics, society, and management within public and private organizations. The concept of governance gained prominence after the release of a World Bank report. In the book of World Bank (1989) "Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth: A Long-Term Perspective Study" published by Oxford University Press; the organization's African experts expressed concerns about the "governance crisis." This report sparked debates in both developing and developed countries regarding governance in relation to economic development.

The term "governance" has a broad definition that encompasses the supervision and management of economic and social resources in a developing country. However, for the purposes of World Bank lending, a more applicable term is "the manner in which a country exercises its power to manage the economic and social resources of a developing country." The World Bank (1992) defined good governance as

"good development management" because its experience has shown that even technically sound programs and their financing often fail to deliver expected results due to various factors.

Governance is a multifaceted term with diverse meanings and applications. According to Rhodes (1996), there are at least six aspects of good governance: minimum state, corporate governance, New Public Management, governance of social and cyber systems, and self - management networks. The International Monetary Fund (1997) recognizes the significance of good governance and actively collaborates with member countries to promote it and combat corruption. The IMF supports good governance through policy recommendations, financial assistance, and technical support to its member countries, making it a priority.

The IMF's approach to good governance primarily revolves around monitoring macroeconomic policies, ensuring government accounting transparency, enhancing the efficiency of public resource management, and creating an economic and regulatory environment that promotes stability and transparency in private sector activities.

Based on Stoker (1998) principles of good governance, the following guidelines are presented:

1. Governance extends beyond the government: good governance recognizes that power and authority are not solely vested in the state or government. Other public or private bodies can also hold significant power and influence, which should be acknowledged and incorporated into the governance framework.

2. Clear scope and responsibility: good governance clarifies the roles and responsibilities of different actors in addressing social and economic problems. It acknowledges that civil society, including NGOs and voluntary groups, play a crucial role in solving these issues, blurring the lines between the state and society, and the public and private sectors.

3. Inter-institutional relations: Governance emphasizes the interdependence of organizations engaged in collective action. To achieve common goals, organizations must exchange resources and negotiate

with one another. The effectiveness of these exchanges depends not only on the resources of each organization but also on the rules of the game and the surrounding environment.

4. Autonomous actor networks: Governance recognizes the significance of autonomous actor networks that can issue commands and cooperate with the government in specific domains. These networks share the responsibilities of public administration and contribute to decision-making processes.

5. Government steering with new tools and techniques: good governance acknowledges that the government can exercise its power and steer society through innovative tools and techniques, rather than relying solely on direct control.

Chhotray and Stoker (2009) define governance as the rules governing collective decision-making in multi-player or corporate situations, without a formal regulatory mechanism dictating the terms of their connection. The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) project, completed by the Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2010), combines indicators for six important governance dimensions: Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Lack of Violence/ Terrorism, Government Effectiveness, Governance Quality, Rule of Law, and Corruption Control. These indicators assess the governance of different countries using responses from business, citizen, and expert surveys.

Governance plays a crucial role in shaping the advancement and progressivity of personal income tax systems in different countries. Various factors, including political and administrative influences, can impact the direction and effectiveness of these tax systems.

## Discussion:

The role of political institutions extends to public trust in the tax system. When political institutions are perceived as corrupt or ineffective, citizens may find opportunities to evade taxes, resulting in lower tax revenues and a less progressive tax system. This situation can create a vicious cycle, as low tax revenues make it challenging for governments to finance public services and infrastructure, leading to further inequality and reduced economic growth. Conversely, when political institutions are viewed as fair and effective, citizens are more likely to comply with tax laws. This leads to higher tax revenue levels and a more progressive tax system. This virtuous cycle occurs as high tax revenues enable governments to finance public services and infrastructure, fostering greater economic growth and reducing inequality.

Political institutions have a significant influence on tax progressivity by shaping the enforcement and compliance with tax laws. In countries where political institutions are weak and corruption is widespread, achieving tax progressivity becomes challenging. Wealthy individuals can evade taxes or exert influence over tax policies to their advantage. Conversely, countries with strong political institutions, transparency, and accountability, particularly those with high-income levels, are more likely to succeed in implementing tax progressivity.

**Figure 3**

Shows Democracy Index by Polity5, 2000–2018 in East Asia and Pacific Countries.



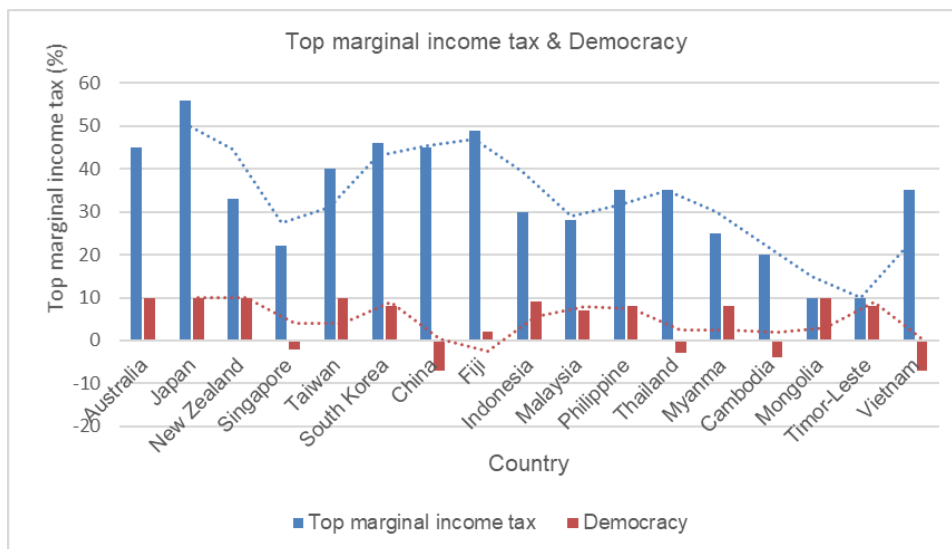
Source: Polity 5 (2021) cc.by Our World Data (2021a)

Countries in figure 3 such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea, which possess strong tax administration and high levels of democracy (polity level 7-10), effectively enforce tax laws and have highly progressive tax systems. These countries exhibit top marginal income tax rates ranging from 33% to 56%. Similarly, countries with authoritarian regimes or limited democracy (polity level -7) and strong political institutions, like China and Vietnam,

can set high individual income tax rates and fully enforce tax laws. These countries have top marginal income tax rates of 45% and 35% in figure 4. Similarly, to Förster, Llena-Nozal and Nafilyan (2014) has studied and reported in the OECD Working Papers that the average of the highest individual income tax rates of the OECD countries has been decreased from 66% in 1981 to 42% in 2010, also indicating that raising the maximum personal income tax rate.

**Figure 4**

Shows the Top Marginal Income Tax and Democracy. Democracy, 2018.



Source: Author

In addition, political institutions play a crucial role in shaping tax progressivity. They influence the enforcement and compliance with tax laws, and their strength and transparency impact the effectiveness of tax systems. Countries with strong political institutions, high levels of democracy, and transparency tend to enforce tax laws effectively, leading to progressive tax systems. On the other hand, weak political institutions and corruption can hinder tax progressivity, resulting in lower tax revenues, increased inequality, and reduced economic growth.

Political institutions can also influence tax progressivity through their interactions with other institutions, such as the judiciary and the executive branch of government. In countries with a robust system of checks and balances, the judiciary plays a crucial role in ensuring fair and impartial application of tax laws, thereby reducing corruption and promoting a more progressive tax system. Similarly, effective government administration can support tax progressivity by advocating for progressive tax reforms and ensuring the effective implementation of tax laws.

However, there are challenges associated with achieving tax progressivity through political institutions. One of the main challenges is political opposition from wealthy individuals who may use their political power to resist tax reforms that would increase their tax burden. This can make it more difficult for political institutions to design and implement progressive tax systems.

Additionally, political institutions face the challenge of balancing competing interests and priorities when implementing tax reform. While tax progressivity is desirable, excessive tax burdens on certain groups or sectors could have negative economic consequences, potentially discouraging investment or reducing incentives for high-income earners. Striking the right balance between promoting tax progressivity and ensuring economic growth and stability poses a challenge for political institutions.

Despite the challenges involved, political institutions are crucial in promoting tax progressivity in the East Asia - Pacific region. Strengthening these institutions to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency is vital for fostering a fair and equitable tax system. Several reforms are necessary to achieve this, including improving tax administration, encouraging citizen participation in tax policy formulation, and implementing measures to combat corruption and promote transparency.

In summary, the relationship between political institutions and tax progressivity is complex and multifaceted. Political institutions play a significant role in shaping tax policies and ensuring the achievement of tax progressivity. However, they face challenges such as political opposition, limited technical expertise, and the need to balance competing interests and priorities. Despite these challenges, strengthening political institutions is essential for promoting tax progressivity and establishing a fair, transparent, and accountable tax system in the East Asia-Pacific region.

In addition, it was also found that governance factors, including political and administrative influences, shape the advancement and progressivity of personal income tax systems. This can be confirmed by a study by Kifordu, Igweh and Aloamaka (2020), which highlights the importance of transparent and accountable tax regimes for economic development and institution strengthening in Nigeria. Ajaz and Ahmad (2010) analyze the effects of corruption and governance on tax revenues, finding that corruption negatively impacts tax collection while good governance improves it. Epaphra and Massawe (2017) suggest that governments should combat corruption, promote effective tax and customs administration, and focus on tax types less susceptible to fraud to increase tax revenue. Political pressures, such as those exerted by interest groups, can lead to changes that reduce progressivity. Progressivity in tax systems is more likely to occur in nations with solid political institutions, high levels of democracy, and transparency.



On the other side, corruption and a lack of strong political institutions can impede tax progressivity. Strong administrative infrastructure and effective tax collection and enforcement mechanisms are crucial for maintaining a progressive tax system. Countries like the Nordic nations have achieved advanced personal income tax systems through a combination of progressive tax policies, political support for reducing income inequality, and robust administrative structures. Other countries, like China, are working to address challenges in tax evasion and enforcement to enhance the progressivity of their tax systems. Good governance is essential for achieving and maintaining a progressive tax system. Effective governance ensures that tax policies are implemented efficiently and fairly. It involves creating robust administrative structures for tax collection and enforcement, reducing corruption, and promoting transparency. Sound governance practices help prevent tax evasion and ensure that everyone pays their fair share, thereby supporting a more progressive tax system.

### Conclusion:

Tax progressivity is an important policy tool that can be used to address income inequality in the East Asia - Pacific region. Developing tax advancements in the region's tax system requires a multifaceted approach, which includes the design of a progressive tax system, tax law enforcement, and ensuring transparency and accountability.

Political institutions and good governance play a crucial role in driving tax progressivity. These factors determine the effectiveness and efficiency of tax reforms. However, implementing tax reform can present challenges. Nevertheless, the benefits of a progressive tax system outweigh these challenges.

It is essential for countries in the region to prioritize tax reform to ensure that their tax systems are fair, transparent, and accountable. By adopting progressive tax policies, governments can create a more equitable distribution of wealth and income, reducing the gap between the rich and the poor.

Additionally, tax progressivity can provide governments with the necessary resources to invest in public services and social welfare programs. These investments can further contribute to reducing inequality and promoting inclusive economic growth.

In summary, implementing a progressive tax system and addressing the challenges associated with tax reform are important steps for countries in the Asia-Pacific region to promote fairness, transparency, and accountability in their tax systems. Therefore, countries should strengthen their political institutions in areas of extreme democracy to promote progressive tax policies, ensure good governance for tax reform, and cause acceptance and transparency in tax collection. By doing so, they can contribute to reducing income inequality and fostering sustainable development.

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