

NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY POLICY

Thailand



Policy Frameworks

Does equity with regard to supporting students from low-income or marginalized populations to enter or succeed in higher education feature in any government produced policy documents? If so, which government policy document(s) are these and can you provide website link(s) to them?

- Equity is an important issue in Thai higher education. It is highlighted in the Higher Education Act of B.E. 2562 (Article 17 and 18). The Act emphasizes the equitable access to higher education of Thai people, regardless of their ethnicity, age, gender, health and physical ability, faith and socio-economic status. In addition, it states that higher education institution must provide financial aids or scholarship to alleviate inequality in education (Article 18).
http://www.ratchakitcha.soc.go.th/DATA/PDF/2562/A/057/T_0054.PDF
- Education equity and accessibility also appears in the National Education Plan (B.E. 2560-2579). The plan focuses on life-long learning and inclusive education and emphasizes the importance of equal opportunity in accessing and completing education, as well as student employability. The main concerns include student dropping out and the gap between the education sector and employers' needs. <http://backoffice.onec.go.th/uploads/Book/1540-file.pdf>
- Apart from the aforementioned Act, Thailand has been implementing the Student Loan Scheme since 1996. The scheme aims to ease learners and parents' financial burden by providing income-contingent loan to all eligible students.
<https://www.studentloan.or.th/th/system/files/files/knowledge/1.1-20173001.pdf>

Please note that all links are in Thai.

What policies and actions are described in these government policy documents in terms of supporting students from low-income or marginalized populations to enter or succeed in higher education?

- At the government level, student loan scheme is the main tool in supporting higher education accessibility. Scholarship schemes are also available for student in remoted areas, particularly the Southern part of Thailand.
- At the institutional level, higher education institutions provide financial aids to their students. The aids normally cover tuition and fees, living allowance and education materials. Services and supports are limitedly available for handicapped students.

Is there a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education? If so, which document(s) is/are these? Can you provide a link(s)?

No.

Which equity target groups are identified in the policy documents? (Please choose as many groups as apply in your own country)

- Low-income or lower socio-economic background students
- Gender groups
- Older or mature learners
- Indigenous populations
- People from rural backgrounds
- Other groups under-represented in HE
- Students with disability

Does the country have concrete targets for the participation of specific equity groups in higher education?

No.

Which agency has responsibility for policies related to equity in student participation/success in higher education?

- Ministry of Finance, through the Student Loan Fund Office, is the main responsible agency for financial aids.
- Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation and higher education institutions are in charge of higher education accessibility and graduate employability.
- Ministry of Education plays roles in encouraging students to continue their study after secondary level.
- Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre is in charge of promoting education accessibility for Muslim and Malay ethnic students in the deep south provinces of Thailand.

Which stakeholder groups are consulted during the equity policy formulation? (Please choose all the stakeholders that are invited to the consultation process in your own country)

- Higher Education Institutions' Associations
- Civil society organisations
- Private sector organisations
- International Organisations

Achieving Policy Targets

Are there any non-monetary instruments such as outreach work between schools and universities, reforms to university admission etc. used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education? If so, can you describe what they are?

- Special quota for ethnic and local students existed among certain public and autonomous higher education institutions.
- Services and supports for handicapped students are available.

Are there any financial instruments such as bursaries, scholarships and loans used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education? If so, can you describe what they are?

The Student Loan Scheme.

Who is responsible for monitoring the impact of measures used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education?

- Ministry of Finance takes care of monitoring student loan, including its impact, debt collection and forgiveness and fund management.
- Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation is responsible for collecting and analysing student data, including their financial sources for education. However, the analysis has been done in a holistic view, not focusing on specific equity group.

What instruments, methods and data are in place to carry out the monitoring and evaluation?

There are student loan and higher education databases.

What kind of autonomy do higher education institutions enjoy in reaching the policy targets set by government?

- ➔ Higher education institutions have full autonomy in every policy aspect, including promoting accessibility and ensuring graduate employability.

How do you see the role of inter-governmental/international organisations in supporting higher education equity policies? In which areas would be their contribution the most valuable? (1= most valuable contribution 4=least valuable contribution)

1. Technical assistance and capacity building
3. Facilitating peer learning, exchange of experience among countries
4. Policy setting
4. Financial assistance (grants, loan financing, scholarships)

COVID-19 and Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education

How, if at all, has Covid-19 affected the existence and implementation of policies designed to encourage greater access and success on higher education of those from low-income/marginalized groups?

Covid-19 amplified the need for equitable access to education in both the financial aspect and the learning aspect. In the financial aspect, the family and parents are likely to financially affected by the pandemic. Families struggle to provide support to their kids despite higher education institutions reduce tuition and fees.

In learning aspect, onsite and face-to-face learning is prohibited. All students lost opportunities to interact with their instructors and peers. Although online learning has been implemented, it will never fully replace the traditional learning approach.

Sources

This country brief was prepared as part of the [“ASEM National Equity Policies in Higher Education”](#) report, a collaboration between the [Asia-Europe Foundation \(ASEF\)](#) and the [National Education Opportunities Network \(NEON\)](#). The report was launched at the [8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education \(ARCS\)](#) on *“Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe”* on 10 September 2021.

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