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EDUCATIONAL POLITICS IN THAILAND: A CASE OF THE
1999 NATIONAL EDUCATION ACT

By
Sarayuth Poolsup

Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Leadership and Counseling
Eastern Michigan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February 25, 2003
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EDUCATIONAL POLITICS IN THAILAND: A CASE OF THE

1999 NATIONAL EDUCATION ACT

Sarayuth Poolsup

APPROVAL:

______________________________ __________________________
James Barott, Ph.D. Date
Dissertation Chair

______________________________ __________________________
David Anderson, Ed.D. Date
Committee Member

______________________________ __________________________
William Shelton, Ed.D. Date
Committee Member

______________________________ __________________________
Pat Williams-Boyd, Ed.D. Date
Graduate School Representative

______________________________ __________________________
Jaclynn Tracy, Ph.D. Date
Department Head

______________________________ __________________________
Patrick Melia, Ph.D. Date
Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

my parents, Prayoon and Prapha Poolsup,

who have given me the most precious present,

*education.*
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research study was successfully completed thanks to many people who helped me along the journey. I thank my advisor and chairperson of the dissertation committee, Dr. James Barott, for his wisdom, mentoring, and encouragement in the course of this research and throughout the years of graduate school. I am deeply grateful to my committee members, Dr. Pat Williams-Boyd, Dr. David Anderson, and Dr. William Shelton for their support, openness, and enthusiasm about this non-American dissertation. I would also like to thank Dr. Jaclynn Tracy, Interim Department Head, for her support throughout my years in the Department of Leadership and Counseling. My sincere thanks also extend to Dr. Helen Ditzhazy for her mentoring and moral support.

I am grateful to my friends in the doctoral cohort for their kindness and encouragement throughout the program. I especially want to thank Kevin Brandon and his family for making me feel like Michigan was my second home. I would also like to thank my parents, Prayoon and Prapha, who have always given me their love, encouragement, and support throughout my educational journeys, both in Thailand and in the United States. Finally, I want to thank my sisters, Nalinee and Lalita, for letting me have a long-distance “counseling session” with them in Thailand every weekend.
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand educational policy-making and politics in Thailand. The researcher sought to answer the questions “What is the nature of Thai politics?” and “What is the nature of educational policy-making in Thailand?” The study followed an institutional approach to political research adopted by sociohistorical theorists (Kato, 1996; Scott, 1995). The research design was based on the qualitative, case-study strategy.

The study consists of two parts: (a) an investigation into the historical development of Thai politics, society, and education and (b) the case study of the bill on the establishment of the council of teachers and educational personnel. The case study is an examination of the political conflicts occurring during the development and consideration of the bill. The conceptual framework and categories used in this study were derived from institutional theories (Scott, 1995) and the concepts of legitimacy of authority (Weber, 1924/1968), citizenship (Marshall, 1969), and political conflict (Schattschneider, 1975).

The data-collection methods of document review and interviewing were used. The interviews were conducted individually with seven participants who were senior civil servants and elite political officials. The trustworthiness of the research findings was achieved by applying the constructivist criteria for evaluating qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The research findings suggested that the Thai political system is an exclusive system. The development of Thai politics was based on an authoritarian tradition vested in the institution of the absolute monarchy. In the past, the masses were excluded from politics by the legal system, social structure, and religious beliefs. The social structure and processes
constituted the normative and cultural frameworks that constrained the choices of political participation by the masses. Similar to Thai politics, educational policy-making in Thailand is an elite system controlled by senior civil servants in the Office of the National Education Commission, by the Ministry of Education, and by members of the Cabinet. The authorities decides who could get involved in the process and at what points in the process. The public was allowed to participate only in the process of drafting policies through public hearings that were organized, for the most part, to support the authorities’ agendas.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In August 1999, the National Education Act (NEA) was promulgated to serve as the framework for the reform of Thai education. The transitory provisions in the act specified the deadlines of the implementation that had to be achieved within one, three, and five years of the enactment date of the act. The implementation of the NEA was concerned mainly with the administration of education, which required the development and amendment of various related laws. As a result of the requirements in the NEA, the Office of the Education Reform (OER) was established to develop new bills and amend related laws in order to facilitate the implementation of the NEA.

Despite the establishment of the OER and the deadlines, the implementation of the NEA was delayed because of the conflicts occurring in the policy-making processes. The conflicts not only delayed but also affected the outcomes of the policy-making, which in turn determined the direction of education reform and the development of Thai education. The significance of education policy-making creates the need for educational leaders in Thailand to be actively involved in policy-making. To effectively get involved and influence educational policies, educational leaders need to understand the nature of educational politics and policy-making processes. When leaders gain an insight into the nature of the system, they can see how to influence educational policies and the future of Thai education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to understand educational policy-making in Thailand. Easton (1965) suggested that the society is the most inclusive social system that encompasses every other system including the political system. Because the political system is open to influences from the society, an analysis of the system must take the context of its
environment into account. Similarly, Van Horn, Baumer, and Gormley (2001) proposed that political institutions function as parts of the larger national, cultural, and socioeconomic systems. Consequently, the actions of political institutions and the nature of public policy are significantly influenced by cultural and economic forces unique to each country. They proposed that before examining specific aspects of politics, the broader context within which political institutions and actors function should be examined.

Because a comprehension of the context within which educational policy-making occurred is essential for an understanding of the policy-making itself, the second purpose of the study was to understand the nature of Thai politics. Therefore, I started by examining the historical development of Thai politics, society, and education. In doing that, I was able to explicate how Thai politics and society have developed over time and to understand the effects of those changes on the current political system. Through this inquiry, a system of explanation for the nature of contemporary Thai politics was developed. In examining the case of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, I wanted to understand current policy-making in Thai education. An understanding of the nature of Thai politics thus assisted in the development of an explanation of what is happening in education policy-making.

Significance of the Study

A number of political observers have noted that Thailand has made significant advances in democratization during the last decade (Pathamanand, 2001). The 1990s was a decade of political changes in Thailand. Beginning in 1991, a military group staged a coup d'état leading to an uprising that overthrew the regime. Under the pressure from pro-democracy groups as well as from the inside, the government created the Constitutional
Drafting Assembly in late 1996 to draft a new constitution to replace the one proclaimed by
the junta in 1991. Despite opposition from conservative politicians, this constitution was
approved by the National Assembly and promulgated in October 1997.

The new constitution aims to provide a more effective system of checks and balances.
A new autonomous counter-corruption committee and a system for the impeachment of
corrupt politicians were created. The constitution recognizes several new rights and liberties
of the people, including the right to participate in the decision-making process
(Bunbongkarn, 2001). Concerning education, the constitution requires the state to provide
laws relating to national education. In accordance with the requirement, the National
Education Act (NEA) was promulgated in August 1999 to serve as the framework for the
reform of Thai education (Office of the National Education Commission [ONEC], 2000).
The act is largely a description of what must be achieved and when. For instance, Section 73
in the Transitory Provisions states that the establishment of the organization with the powers
and duties for setting teaching professional standards, issuing and revoking teaching licenses,
and overseeing maintenance of professional standards and ethics must be completed within
three years after the enactment date of the act, that is by August 2002. To create the
organization, the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel must be
passed. Despite the deadline, in November 2002, the bill was still under the consideration of
a select committee of the House of Representatives. This situation is comparable to those of
other education reform bills required for the implementation of the NEA. The political
conflicts, which occurred during the policy-making and delayed the education reform,
interested me. I wanted to understand what had happened in the policy-making processes. I
started to examine various conflicting issues that arose during the development of education
reform bills and finally decided to focus on the political conflicts occurring during the
drafting and consideration processes of the bill establishing the council of teachers and
educational personnel.

Thailand is in political transition from a bureaucratic polity to a more participatory
during the political crisis of Bloody May 1992 and the movement leading up to political
reform in 1997—political activism expanded and strengthened among farmers, labour,
feminists, environmentalists, and pro-poor organizations” (p. 32). The changes resulted in the
increasing of the number and roles of interest groups in Thai politics. In the case of the bill
establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel—in addition to the agencies—
various groups of teachers, university faculty, and activists tried to get involved or were
involved in the policy-making process. The influences of these groups on the bill, however,
were ambiguous. Thus, the phenomenon of the conflict over the bill provided an opportunity
for the investigation into educational policy-making in Thailand.

In his discussion on the Thai’s perception of knowledge, Mulder (1996) talked about
Thai university faculty:

Most of the people who are addressed as aacaan [romanized Thai ad lib = ar-jahn,
often used as a title to call university faculty and, sometimes, teachers]… are
curiously incurious, uninquiring, do little if any research, and tend to shy away from
discussion. Often they seek to validate their position by having a bland or derivative
article published in one of the multitude of social science or cultural journals that
nobody seems eager to read; to that article they append a three or four page
bibliography, whether it is relevant or not, enumerating all the literature that they
have read while studying abroad…. In liberal academic circles, criticism and the scrutiny of ideas are undeveloped, even to the extent that many Thai social scientists fear to be accused as unpatriotic if they voice a controversial political or religious opinion. Moreover, to state such opinions may adversely affect [sic] their chances of bureaucratic promotion, and it is therefore wise to show that one conforms to the expectations that surround one’s position.

What social science is about remains unclear, even to most of the professionals in this field. Academic sociology and anthropology are defined by the contents of the American textbooks in use and their Thai imitations. The latter are largely irrelevant as guides to a conceptual analysis of Thai society and political economy in terms of structures, institution, and social forces. (p. 140–141)

Although the situation has improved, to a great extent the observation is justified and supported by the comment creating national debates, made by former Prime Minister Chaun in 1994, that Thai university faculty did their jobs as if it were a sideline and gave priority to their sideline job at the expense of their teaching (Hallinger, 1996). Being unbounded by those constraints, I thus hope that this research will help Thai educators as well as readers who are interested in Thai politics to make sense of educational policy-making and politics in Thailand. Additionally, I expect that the study will contribute to the field of political science in Thailand and that the concepts and categories used in this research will present an alternative way of looking at Thai politics that can be applied to other cases.

Research Design

The institutional approach in political science (Kato, 1996; Scott, 1995) was used in this research. The approach emphasizes the roles of political institutions as well as the social
context of politics (March & Olsen, 1984). The strategy of inquiry was based on the qualitative case study (Stake, 1998; Yin, 1994), which allowed the researchers to cover both the particular phenomenon, or the case, and the context within which the phenomenon occurred (Yin, 1993). The study consists of two parts: (a) an investigation into the historical development of Thai politics, society, and education and (b) the case study of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel. The case study is an examination of the political conflicts occurring during the development and consideration of the bill. The conceptual framework and categories used in this study were derived from the concepts of types of authority (Weber, 1924/1968), elements of citizenship (Marshall, 1964), and political conflict (Schattschneider, 1975) and institutional theories (Scott, 1995).

The data collection methods of document review and interviewing were used in the research. Parts of the data from documents were used to identify the informants and formulate interview questions. Data were analyzed concurrently with the data collection, and the final data analysis was conducted after the data collection was completed. The trustworthiness of the research findings was achieved by applying the constructivist criteria for evaluating qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A detailed discussion of the research design is presented in chapter 2. The research findings and discussions were provided in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 presents the historical development of Thai politics, society, and education from the Ayutthaya period (1350–1767) to the present. Chapter 4 focuses on the political conflicts occurring during policy-making of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel. Chapter 5 begins with a summary of the case study and then presents theoretical implications of the research.
Definition of Terms

**Aristocracy:** a privileged social class whose members possess disproportionately large shares of a society’s wealth, social prestige, educational attainment, and political influence. The advantages have been acquired mainly through inheritance from a long line of similarly privileged and cultivated ancestors. The term also refers to a form of government in which the state is controlled by the members of such a class (Johnson, 1999).

**Authority:** “the legitimated right to make certain categories of decisions and bind a collectivity to them” (Parsons, 1969, p. 322).

**Charismatic authority:** authority based on devotion to the exemplary characteristics, such as supernatural, superhuman, or exceptional powers or qualities, of the individual leader who is of divine origin (Weber, 1924/1968).

**Civil element of citizenship:** “the rights necessary for individual freedom—liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice” (Marshall, 1964).

**Legal authority:** authority based on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and exercised by an incumbent of office within the scope of authority of the office (Weber, 1924/1968).

**Norm versus Culture:** “Norms are oriented to patterns *for action*, whereas culture constitutes a body of definitions, premises, statements, postulates, presumptions, propositions, and perceptions about the nature of the universe and man’s place in it. Where norms tell the actor how to play the scene, culture tells the actor how the scene is set and what it all means. Where norms tell the actor how to behave in the presence of ghosts, gods, and human beings, culture tells the actor what ghosts, gods, and human beings are and what they are all about” (Schneider as quoted in D’Andrade, 1984, p. 93).
Political element of citizenship: “the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body” (Marshall, 1964).

Privatization of conflict: restriction of the scope of conflict by keeping it out of the public domain (Schattschneider, 1975).

Scope of conflict: “the number of persons and groups who have actually aligned themselves in a conflict” (Cobb & Elder, 1972, p. 43).

Social element of citizenship: “the rights to a modicum of economic welfare and security, to share to the full in the social heritage, and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society” (Marshall, 1964).

Socialization of conflict: expansion of the scope of conflict by appealing to the public (Schattschneider, 1975).

Traditional authority: authority based on a belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and exercised by the person who occupied the traditionally sanctioned position (Weber, 1924/1968).
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

As presented in chapter 1, the purpose of this research was twofold. First, I wanted to understand educational policy-making in Thailand. As I determined that it was important to gain insight into Thai politics in order to understand the context within which educational policy-making occurs, the second purpose was to understand the nature of Thai politics.

Research Questions

In order to understand the historical context of Thai politics and society and the nature of Thai politics, the following questions were asked:

1. What incidents occurred in the history of Thai politics, and who was involved in those incidents?
2. What caused those incidents and what were the consequences?
3. Who had what types of authority and citizenship and how did authority and citizenship of those people change over time?
4. Who competed for the control of Thai politics and what did those people do?
5. Who was excluded from the competition and what did those people do or what did others do to them?
6. Why could some groups get involved in the politics, whereas others were excluded?
7. What is the nature of Thai politics?

In addition, the following questions were asked in examining the political conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel:

1. What was the conflict about and what happened in the conflict?
2. How was the conflict organized and by whom?
3. Who had what types of authority and citizenship and how did those attributes affect them?

4. Who was involved in or excluded from the conflict and at what points?

5. Why could some groups get involved in the conflict, whereas others were excluded?

6. What is the nature of educational policy-making in Thailand?

Approach to the Inquiry

In order to conduct any inquiry, a researcher must have ideas about both what to explore and how to proceed. To decide how to proceed or what research methods should be used, Wolcott (1992) suggested, “The important question is not whether these approaches work, but whether they are realistic alternatives because of the likelihood they work for you and adequately address your problems” (p. 18). Because the focuses of this research are the structures and processes of political institutions, an institutional approach (Kato, 1996; Scott, 1995) was selected as a means of understanding educational policy-making and politics in Thailand. The early institutional approach dominated the field of political science in both Europe and America during the latter half of the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth centuries. To understand politics and explain political outcomes, Scott stated that the institutional approach emphasized the analyses of formal political institutions, charters, legal codes, and administrative rules. During the mid 1930s through the 1960s, the institutional approach was challenged and supplanted by the behavioralist approach, which focused on informal distributions of power, attitudes, and political behavior instead of the formal attributes of government institutions. In reaction to the excessive dominance of the behavioralist approach, the new institutionalism started in the 1970s has developed (March & Olsen, 1984; Scott, 1995) and become the driving force behind the production of new studies.
in political science (Kato, 1996). March and Olsen asserted that the new institutional
approaches emphasize the roles of political institutions without denying the importance of the
social context of politics and the motive of individual actors: “Human actions, social
contexts, and institutions work upon each other in complicated ways, and these complex,
interactive processes of action and the formation of meaning are important to political life”
(p. 742).

Scott (1995) stated that the new institutionalists in political science have divided into
identified three distinct groups of neo-institutionalists, on the basis of their approaches to the
research, as the sociohistorical, rational choice, and bounded rationality approaches. The
bounded rationality group is the least well known and is often confused with the rational
choice group. This group seeks a middle ground between the sociohistorical and the rational
choice approaches. They consider institutions “as possible environments in which the rational
behavior of individual actors in promoted” (Kato, 1996, p. 555). Kato stated that both
sociohistorical and rational choice institutionalists are concerned with the question of how
institutions shape political behavior and outcomes, and they include both formal rules and
organizations and informal routines and procedures of institutions in their analyses.
However, a major difference between the two groups is that sociohistorical theorists regard
institutions as the primary subject of analysis, whereas rational choice theorists focus on
individual rational behavior and its relationship with institutions. In addition, historical
theorists reject the rationality assumptions, such as the assumptions of utility maximization
of self-interested individuals (Kato, 1996), embraced by the rational choice theorists as
unrealistic (Scott, 1995).
This research followed the approach used by sociohistorical institutionalists. Sociohistorical theorists employ historical investigation and qualitative analysis with broad perspectives of institutions, including factors such as culture, norms, and routines (Kato, 1996). In the historical approach, institutions are considered as including both formal structures and informal rules and procedures. Sociohistorical institutionalists postulated that “institutions construct actors and define their available modes of action; they constrain behavior, but they also empower it” (Scott, 1995, p. 27). In their research, they focused on one or more of the following elements: the state, the relationships between the state or bureaucracy and society, and the basic elements, such as rules, routines, norms, and values, that constitute institutions. They generally develop their hypotheses more inductively in the course of interpreting the empirical material rather than deducing hypotheses on the basis of global assumptions prior to the analysis (Kato, 1996). Therefore, in this study, not only the institutional structures that were defined as collections of institutions, rules, norms, and roles (March & Olsen, 1984), but also the social context and historical dynamics of continuity and change that underline the structures and the manner in which the institutional structures shape and constrain the actors within them (Ikenberry, 1988) were explored.

Conceptual Framework

In a research study, conceptual frameworks offer vantage points for viewing the subjects, criteria for judging what information is relevant to the study, and advice for organizing the data collected. Conceptual frameworks consist of related concepts, assumptions, and questions that appear to be successful in attacking the research problems (Campbell & Mazzoni, 1976). A conceptual framework in qualitative research design is a layout of the key factors, constructs, or variables in the research and the presumed
relationships among them. The functions of a conceptual framework are focusing and bounding. A framework can be used to identify who will and will not be studied (Huberman & Miles, 1998). In this research, the main conceptual framework was drawn from the normative and cognitive aspects of institutional theory (Scott, 1995). Other conceptual categories, such as legitimacy of authority (Weber, 1924/1968) and citizenship (Marshall, 1964), were derived from the literature and applied to the analysis of the case to make sense of the data. Additionally, a framework used in the examination of the phenomenon of conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel presented in Figure 1 was derived from the concepts of conflict proposed by Schattschneider (1957, 1975).

Institutional Theory

Scott (1995) theorized that, “institutions consist of cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior…. institutions are multifaceted systems incorporating symbolic system—cognitive constructions and normative rules—and regulative processes carried out through and shaping social behavior” (p. 33). He stated that various institutionalists have given priority to one of the three elements, or pillars, of institutions: the regulative, the normative, and the cognitive. Regulative processes involve the capacity to establish rules and enforce them. The regulative pillar is commonly embraced by rational choice theorists. In political research, institutionalists emphasizing regulative aspects of institutions often view the state as a rule maker, referee, and enforcer (Scott, 1995). They explore the relationship between institutional contexts or structures for decision-making and rational individual behavior (Kato, 1996). Instead of focusing on a restricted definition of rational behavior,
sociohistorical institutionalists emphasize the normative pillar of institutions. Scott (1995) asserted that the normative view focuses on “normative rules that introduce a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life” (p. 37). Norms specify how things should be done. The normative approach stresses how values and normative frameworks structure choices; “actors conform not because it serves their individual interests, narrowly defined, but because it is expected of them; they are obliged to do so” (Scott, 1995, p. 39). March and Olsen (as quoted in Scott) stated, “Much of the behavior we observe in political institutions reflects the routine way in which people do what they are supposed to do” (p. 39).

Institutional theorists embracing the cognitive pillar stress the importance of symbols and meanings. In the cognitive view, individuals construct and continuously negotiate social reality in everyday life “within the context of wider, preexisting cultural systems: symbolic frameworks, perceived to be both objective and external, that provide orientation and guidance” (Scott, 1995, p. 41). Scott summarized the differences between the normative and cognitive views as follows:

Whereas the emphasis by normative theorists is on the power of roles—normative expectations guiding behavior—the cognitive framework stresses the importance of social identities: our conceptions of who we are and what ways of action make sense for us in a given situation. And rather than focusing on the constraining force of norms, cognitive theorists point to the importance of scripts: guidelines for sensemaking and choosing meaningful actions. (p. 44)

In this study, I examined how the regulative and normative frameworks as well as cultural systems have influenced the structures and processes of Thai educational policy-making and politics.
Types of Authority

Authority, as defined by Parsons (1969), “is the legitimated right to make certain categories of decisions and bind a collectivity to them” (p. 322). Weber (1924/1968) proposed three categories of authority based on the type of claims to legitimacy: legal, traditional, and charismatic (p. 215). He described the three types of authority and their bases for legitimacy as follows:

In the case of legal authority, obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order. It extends to the persons exercising the authority of office under it by virtue of the formal legality of their commands and only within the scope of authority of the office. In the case of traditional authority, obedience is owed to the person of the chief who occupies the traditionally sanctioned position of the authority and who is (within its sphere) bound by tradition. But here the obligation of obedience is a matter of personal loyalty within the area of accustomed obligations. In the case of charismatic authority, it is the charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities so far as they fall within the scope of the individual’s belief in his charisma. (p. 215–216)

Scott (1955) also addressed the issue of legitimacy, although his focus was on the legitimacy of institutions. Scott defined legitimacy as “a condition reflecting cultural alignment, normative support, or consonance with relevant rules or laws” (p. 45). The three pillars of institutions, the regulative, the normative, and the cognitive, present three related bases for legitimacy. The regulative pillar emphasizes the importance of laws and regulations. The normative pillar focuses on values and norms, and the cognitive pillar
stresses symbolic and cultural systems in which individuals construct and negotiate social realities as the basis for the institution’s legitimacy.

The bases for an institution’s legitimacy associated with the three pillars proposed by Scott are comparable to the bases for legitimacy of authority theorized by Weber (see Table 1). The legitimacy of legal authority is based on legally enacted rules and regulations, which are also the bases for an institution’s legitimacy emphasized by the regulative pillar. For traditional authority, legitimacy is claimed on the grounds of traditional rules. The rulers are obeyed because of their traditional status, and the power of control is derived from norms sanctified by tradition (Weber, 1924/1968). The claims to legitimacy of traditional authority are congruent with the bases for an institution’s legitimacy emphasized by the normative pillar, which are the traditional and normative rules. Finally, cultural beliefs, symbols, and the construction of meanings of individual actors emphasized by the cognitive view as bases for an institution’s legitimacy (Scott, 1995) are crucial factors of the claims to legitimacy of charismatic authority. Weber (1924/1968) stated that the power of the charismatic rests upon the conviction that certain manifestations, whether they are of religious, ethic, political, or other kind, are important and valuable. Charisma manifests its power from within, “from a central metanoia [change] of the followers’ attitudes” (p. 1117).

Weber (1924/1968) suggested that ruling organizations that belong only to one or another of the three pure types of authority are very exceptional, as he explained:

It should be kept clearly in mind that the basis of every authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige. The composition of this belief is seldom altogether simple. In case of “legal authority,” it is never purely legal. The
It thus connotes that a ruling organization rarely depends upon only one of the three pillars of institutions as the basis for its legitimacy. Therefore, in this study, I emphasized both the normative and cognitive pillars of institutions. In addition, Weber’s (1924/1968) categories of authority were employed to examine the authority of the political elites in Thai education and politics.

*Concepts of Conflict*

Political scientists agree that social conflict and its management are necessary ingredients in any conception of politics. As Easton (1965) stated, “Conflicts over demand constitute the flesh and blood of all political systems, from the smallest to the largest and the
simplest to the most complex” (p. 48). Schattschneider was one of the very first analysts to apply the notion of social conflict to the study of politics (Cobb & Elder, 1972). Schattschneider (1975) suggested that conflicts are initiated by highly motivated, high-tension groups so directly involved that it is difficult for them to see the justice of competing claims. He asserted that

The people are involved in public affairs by the conflict system. Conflicts open up questions for public intervention. Out of conflict the alternatives of public policy arise. Conflict is the occasion for political organization and leadership. In a free political system it is difficult to avoid public involvement in conflict; the ordinary, regular operations of the government give rise to controversy, and controversy is catching. (p. 135)

Mileur (1992) stated, “Schattschneider’s theory of politics centers on the relation of political organization to conflict. Political organization structures conflict, and all politics deals with the definition and use of conflict” (p. 177). Schattschneider organized his concepts of conflict around two major themes: the scope of conflict and the displacement of conflicts. In this research, to understand educational policy-making in Thailand, I examined the political interplay among participants who were involved in the conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel from these two perspectives

**Scope of Conflict**

Schattschneider (1975) proposed that “the outcome of all conflicts is determined by the scope of its contagion .... [or] the extent to which the audience becomes involved in it” (p. 2). Drawing from Schattschneider, Cobb and Elder (1972) defined scope of conflict as “the number of persons and groups who have actually aligned themselves in a conflict” (p. 43).
The scope of a conflict depends on the number of persons who value the scarce things at issue. Schattschneider argued that all conflicts have two sets of participants: those who are actively engaged in the fight and the audience who is attracted to the scene. Because the audience is overwhelming and never neutral, it is likely to do things that determine the outcome of the conflict. Conflicts are frequently won or lost by the success that the contestants have in getting the audience involved in the fight or in excluding it. He concluded that “At the nub of politics are, first, the way in which the public participated in the spread of the conflict and, second, the processes by which the unstable relation of the public to the conflict is controlled” (p. 3).

In Schattschneider’s view, a change in the scope of conflict is likely to produce great consequences. He proposed that “the most important strategy of politics is concerned with the scope of conflict” (Schattschneider, 1975, p. 3). In order to understand the dynamics of politics, what actually happens in the political process, and what can or cannot be accomplished in the political system, he suggested examining how politicians, publicists, and men of affairs try to manage the scope of conflict. Schattschneider posited two strategies for managing the scope of conflict: privatization and socialization of conflict. Privatization strategies aim to restrict the scope of conflict and keep it out of the public domain. In private conflicts, “the most powerful special interests want private settlements because they are able to dictate the outcome as long as the conflict remains private” (p. 39). Socialization strategies seek to enlarge the scope of conflict by appealing to the public. Private conflicts are taken into the public arena because someone wants to change the power ratio among the private interests most immediately involved. It is the weak who want to socialize conflict—to change the balance of forces by involving more and more people (Schattschneider, 1975).
Baumgartner (as cited in Bosso, 1994) stated that all political elites pursue variations on Schattschneider’s strategies of socialization and privatization of conflicts. Schattschneider suggested that the expansion of the scope of conflict depends on the competitiveness and visibility of the conflict and the effectiveness of the government (p. 16). The visibility of the conflict determines the number of persons or groups that will be aware of the conflict and its consequences (Cobb & Elder, 1972). The effectiveness of a government in expanding the scope of conflict depends on its powers and resources. A resourceful government is able to respond to conflicts by “providing an arena for them, publicizing them, protecting the contestants against retaliation, and taking steps to rectify the situations complained of” (Schattschneider, 1975, p. 17).

Displacement of Conflicts

“The most powerful instrument for the control of conflict is conflict itself” (Schattschneider, 1975, p. 65). Schattschneider argued, “There are billions of political conflicts in any modern society, but only a few become significant” (p. 64). Conflicts compete with each other; more intense conflicts are likely to displace the less intense, hence creating a system of domination and subordination of conflicts. The result of the competition of conflicts “depends on what we want most” (p. 66). What people want more becomes the enemy of what they want less. He asserted, “All politics deals with the displacement of conflicts or efforts to resist the displacement of conflicts” (p. 68). “The substitution of conflicts is the most devastating kind of political strategy .... In politics the most catastrophic force in the world is the power of irrelevance which transmutes one conflict into another and turns all existing alignments inside out” (p. 71). The outcome of a political game depends on which of a multitude of possible conflicts gains the dominant position. A substitution of a
new conflict will change the location of the line of cleavage, produce a new allocation of power, and redivide and reunite contestants—friends become enemies, and enemies become friends.

Not every conflict can be exploited. Schattschneider (1975) stated, “All forms of political organization have a bias in favor of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of the others because organization is the mobilization of bias” (p. 69). He added, “The government above all else, is never fully neutral in political struggle” (Schattschneider, 1957, p. 936), and “nothing could be more mistaken than to suppose that public authority merely registers the dominance of the strong over the weak” (Schattschneider, 1975, p. 40). In this research, I also examined the bias in the Thai political system and its effects relating to the phenomenon under study.

In the conceptual framework, the conflict, the participants, their interests, and their conflict-controlling strategies are presented. Five major participants were directly involved in the conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel. The Office of Education Reform (OER) and the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC), which were responsible for developing and proposing the bill to the Cabinet, wanted to create a new independent organization. On the other hand, with support from the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Teachers Council of Thailand (TCT) (which is currently responsible for teachers’ welfare, grievances, and professional development) wanted to take on the responsibilities of the new organization. Each side socialized the conflict with its allies and competed for support from the Cabinet and political parties. The Cabinet was directly involved in the conflict because it had considered the bill and made the decisions before sending the bill to the House of Representatives, whereas political parties were only partly
Conflict: Who will be responsible for setting teachers’ professional standards and issuing/revoking teaching licenses?

Choice #2: Teachers Council of Thailand (TCT)

Choice #1: New Independent Agency

Supporters
- Ministry of Education
- The TCT
- The ONEC
- The OER

Supporters
- The Cabinet

Partly involved in the conflict
- Teacher Groups

Partly involved in the conflict
- Academic Groups

Directly involved in the conflict
- Political parties

Excluded from the conflict
- Labour, Farmer, and Civic Groups

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

involved because they could still influence the bill when it was considered by the House. Academic and teacher groups were involved only in the drafting process of the bill, during which the conflict had not yet been clearly defined, and they were excluded afterwards. As for the public and other civil groups, they were either excluded or not interested in getting involved at all.

Research Design

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) suggested that research design is the researcher’s plan of how to proceed. It is a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and methods for collecting empirical material. A research design situates
researchers in the empirical world and connects them to specific sites, persons, groups, institutions, and relevant material. It also specifies how the investigator will address the two critical issues of presentation and legitimization. Because the focus of this study is the phenomenon of a political conflict and the context within which it occurred, the qualitative case study (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1998; Yin, 1994) was selected as the research strategy.

Denzin and Lincoln described qualitative research as follows:

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Patton (1980) stated that a qualitative research strategy is holistic, inductive, and naturalistic. Qualitative researchers strive to understand phenomena and situations as a whole; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. They allow the important dimensions to emerge from the cases without making prior assumptions about the linear or correlative relationships among narrowly defined, operationalized variables (p. 40). Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, seek to capture the actor’s perspective through detailed interviewing and observation, and commit to an emic, ideographic, case-based position, which directs their attention to the specifics of particular cases (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). They ask such questions as “What kinds of things are going on here?” “What are the forms of this phenomenon?” “What variations do we find in this phenomenon?” (Loftland, 1971).

Some researchers argued that the case study is an end-product or a choice of object to be studied rather than a strategy (Stake, 1998; Walcott, 1992). However, others stated that it
is a research tradition or a research strategy of the qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 1994). According to Yin, as a research strategy, the case study has been used extensively in social science research in both traditional disciplines, such as sociology and political science, and practice-oriented fields, including public administration, public policy, and education. Eckstein (1975) stated that the intensive study of individual cases is the type of study most frequently conducted in the field of political science. Case studies in political science range from the most microcosmic, such as studies of political personalities of political leaders, to the most macrocosmic levels of political phenomena, such as studies of particular systems of international politics. He asserted that the objective of the case-study method is to capture the particular and unique knowledge about the case or cases, not to generalize the knowledge. Yin (1993) suggested that the case study is the method of choice when the investigation must cover both a particular phenomenon and the context within which the phenomenon is occurring and when the researcher is trying to attribute causal relationships, not just wanting to explore or describe a situation. He proposed, “In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigators have little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 1994, p. 1).

A case study is an exploration of a case or multiple cases over time through detailed and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. It provides an in-depth study of a bounded system that is situated within its context or setting (Creswell, 1998). The boundedness and behavior patterns of the system are key factors in understanding the case (Stake, 1998). One of the first decisions that a researcher deciding to use the case-study strategy has to make is the selection of the case or cases to study. Stake identified three
types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. In an intrinsic case study, the case is selected because the researcher wants to achieve a better understanding of a particular case. The case in an instrumental case study is examined to provide insight into an issue that will facilitate an understanding of something else. The case is studied because it is expected to advance an understanding of that other interest. Because a researcher usually has several interests, there is no clear line separating an intrinsic case study from an instrumental case study. Last, a collective case study is a study of a number of cases in order to inquire into a phenomenon or general condition. This research is, to a large extent, an intrinsic case study because the case of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel was examined to develop an understanding of educational policy-making in Thailand. However, because it was important to understand the context within which the policy-making took place, I also examined the historical development of Thai politics and society, resulting in an understanding of the nature of Thai politics as a whole.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is what researchers actually measure or study. It is not the variable being studied but the entity being studied, such as person or place from which a measurement is obtained (Sirkin, 1995). Each unit of analysis implies a different type of data collected, a different focus of data analysis, and a different level of conclusion statements (Patton, 1980). Yin (1994) suggested that selection of the appropriate unit of analysis is based upon the primary research questions. Similarly, Patton stated that the key issue in selecting the appropriate unit of analysis depends on what the researchers want to answer at the end of the study. Because the objective of this research was to understand the structures
and processes of educational policy-making in Thailand, the units of analysis in the study were political organizations and institutions in Thailand.

_Sampling Procedures Within the Case_

Even after the case and the units of analysis have been selected, qualitative researchers still have many within-case decisions to make; as Miles and Huberman (1994) stated, “You cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything” (p. 26). The researcher has to make subsequent decisions on whom, within the case, to talk with or what events, when, and where to observe (Stake, 1998). These initial decisions made about the study give the researchers a sense of direction and a place from which to launch data gathering (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In qualitative research, researchers normally work with small samples of people, nested in their contexts and studied in depth. In contrast, quantitative researchers usually study larger numbers of context-stripped samples and seek to generalize the results from the samples studied to some larger population. Sampling strategies used in qualitative research tend to be purposeful rather than random. Patton (1980) suggested that purposeful sampling is used when researchers want to learn something about certain selected cases without needing to generalize to all such cases. In order to do purposeful sampling, researchers must have some information about variations among their choices. For example, researchers need to know from which cases they can learn the most or which informants are the most knowledgeable. In this research, two levels of decisions were made: (a) what organizations and agencies would be included in the study and, (b) within those organizations, whom would be selected as the informants.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that samples in qualitative research are usually not wholly prespecified but evolve once fieldwork begins. Sampling must be theoretically
driven. Choices of informants and interactions are driven by conceptual questions, not by a concern for representativeness. As researchers observe, talk to people, and go through documents, this new information leads them to new samples of informants and observations. In this study, the data from documents were analyzed to identify agencies and potential informants. A criterion for selecting an informant, suggested by Morse (1998), is that a good informant is one who has the knowledge of and experience with the subjects that the researcher wants to know about, has the ability to reflect, has the time to be interviewed, is articulate, and is willing to participate in the study. Two informants in this study were identified by using a reputational case-selection strategy in which participants were chosen on the recommendations of experts or key informants (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Instrumentation

How data are collected in a study depends on the design of instrumentation. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that instrumentation is composed of specific methods for collecting data. How much of the instrumentation has to be designed before starting data collecting depends on the conceptual focus, questions, and sampling criteria of the research. Highly predesigned and structured instrumentation helps to improve the internal validity and generalizability of the research, whereas loose design or little prior instrumentation emphasizes construct, descriptive, contextual, and interpretive validity. The degree of predesigning also depends on the case. If the study is an exploratory in which the researchers know very little about the phenomenon and the dynamics of the setting, heavily predesigned instrumentation is inappropriate. Miles and Huberman concluded that front-end instrumentation can be and should be revised as the research progresses, and the validity and reliability of an instrument depend upon the skills of the researchers. A predesigned
The instrument used in this research was an interview guide prepared in advance for each interview. An interview guide is a list of subjects and questions that are to be explored during an interview. The interviewer is still free to build a conversation, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversation style with the focus on particular subjects that have been determined (Patton, 1980). In this research, the data from documents and previous interviews were used to frame central questions and prepare the interview guides for the next interviews.

Yin (1994) stated that the unique strength of a case study is its ability to deal with various types of data, including documents, artifacts, archival records, interviews, and observations. Documents and interviews were the data sources of this study. Yin advised that documents must be carefully used and should not be accepted as literal recordings of events. The most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. If the document evidence is contradictory rather than corroboratory, the researcher should inquire further into the topic. Inferences made from documents should be used as clues for further investigation rather than as definitive findings (p. 81). The documents used in the research were books on Thai history, society, politics, educational politics, and education; articles appearing in journals and newspapers; government documents and records; legislative materials; and reports and newsletters from the involved agencies. These documents were obtained from public libraries, government agencies, and newspaper publishers. From document analyses, the narratives of the development of Thai politics, society, and education, and events of the conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel were developed. The agencies, organizations, and the key members of those agencies and organizations who were involved in the conflict were also
identified. The process led to the development of an instrument used in the second method of data collection, the interview.

An interview is a face-to-face verbal interchange in which the interviewer attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions or beliefs from the interviewee or interviewees (Denzin, 1989). Interviews are an essential source of data in case studies, as most case studies are about human affairs and the affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of well-informed participants who can provide important insights into an event. However, interviews are subject to the problems of bias, poor recall, and inaccurate articulation (Yin, 1994). Particularly in political research, after participants are informed about the purpose of the research, some of them may not answer the questions honestly for political reasons (Johnson & Joslyn, 1991).

Interviews are categorized by their degree of structuring as structured or unstructured interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In structured interviews, questions are prepared in advance, and the wording and order of questions are exactly the same for every interviewee. The purpose is to develop an instrument that can be given in the same way to all respondents (Denzin, 1989). On the contrary, the interviewer in an unstructured interview encourages the respondent to talk in the area of interest and then probes more deeply, picking up on the topics and issues the respondent initiates. The respondent plays an important role in defining the content of the interview and the direction of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Unstructured interviewing can provide a greater breadth than any other type of interview (Fontana & Frey, 1998). The type of interview used in the study, the semistructured interview, falls between the two ends of the structured/unstructured continuum. In a semistructured interview, a number of open-ended questions are prepared in advance, but the
prepared questions are designed to be sufficiently open so that the subsequent questions can be improvised during the interview (Wengraf, 2001). This format allows the researcher to cover specific subjects and obtain desired information while still being able to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the subjects (Merriam, 1998).

In this research, I encountered various challenges in trying to obtain interviews. However, I later found that my experiences with those challenges provided me with important information about the system I studied. After the agencies and prospective informants were identified, I went to those agencies, talked to the people, tried to locate other potential informants, and explained the study and its purposes to them. They then started to tell me the stories and their roles in the conflict. However, after I was certain that the prospective informants had knowledge on the subjects and requested them for interviews, on some occasions, I was referred to other persons and given the reason that other persons had better knowledge on the subject. In one particular agency, the referrals became a merry-go-round. I later noticed that each referral directed me towards a person with higher authority in the organization. After I went through the field notes and reflected upon that incident, I found that the series of the events mirrored the structures and norms of the Thai bureaucracy as well as those of Thai society. Scott and Meyer (1994) asserted, “The visible structures and routines that make up organizations are a direct reflection and effects of rules and structures built into (or institutionalized within) wider environments. Organizations reflect patterns or templates established in a wider system” (p. 2). Thailand is a highly hierarchical society, as discussed in chapters 3 and 4 of this study; thus, hierarchical characteristics are embedded in organizational structures and norms. Fieg (1980) stated that in Thailand the overall societal
emphasis on vertical respect relations and submission to authority shows itself again in the area of organizational structure; “the subordinate is thus above all else concerned with complying with the wishes and orders of his superior, who is in turn ‘looking up’ to his supervisor, and so on” (p. 51). Therefore, in my research, I was always referred to their superiors because they did not want to cross the line, or “kham nha kham ta.” In one agency, to break the referral cycle, I contacted the man at the top of the hierarchy and requested an interview. Later, I was informed that one of his colleagues who was directly involved in the conflict would give me an interview.

Another challenge that I encountered is a result of the Thai culture of Kreng-jai. Fieg (1980) described krengjai as “the desire to be self-effacing, respectful, and extremely considerate as well as the wish to avoid embarrassing others or intruding or imposing on them” (p. 30). Mulder (1996) stated that kreng jai “manifests itself in kindness, self-restraint, tolerance, and the avoidance of interpersonal irritation” (p. 109). To maintain harmonic interpersonal relations or to avoid hurting or disappointing another person, sometimes Thais prefer to tell a white lie instead of the discomfiting truth. Fieg observed that Thais “would tend to agree with Shakespeare that ‘Though it be honest, it is never good to bring bad news’” (p. 31). In my case, I was told by three prospective informants on separate occasions that they were busy during the time that I met face-to-face with them and that I should call them again the following week; they might be able to give me the interviews then. Several weeks passed, and a number of phone calls were made, but they were always busy. Although I had lived in Thailand all my life, except for only the five and a half years that I have been studying in the U.S., I did not quite understand the situation. Later, after I reflected on the incident, I started to understand that it was a polite Thai way of saying “No.”
With awareness of those challenges, I conducted the following seven interviews individually with each participant. The interviews varied from about 45 minutes to two hours.

- The interview with Dr. Chakrapat Wata, Deputy Secretary General of the Teachers’ Council of Thailand, on August 26, 2002.
- The interview with Mr. Paibul Siengkong, Deputy Permanent Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education, on September 6, 2002.
- The interview with Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva, deputy leader of the Democrat Party (the leader of the opposition), on September 9, 2002.
- The interview with Mr. Thawin Noikhiew, Chairman of the Federation of the Elementary Education Teachers Associations of Thailand, on September 10, 2002.
- The interview with Mr. Chamlong Krudkhunthod, Advisor to the Prime Minister and former Deputy Minister of Education, on September 11, 2002.
- The interview with Professor Somwung Pitiyanuwat, member of the Executive Committee of the Office of Education Reform and Director of the Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, on September 20, 2002.
- The interview with Professor Surapol Nitikraipoj, member of the Executive Committee of the Office of Education Reform and Dean of the Faculty of Law at Thammasart University, on September 25, 2002.

Every interview was conducted in the office of the interviewee and was tape-recorded. By using a tape recorder, I could focus on what the interviewee was saying, take notes, observe nonverbal communication, and develop follow-up questions. Every interview was conducted in Thai, and after each interview, the tape was transcribed, translated, and analyzed. Loftland
(1971) suggested that the researcher spend “at minimum, at least as much time immediately studying and analyzing the interview material as was spent in the interview itself .... Do not let the transcripts pile up without studying them as they become available” (p. 90).

Because the informants in this study were elite bureaucrats and politicians, besides the hurdles previously discussed, gaining access to them was a major challenge in the study. Johnson and Joslyn (1991) suggested that a reason for conducting an elite interview is that the researcher does not want to lose the valuable information that an elite insider may possess. The researcher should seek references from people who are known to potential interviewees, and sometimes the elite who have already been interviewed can assist the researcher in gaining access to other elites. In this research, the interview with Professor Surapol was obtained through a reference from Mr. Abhisit, who was also an informant, and the interview with Mr. Thawin was achieved through a reference from Dr. Chakrapat, another informant. In addition, a friendship between my father and Mr. Paibul made possible the interview with him.

Johnson and Joslyn (1991) also suggested that advance preparation for elite interviewing is very important. The researcher should study all available documentation of events and related materials before the interview. The questions that can be answered elsewhere should be eliminated from the interview. However, the researcher may ask the interviewee to verify the accuracy of the information obtained from other sources. If the confidentiality is desired, it is beneficial to the researcher to offer interviewees a chance to review what has been written about them and the opportunity to clarify and expand on what they said. In this research, questions were asked to obtain descriptions, explanations, verifications, and opinions. Therefore, I asked questions such as “What did your organization
do to support the proposal?” “How did the committee work?” “Why your supporters did not come out?” “What were the differences between your and the other’s proposals?” Follow-up questions that evolved as the interview proceeded were asked when appropriate. Because the time available for each interview was limited, I studied all relevant information and prepared an interview guide before each interview. This allowed me to cover predetermined topics within the time frame while still being able to probe deeper into new areas that emerged during the interview. Every participant in the research was offered an opportunity to review the transcription of his interview, but only two informants wanted to see the transcriptions. Johnson and Joslyn cautioned that in elite interviewing, interview data may be biased. Informants may give evasive or untruthful answers. Researchers should determine the validity of interview statements by examining their plausibility, checking for internal consistency, and corroborating with information from other sources. The use of triangulation, discussed in the validity and reliability section later in this chapter, enabled me to examine the validity of the data from the interviews.

Research Relationship and Self-Awareness

Berg and Smith (1988) proposed that the nature and quality of social research findings are strongly influenced by the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Thus, the research relationship “should receive the same intense scrutiny as other methodological issues in the research process” (p. 21). The research relationship is the means for the researcher to understand a social system, and both the researcher and the social system under study contribute to creating the research relationship. Glense (1999) suggested that the nature of the relationship depends on at least two factors: the quality of the researcher’s interactions with other people and the quality of the researcher’s self-awareness,
or subjectivity. Subjectivity operates during the entire research process, from the choice of
topic, to data gathering and analysis, to the writing up of the findings (Jasen & Peshkin,
1992). Ginsberg & Matthews (as cited in Jasen & Peshkin, 1992) stated that subjectivity and
bias are the results of intensive interactions between the researcher and the researched.
Subjectivity could cause inaccurate outcomes when the unconscious reactions of the
researcher to the researched go unnoticed.

In the process of doing social research, the researcher is definitely influenced by his
relationship with other human beings and social systems. This influence may change the
researcher’s understanding of the world, values, beliefs, and feelings about individuals,
groups, or cultures. The influence process may go unnoticed because the process may be
slow and the researcher’s reactions may be attributed to sources rather than the research
involvement (Berg & Smith, 1988). Berg and Smith stated:

When the influence goes unnoticed, a wealth of information about the social system is
lost because the researcher is not attending to the characteristics of the social system
that are influencing his or her feeling or reactions and may also be ignoring the
hypothesis that the social system is responding, in part, to the researcher’s thoughts
and actions. (p. 26–27).

Jasen and Peshkin (1992) stated that there is no agreement among scholars on how to view
the researcher–researched relationships and how to respond to subjectivity in the practical
conduct of research. To address the issue of the research relationship, the participatory
consciousness approach (Heshusius, 1994) was used in this study. Heshusius stated,
“Participatory consciousness is the awareness of a deeper level of kinship between the
knower and the known .... It requires an attitude of profound openness and receptivity” (p.
Participatory consciousness results from the ability to temporarily let go of all preoccupation with self and move into a state of complete attention. “This temporarily self-forgetfulness is not to be equated with loss of self, but points to the possibility of fundamental self […] other unity in which egocentric thoughts … are voluntarily released, but in which the capacity for autonomy is not relinquished” (p. 18). Heshusius also noted that in cultures such as the ancient Eastern or the Native Indian, in which the organization of reality neither objectifies nor subjectifies nature, there is no alienated mode of consciousness that creates psychic distance between the knower and the known.

In this research, even though I could not maintain participatory consciousness all the time during the research process, my commitment to the approach and my interest in and practice of Buddhist teachings helped me to let go my “self,” reflect without judging, achieve awareness and mindfulness, and bring back my consciousness when it got lost. The use of the participatory consciousness approach and field notes enabled me to observe the phenomenon, reflect upon the happenings, and analyze the data without prejudices. Sumedho (1995) suggested that Buddhist teachings emphasize making pure awareness the subject of the consciousness. In pure awareness:

Conditions are seen simply as conditions, rather than being judged and reacted to from the personality viewpoint …. If we are mindful, then we are not judging something; we are just observing it. We can even observe our reactions …. We can make use of the teachings to help us watch and observe …. The subject is not mine or ours …. but there is still awareness and the ability to reflect wisely on the way things are in this sensory realm. (p. 65)
In the process of conducting this research, I found that the relationships between the people with whom I interacted and me strongly influenced my beliefs and feeling about those individuals, the institutions, and the systems. My beliefs and feelings in turn influenced my understanding of the systems I studied. I found that if I allowed those beliefs and feelings to go unscrutinized by unprejudiced consciousness, I would not be able to see implicit meanings in those interactions I experienced. Moreover, I would lose important data on the systems, which would lead me to inaccurate conclusions. As the chairperson of my dissertation committee reminded me,

Your interactions with the system are at least as valuable in terms of information gathering as what someone tells you in an interview .... It is very important that you do not let your need for the ‘right’ information blind you to the information you are gaining by engaging with this particular system. (J. E. Barott, personal communication, August 29, 2002).

In this study, when I encountered challenges to gaining interviews from government agencies, I felt that those groups of people were self-centered, and I had negative feelings about them. At the time, as my focus was on getting data by interviewing, I did not see the interactions as significant information about the culture of the society embedded in political institutions and in the cultures of those agencies. I also found that not only the interactions between researcher and researched but also the interactions among the researched could reveal valuable information about the system under study. In this study, by consciously observing the interactions among the people with different positions in those agencies, I could see, from the language as well as the body language used in those settings, an influence
of the past hierarchical society on organizational cultures. This information helped confirm my conclusions about the political actors in Thai educational policy-making.

My background in Thai education and culture and the ways that I was socialized had influenced my perceptions of Thai politics and educational politics. This research, however, provided me an opportunity and tools to examine Thai education and politics from different perspectives, and my interactions with the people in the system during the research process gave me direct experience with elite bureaucrats and politicians in the system. From the research findings, I have learned about important characteristics of educational policy-making and politics in Thailand that I could not see before. As an educational leader who wants to influence the future of Thai education, I have been equipped with knowledge of Thai politics and educational policy-making that will enable me to effectively get involved in the politics in order to achieve my goals. In addition, the concepts and categories used to make sense of the data in this study provided me with conceptual frameworks that will help me to understand the politics in my school in Thailand and to successfully deal with political conflicts in my organization.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the data that have been collected to create a new understanding and present what has been discovered to the audience. The process involves organizing data, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what will be presented to the readers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Preliminary data analysis should be conducted concurrently with data collection, and more formal analysis can be performed after most of the data have been collected (Bogdan &
Biklen, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Early data analysis helps the researcher understand the existing data and develop new strategies for correcting blind spots. It can also enable the researcher to develop new instruments for collecting additional data. In this research, the method of first-level coding, advocated by Miles and Huberman, was used in the first stage of data analysis. Coding is an analytical process in which codes—tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the information—are attached to chunks of varying sizes of data, such as words, sentences, or paragraphs. Codes are changed and developed as the research continues. By doing coding—putting names on incidents and events, trying to cluster them, and organizing them around some common ideas—the researcher can understand what is unclear, uncover sources of bias, and tie research questions to the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the first phase of the data analysis, in which the development of Thai politics and society and the phenomenon of political conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel were explored through data from various types of documents, sets of codes were developed, and codes were assigned to the data. Then, an event-listing matrix, which is a technique of time-ordered displays advanced by Miles and Huberman, was used for data analysis. Time-ordered displays are descriptive displays of data categorized by time and sequence. An event-listing matrix displays a series of concrete events by chronological time periods. It preserves the historical, chronological flow of the events and allows the researcher to understand what they are, when they happened, and what their connections to other events are or were. It shows the researcher the salience or significance of preceding events for following events. After a matrix is filled, a draft of a focused narrative can be created (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As a result of this process, the narratives were drafted and this research moved to the next stage. The outcomes of the analysis were used to identify
the agencies and individuals that would be investigated in the second stage of the research and to develop interview guides.

In the second phase, besides document reviews, interviews were conducted to collect data from key individuals who were involved in the conflict. Again, data from the interviews and documents were coded to categorize and identify their relationships. However, in this process the focus of coding was not only to summarize segments of data, as in the first-level coding, but also to identify emergent themes. In this stage, data from various types of documents and from interviews were compared and contrasted to develop the conclusions. The method of making contrasts and comparisons was suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) as a technique for drawing and verifying conclusions. The process of coding and comparison that was conducted concurrently with data collection helped to identify what data would be needed, what questions should be asked in the next interviews, and when sufficient data had been collected. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that coding and recoding are over when all of the incidents can be classified, categories are saturated, and sufficient numbers of regularities emerge. In qualitative research, data adequacy is attained “when sufficient data have been collected that saturation occurs and variation is both accounted for and understood” (Morse, 1998, p. 76).

In this research, case-dynamics matrices advanced by Mile and Huberman (1994) were used as analytical tools in the final stage of data analysis, drawing and verifying conclusions. A case-dynamics matrix shows a set of forces that cause changes and traces the consequential processes and outcomes. It helps the researcher to link data to explanations, and to understand why specific things happen as they do. Here, again, the technique of making comparisons can be used to analyze the data after they have been entered into a
matrix in order to reach the conclusions. This technique is similar to the process-analytical approach advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 163). In process analysis, the researcher looks at action/reaction evolutions, or changes in response to shifts in the context, or how action/reaction can bring about changes in the context. Strauss and Corbin suggested some questions that might be asked when analyzing the process: What is going on here? What conditions combine to create the context in which the action/reaction is located? How do the consequences of one set of actions/reactions play into the next sequence of actions/interactions? The questions that I asked during the analysis were “What happened?” “How did they happen?” and “Why did they happen?”

Validity and Reliability

The debates over the issue of criteria for good qualitative research have been extensive and still continue (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) discussed four basic strands of the issue: positivism, postpositivism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism. Positivists are those who apply to qualitative research the same criteria as is used for evaluating quantitative research. Postpositivists believe that a set of criteria unique to qualitative research needs to be developed because qualitative inquiry is an alternative research paradigm that is based upon ontology and epistemology different from that underlying the quantitative paradigm. Postmodernists argue that the criteria for assessing qualitative research depend on the nature of the research and the world it attempts to study; therefore, there can be no standard criteria for judging its results. Finally, poststructuralists advocate the development of a new set of criteria, divorced from the positivist and postpositivist tradition. To achieve validity and reliability, the constructivist criteria for
evaluating qualitative research advanced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were applied to this study.

Conceptions of criteria for assessing research in the conventional paradigm are termed *internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Validity is generally defined as the trustworthiness of inferences drawn from data (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the basic issue of trustworthiness is as follows:

How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what question asked, that would be persuasive on this issue? (p. 290)

Cook and Campbell (as quoted in Lincoln & Guba, 1985) defined internal validity in the conventional paradigm as the approximate validity with which researchers infer that a relationship between two variables is causal or that the absence of a relationship implies the absence of a cause. They described external validity as “the approximate validity with which we infer that the presumed causal relationship can be generalized to and across alternate measures of the cause and effect and across different types of persons, settings, and times” (p. 291). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the substitution of credibility for internal validity and transferability for external validity. They argued that because reality is a multiple set of mental constructions, the researchers must show that they have “*represented those multiple constructions adequately,* that is, that the *reconstructions ... that have been arrived at via the inquiry are credible, to the constructors of the original multiple realities*” (p. 296). Lincoln and Guba rejected the notion of generalization in the conventional paradigm, in
which the research findings are applied to all contexts within the same populations; instead, they suggested the concept of transferability of research findings, which depends upon the degree of similarity between sending and receiving contexts.

In this study, the technique of triangulation—one of several techniques suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985)—was used to achieve credibility for the research findings. Denzin (1989) identified four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. Both data and methodological triangulation were employed in the study. Methodological triangulation refers to using either different data-collection methods or different research designs. Each research design or data collecting method yields a different picture and slice of reality. The use of methodological triangulation allows different pictures to emerge (Denzin, 1989). In this research, methodological triangulation was achieved by using both interviewing and review of documents as data-collecting methods. Data triangulation means comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived at different times and by different means, for example, comparing data from documents with ones from interviews, comparing what people say in public with what they say in private, or comparing data collected from people who have different points of view. An advantage of data triangulation is that different types of data capture different things and reveal different aspects of what is being studied. In addition, consistency in overall patterns of data from different sources and reasonable explanations for differences in data from different sources contribute significantly to the overall credibility of the research findings (Patton, 1980). In the study of the development of Thai politics and society in this research, the data from various types of documents were compared and cross-checked. For example, data from books written by Western authors were contrasted and
cross-checked with those written by Thai authors. In the study of the conflict over the bill establishing the teachers’ council, the data from documents and interviews were compared and cross-checked.

Concerning transferability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that the external validity of qualitative research cannot be specified by the researchers themselves; they can only provide the thick description necessary to enable their readers who are interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether the transfer is possible. Although the definition of proper thick description is still not completely resolved, Lincoln and Guba suggested that the researcher should provide the widest possible range of information for inclusion in the thick description. Case studies are often criticized on the grounds of their generalizability: How can the findings from only one or a few cases be generalized to larger populations? Stake (as quoted in Lincoln & Guba) argued that the generalization must be considered from the users’ perspective: “case studies will often be the preferred method of research because they may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader’s experience and thus to that person a natural basis for generalization” (p. 120). In this research, to achieve transferability the discussion of the development of Thai politics, education, and society provides rich descriptions of the case’s context that enable the readers to make their own decisions about whether the transfer is possible.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also proposed the substitution of dependability for reliability and confirmability for objectivity. Dependability refers to the stability, or consistency, of the inquiry processes used over time, and confirmability refers to how well the research findings produced by a researcher are supported by informants in the study and by events that are independent of the researcher (Williams, 1996). In the positivist and
postpositivist paradigms, reliability is the extent to which findings can be replicated or reproduced by another inquirer, and objectivity is the extent to which findings are free from researcher bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Strauss and Corbin (1998) noted that the conventional criterion for reproducibility could not be applied to qualitative research. Reproducing the findings of social phenomena can be very difficult because it is nearly impossible to replicate the original conditions of the ever-changing phenomena under which data were collected. Concerning subjectivity and objectivity, Jansen and Peshkin (1992) noted that there is no agreement among qualitative researchers on the definition of subjectivity and how to respond to subjectivity in the practical conduct of research. Some researchers see subjectivity as taking sides and reject the idea of value neutrality, and most accept that the emotions and predispositions of researchers influence the research process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested changing the focus of objectivity from the investigator to the data. As they stated, “The issue is no longer the investigator’s characteristics but the characteristics of the data: Are they or are they not confirmable?” (p. 300). To achieve both dependability and confirmability, Lincoln and Guba proposed the use of an auditing method. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated, “Although qualitative studies are rich in descriptions of settings, people, events, and processes, they often say little about how the researcher got the information, and almost nothing about how conclusions were drawn” (p. 281). The concept of inquiry auditing is the making available of evidence so that an auditor can examine the process of the inquiry—which will attest to the dependability of the inquiry—and can examine the products of the inquiry—which will attest to the confirmability of the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Miles and Huberman suggested that although an audit of the research by an outside auditor is not intended, the first and basic
audience for good documentation is the researcher’s self. To achieve dependability, the
documentation of analysis operations proposed by Miles and Huberman was modified for use
in this study. The document’s form is presented in Appendix A. Although this research was
not audited by an outside auditor, the use of documentation of analysis operations helped me
to improve the analysis tasks carried out and allowed me to assess the dependability of the
inquiry processes and the confirmability of the findings. The confirmability of the data in this
research was attained by the verification of the transcriptions of the interviews by the
interviewees after I translated the interviews into English. In addition, the confirmability of
the findings was achieved by providing the readers with excerpts from different participants
when possible.
CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE THAI GOVERNANCE, SOCIETY, AND EDUCATION

Contemporary Thai politics are the result of continuous and incremental changes in the system for more than 600 years since the Ayutthaya kingdom (1350–1767). Because Thailand, or Siam, has never been colonized by the Western powers, the political structure has not been totally destroyed or gone through any abrupt changes. Moreover, there has been no major social revolution; so, the current political and social values and norms maintain many characteristics transferred from the past. As Girling (1984) stated, “What distinguished Thailand was its remarkable continuity of leadership structure and ideology, compared with the dislocation and disorientation suffered by both elite and masses in other Southeast Asian countries as a result of colonial rule” (p. 387). Dhiravegin (2000) and Raksasataya (2001) emphasized that it is crucial to be familiar with the history and the development of Thai political, governing, and social systems in order to thoroughly understand current Thai politics. The following is a discussion of the historical development of the Thai governance, society, and education starting from the Ayutthaya period.

Ayutthaya Kingdom (1350–1767)

Although the history of Siam can be traced back to the Sukhothai kingdom (1238–1419), which is believed to be the Thais’ first state, the influences of Ayutthaya on the current governing and social structures were more obvious. This is partly because the governing and social systems in the early years of the current dynasty emulated those of Ayutthaya kingdom (Dhiravegin, 2000).
Governance

Weber (1924/1968) stated that a political organization “will be called a ‘state’ insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order” (p. 54). However, he added that “the use of physical force (Gewaltsamkeit) is neither the sole, nor even the most usual, method of administration of political organization” (p.54). The motives of the great majority to obey the orders given by the state largely relate to the types of authority. Weber further asserted that no domination limits itself to only material or ideal motives as a basis for its continuance, but it also attempts to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy. The type of legitimacy affects the type of obedience and the kind of administrative structures and processes.

Since the beginning of the state, the monarch has been the most important political institution in Thailand. Thais had been living side by side for several centuries with Cambodians, or Khmers, since the time of Sukothai kingdom. From Cambodia they had adopted various attributes of their civilization that were in turn based on those of India. In 1431, King Boromaraja II invaded Ankor Thom, the capital of Cambodia, and brought back a large number of Brahmanized officials and Brahmans (Wood, 1933). Some of the officials were held to work for the king as priests in the palace. This facilitated the greater integration of the Brahman beliefs of Cambodia into the Hinayana Buddhism beliefs of Ayutthaya. Brahmans believed that the king was a part of the Godhead, whereas Buddhists regarded the monarch as a part of the social institutions. The belief in divine kingship was introduced by the Brahmanized Khmer, and the concept of the King as the Lord of Lives emerged in the Ayutthaya kingdom. The Khmer cult of Devaraja, or God-King, coupled with the Hinayana Buddhism, which regards the king as a Bodhisattva, an enlightened individual who wishes to
help all human beings attain nirvana, became the foundation for the absolute monarchy of the Ayutthaya and the early Rattanakosin periods (Dhiravegin, 1973; Syamananda, 1977). Royal ceremonies, special court language, and Khmer terms were introduced into the monarchical institution to elevate the king’s merit, grandeur, and sacredness (Eiosrivongs, Pattiya, Suvanthat-Pien, & Poosawang, 1991) and reinforce the traditional authority (Weber, 1924/1968) of the king. In 1450, King Trailok promulgated the Palace Law, or Kot Montien Ban, which formulated the customs, ceremonies, rules, and regulations related to the court and the royal family. The law also defined the relative rank of different classes of queens and princes and specified types of severe punishments for all kinds of offenses. It helped to strengthen the ideology of divine kingship and to prevent the people from hatching a plot to cause harm to the king (Syamananda, 1977; Wood, 1933).

The Hindu beliefs in reincarnation and karma were also used by the king and the ruling elites as the bases for the legitimacy of their authority (Weber, 1924/1968). In Hindu, reincarnation means “if you’re born into a low caste, you must wait for the next reincarnation, your next lifetime, when you might be reborn into a higher caste” (Sumedho, 1995, p. 52). The concept of karma is that the present circumstances of one’s personal life are largely predetermined by one’s positive and negative actions in the previous existence (Mulder, 1996). These two concepts reinforced the class structure of Ayutthaya society, provided the ruling elites the right to rule, and excluded the masses from politics. The masses believed that their hardships in life were the result of sins in their previous lives, which could not be changed and that the ruling elites had done good deeds in their previous lives, which gave them the merit to rule (Nartsupha, 1984/1999).
During the first century of the Ayutthaya period, the administration was decentralized. The king’s governing power was centered largely in the capital, whereas the territories were under the feudal princes who were succeeded by their own sons (Dhiravegin, 1973). Later on, King Boromtrailoknatr, or Trailok (1448–1488), reorganized the government to achieve a centralization of power by establishing the military and civil administration and a number of departments under these two divisions. For provincial administration, he assigned the north of the kingdom to the head of the military division and the south to the head of the civil division. The king promulgated the Law of Civil Hierarchies and the Law of Military and Provincial Hierarchies, which specified the rank (or sakdina), duties, and privileges of every official. Since the promulgation of the laws, high-ranking aristocrats have become the king’s men and have prestigious status and powerful positions. Syamananda (1977) stated that the new governing system was not a feudal system because the title and the land tenure of a retired official reverted to the king. His children were commoners and could own land according to their status unless they were made noblemen by the king. However, Eiosrivongs et al. (1991) argued that in practice, positions were handed down within families for generations, and only those who were born into noble families or received support from high-ranking officials could gain entry to the administrative system. It was almost impossible for a commoner to get into the elite system on his own merits.

Society

Ayutthaya, like all other states in Southeast Asia, had abundant land but lacked population. Therefore, the primary purpose of the administration was to control and employ labor to either produce wealth or make war. Consequently, the distribution of power coincided with the distribution and control of land and labor (Eiosrivongs et al., 1991). The
Miscellaneous Laws of the Ayutthaya stated that “land in the territory of Ayutthaya is the land of the king. If it is given to people who are subjects of the realm, it cannot be their property” (Nartsupha, 1984/1999, p. 12). During his reign, King Trailok promulgated the Three Seals Law to provide legal legitimacy to the land-distribution and class system, called the sakdina system. The system was revised by King Rama I to use in the Rattanakosin kingdom and was in use until the reign of King Rama IV in 1861 (Nartsupha, 1984/1999).

The sakdina system categorized the Ayutthaya population into four main classes: the royal families, the nobles, the commoners, or prai, and the slaves. In each class there were subclasses categorized by ranks and lands that the members could have. For example, a prince could possess from 15,000 to 100,000 rai (6,000 to 40,000 acres), depending on his rank, and a commoner could own no more than 30 rai, or 12 acres (Raksasataya, 2001).

Officials, instead of receiving salaries, received lands according to their ranks as specified by the law. The sakdina system not only regulated the system of land tenure but also promoted the royalty, as only the king had the power to promote his subjects to higher classes (Raksasataya, 2001; Syamananda, 1977). In addition to the sakdina system, King Ramathibodi II (1491–1529) created a system for controlling and distributing corvée laborers. Every commoner was prai, and every prai man was obliged to work as a corvée laborer. All prai men whose ages were between 18 and 60 had to be placed under the Conscription Department, or Krom Surasvadi. For exemption, a prai had to have at least three of his sons serve in his place. Prai were divided into two classes: probationary retainer, or Prai Som, and permanent retainer, or Prai Luang. At the age of 18, probationary retainers were required to undergo training and assigned to work for the royal families, nobility, and high-ranking officials who had sakdina of at least 400 rai, or 160 acres, for a period of two
years. Then, they became permanent retainers who were obligated to do corvée labor.

Permanent retainers were divided into two categories: those who devoted their time to working for the king in various departments for six months of the year (one month on duty and one month off, alternately), and those who lived far from the capital and paid for their duties in kind (Raksasataya, 2001; Syamananda, 1977).

Prai might be reduced to slavery. Owing to poverty, a man might have to sell himself or members of his family for a certain period or for life. Compared to prai, slaves were held in contempt and were less protected by law. Their status, however, was more secure than that of prai in the sense that their masters supported them, whereas prai had to support themselves. Nonetheless, there were no safeguards to prevent masters from taking advantage of prai and slaves. The patronage tradition from early times had been a refuge and support for prai and slaves but did not guarantee their well-being. Although the rank of officer-in-service was open to prai, opportunities for prai to leave their status were rare (Eiosrivongs et al., 1991).

Marshall (1964) defined citizenship as “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed” (p. 84). He proposed three elements of citizenship, civil, political, and social, which are described as follows:

The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom—liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice .... By the political element I mean the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body .... By
social element I mean the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society. (p. 71–72)

In Ayutthaya, citizenship was a function of the class, ranging from full citizenship for the royal families to no citizenship for commoners and slaves (see Table 2). Only members of the royal families and high-ranking aristocrats possessed every component of citizenship. The civil element of citizenship of the commoners was minimally offered and protected by law. They however had no political right to participate in the politics and no social right to receive social services. Slaves had no citizenship at all.

Table 2

Components of Citizenship of the Ayutthaya and Early Rattanakosin Population

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ayutthaya–Rattanakosin (1350–1868)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Components of citizenship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td>Civil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royal families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hereditary aristocrats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commoners (Prai)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slaves</td>
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</table>
Education

A milestone in the history of Thai education was the invention of the Thai alphabet by King Ramkamhaeng of Sukothai in 1282 to replace one borrowed from the Khmer. Education in Siam from the Sukothai to the early Rattanakosin period was characterized as informal education. There were no formal schools, curriculum, or textbooks, and education was voluntary. From the thirteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century, education for both elites and the masses was based mainly in monastic schools in the Buddhist temples, where monks were teachers and abbots were headmasters. The aims of monastic education were mainly ethical and religious, with literacy as a preparation for the monastic life. The extensive influences of Buddhism on Thai education and society can be seen dating from the reign of King Ramkamhaeng (1275–1317). The king invited Mahayana Buddhist monks from Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, to teach and supervise public education in Sukothai. The monks regarded reading and writing and the provision of knowledge to others as religious acts, a form of merit. Therefore, wherever the monks settled and established monasteries, they also established monastic schools. The monasteries in Siam thus became centers of learning and culture, and monks had to master all the subjects that had to be taught to everyone, from princes down to peasants (Sukontarangsi, 1968; Watson, 1980).

Parents who wished to have their sons educated in monastic schools had to send them to stay at the temples, beginning from the age of seven-to-ten years old. The boys would learn reading, writing, basic arithmetic, and chanting and would also fetch and carry for their monk teachers. This method of education was not systematic because the teachers taught only when they were free and the boys could leave the temples whenever their parents needed them. Further education could be received after the age of twenty, when most young
men were ordained as monks. At a higher level, these monks studied Pali and the Buddhist scriptures and could become teachers if they possessed sufficient knowledge. If they decided to leave the monkhood, they could expect royal patronage in the crop of scribes (Bunnag, 1970; Tangjitsomkit, 1996). In addition, education for the elite was organized in the palaces and houses of the nobility. The subjects taught were, for example, military arts, astrology, medicine, construction, and arts and crafts. Knowledge and skills were also secretly handed down in families or to apprentices who sought training by themselves.

For girls, educational opportunities were limited because they were, and still are, not allowed to stay in temples, to be with monks by themselves, or to have physical contact with monks. Parents could send their daughters to study in the palaces or houses of the nobles. They learned arts and crafts for women, basic reading and writing, manners, and the art of living. In addition to monastic schools, the first missionary school in Thailand was established during the reign of King Narai (1656–1688) of Ayutthaya. However, the influence of European missionaries on Thai education in the Ayutthaya period significantly declined after the end of his reign (Raksasatara, 1969; Tangjitsomkit, 1996).

The end of Ayutthaya came in April 1767, after the second successful invasion of Thailand by Burma. Seven months later, Praya Tak, a general who escaped from the besieged city returned with his troops and liberated the Thais from the Burmese. However, Ayutthaya suffered such vast destruction that it could not be restored. Therefore, Praya Tak established the new capital in Thon Buri and ascended the throne as King Taksin, the first and only king of Thon Buri. He later suffered mental illness and became insane. After ruling the kingdom for 15 years, he was put to death in 1782. One of his generals, Chao Praya Mahakasatsuek, ascended the throne as King Ramatibodi (Rama I). In the same year, the king moved the
capital to Bangkok and inaugurated the Rattanakosin period under the Chakri dynasty (Dhiravegin, 1999; Syamananda, 1977).

Summary

Ayutthaya was the beginning of the centralization of the king and the state’s authority. The military and civil administration divisions and a number of departments under these two divisions were created. Administrative laws were promulgated to specify the rank (or sakdina), duties, and privileges of every official. The class and labor systems, which had a significant influence on the development of Thai society and politics, were also established. The systems specified the lands that members of each class could own and the numbers of men, or prai, that different levels of ruling elites could have under their control. Thus, the citizenship of the Ayutthaya people was a function of class.

In addition to the social structure, the Ayutthaya ruling elites also exploited Hindu beliefs that were integrated into Thai Buddhism to cultivate belief in the legitimacy of their authority among the masses and to exclude them from politics. The concept of the King as the Lord of Lives emerged and became unquestioningly accepted by the masses. Because education for the masses from the Ayutthaya to the mid-Rattanakosin period was based in monastic schools, such beliefs as those in divine kingship, reincarnation, and karma became deeply ingrained in the masses. Therefore, those beliefs profoundly affect the current attitudes of the masses toward the authorities, and vice versa, and also influence the political participation of the masses today.

Rattanakosin (1782–1932)

When King Rama I built Rattanakosin, he tried to emulate the Ayutthaya kingdom. For example, architectural designs and names of the temples were borrowed from those of
Ayutthaya. Laws and governing structures, created by King Trailok and strengthened by King Ramatibodi II of Ayutthaya, were adopted with some modifications (Dhiravegin, 1999). The foundations for major changes in the governing and social structures were laid by King Rama IV, or King Mongkut (1851–1868), and the reforms were carried out by his son, King Rama V (1868–1910). King Mongkut, for a political reason, had been a Buddhist monk for 27 years before ascending the throne. During his long monastic retreat, he not only studied Buddhism and Pali, but also met with American and French missionaries and studied English, Latin, western sciences, mathematics, and astronomy. This experience helped him in dealing with the western powers, when he later became a king (Riggs, 1966; Wyatt, 1984).

**Governance**

Although Thailand has had a diplomatic relationship with the West since the Ayutthaya period, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that western influences started to affect the traditional Thai aristocracy and politics (Nuechterlein, 1965). The influences were broadly classified into two categories: (a) western knowledge and culture and (b) political and economic forces in the forms of trade treaties and military power from Britain and France. Western culture and knowledge slowly and sometimes almost imperceptibly penetrated Thai society and contributed to the end of the absolute monarchy (Siffin, 1966).

Thai governance during the absolute monarchy was characterized as “a classic centralized hierarchy, in which the entire focus of legitimacy and status emanates downward from the king through the royal elite to the ordinary citizen, and outward from the palace in Bangkok through the provincial towns to the villages” (Samudavanija, 1995, p. 323). The king held all legislative, administrative, and judicial powers, and his officials, who were given high status and prestige, implemented his mandates. After his ascension, King Rama
IV pursued incremental administrative reform. He started the publication of a government gazette and allowed the laws to be printed. He employed a handful of foreign advisors and experimented with the elections of judges. In the face of colonial threat from the West, he signed a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Great Britain in 1855. Although Siam lost her judicial and fiscal autonomy as a result of the treaty, she opened up to foreign trade and, later on, social and political change. To minimize the dangers of colonialism, the king also welcomed diplomatic overtures from other western nations. Within a decade, similar treaties were negotiated with France, Portugal, and some other countries (Syamananda, 1977). King Mongkut died in 1868, and his son, King Chulalongkorn, or Rama V, ascended the throne at the age of 15.

In 1873, King Rama V started a series of reforms and soon faced strong resistance from the old guard. Before the end of the absolute monarchy, the second most powerful entity in Thai politics after the monarch was the hereditary aristocracy. These aristocrats were appointed by the king, who, in theory, could dismiss them at will. In the reign of King Rama II, one family of the nobility, Bunnag family, rose to such high power that it became a kingmaker. When King Rama V ascended the throne at the age of 15, the head of the Bunnag family, who was appointed as the regent, effectively challenged the king’s power during the early years of his reign. Between 1882 and 1888, the king slowly replaced these conservative hereditary aristocrats in the administration with his young brothers and sons as well as a new group of modern-educated civil servants (Wyatt, 1994). This enabled him to carry on his reforms and achieve his governing and social reform goals. It was also the beginning of the dominance of western-educated aristocrats in modern Thai governance.
In 1874, the king established the Council of State, composed of 12 members, as his first advisory body. In the same year, he created a Privy Council consisting of 49 members including 13 princes and 36 high-ranking aristocrats. These two bodies had advisory, investigatory, and legislative powers and were dominated by young members (Syamananda, 1977, Wyatt, 1984). In 1892, the king reorganized the administrative structure. He replaced the system that was established by King Trailok and had been used since the Ayutthaya period with 12 ministries: (a) Defense, (b) Foreign Affairs, (c) Interior, (d) Local Government, (e) Royal Household, (f) Finance, (g) Agriculture, (h) Justice, (i) Public Instruction, (j) Public Work, (k) War, and (l) Privy Seal. Some of these ministries still exist in the current administrative structure. For provincial administration, King Rama V divided the country into monton (circle), changwat (province), and amphoe (district). Officials appointed from Bangkok were sent to govern these administrative zones. Each amphoe was split up into Tambon (communes), which consisted of a number of villages. The villagers elected their own leader, and a group of village leaders in a Tambon elected a leader among themselves. The system was centralized under the Ministry of Interior. With some changes over time, the system is still in use today (Raksasataya, 2001; Riggs, 1966; Syamananda, 1977). After the new governing structure was in place, traditional authority (Weber, 1924/1968) of the hereditary aristocrats started to decline because their conventional administrative positions were replaced by a large number of positions in the government for which the criteria were more open and not based only on hereditary succession. The new structure also created a new class, the young aristocrats who came from wealthy and Chinese trading families. They were equipped with modern knowledge and legal authority (Weber, 1924/1968) and played a major role in Thai politics after 1932. Furthermore, the reform put
an end to the quasi-autonomous, quasi-feudal governing system borrowed from the Ayutthaya kingdom and created a strong centralized state in which the king’s modernization programs could be launched. The new administrative system of King Rama V became the foundation of the current Thai governing system (Dhiravegin, 1973).

The administrative reform created personnel needs that had to be met by recruitment for low-level positions from the population at large. The recruitment of these low-ranking civil servants was facilitated by the reform of monastic-based education for the masses. The expansion of the government also allowed talented young officials to move up rapidly from the middle of the promotion ladders. Between 1890 and 1919, the numbers of salaried officials increased from about 12,000 to 80,000 (Siffin, 1966). The high-level positions in the government, however, were still limited to members of royal, noble, and wealthy families. As part of building the new dynasty, all the early Rattanakosin kings fathered large number of children. The numbers of children of the kings from King Rama I to Rama V were 42, 73, 51, 82, and 76, respectively. Therefore, members of the expanding royal families had occupied a lot of important government posts. In 1906, royalty occupied nine of the twelve cabinet posts, and in 1910 there were nine members of royal families in the sixteen most senior positions in the army (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995).

Society

During the reign of King Rama I, the corvée labor period of six months a year in the Ayutthaya period was reduced to four months and then to three months during the reign of King Rama II. With the introduction of a tax system and army conscription, the corvée system was abolished by King Rama V in 1905 (Nartsupha, 1984/1999). Beginning in the reign of King Rama IV, commoners were allowed to come near the king and gaze upon his
face when he paraded in public. The king also permitted the westerners who paid respect to
him to stand as they would in the presence of their own sovereigns instead of going down on
their knees (Wyatt, 1984). King Rama V’s very first decree, promulgated at his second
coronation in 1873, symbolized new ideas of citizenship. He abolished the centuries-old
practice of prostration in the royal presence and ordered his subjects to stand in his presence
(Riggs, 1966; Wyatt, 1994). In 1874, he announced the abolition of hereditary slavery and
restricted the conditions under which the nobility could hold debt-bond servants. To avoid
social upheaval, he took gradual steps to abolish slavery. He continually freed many slaves
and finally issued a law for the abolition of slavery in 1905 (Dhiravegin, 1999; Syamananda,
1977). Although the abolition of the corvée and slavery systems and the improvement of the
legal system provided commoners with a greater degree of the civil element of citizenship
(Marshall, 1964), during this period the masses still did not have the political component of
citizenship. The citizenship of the Rattanakosin population before the end of the absolute
monarchy is presented in Table 3.

A sense of patriotism among the Thai people was instilled by King Rama VI (1910–
1921). The king created the notion of a Thai nation based on the triad of the nation, religion,
and the king. It was a Trinitarian mystery in which all three elements were inextricably
bound together. Disloyalty or disobedience or disrespect toward any one of the three meant
disrespect toward all (Wyatt, 1984). The slogan “Nation, Religion, King” was revived by the
1947 military coup leaders (Girling, 1981). Since then, various military groups, if not all,
have claimed the protection of the three pillars as the basis for the legitimacy of their coups’
actions.
### Table 3

*Components of Citizenship of the Rattanakosin Population before the 1932 Coup*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rattanakosin (1868–1932)</th>
<th>Components of citizenship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social class</strong></td>
<td>Civil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royal families</td>
<td>![Icon]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hereditary and Wealthy aristocrats</td>
<td>![Icon]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese traders</td>
<td>![Icon]</td>
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<td>Low-ranking officials</td>
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<td>Labor and peasants</td>
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A new, and the most important, minority group, the Chinese, also emerged in the Rattanakosin period. The early Rattanakosin kings had encouraged large-scale Chinese immigration to replenish the scare labor resource. As King Rama V expressed, “The Chinese should have equal opportunities in Siam for labor and for profit .... ‘I regard them not as foreigners but as one of the component parts of the kingdom and sharing in its prosperity and advancement’” (Batson, as quoted in Girling, 1981, p. 57). Chinese laborers were hired by the state to build infrastructures and were used by merchants and service industries. A large number of Chinese also came as traders. In the expansion of trade with China, a lot of Chinese, under royal support, served as ship owners (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). Later, as the quantity of rice entering the world market increased at an explosive rate, the opportunity for middlemen and milling increased accordingly. Whereas Thai peasants focused on
expanding their production and the Thai upper class was absorbed in increasing administrative and political work, the Chinese quickly took this opportunity in a developing economy (Wilson, 1962). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Chinese dominated trade in Siam; they bought up crops and sold imports of western-manufactured goods. They also took charge of the various state monopolies, such as those of opium, gambling, and the lottery, which provided about 40 to 50% of the state revenues. However, after the end of King Rama V’s reign, the view of the Thai elites toward the Chinese began to change. This was because of the growing economic strength of the Chinese and the movement from ethnic assimilation to ethnic separation among the Chinese. Initially, Chinese immigrants were almost exclusively male; they married Thai women and assimilated without difficulty into the Thai population. Around 1910, Chinese women began to immigrate to Thailand, and the Chinese started to set up their own schools and community organizations. By 1930, the Chinese population was approximately two million out of the total population of more than 12 million (Girling, 1981).

Education

The monastic-based education had served the Thai people from the Ayutthaya to the early Rattanakosin periods. The system, which spanned the reigns of four Rattanakosin kings, was gradually modified over a hundred years, making the transition from its traditional form to the modern one that is known today. In the reign of King Rama III (1824–1851), small groups of American Protestant missionaries came to Bangkok. They were doctors who brought new medicine to help the sick and brought presses to print their religious materials in order to spread their beliefs. In response to this challenge to the traditional way of life, King Rama III tried to preserve the standards of Buddhist discipline and scholarship by founding a
Buddhist academy and revising traditional textbooks. He also preserved the intellectual heritage of the past by ordering inscription on marble plaques of classic poems, proverbs and maxims, and traditional medical instructions. The plaques were hung on the walls and columns of a royal monastery (Kluaymai Na Ayutthaya, 1983). King Rama IV, who at the time was in the monkhood, found the practice of Thai Buddhism considerably at variance with the classic Theravada. Therefore, he established the Thammayut sect on the basis of his extensive education in traditional Buddhism (Wyatt, 1969). After his ascension to the throne, he hired an English woman and then an American missionary as tutors to his son and heir, Prince Chulalongkorn. He also allowed the Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries to open their own schools.

King Rama V considered education a means of producing a new generation of aristocrats in order to facilitate reform of the governing system. Besides his own sons, the king sent sons of the noble and wealthy families on scholarship to study in Europe. In 1870, the king founded the first western-type school in the Royal Palace to provide princes and children of the nobility with education in preparation for government service. The subjects taught were Thai, simple calculations, and administrative regulations. New Thai primers also improved upon traditional textbooks. Concerning education for the masses, the king developed a system of formal education based on traditional monastic schools. In 1884, he asked Prince Damrong, one of his half brothers, to devise plans to collaborate with abbots in monastic schools to formalize the traditional ways of teaching. A year later, the first government school for the masses was opened, and a number of abbots began to hold formal classes and used standard textbooks (Wyatt, 1969). By 1886, there were 36 public schools located in monasteries. The Department of Education was established in 1887, and two years
later it became the Ministry of Public Instruction, with Prince Damrong as the first minister (Watson, 1980).

After his visit to Europe in 1897, the king made a determined effort to provide formal education to the masses. He ordered the Thai ambassador in London to study and report on the English education system. He later realized the differences between England and Siam and argued that Siam could both be modernized and, at the same time, remain Thai. A recommendation in the report was that primary education for children from seven to ten years old should be made compulsory and secondary education should be divided into two parts: that for children from 11 to 13 years old and that for children from 14 to 17 years old. The king sought the advice of Prince Damrong, who, at the time, was the Minister of Interior, and the Supreme Patriarch Prince Wachirayan, one of his half brothers. They both recommended that monasteries should be more actively engaged in education, as that would be cheaper than building large numbers of new schools. As a result, the Decree on the Organization of Provincial Education, which is a part of the first National Education Scheme in Thailand, was issued in November 1898. Prince Wachirayan began to send monks from Bangkok as directors of education to assist provincial abbots in opening formal schools in their monasteries, and Prince Damrong sent teachers and standard textbooks from the Ministry of Interior to those schools. Within six months, 177 provincial schools were opened in monasteries (Watson, 1980).

The principal route into the new aristocracy, especially into high-ranking positions, was through modern or western-type education. In 1887, the Chulachomklao Military Academy was founded on the model of the German military school, and by 1909 the academy had over 1,000 cadets. Until 1898, the academy was confined to the children of
royal and noble families. Thereafter, the doors were opened slightly wider, but birth remained a critical factor for admission (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). On the advice of Prince Damrong, King Rama V founded the Royal Pages School in 1898. Admission to the school was limited to males from royal and noble families who were between the ages of 15 and 20. The Royal Pages School became the Civil Service School in 1911, and finally, in 1916 it was developed into the first university in Thailand, Chulalongkorn University (Siffin, 1966). The university became the main producer of high-ranking aristocrats. In addition to the nobility and royalty, students in those elite institutions came from wealthy Chinese trading families, especially those who had made their fortunes as royal-patronized traders, and from the provincial nobility (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). Thus, this opened up an opportunity for Chinese descendants to get into top positions in the aristocracy. As Girling (1981) stated,

More and more Chinese (cut off from the mainland) marry either local-born Chinese wives or Thai wives; more of their children are educated in Thai schools and universities: and more use Thai names, take up “Thai” occupations—in the professions and, especially, in the bureaucracy—and consider themselves Thai. (p. 77)

Prime Ministers Phahon and Pridi, two of the leaders of the People’s Party, which ended the absolute monarchy in 1932, as well as many other elite aristocrats and military officers were of Chinese descent.

At the end of King Rama V’s reign, the foundations for governmental control of education had been laid. The system of compulsory education based on monastic schools could be implemented. A highly centralized system of ministerial control through textbooks,
curriculum, examinations, and inspections was in place. During the reign of King Rama VI (1910–1921), schools were categorized into three types: government schools, set up and maintained with government funds; local schools, set up and maintained with local taxes; and private schools, set up and maintained by individuals or groups. The first university, Chulalongkorn University, was founded in 1916 by King Rama VI as a memorial to his father, King Rama V. The Private School Act was promulgated in 1919 to control private schools, especially those of the Chinese and missionaries. In October 1921, the Primary Education Act was proclaimed, and Siam became the second country in Asia, after Japan, to have enforced compulsory education. The act stated that children of both sexes had to attend school between the ages of 7 and 14 or until such time as they could both read and write. Consequently, enrollment of girls in schools increased from 16,819 to 131,764 in the first year after the act was put into effect. Although primary education was compulsory, it was not free. A local education tax was collected at an annually fixed rate, as at that time it was financially impossible for the government to provide all children with free education. However, the tax was abolished by King Rama VII in 1930. It was not until 1935 that compulsory education was extended to include the whole country (Mulsilp, 1983; Watson, 1980).

Marshall (1964) stated that the right to receive education is a social right of citizenship. Although it may be argued that children, by definition, cannot be citizens, Marshall asserted that the right to education should be regarded as the right of the adult citizens to have been educated (p. 82). He concluded that through education, citizenship operates as an instrument of social stratification. Compared to the nobility and royalty, the masses in Thailand had not obtained their social right of citizenship to receive modern
education until 15 years after the first western-type school for the nobles and royal families was established. Furthermore, it was not until 1897, or 12 years after the first modern-type state school for the masses was founded, that the government committed to making modern education become more accessible to the masses. After all, the differences between state schools for the masses and those for the nobility and royalty were obvious. Schools for the masses were monastery based, whereas those for the nobility were newly founded by the state or privately founded with state’s support.

Factors Leading to the 1932 Coup d'état

Wilson (1962) suggested that the converging of three factors led to the 1932 Coup. The first factor was the diminishing psychological power, or, in Weber’s terms, traditional and charismatic authority (Weber, 1924/1968), of the monarch, which was the result of the democratic ideal from the West and the lack of success of the king. The second was the resentment among the young aristocrats, especially those who had been educated in Europe, over the royal monopoly of power because a large number of the nobility and royalty occupied most of the top positions in the aristocracy. The last factor was the economic problem resulting from the developing world depression and the previous extravagance of King Rama VI.

An indication of opposition to the absolute monarchy first appeared during the reign of King Rama V. Against the advice of his European advisors, the king committed to both universal compulsory military conscription, which led to the abolition of the corvée, or prai, system in 1905, and universal compulsory education. They were opposed on the grounds that they both were prohibitively expensive and potentially dangerous in political terms because in the long run, they would increase the possibility of opposition to the regime (Wyatt, 1994).
In 1885, eleven young men—almost all of them recently returned from studying in Europe—including three of the king’s half-brothers, petitioned the king urging him to quickly move toward a system of parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy. A few months later, in replying to the petition, the king expressed sympathy with the intentions and objectives of his critics, but expressed his doubt as to the altruism, the independence, the efficiency, and the ability of the country’s small elite to subordinate personal to national interests (Wyatt, 1984). King Rama V died on October 24, 1910. After 42 years of reign, he was succeeded by his son, King Maha Vajiravudh, or Rama VI.

In 1912, at the beginning of King Rama VI’s reign, a group of junior military officers plotted a coup against the king. Ninety-two men were arrested, but none of them suffered capital punishment. Toward the end of his reign, owing to his excessive generosity and glaring extravagance in his palaces, the annual national budget was unbalanced for several consecutive years. When he died in 1925, he left serious unresolved economic and political problems to his youngest brother, who ascended the throne as King Prajadhipok, or Rama VII. Relatively young, inexperienced, and not expected to ascend the throne, as he was the youngest of the king’s four brothers, King Rama VII established the Supreme Council of State, consisting of five senior members of the royal family, to help him rule the country. To handle the economic problems, the budgets of every government department, including royal expenditures, were cut. Some ministries were merged, and the number of officials retired or dismissed was close to 10,000, exceeding ten percent of all government employees. By mid 1926, the immediate crisis had passed, and through the late 1920s, prosperity and balanced state budgets returned (Batson, 1984).
In the early 1930s, the world economic depression hit the country. The price of rice, a dominant component of Siam’s exports, dropped by two thirds. Consequently, the expenditures were in excess of the revenues, and the government was forced to cut its budgets. This meant salary cuts and new tax measures that, in fact, affected only income from salaries and left untouched incomes from rents, royalties, dividends, interest, and profits from business enterprises. The result was the increase in dissatisfaction among salaried officials that was a factor leading to the 1932 coup (Wilson, 1962). In April 1932, two months before the coup, the king planned to introduce a certain degree of representative government, but he was opposed by members of the Supreme Council of State.

As Weber (1924/1968) suggested, a ruling institution rarely depends upon only one of the three types of authority. In the case of Thailand, during the time of the absolute monarchy, all three types of the bases for legitimacy, legal, traditional, and charismatic, played important roles in supporting the kings’ authority. Weber stated that a striking lack of success might be sufficient to ruin any government, to undermine its prestige, and to prepare the way for a revolution. His statement proved to be true in the case of Thailand. In comparison with King Rama V, or Chulalongkorn the Great, who had been on his throne for 42 years and made tremendous progress in the development of the country, his successors and also his sons, Kings Rama VI and VII, were far less successful. Moreover, national as well as world economic problems during the reigns of Kings Rama VI and VII worsened the situation. In the eyes of certain groups, these factors had lessened the traditional and charismatic authority (Weber, 1924/1968) of the two kings and, thus, the legitimacy of the monarchy. This finally resulted in the coup ending the absolute monarchy in 1932.
Summary

As a result of the Treaties of Friendship and Commerce signed with the western powers, Siam opened up to foreign trade and western influences, which, later on, led to social and political changes. King Rama V (1868–1910) replaced the divisions of military and civil administration used since the Ayutthaya kingdom with 12 ministries and replaced conservative hereditary aristocrats with the younger generation of western-educated members of the royal and noble families. The king abolished the slavery and prai systems. Although the masses received greater degrees of the civil and social components of their citizenship, they still had no right to participate in politics. The most important minority group, the Chinese, also emerged during the Rattanakosin period. Chinese laborers were hired by the state to build infrastructures and used by merchants and service industries. As the quantity of rice that was entering the world market increased, the opportunity for middlemen and milling increased accordingly, and the Chinese quickly took advantage of this opportunity to dominate trade in Siam. They also took charge of the various state monopolies, such as those of opium, gambling, and the lottery.

The Department of Education was established in 1887. Traditional monastery-based education for the masses was formalized and centralized under ministerial control through the choices of textbooks, curriculum, examinations, and inspections. Monks were sent from Bangkok as directors of education to assist provincial abbots in opening formal schools in their monasteries, and teachers and standard textbooks were sent to those schools. Education was seen as a means of producing a new generation of officials. Low-level officials were produced by formal monastiery-based schools. The Civil Service School and Chulachomklao Military Academy were established, first for members of the royal and noble families. Later
opportunities were also given to the children of wealthy families. These elite schools became the training ground for high-ranking aristocrats who played a major role in Thai politics after 1932. The major factors resulting in the 1932 coup were the economic downturn and the resentment among the civilian and military aristocrats about the royal monopoly of power in the government. The lack of success of Kings Rama VI and VII, in comparison with the success of their father, also diminished the legitimacy of authority of the monarchy.

Rattanakosin (1932–Present)

The 1932 Coup d'état

On the 24th of June, 1932, a group of civilian and military aristocrats calling themselves the People’s Party overthrew the absolute monarchy of King Rama VII and established a quasi-parliamentary constitution. Yano (as cited in Girling, 1981) described it:

The “People’s Party”… consisted of not more than 70 people in four different groups: senior army officers, junior army officers, navy officers, and civilian officials. All the senior officers had studied in Germany, while the younger army officers and civilians had been students in the early 1920s in France. The actual organization and control of the party were initially in the hands of fewer than twenty men; the remainder were recruited immediately before the coup from among those who worked for, or studied under the leaders. (p. 59–60)

While the King was away at his summer palace in a southern province, the troops under the command of the leaders of the People’s Party arrested the king’s senior advisors and seized certain key positions in Bangkok. There was only one shooting incident and were no deaths. Following the coup, the People’s Party conducted a limited purge of the royalist forces. Some senior princes were withdrawn from their positions in the previous administration and eased
into lives of enforced leisure or exile. Other senior aristocrats were removed from key positions in the government (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). The group issued a proclamation announcing that a radical change in government had been effected in Siam. The proclamation was written by Pridi, the ideological leader of the group who had received a Doctor of Law from the University of Paris. The end of the proclamation stated, “Let us understand that this country belongs to the people, not to the king as we have been deceived into believing. Whereas the ancestors of the common people fought the enemy to maintain national independence, the royalty just reaps the fruits which it does not deserve to have” (Keyes, 1987, p. 63).

In spite of the harsh statement by Pridi, the monarchy was not abolished. Two days after the coup, the king was brought back from his summer palace to Bangkok, and the members of the People’s Party formally apologized to the king (Keyes, 1987). In response, the king negotiated for his new legal authority (Weber, 1924/1968) under the constitution, when he replied to the ultimatum of the People’s Party that “if I decline to continue in my office as king, the foreign powers will not recognize the new government” (Nuechterlein, 1965, p. 33). In January 1935, the king and queen left for England for medical treatment. While he was there, in response to the request from the government for his return, the king demanded major changes in the constitution to increase the legal authority of the monarch. However, before anything happened, the king announced his abdication in March 1935 while he was still in Europe. The government chose ten-year-old Prince Ananta Mahidol, who was then in school in Switzerland, as a successor. The Regent Council was established to act for him. As a result, Thailand had no resident king for the next 15 years (Keyes, 1987; Nuechterlein, 1965; Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995).
Governance

After the coup d'état, the People’s Party appointed itself as the interim parliament and formed a new government. Members of the Cabinet included leaders of the party and royalty who did not serve the king in the previous administration. With its legal authority, the People’s Party created political structures and processes allowing them to dominate the politics. A committee was set up to draft the permanent constitution, which was proclaimed on December 10, 1932. Although the absolute monarchy came to an end, the masses still did not receive the political component of their citizenship (Marshall, 1964). A unique provision in the constitution declared that half of the parliament would be appointed by the government until half of the eligible voters had completed four years of school or for 10 years, whichever came first (Wilson, 1962). Furthermore, the voting method in the first election was indirect. First, each village elected its representatives. Then, the representatives elected district representatives who, finally, elected provincial representatives to become members of the National Assembly (Samudavanija, 1995). This provision allowed the People’s Party to control the parliament and legislative processes for over two decades. As is the case for the constitutions of Thailand, which were often amended by the authorities to their advantage, when the National Assembly was due to become wholly elective, the government amended the constitution to extend the structure of the unicameral legislature in which half of the members were selected by the government until 1946.

The events after the coup reflected competition and compromise for political control between the two factions in the People’s Party: the left-wing group and the conservative group. The left-wing group, led by Pridi, consisted primarily of radical young aristocrats espousing socialism and democracy. The conservative group, led by Colonel Pahon, was
made up of the older army and navy officers who wished to retain a controlled monarchy. Pridi and his group of intellectuals recruited the military conservative group to the People’s Party because they would not be able to stage the coup without support from the military (Hindley, 1968). The main reason that the military group joined Pridi was their dissatisfaction with the arrogance of the royal princes who occupied most of the top positions in the military (Nuechterlein, 1965; Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). Soon after the coup, the young military faction within the People’s Party emerged and was able to overcome the senior members. The rise of the young military faction also gradually reduced the political influence of the civilian faction in the People’s Party (Samudavanija, 1995).

Although the coup brought an end to the absolute monarchy that had been in Siam for almost seven centuries, the masses were not aware of the significance of the coup in which they had played no part. Only a handful of people attended the inauguration of the constitutional government. Paribatra (1993) stated that because the People’s Party was reluctant to relinquish authority to the people, the coup was only the replacement of princes and nobles with aristocrats who used their authority for individual or collective causes. Similarly, Tongdhamachart (1982) asserted that the coup was not a popular revolution but an aristocratic coup aimed at breaking the royal monopoly of power. The end of monarchical control did not allow the creation of popular control over the government. The 1932 coup was only a victory of the new aristocrats in their struggle to attain political dominance (Riggs, 1966). The end of the absolute monarchy had created a power vacuum, and there was no political culture and historical background upon which a democratic form of government could thrive. Thus, with its armed forces, the military, in alliance with the civilian aristocrats, moved in to fill the power vacuum left by the monarch (Dhiravegin, 1973). Batson (1984)
argued that the transformations of the Thai political and social structures were not the results of the change of ruling oligarchies in 1932. Rather, they were changes initiated by Kings Rama IV and Rama V that affected all political, social, and economic systems. Similarly, Riggs (1966) stated that the 1932 coup involved only the substitution of one oligarchic elite for another. It was nothing more than the consolidation and manifestation of a revolution that had already brought about by King Chulalongkorn.

*The Dominance of the People’s Party (1932–1947)*

The first constitution of 1932 represented a compromise between the liberal and the conservative groups in the People’s Party. It provided the monarch with a more prominent role and authority than the provisional constitution written largely by Pridi (Nuechterlein, 1965). Another indication of compromise was the selection of the Prime Minister, Phraya Mano, who was a conservative and the chief judge of the Court of Appeals (Keyes, 1987).

Soon after the government was formed, the conflict between Pridi’s left-wing group and the military conservative group resulted in a serious split between Pridi and Mano. The Economic Plan of 1933 proposed by Pridi met strong opposition from the conservative group, and Pridi was labeled as a communist (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). His economic plan was strongly influenced by Marxist ideas. The key element in the plan was that the government should take over and operate the economic system, own all the industries and all the land, and decide how they should be operated and divided. However, instead of confiscating the land and industries, the government would compensate the owners with government bonds (Nuechterlein, 1965). In April 1933, with support from senior conservative military officers and royalists, Mano dissolved the assembly, reorganized the government without Pridi and his supporters, and forced Pridi into exile. Meanwhile,
conflicts between the young and the senior military factions also occurred. Two months later, in June 1933, the military group led by Lieutenant Colonel Pibul arrested Mano and other conservative leaders, imposed martial laws, and formed a new government. Under the new government, Prime Minister Pahon was persuaded to permit Pridi to return to Thailand. In 1934, Pridi was officially cleared of the charge of being a communist (Syamananda, 1977).

Prime Minister Pahon became a moderator between the two forces in the People’s Party: the military faction led by Pibul and the civilian faction led by Pridi. Pibul was appointed as the defense minister. Pridi became the interior minister in 1935 and the foreign minister in 1937 (Nuechterlein, 1965).

From 1938 to 1944, the civilian faction of the People’s Party lost its domination to the military counterpart. During the time that Pibul was the defense minister, he consolidated his control over the military. After the elections in 1938, Pibul became the Prime Minister. He appointed himself as commander-in-chief of the army, navy, and air force. There were seven Cabinets with an average of 51% military men in the Cabinets during the six years of his premiership (Samudavanija & Paribatra, 1992). Pridi was appointed to be the finance minister in Pibul’s government. After Pibul decided to join Japan in declaring war on the Allies in December 1942, Pridi was removed from the Cabinet and appointed to the Regency Council, which represented the king in his absence. However, this politically unimportant position gave Pridi an opportunity to organize the underground to work secretly with the Allies. The underground, called Free Thai, was founded in the U.S. and England. A number of Free Thai members were Thai students who had been unable to return home after the war broke out. Although the Thai government declared war on the Allies, Seni Pramoj, who was the Thai ambassador to the U.S. refused to deliver the declaration to the U.S. government.
The U.S. government reciprocated by providing support for the Free Thai movement and not declaring war on Thailand. After the war, England and France demanded that Thailand return all territories taken during the war and pay very large reparations. The U.S., however, helped Thailand to successfully negotiate with England and France. The important role of the U.S. at the end of the war was the beginning of a close relationship between the two countries and also the beginning of the influence of the U.S. that led to marked changes in Thai society and politics (Keyes, 1987).

Pibul’s political influence began to decline when it became clear in early 1944 that Japan would be defeated in the war. In July 1944, Pibul resigned after losing a key vote in the National Assembly. With support from Pridi, Khuang, who was a royalist and a member of the People’s Party, became the Prime Minister until the defeat of Japan in August 1945. After the end of Pacific war, Seni was called back from the U.S. and became the Prime Minister after the postwar elections. Wilson (1962) noted that postwar politics in Thailand was a matter of the struggle for dominance among three groups: the military group led by Pibul, the parliament and elite aristocracy group centered around Pridi, and the smaller but more prestigious traditionalists and royalists led by Khuang and Seni.

After the end of Pacific war in August 1945, Pridi and the Free Thai group emerged as a dominant political force and national heroes. In the same year, political parties were allowed to operate for the first time in history. In the 1946 elections, Pridi and his supporters won the majority of seats in the National Assembly, and Pridi stepped down as a regent to become the Prime Minister. He again used his authority to change the political structures and processes. In May 1946, under the guidance of Pridi, the assembly passed a new constitution to replace the 1932 constitution. The new constitution provided that the National Assembly
consisted of the upper house, or the Senate, and the lower house, or the House of Representatives. However, the members of the Senate were selected by the lower house, which at the time was under the control of Pridi and his group. Pridi also restructured the military to ensure his control of political situations. However, the attempt to put Pibul and his chief lieutenants on trial for war crimes was unsuccessful. Later on, Pibul and the others were allowed to go free (Nuechterlein, 1965).

Pridi’s political fortunes came to an end shortly after he became the Prime Minister. On the 9th of June, 1946, the 20-year-old King Ananta Mahidol (Rama VIII) was found shot in bed. He had been selected to ascend the throne after the abdication of King Rama VII and had returned to Thailand after spending the war period in school in Switzerland. The death was reported as an accident caused by King Ananta’s playing with a gun. However, until now the exact circumstances of his death have never been revealed. Pridi made the matter worse by imposing press censorship to silence the wild speculation. His reactions opened up an opportunity for Khuang and his royalist group to mount an attack on Pridi. Finally, in August 1946, Pridi voluntarily resigned in favor of his own choice, Thamrong, a member of the People’s Party. Only three months later, as a result of the corruption in Thamrong’s Cabinet, an economic downturn after the war, and the mysterious death of the king, a military group took the opportunity to stage a coup in November 1947. A leader of the coup group, General Phin, was one of the leaders of the People’s Party. However, the other two young leaders, Colonel Sarit and Colonel Phao, were not members of the People’s Party. After the 1947 coup, the military captured and maintained political ascendancy through 1973.

Nuechterlein (1965) noted that the coup was welcomed by the lower classes and the royalists. For the lower classes, there had been nothing good about the previous government, so they
looked for any kind of change. To the royalists, Pridi was an enemy of the throne. This series
of events after the 1947 coup became a vicious cycle of Thai politics (Samudavanija &
Paribatra, 1992). Whenever there were social disturbances, political turmoils, or an increase
of public dissatisfaction with the government, the military would take the opportunity to
stage a coup and claim the restoration of stability and protection of the three pillars, the
nation, religion, and king, as the bases for the legitimacy of its actions.

The Military Regimes (1947–1973)

Following the coup, Pridi and Thamrong escaped from the country. The constitution
of 1946 was abrogated, and a provisional constitution was put into effect. To cultivate belief
in its legitimacy among the people, the coup group announced that elections would be held
within three months and a new constitution would be drafted after the elections. The results
of the elections allowed Khuang and his royalist party, the Democrat Party, to form the
government. However, the coup group did not allow Khuang to reap the fruits of his efforts.
After only four months of his term, the coup group forced Khuang to resign. Then, it formed
a military government, and Pibul made his comeback as the Prime Minister (Keyes, 1987;
Nuechterlein, 1965). Nuechterlein (1965) and Keyes (1987) suggested that the coup group of
1947 allowed the general elections to be organized and Khuang to form the government
because of pressure from the U.S. and England, who first showed disapproval of the coup
and the return of Pibul. However, the world situation in 1948, in which Communists were
extending their control in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, provided an opportunity for the
coup group and Pibul’s government, who were anti-communist leaders, to be accepted by the
U.S. and other western governments.
These coup tactics were used again by the 1957, 1976, and 1991 military groups. After a coup d'etat, the coup group must restore peace and order as quickly as possible. It is therefore likely to amend the constitution to create its legal authority (Weber, 1924/1968) and reduce the authority of its opponents. Then, to gain popular support, the group will try to connect itself with traditional and charismatic authority (Weber, 1924/1968) by inviting nonmembers—experienced aristocrats and public men with prestige—to join the Cabinet or to take the Prime Minister position. As soon as the regime has gained enough experience and consolidated its power, such outsiders are regarded as expendable. In addition, the coup group must seek to legitimize its control. Thus, it usually organizes general elections and at the same time tries to influence the outcomes and installs a new parliament. This enables the coup group to form and control the Cabinet and also to lay claim to the legitimacy of its authority. Finally, the premier is replaced by a key member of the coup group, who then can claim that his authority is legitimate on the basis of democratic parliamentary processes as specified in the constitution (Riggs, 1966).

*Figure 2. The vicious cycle of Thai politics.*
In early 1949, Pridi returned to Thailand and attempted to stage a coup with support from the navy and former Free Thai members. The coup failed and Pridi was forced into exile again. Consequently, he spent 20 years in China, then moved to France and remained there for the rest of his life. In 1951, the navy made another attempt to regain its political dominance by taking Prime Minister Pibul hostage on board a navy warship. After several days of negotiations and shooting, 128 deaths, and more than 500 wounded, the navy was crushed by the military and the air force. In the aftermath, the naval headquarters was removed from Bangkok, 18 departments and battalions were disbanded, and several senior officers were forced to resign. In November 1951, only two days before the permanent return from Switzerland of King Bhumibol, who ascended the throne after the death of his brother, Sarit—a leader of the 1947 coup group—staged another silent coup. This time he abrogated the 1949 constitution, dissolved the assembly, and re-instituted the first constitution of 1932. Pibul was, once more, appointed Prime Minister, and he remained in the position until 1957.

Three major political figures emerged after the 1947 coup: Sarit, who was supreme commander of the army; Phao, who was the commander-in-chief of the police; and Pibul, who lost his control over the armed forces but retained political influence. Phao, later on, built the police into a paramilitary to compete with Sarit’s army forces and worked closely with Pibul to control the government. Phao’s corruption and his efforts with Pibul to manipulate the elections in 1957 led to another coup by Sarit. After the coup, Phao escaped to Switzerland and Pibul was exiled to Japan. Sarit employed his old tactics; he selected a civilian as the interim Prime Minister and promised general elections within 90 days. After the fraudulent elections, Field Marshal Thanom, who was one of Sarit’s lieutenants and founded a political party to compete in the elections, became the Prime Minister. However,
less than a year later, Sarit staged another coup in October 1958. He dissolved the National Assembly, abrogated the 1932 constitution, declared martial law, outlawed all political parties and gatherings, and took over as the Prime Minister (Keyes, 1987, Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). Afterwards, the military regimes governed without an elected National Assembly for over a decade.

Sarit smoothly transferred political control to his lieutenants, Thanom and Praphat, before he died in 1963. After Sarit’s death, Thanom became the Prime Minister until a student uprising in October 1973. In comparison to Sarit, Thanom appeared to be less concerned about the legitimacy of his authority and the ideological foundations of his economic policies (Pongpaichit, 1980). During the period of military regimes, the media were subjected to censorship. From 1958 to 1965, political parties were not allowed to organize, and a new constitution was not promulgated until 1968. The regimes used both political and military power to control their opponents. Communism was used as the main reason to control or destroy politicians and activists who did not agree with the regimes.

*The Student Uprising*

Reaction to the military dictatorial regime started in the early 1970s. In 1971, while he was the Prime Minister, Thanom staged a coup against his opponents and potential opposition forces. He abrogated the 1968 constitution, dissolved the Nation Assembly, and declared martial law. A number of interest groups, including intellectuals, students, and politicians, were offended by the coup and by the fact that the regime was increasingly ruling in its own interests. Military factionalism also increased when it became clear that Thanom and Praphat were grooming Colonel Narong, the son of Thanom and the son-in-law of Praphat, for the position of Prime Minister after their retirement. Meanwhile, the economy
that had been growing since 1958 began to deteriorate in the early 1970s. The economic growth rate dropped from 11.8% per year during the latter half of the 1960s to 2.8% in 1971. The inflation rate rose to 15% in 1973 and reached 24% in 1974 (Neher, 1975). The corruption and monopoly of various types of business by Thanom and Praphat also resulted in an increase of public dissatisfaction with the government.

The student uprising started when nine students at Ramkamhaeng University were expelled because they insulted Prime Minister Thanom in their newspaper. The expulsion led to student protests pressuring the university to reaccept those nine students. About 50,000 students participated in the protests. Later on, students also demanded the promulgation of a new constitution from the government within six months. As a result of the protests, the nine students were reaccepted, but the demand for a new constitution was in vain. Therefore, on the 5th of October 1973, leaders from the National Student Center of Thailand and university faculty established the Group for Democracy and started their campaign to pressure the government. The next day, 11 people in the group were arrested, and other two people were arrested later on. The arrest provoked students from various universities, colleges, and vocational schools into demonstrations to pressure the government to release the 13 political prisoners and expedite the constitution-drafting process. On October 13, approximately 500,000 people demonstrated at the Constitution Monument and waited for an answer from the government. That night the government agreed to release the 13 prisoners unconditionally and promised that the new constitution would be promulgated within a year. Although the protesters were not satisfied with the answer, they decided to end the demonstration. On the morning of October 14, while the protesters dispersed on the streets, they were blocked by the police force. Soon afterward, a segment of military forces were
deployed and started shooting at the protesters (Tantivittayapitak, 2000; Tojirakarn, 2001). More than a hundred students were killed. Thanom announced that the mob had been infiltrated by communists and ordered the military to suppress the demonstrations. Because of factionalism within the military, General Krit, the army commander in chief, refused to use his armed forces against students. Without military support, Thanom, Praphat, and Narong could no longer maintain their political control. King Rama IX also intervened to end the bloodshed. He ordered the three regime’s leaders to leave the country, and appointed Sanya, a royalist law professor, as the Prime Minister. In the aftermath, General Krit purged the army senior officers who supported Thanom and placed his men in those positions in the army and the police (Dhiravegin, 1999; Keyes, 1987; Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995).


After the end of Thanom’s regime, political structures and processes were changed again. Under Sanya’s government, a new constitution was drafted by a largely academic committee. It was designed to exclude high-ranking military officials and civil servants from politics. The final version was, however, substantially modified by the Assembly. The constitution of 1974 created the structure of the bicameral National Assembly, the Senate and the House of Representatives. Senators were selected by the House and appointed by the king. Elite civil servants and military officials were excluded from both the House and the Senate. The military under General Krit also kept a low political profile. General elections were held in January 1975, but no parties gained a majority of 269 seats in the House. An unstable coalition government was formed and dissolved after only two months because of a no-confidence vote. A new government was formed by the opposition parties and again dissolved in April 1976 for the same reason (Girling, 1981).
Political changes after the October 1973 incident and democratic governments created a new political climate that allowed various interest groups to spring up. With the support of student organizations, the Farmer’s Federation of Thailand (FFT) was founded in 1974. In the same year, student leaders helped labor groups to organize the Labor Coordination Center of Thailand (LCCT). Labor unions that had been banned from 1958 to 1973 increased their numbers and activities. Because they had no connections or access to political power, student, farmer, and labor groups normally organized demonstrations and strikes in order to have their voices heard. Laborers demanded an increase in their wages and farmers wanted land and financial support from the government. Between 1965 and 1972, there had been an average of 18 strikes a year, but in 1973 the number rose to 501 strikes (Phongpaichit, 1980).

Communism spreading from China to Southeast Asia also interested a large number of students and gained support from peasants. This situation concerned the ruling elites, who were afraid of losing their authority and political control. The recent end of the monarchy in Laos also troubled the king (Girling, 1981). To counter the growth of those movements, some high-ranking military officers, royalists, and government leaders organized right-wing groups. These groups varied in size and activities. Some groups drew their members from mercenaries who had fought for the U.S. in Laos and from vocational students in Bangkok. These groups used violent actions to interfere with and intimidate their opponents. Other groups had broader popular support and were sponsored by government agencies. All the right-wing groups held the common theme of protecting the three pillars—nation, religion, and king—against the Communists.

In late 1975, the use of violence against political activists increased. Several FFT and LCCT leaders were killed, and many were arrested and charged with being communists. The
exiled military dictators, Thanom and Praphat, also planned for their return. In August 1976, Praphat returned to Thailand for medical treatment and an audience with the king. He faced strong resistance and had to leave in the same month. In September, Thanom, using Buddhism as his shield, returned to Thailand as a novice. The king paid him a visit at a royal monastery. Thanom’s return was also met with protests, and on September 24, 1976, two protesters were found hung dead. On October 4, about 500 Thammasat University students protested the return of Thanom and the false investigation of the death of the two victims. They staged an act presenting the hanging of the victims. Pictures from the play published by two newspapers were modified so that one of the actors who was hung looked like the crown prince. The students were accused of lese majesty, which provoked serious confrontations between the right-wing groups supported by the authorities and the students who demonstrated at Thammasat University (Tantivittayapitak, 2000).

Schattschneider (1975) asserted that “the substitution of conflicts is the most devastating kind of political strategy .... In politics the most catastrophic force in the world is the power of irrelevance which transmutes one conflict into another and turns all existing alignments inside out” (p. 71–72). In the case of student demonstrations, the authorities used the media to replace the conflict over the return of a former military dictator with the conflict over the invasion of communists who wanted to destroy the king and royal family. The new conflict turned the public, who had been firmly loyal to the monarch, against the students, who were portrayed as communists. The authorities also used it as the basis for the legitimacy of using force against the students in order to protect the three pillars of the nation. In the morning of October 6, 1976, right-wing groups, police, border-patrol police, and military forces broke into Thammasat University and cruelly murdered the students. That
evening, a military group known as the Young Turks staged a coup and started the aftermath purge (Tantivittayapitak, 2000; Tojirakarn, 2001). It was estimated that more than 300 students were killed. Approximately 2,000 to 3,000 students left the city to join the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in the jungles, and more than 8,000 people were arrested on charges of being a threat to society. University faculty and civil servants were forced to attend courses on the evils of communism. The constitution of 1976 was promulgated, new members of parliament were appointed, and a timetable of twelve years before the restoration of an elected assembly was imposed. Thanin, a former Supreme Court judge and an anti-communist, was appointed as Prime Minister (Keyes, 1987; Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995).


A year later, in October 1977, the Young Turks staged another coup. A new government was formed under a military Prime Minister, General Kriangsak. This government allowed more political freedom. It promulgated the constitution of 1978 and organized general elections in 1979. The government also allowed labor, student, and farmer groups to operate, although with some restrictions. After the 1979 elections, General Kriangsak returned as Prime Minister for a second term. However, in March 1980, the same military group staged a silent coup to replace Prime Minister Kriangsak with General Prem (Keyes, 1987).

Prem was different from other military prime ministers in that he had acquired a reputation as a capable professional soldier who showed no interest in using his position for personal gain. He thus received strong support from the king. During his eight years as Prime Minister, he survived two coup attempts and returned as Prime Minister after the elections in
1983 and 1986. He had no affiliation with any political party and never ran for a political office, but he was asked by the leaders of major parties in the parliament to remain in his position after the elections. In April 1981, the Young Turks—the military group that had supported him to become Prime Minister in 1980—staged a coup on the grounds that they disliked two retired military leaders who had been bought into the Cabinet. Prem refused to cooperate and escorted the royal family by helicopter from Bangkok to his old garrison base in Korat, a northeastern province. He then publicized the royal opposition to the coup. The coup ended within three days, and 52 members of the Young Turks were arrested and discharged from the army. However, they were later reinstated in the army. In September 1985, when Prem was in Indonesia and the king and queen were at their palace in a southern province, the Young Turks staged another coup. This one, however, ended the same way. Consequently, the group leaders were exiled and the rest were discharged from the army (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995).

Prem’s administration is one of only a few periods of an undisrupted parliament in Thai history. The process of democratization evolving during his terms allowed political parties and the elected parliament to gradually become institutionalized (Bunbongkarn, 2001). Prem’s support came from the king and his ability to prevent any one particular military faction from dominating the armed forces (Paribatra, 1993). In July 1988, as a result of internal conflicts in the coalition government, Prem dissolved the parliament and called general elections. After eight years as Prime Minister, he decided to step down. Chartchai, the leader of the party with the majority of votes in the parliament, formed a new government and became the Prime Minister (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995).
Chartchai’s Cabinet was the first time that the control of the Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Finance were taken away from the high-ranking military officers and civil servants. Chartchai took the Defense Ministry; Pramarn, his brother-in-law, became the Interior Minister; and Pramuan, a businessman and the party’s financier, undertook the Finance Ministry. Although both Chartchai and Pramarn held the title of General, they were long retired and had little influence in the army. They were viewed as business politicians rather than soldiers (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). This lineup proved to be fatal for the survival of Chartchai’s government and the parliament. The National Assembly passed a cut in the military budget for the first time in the history in 1989. In 1990, the Budget Scrutiny Committee cut the military allocation, and the Cabinet rejected a plan for the military to build a new intelligence center. In 1991, the Committee demanded that the military reduce its manpower, scale down the budget, and eliminate middlemen and monopolies on the purchase of military arms. Chartchai’s term was the re-emergence of many radical and dissident elements that first appeared after the student uprising in 1973 and had been repressed since 1976. Several of the members of parliament were student activists who fled to join the Communist Party after the clash between students and the military in October 1976. Double-digit economic growth created the need for large-scale governmental investment in infrastructure development. Such projects provided opportunities for many ministers in the Cabinet to use their positions for personal gain. Tales of corruption among ministers were closely reported by the press, which was connected with one or another of the political elites, such as leaders of political parties and top military officers (Dhiravegin, 1999; Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). The corruption scandals of the government resulted in a decline in public
support. The military, whose prestige was attacked by the government and the parliament, took advantage of the situation to stage a coup in February 1991 and gained support from the public during its first few months.


After the coup, the military group employed the tactics used by various previous coup groups. It formed the National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC) to oversee and influence political processes. The NPKC abrogated the constitution, dissolved the parliament, and appointed a committee to amend the constitution. The amendments provided legal legitimacy for nonmembers of parliament to become Prime Minister. In order to obtain public support, especially from business communities, the group selected Anand, a retired aristocrat and business leader, to form an interim government and serve as the Prime Minister. General elections were scheduled for March 1992. Anand and his Cabinet soon proved to be the wrong choice. When the military resubmitted their massive request for arm purchases, the Cabinet refused to comply and left the decision to the new government that would be formed after the elections. Within six months, the coup leaders wanted to remove Anand, but the situation forced them to wait for Anand to be replaced by an elected government (Dhiravegin, 1999; Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). To compete in and manipulate the elections, the coup group formed a political party that immediately attracted a number of politicians from other parties.

After the elections, the coup’s party won the majority of seats in the parliament. However, Narong, the puppet party leader, could not become Prime Minister because he was once refused a U.S. visa on the basis of suspected involvement with drug trading. Although General Suchinda, leader of the coup group, made a public announcement that he did not
want the position, he accepted the offer and became the Prime Minister. Amending the
constitution to its advantage, forming a political party to compete in the elections, and
finally, taking the Prime Minister position clearly indicated the intentions of the coup group.
This series of events gave rise to demonstrations in April 1992, which demanded the
resignation of Suchinda and the removal of four amendments in the constitution. The
demonstrations continued through mid of May, when the violence started (Paribatra, 1993).

Weber (1924/1968) stated, “the basis of every authority, and correspondingly of
every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising
authority are lent prestige” (p. 263). What Suchinda and the NPKC had done made the public
believe that they wanted to monopolize the political power and turn the country back to the
pre-1973 situation. The demonstrations in Bangkok also persuaded the public that the junta
did not stage the coup to rescue the country from corrupt politicians as they had previously
claimed (Paribatra, 1993). Although his assuming the office was legitimate because the
constitution allowed him to do so, merely legal legitimacy was not enough to convince the
public to believe in his authority. As the demonstrations continued, more and more people
participated. On May 17, more than 300,000 protesters moved to the parliament to pressure
Suchinda for answers. They were blocked by the Bangkok police forces and military forces
from provincial bases who were briefed that they were suppressing a communist uprising.
Suchinda appeared on television and described the demonstrations as an attack on the three
pillars of the country (nation, religion, and king) organized by communists and enemies of
Buddhism. The confrontation between the demonstrators and officers became riots; buses
and buildings were burned; soldiers fired into the crowd. News of the bloodshed could at first
be seen only in the international media, as the junta had control over the local media. The
official number of deaths was less than 50, but in reality, a few hundred lost their lives (Dhiravegin, 1999). The violence ended on the May 20, 1999, after Chamlomg, who was a leader of the protesters, and Prime Minister Suchinda were called for an audience with the king, who intervened to end the bloodshed. Suchinda resigned after issuing an amnesty for all acts committed during the demonstrations, and the amendments to the constitution were removed. Anand was brought back to form an interim government until the elections in September 1992. During the elections, political parties were divided into two camps of what were called the angels and the devils. The angels were the parties that stood against Suchinda and his regime, and the devils were those that had formed the government with Suchinda. The elections, however, ended with the angel camp gaining only a few seats more in the parliament than did the devil camp. The Democrat Party, which gained the majority of seats in the House, formed a government with its alliance. The leader of the Democrat Party, Mr. Chuan, became the Prime Minister.

The 1992 uprising against the junta represented a new phenomenon in Thai politics, which was that the challenge to the regime came from the middle class. After Suchinda assumed the position of Prime Minister, the urban middle class actively participated in the demonstrations that overthrew him and the regime. The protestors were mainly middle-class residents of Bangkok and its vicinity. A survey of 2,000 of the hundreds of thousands of demonstrators gathering at Sanam Luang on the May 17, 1992, showed that nearly 60% of the survey participants had bachelor’s degrees or equivalents, nearly 50% were employed in the private sector, and over 50% had monthly salaries or incomes over 10,000 baht, or about $230 (Paribatra, 1993). Following the 1992 incidents, the middle class became more aware of its ability to affect political changes. In 1997, middle class, pro-democracy groups pressured
the government to pass the new constitution as part of a political reform program, and also successfully campaigned for the resignation of Prime Minister Chavalit on account of his mismanagement of the country’s finances, which caused the 1997 economic crisis (Bunbongkarn, 2001).

*The Revisit of Democracy and Money Politics (1992–Present)*

After the 1992 elections, although there was no interference from the military, democracy in Thailand remained fragile as a result of the fragmented party system, endemic corruption, vote buying, and unstable coalition governments (Bunbongkarn, 1999b). Political reform was pushed by small groups of activists who opposed the constitution drafted under the guidance of the coup group in 1991. However, they did not receive much attention from the public and the government. Although Prime Minister Chuan was regarded as a man of integrity, his government was not free from corruption scandals. In May 1995, he was forced to dissolve the parliament when one of his coalition parties withdrew its support. After the elections, a coalition government composed of seven political parties was formed. The new Cabinet included many corrupt politicians who were unacceptable to the public. Within 14 months, the government collapsed and new elections were called in November 1996. The failure of the current system and the increase in corruption gave more momentum to political reform. In late 1996, the National Assembly agreed to amend the constitution, and the constitution-drafting assembly was created. In 1997, an economic crisis hit Thailand after the government announced the flotation of Thai currency. Driven by the crisis, the public pressured the government to dissolve only one year after the elections. The leader of the opposition parties, former Prime Minister Chuan, was invited to form a new government again in November 1997. The advocates of political reform took advantage of the situation to
pressure the government and the National Assembly to pass the constitution. Although conservative members of parliament and senators were opposed to the draft of the constitution, the National Assembly finally passed the constitution in October 1997 (Bunbongkarn, 1999b; Connors, 1999).

**Society**

After he came to power in 1938, Prime Minister Pibul started a series of social reforms. Educated in Germany, Pibul borrowed ideas from the Fascists in Europe and Japan to develop an ideology of military nationalism. He believed that authoritarian government based on military strength was the most effective way to develop the country. In 1939, he announced that Siam was to be renamed Thailand. During his terms, the government imposed its will on the Thai people. The state remodeled the values and behaviors of the citizens by imposing orders, rules, and regulations and using all kinds of media. Thais were told what to do and not to do (Samudavanija & Paribatra, 1992). Pibul’s national building program consisted of four main aspects: the reform of the sociocultural aspect, the reform and re-education of the people, the physical reconstruction of the nation, and the strengthening of the armed forces. Nationalism and patriotism were the main ideologies of his program. The goal of sociocultural reform was to create a new, cultured Thai society, which was strengthened by Thai values and patrimony and enhanced through the adoption of certain aspects of western culture, including the new dress code, social etiquette, and the treatment of women. For example, the Royal Decree on the Dress Code of the Thai People issued in September 1941 stated that

In public places and areas within the municipality, the people must not dress in an improper manner which will damage the prestige of the country, e.g. wearing a loose-
ended sarong, wearing only the underpants, wearing garments fit for sleeping, wearing a loincloth, wearing no tops, or (for women) wearing only vest or wraparound. (Suwannathat-Pian, 1995, p. 117–118)

Pibul’s government also adopted a number of repressive measures in order to control the Chinese in Thailand. The number of Chinese schools was limited, and the number of Chinese immigrants allowed was reduced to only 200 annually. In addition to cultural alterations, Pibul portrayed himself as the supreme leader, or Than Phunam, and elevated himself to the same level as that of the monarch, the highest traditional authority (Weber, 1924/1968). His birthday became a national holiday, his pictures were displayed everywhere, the public was asked to stand at attention when his pictures were shown in theaters before the shows started, and the sign of the year and the color of the day that he was born became the official logo stamped on various government properties. As a result, the public was resentful, as those privileges were traditionally and exclusively reserved for the king (Suwannathat-Pian, 1995). The efforts of Pibul and his government to institutionalize strange customs and regulations that conflicted with the Thai culture were also greatly resented by the people (Samudavanija & Paribatra, 1992). Persuasion as a means of obtaining cooperation was soon replaced by coercion. The government prescribed various disciplinary actions for those who violated the codes. Pibul’s campaign, however, was not very successful. The rise of military power and his campaign were hampered by the occupation of Thailand by Japanese forces in December 1941. Shortly after he fell from power in 1944, his social reform programs were abolished and his prescribed way of life for the Thai people was abandoned.

The coup in 1957 led by Sarit, who was pro-American, tolerant of the Chinese, and respectful towards the monarch, put an end to Pibul’s nationalist government and also Pibul’s
political career. The relationship between the Thai ruling elites and Chinese business elites, declining since the end of King Rama V’s reign in 1910, flourished again in Sarit’s era and since then. Girling (1981) stated that the cooperation was a contemporary equivalent of the informal patron–client relationship between Thai kings and Chinese tax farmers and traders. The partnership developed in three forms. First, Chinese corporations included top government and military officials on their boards of directors. Second, most of the major corporations established after the 1951 coup became Sino–Thai joint ventures. Third, state enterprises used the managerial skills of local-born Chinese by bringing them onto their boards and staffs. A research study in 1976 showed that 30% of the elite civil servants came from Chinese trading families and that perhaps at least half had Chinese ancestry.

In contrast with Pibul, Sarit attempted to create a symbiotic relationship between the monarch and the military leaders (Phongpaichit, 1980). The regime leaders exploited the awe and traditional authority (Weber, 1924/1968) that surround the monarch; the king in turn secured his privileges and status. Sarit also retained the attitude of the pre-1932 benevolent rulers. Schools, roads, and hospitals were built; taxation was mostly indirect; and irrigation, the drinking water supply, and the electricity supply were expanded. In 1960, about 82% of the economically active population was in the agricultural sectors. In spite of the change of governance in 1932, peasant life remained unaffected; each individual sought his own salvation through merit-making as was the custom of his ancestors, and the government remained a distant force. The urban working class was small in size. They were rural migrants, viewing their work in towns as only temporary. The urban middle class was also small and composed of two groups: the Thais and the Chinese or those of part-Chinese
descent. The ethnic Thais were found mostly in the civil service, whereas the Chinese
dominated business sectors (Hindley, 1968).

Sarit was development oriented and won the approval of the masses as a capable ruler
although he was a corrupt leader. In 1958, he introduced the first National Economic
Development Plan, aiming to encourage foreign investments and develop the economic
infrastructure (Hindley, 1968). After the introduction of the plan, Thai economy grew at an
impressive rate. The open economy and grant aid and loans from the U.S., which was
seeking ideological allies in Southeast Asia to contain communism, stimulated economic
growth that was extensive enough to prevent the emergence of significant frustrations among
the majority of the population (Bunbongkarn, 1999a). Even though Sarit was a military
dictator, certain groups in Thai society admired his paternal, benevolent dictatorship and his
quick and bold decision-making. Dhiravegin (1999) suggested that the popularity of Sarit
among the masses reflected a Thai political culture in which the masses favored authoritative
leaders who had power to control and end political struggles.

Before the 1970s, the middle class in Thailand was still relatively small and played a
limited role in politics. The rapid economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s created a large,
urban middle class in Bangkok and urban areas of 76 provinces throughout the country
(Samudavanija, 1995). In 1975, the urban population accounted for only 16.7% of the total
population. In 1990, the urban population rose to 28.4% and increased to 35.5% in 1995.
Most people in this social class have received higher education and, in general, are more
concerned with political and socioeconomic issues than are those in the lower strata. They
played a major role in the demonstrations demanding the resignation of the military prime
minister, which finally overthrew the military junta in 1992. The class structures in Thai society since the Ayutthaya period are presented in Table 4.

**Education**

Only a year after the end of the absolute monarchy, the second university in Thailand, Thammasat University, was established in 1933. The university was founded as an alternative to the royally founded Chulalongkorn University. The goal of Thammasat University was to develop knowledge and understanding of the law, politics, and governance among Thai people. The university was first established as an open university and was independent from the civil service. However, it was later absorbed into the system and has become a part of the public university to which a national entrance examination is a requirement for admission (Borvornsiri, 1996). The government also created the Council of Education to be responsible for national education policy-making and developed the National Education Scheme (NES) of 1932. Although there were 23 governments from 1932 to 1950 and most governments issued their own education policies, Watson (1980) stated that in practice, the education policies had remained remarkably consistent. The NES was first developed in 1898, in the reign of King Rama V (Tangjitsomkit, 1996). After the introduction of the National Education Development Plan in 1961, the NES became a long-term education policy. The current scheme is the National Education Scheme of 2002–2016.

When he was the Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963, human resource development and higher education were also Sarit’s main concerns. Even though his motive was to control all higher education institutions, Sarit responded positively to the demands from young faculty for improvement of the administration, instruction, and research of the universities. The National Research Council of Thailand was founded to support research in universities,
Table 4

*Class Structures in Thai Society from the Ayutthaya Period to Present*

This table did not transfer from original source
and new universities were established in the northeastern and southern parts of the country (Bunbongkarn, 2001). Beginning in 1961, in addition to the long-term National Education Scheme, education policies have been outlined in the five-year National Education Development Plan (NEDP). As an integral part of the five-year National Economic and Social Development Plan, the NEDP has linked education with economic and social development. The underlying assumptions about the purpose of education in the NEDP were that education should perpetuate Thai culture and should provide knowledge and skills to meet the demands of the economy (Watson, 1980). The current NEDP is the Ninth National Education Development Plan (2002–2006).

The growth of higher education from the Sarit era in 1950s through the 1970s introduced a large number of students to democratic views as well as communism from abroad. Students became more aware of the social and political problems in the country, such as the lack of political freedom and corruption among the military and political elites. After the government established an open public university, Ramkhamhang University, in 1971, the population of higher education students increased sharply (Bunbongkarn, 2001). Between 1961 and 1972, the number of universities increased from 5 to 17, and student enrollment increased from approximately 15,000 to 100,000 (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). The increase in the college student population was a major factor leading to the uprising against the military regime in 1973. The involvement of the U.S. in Southeast Asia also influenced the development of Thai education during the period of the military regime. After Thailand became a member of the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1949, the country received a great deal of educational support from UNESCO, and the U.S. educators and educational consultants from the U.S. provided training for Thai
teachers and played a major role in educational policy-making. Financial aid from the U.S. also initiated collaborative research between educators in the two countries and provided scholarships for Thai students to receive higher education in the U.S. (Sukontaman, Tirajit, & Thongthew, 1996).

Summary

A major factor leading to the coup was the resentment among leaders of the People’s Party who had been educated in Europe over the royal monopoly of power, as most of the top positions in the government and military were occupied by members of the royal and noble families. The coup was not a popular revolution; it was only a substitution of one oligarchy for another. The masses played no part in the coup, and the People’s Party also did not give the masses the political component of their citizenship. The first general election after the coup was indirect. The unicameral legislature in which half of the members were appointed by the government continued for more than a decade.

Politics after the end of the absolute monarchy became the competition for political control between the civilian and the military aristocrats in the People’s Party. By 1947, the civilian faction completely lost its dominance to the military counterpart, and the military captured control until the student uprising in 1973. The growth of higher education during the 1960s and an economic downturn starting in the early 1970s were major factors leading to the student uprising that overthrew the military regime in 1973. The period of democracy ended three year later after the ruling elites saw the political activities of the masses as a threat to the stability of their political control. They finally used armed forces against the students. At the end of the bloody crackdown in October 1976, a new military group staged a coup. The period of stable semi-democracy continued through 1988. The elections in 1988
was the first time since 1976 that the leader of the party with the majority of votes in the House of Representatives became the prime minister. It also marked the beginning of widespread vote buying and corruption in the government, which opened up the opportunity for a new military group to stage a coup in 1991. The economic growth during the 1980s and 1990s created a large urban middle class who played a major role in the demonstrations overthrowing the military regime in 1992. Middle class, pro-democracy groups also successfully campaigned for the development and passage of a new constitution in 1997.

Despite all the political changes since 1932, the masses in Thailand still do not fully have the political component of their citizenship (see Table 5), and the majority of them may not even be aware of it. They have been excluded from participation in politics, on some occasions through the use of violence against them. However, the development of the social, economic, and governing systems resulted in the increase of the civil and social components of their citizenship. After the 1932 coup, the military and civilian aristocrats and royalists in the People’s Party had full citizenship, whereas the political element of citizenship of the royal families was limited by the constitution. With their financial resources, the business leaders later joined the elite system and constitute the group that currently dominates Thai politics.

**Major Entities in Current Thai Politics**

Even though 15 constitutions have been promulgated during a period of only seven decades, some basic concepts of the constitutional government and the monarchy laid down in the first constitution of 1932 have remained unchanged. Every constitution stipulates that the king is the head of the state, exercising legislative power through the National Assembly, executive power through the Council of Ministers, and judicial power through the courts.
Table 5

*Components of Citizenship of the Thai People*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Civil</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Royal families</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruling elites (royalists, business politicians,</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high-ranking civil servants and military officials)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-class and civil service officials</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-class and peasants</td>
<td>..</td>
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<td>..</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Thai Parliament, 2002). The Thai National Assembly is a bicameral system composed of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The executive branch of the government consists of a number of ministers who are responsible for administration in various ministries of the government, with the Prime Minister as the head of the government (ONEC, 2000). In addition to the king, the National Assembly, and the executive branch of the government, various institutions and organizations, such as the military, political parties, and interest groups, have also played important roles in Thai politics. The following is a brief discussion of those political institutions and their roles.
The governance of Thailand had been based on an authoritarian tradition vested in the institution of the absolute monarchy for more than six centuries. The masses unquestioningly accepted the absolute monarchy as a vital part of the accepted social order. Although palace intrigues and revolts sometimes occurred, not once in Thai history did popular opposition erupt against the kings (Darling & Darling, 1971). After the abdication of King Rama VII in 1935, the role of the monarch in Thai politics declined significantly. The mysterious death of King Ananta in 1946, only about a year after his return to Thailand, was used by a military group as the reason to stage a coup and eliminate its opponents. After the coup, the military dictatorial prime minister, Field Marshal Pibul, did not try to reinstate the monarch; instead he took the advantage of the time that Thailand had no resident king to raise himself up to the level of the traditional authority (Weber, 1924/1968). It was only after the permanent return to Thailand of King Bhumibol, who ascended the throne after his brother, in 1951 that the king began to recapture his major role in Thai politics (Keyes, 1987). Beginning in the mid 1950s, Sarit, a military coup leader and Prime Minister who strongly believed in the paternal authoritarian tradition, tried to legitimize his position and authority by reinstating the relationship between the monarch and the military. As the Prime Minister, Sarit changed the national day from the 1932 anniversary to the king’s birthday. He reintroduced various royal ceremonies that had been suspended since 1932. He also transferred one military regiment to royal duties and asked the king to become honorary commander of the army academy and five other regiments. With support from the military, the king and queen started to travel to the countryside and established royal projects to help farmers and less fortunate people in rural areas (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). Later, in all the subsequent coups and power shifts
among the political elites, the new rulers always sought to obtain the king’s sanction in order to legitimize their authority in the eyes of the masses. By 1985, after three decades of slow but firm re-establishment of his traditional and charismatic authority (Weber, 1924/1968), King Bhumibol became the most powerful and respected symbol of the nation and Thai politics. Since the student uprising in 1973, the king has become the final arbitrator of political crises. In 1984 and 1986, he supported Prime Minister Prem against the coup attempts of the military, and in October 1973 and May 1992, he intervened to prevent the escalation of political bloodshed into civil wars (Samudavanija, 1995).

Under the 1997 Constitution of Thailand, the king serves as the head of the state. Bills passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate become laws upon the approval of the king. Unless later re-approved by the National Assembly, bills do not become effective as laws without his approval. If the king disapproves a bill, it must be returned to the assembly. After consideration of his objections, if the assembly nonetheless approves the bill by the votes of at least two thirds of the number of the existing members of both the House and the Senate, the bill is returned to the king for reconsideration. If the king still declines to approve it, the Prime Minister is authorized to promulgate the bill as law by publishing it in the Government Gazette, the official journal of the government, as if the king had signed it.

*The Executive Body*

The Prime Minister is the head of the executive branch of the government, which consists of the ministers, deputy ministers, and permanent officials of all ministries. Under the Constitution of 1997, the Prime Minister must be selected from members of the House of Representatives and must be approved by the votes of more than one-half of the total number of the existing members of the House. After the approval of the House of Representatives,
the president of the House submits the recommendation to the king, who then appoints the Prime Minister. Generally, the person approved by the House is the leader of the political party with the majority of votes in the House. The Prime Minister is responsible for the administration of all government agencies. He or she selects persons, usually members of the House, to name as ministers and deputy ministers. When a coalition government is formed, each party traditionally seeks representatives from its membership to be appointed as ministers and deputy ministers depending on the quota received. Upon recommendation of the Prime Minister, the king appoints up to 35 ministers, deputy ministers, and deputy prime ministers (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 1999).

The Prime Minister and all appointed deputy prime ministers, ministers, and deputy ministers will surrender their positions as members of the House of Representatives or of the Senate. They collectively make up a body called the Council of Ministers, or the Cabinet. The Cabinet sets policies and goals and is in charge of the day-to-day operations of the government. It has the authority to submit urgent legislation to the king for immediate implementation by royal decree, which must be followed by the consideration by the Parliament within one year. Once such a proposal has been adopted by royal decree, it is a law unless overturned by action of the Parliament. The Cabinet also approves and submits bills proposed by the Prime Minister or by individual ministers to the Parliament and prepares the budget for consideration by the Parliament (Tunsiri, 2001). In October 2002, the government restructured its ministries and the number of ministries, including the Office of the Prime Minister, increased from 15 to 20. Those ministries consist of the Ministries of (a) Defense, (b) Finance, (c) Foreign Affairs, (d) Tourism and Sports, (e) Social Development and Human Services, (f) Agriculture and Cooperatives, (g) Transport, (h) Natural Resources
The Parliament

The Thai parliament consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The parliament, or the National Assembly, is empowered to enact laws, approve emergency decrees, and amend or repeal existing laws. It can also keep the government in check by initiating a vote of no confidence against ministers and the Prime Minister. It is authorized to approve certain critical elements of legislation, such as the budget and appropriations. The House of Representatives, or the lower house of parliament, is composed of 500 members of parliament elected for a four-year term. Its 400 members are directly elected from single-member constituencies and the other 100 members are elected from party lists. The number of elected party-list members of each party is determined by the percentage of votes the party receives in the elections. Only political parties receiving at least five percent of the total number of votes throughout the country will have the persons on their party lists elected in accordance with the proportion of votes the party received. An individual who wants to run for the House of Representatives must have at least a bachelor’s degree or equivalent. Each voter casts one vote for an individual candidate in his/her constituency for membership in the House of Representatives and also one vote for the party list of the political party that the voter favors. The Senate, or the upper house of parliament, consists of 200 members elected for a six-year term by popular vote on a constituency basis. A candidate must be at least 40 years of age and must have received at least a bachelor’s degree. A candidate must be a member of neither the House of Representatives, a political party, nor a local assembly, nor
The Constitution of 1997 states that a bill may be introduced by the Cabinet, Members of the House of Representatives, or persons having the right to vote (see Figure 3). If it is proposed by members of parliament, a minimum of twenty members must support the bill for it to be considered by the House of Representatives. A group of not less than 50,000 of the persons having the right to vote can introduce a bill concerning the rights and liberties of the Thai people and the principles of fundamental state policies. If a bill is related to financial matters, it can be proposed only after the approval of the Prime Minister. A bill will be considered on three separate occasions, first by the House of Representatives and then by the Senate. In the first reading, the House considers and resolves whether or not to accept the principle of the bill. If the bill is accepted, the House will consider it in the second reading. Otherwise, the bill is dropped. In the second reading, the bill is considered by one of the House’s standing committees or by a select committee appointed by the House. If members of the House or the committee desire to amend the bill, they must submit the amendments to the chairman of the committee. After the committee has completed its deliberation, the bill is sent back to the House. The House then considers the bill in the order of its articles, starting with the title of the law, then moving to its intent and various clauses. Members of parliament...
can debate only amendments made by the committee or reservations or opinions about the bill expressed by members of the committee or members of parliament. Then, the House will accept the bill for its third reading, during which it will vote on the bill without debate. If the bill is approved, the Speaker of the House will present the bill to the Senate for its consideration. If the bill is defeated, it will be dropped. However, if the Cabinet considers the bill to be of importance to the administration and the number of opposing votes is less than one half of the total number of the House, the Cabinet may call for reconsideration of the bill by the National Assembly. If the National Assembly accepts the bill, a committee consisting of equal numbers of representatives from both the House and the Senate will be established to reconsider the bill. The joint committee will study the bill and present its findings to the National Assembly. If the National Assembly votes to pass the bill, the Prime Minister will present the bill to the king for his consideration. Otherwise, the bill is dropped.

After the bill is sent to the Senate, the Senate must complete its consideration within 60 days. The consideration processes of the Senate are similar to those of the House of Representatives. If the Senate approves the bill, the Prime Minister will present the bill to the king within 20 days for his approval. If the Senate does not agree on the bill as approved by the House, it may withhold or amend and return the bill to the House. If the Senate amends the bill and the House agrees with the amendment, the Prime Minister will present the bill to the king for his consideration. If the House does not agree with the amendment, the two bodies appoint a joint committee to try to resolve the differences. If the Senate withholds the bill or if either the House or the Senate disapproves the bill considered by the joint committee, the House may reconsider either the original bill or the one proposed by the joint committee only after the lapse of 180 days from the date the bill is returned to the House. If
the House resolves to reaffirm the original bill or the bill proposed by the joint committee by
the vote of more than one half of the existing members of the House, the bill is then
submitted by the Prime Minister to the king for his approval.

Only the Cabinet and members of the House of Representatives, with the endorsement of the Prime Minister, may introduce a money bill. A money bill is a bill dealing with taxes, duties, state funds, state loans, or currency. After a money bill is sent from the House of Representatives to the Senate, the Senate must finish its consideration within 30 days. If a bill is an annual appropriations bill, a supplementary appropriations bill, or a transfer of appropriations bill, the House of Representatives must complete its consideration within 105 days, and the Senate must finish its consideration without any amendment within 20 days (Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540, 1997).

*The Aristocracy*

The military is an institution that, along with the monarch, has played a major role in Thai politics since the beginning of the state. Because control over the military was crucial to the endurance of the throne, during the absolute monarchy, princes and the kings’ brothers were often appointed to top positions in the military. In 1910, 9 of the 16 most senior positions in the army were occupied by members of royal families (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). Thai politics after 1932, as described by Wilson (1962), “has become a matter of competition between bureaucratic cliques for the benefits of government. In this competition the army—the best organized, most concentrated, and most powerful of the branches of the bureaucracy—has come out on top” (p. 277). Neher (1975) suggested that Thailand is a nation with proper preconditions for military rule because she has been independent of any
A bill introduced by the Cabinet, members of the House of Representatives, or a group of not less than 50,000 of the persons having the right to vote.

**Money Bill**

- Yes → Next page
- No → House’s Approval

**House’s Approval**

- No, with the votes not less than one-half of the total number of the members of the House or no request for reconsideration from the Cabinet → No, with the votes less than one-half of the total number of the members of the House and with a request for reconsideration from the Cabinet
  - No → The National Assembly (the House and the Senate)
  - Yes → The Senate

**The Senate**

- Within 60 days → No, with amendment
- Yes → Senate’s Approval

**Senate’s Approval**

- No → The bill lapses
- Yes → Senate’s Approval (No, with amendment)

**The Prime Minister**

- Within 20 days → The King
- Within 90 days → No, with amendment

**The King**

- Within 90 days → No
- Yes → King’s Approval

**King’s Approval**

- Yes → The bill is promulgated as an act
- No → The National Assembly

**The National Assembly**

- Yes → The House
- No → House’s Approval

**House’s Approval**

- No, with amendment → The House and the Senate Joint Committee
- Yes → Next page
The bill lapses

Yes, with no less than two-thirds of the number of the existing members of both chambers

The Prime Minister

The King

The bill is promulgated as an act

The House

The Senate

Both chambers’ approval

The bill is tabled for at least 180 days

The bill lapses

Money Bill

Appropriations Bill

The House must complete its consideration within 105 days, and the Senate must finish its consideration (no amendment is allowed) within 20 days. If the Senate disapproves the bill, the bill will be returned to the House and the House can immediately reconsider the bill.

The Senate must complete its consideration (disapproves, approves, or amend the bill) within 30 days. If the Senate disapproves the bill, the bill will be returned to the House, and the House can immediately reconsider the bill or sets up a joint committee to consider the bill.

Figure 3. Legislative processes.
foreign influence that has opposed coups d'état. Furthermore, the national emphasis on hierarchy, deference, and status is congruent with the military’s organization, which is based on superior–subordinate relationships. After the end of the absolute monarchy, the military was still an aristocratic institution. Successful military officers sent their sons to the Chulachomklao Military Academy. Within two generations, distinctive military families emerged. For instance, General Phin, who was the leader of the 1947 coup, put his son, former Prime Minister Chartchai, in the army and married three daughters to rising officers (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995).

The involvement of the military in politics resulted in the disruption and instability of Thai democracy. From 1932 to 1992, Thailand had 16 military coups (nine of which were successful), 19 general elections, 50 cabinets, and 20 Prime Ministers. Of those 20 Prime Ministers, eight were military officers and were in the office for a total of 47 years, whereas 12 civilian Prime Ministers were in the office for a total of only 15 years (Samudavanija, 1995). With their control of the armed forces, high-ranking military officers often took advantage of unstable political situations to stage coups. They then used political power for their own financial gain by extending their influence to the business sector. Today, it is still a tradition for senior military officers to occupy key positions in state industries. For example, the head of the air force is on the board of the national airline and the airport authority, the head of the navy is on the board of the port authority, and the head of the army is on the board of the electricity authority and the railways (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). The military also owns 221 radio stations, two television stations, and one commercial bank. It has used its monopoly over the media to advance political agendas (Pathmanand, 2001). The relationship between the military and the business sector, however, started to decline after the
fall of the military regime in 1973. Many of the new growth industries ignored the military hierarchy and were more likely to fill their boards with senior bankers or retired technocrats (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995).

Today, the military has been politically divided into various factions spread across the army, navy, and air force. The conflicts arose from high-ranking officers who graduated from the royal military academy in different years and competed for control and power (Pathmanand, 2001). The recent unsuccessful attempt of the military to restore an authoritarian regime in 1991, which ended up with the bloody May 1992 incident, also diminished the military’s prestige and political control and opened up opportunities for civilian governments to restructure the military and limit its actions. In the past, giving portfolios in the government, especially in the Ministry of Defense, to military men was crucial to the survival of a civilian government (Neher, 1975). However, the tradition was broken by Prime Minister Chuan, who, as a civilian prime minister, also took the defense portfolio after his party won the 1992 elections.

In addition to top-position military officers, high-ranking civil servants have played an important role in Thai politics and policy-making since the 1932 coup. They have contributed their expertise, something that was not adequately provided by the military officers to the government (Milne, 1982). During the 1950s, prominent western-educated civil servants associated with the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Thailand, and other agencies responsible for financial management were recognized as the most influential group in economic and financial policy-making. The achievements of these elite civil servants in their policy-making and administrative roles were a vehicle for advancement to positions in the Cabinet (Stifel, 1976). From the 237 ministers in the Cabinets between 1932 and 1958, a
total of 184 were classified as career officials, of whom 100 were civil servants and 84 were military officers (Somvichian, 1978).

Like the military, the civil service after 1932 was still an aristocratic institution. A study by Dhiravegin (1978) revealed that the civil service continued to be an elite system. Approximately 74% of the special-grade officers, the top seventh through eleventh grades, were from official and business families that accounted for only 10% of the national population. A study of about 2,200 elite civil servants who held the most prestigious and powerful positions in Thailand indicated that 93% of them were college graduates and one third had graduate degrees that were almost entirely from western universities. Of the younger officers who were under 56, two thirds had graduate degrees from abroad (Stifel, 1976). Civil service careers continued to be regarded as a desirable path to high social status and prestige. Consequently, despite the relatively low government salaries (in comparison to well-paid jobs in the business and industrial sectors), civil service careers continued to attract the younger generation of the elite families.

**Political Parties**

In general, political parties in Thailand are described as weak in view of their limited organizational structures, disunity, and lack of clear ideologies (Samudavanija, 1995; King, 1999). They are relatively new and underdeveloped. Although the first political party was founded in 1946, it was not formally registered until the first Political Party Act was promulgated in 1955. From 1946 to 1981, 143 political parties were established, but as of November 2000 only 60 parties remained (Election Commission of Thailand [ECT], 2002a). Political parties represent shifting coalitions of interest groups, bound together by some mutual advantages but prone to defections and shifting alliances (ADB, 1999). They are
primarily groupings of individuals or networks of patrons and clients who are forced to be together by the requirements of political acts. Thus, there are a number of factions and cliques that cause disunity in each party. Parties also suffer from lack of discipline among their members who pursue factional and individual interests. Party members who prepare to leave their parties may challenge the party leadership without fearing expulsion (Tongdhamachart, 1982). Before each election, a large number of candidates engaged in party switching. Because voters did not have a negative attitude towards candidates who switched parties, candidates who could run strong campaigns were in high demand. If they left their parties, other parties would willingly accept them. Those candidates normally looked for the parties that could contribute money to their campaigns and had the potential to form the government after the elections (King, 1999; King & LoGerfo, 1996). Thai political parties also do not fit easily within the traditional left–right ideological spectrum (ADB, 1999). There are no clear ideological camps like those in Europe or America. Party members can therefore switch parties without feeling that they have abandoned or deviated from their ideology (Tongdhamachart, 1982). Political parties have basically similar economic and social policies. Policies have been copied from various National Social and Economic Development Plans, which are state-led models of centralized social and economic development (Samudavanija, 1995).

Party development in Thailand was relatively slow because the process was often interrupted following military coups, and the ruling elites did not see the significance of the party system (Tongdhamachart, 1982). The situation, however, is changing. More intellectuals and academics are being recruited into new think tanks associated with various parties to sharpen their policy focus (ADB, 1999). The 1997 Constitution also aimed to
facilitate the development of party system and strengthen the stability of Thai politics by preventing vote buying and eliminating small political parties from competing in elections. In the past, members of the House of Representatives in a single term came from as many as 22 parties, resulting in unstable coalition governments. Under the 1997 Constitution, to be eligible to run for the House, candidates must belong to a party for a consecutive period of not less than 90 days up to the date of application for candidacy in an election. In addition, a party must receive a threshold of five percent of the popular vote to be recognized. In the January 2001 elections, of the total of 43 parties competing in the elections, only nine parties succeeded in winning seats in the House of Representatives (ECT, 2002b). The ruling coalition consists of four parties: the National Development Party, the New Aspiration Party, the Thai Nation Party, and the coalition leader, the Thai Rak Thai Party. In 2002, the New Aspiration Party merged with the Thai Rak Thai. The leader of the opposition is the Democrat Party.

Because there was no tradition among the general public of offering voluntary service or contributing money to political parties, Thai political parties tended to look for rich and influential patrons for their support and to become dependant on them. In the same way, metropolitan and provincial businessmen saw elections as the path to the National Assembly in order to crown their leadership, to build business contacts, and to tap government funds for personal gain (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). The need for campaign funds, increasing significantly because of vote buying, resulted in an increase in both business communities’ involvement in politics and corruption in the Cabinets. In the 1996 elections, approximately $800 million had been spent legally on the elections and another $2,400 million had been spent on vote buying (Bunbongkarn, 1999b). At the national level, some prominent
businessmen have become deputy leaders or executive members of political parties. At the provincial level, local businessmen are actively involved in politics as candidates or as financial supporters (Samudavanija, 1995).

The increase of business communities’ involvement in Thai politics in the 1990s created an era of money politics (Pathmanand, 2001). Most of the political parties were influenced by businessmen; none of them represented the masses (Dhiravegin, 1999). Various groups of businessmen developed political links and used them to protect and expand their business interests. Politics was seen as an inside track toward licenses, government projects, and the inside information necessary to achieve high profits through speculation on lands, shares, and other assets. The results of the January 2001 elections reflected the relationship between politics and capital. In 1998, the business-based Thai Rak Thai Party (TRT) was founded by Thaksin, the owner of the largest telecommunications company in Thailand. Thaksin has a deep understanding of the power of the state to generate money for those daring enough to bid for it. His spectacular wealth came from the monopoly on telecommunications licenses issued by political favor (Pathmanand, 2001). The other party’s founders included owners of international businesses and bankers. The party quickly attracted current and former members of parliament from other parties, including those who were known as local godfathers and were involved in vote buying and corruption. Before the elections, Thaksin was found to have invaded the statutory declaration of his assets by transferring about $56 million of shares to nominees including his driver, maids, and security guard. Despite the scandal, the TRT party won the majority of seats in the parliament and Thaksin became the Prime Minister (Pathmanand, 2001). The constitutional court subsequently found Thaksin not guilty of deliberately concealing assets when he was a
minister in the Cabinet. Although Thaksin claimed that the party had been established to change Thai politics, some observers asserted that its ideas were not new and there might be other motives behind the forming of his party (Bunbongkarn, 1999b).

**Interest Groups**

Similarly to political parties, interest groups in Thailand are not well developed, especially nonelite groups. Bunbongkarn (2001) stated that in the past, professional interest groups in Thailand, such as teachers, labor, and commercial associations, often originated from government initiatives. These organizations often lacked autonomy and served to extend the reach of the bureaucracy. Interest groups that played important roles in the history of Thai politics were student, business, farmer, and labor groups. Although labor groups existed in Thailand before the end of the absolute monarchy, it was not until 1947 that labor organizations could freely organize their political activities. However, soon after the rise of the military regimes in the late 1950s, labor groups were suppressed by those regimes. In the 1957 elections, a few labor representatives ran under the Labor Party and the Socialist Party, but they were all defeated. A year later, after a military coup, the labor law was abrogated, labor unions were outlawed, and a number of labor leaders and activists were either arrested or murdered. In 1972, the military junta passed a labor law that allowed labor organizations to operate, but within strict limits. Following the fall of the military regime in 1973, the number of labor strikes increased significantly. However, political activities were suppressed again after the October 1976 incident in which Thammasat University was besieged and hundreds of students were massacred. It was not until 1981 that the government allowed labor organizations to function again (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995).
The farmers’ movement started in the early 1970s. After the end of the military regime in 1973, the government sponsored students to go to the countryside to educate villagers about democracy and popular participation. Students also helped farmers found political organizations as instruments for presenting their voices. In the same way as the labor groups, farmer organizations were suppressed after the October 1976 incident (Keyes, 1987; Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). Today, the Assembly of the Poor and the Assembly of North Eastern Small Farmers are the most well-organized and effective farmer-based interest groups. The Assembly of the Poor is composed of groups of rural villagers who have been affected by government infrastructure projects, such as the building of dams and industrial parks. Farmer groups normally demand allocation of lands for settlement and cultivation, fair compensation for lands appropriated by the government, and guaranteed prices for agricultural products (Bunbongkarn, 1999a, 2001).

The story of business interest groups is different from that of nonelite groups. Business groups have existed since before the 1932 coup and have had good relationships with the governments since the beginning of the constitutional monarchy. After the 1932 coup, some business leaders were appointed to the National Assembly, and the Thai Chamber of Commerce was founded in the same year. Because of their common interests with the ruling elites and their resources, business interest groups have maintained their political roles even during the periods of military regimes (Keyes, 1987; Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, three major business associations, the Thai Banker Association, the Federation of Thai Industries, and the Thai Chamber of Commerce, played an active role in determining the national economic policies through the Joint Public-Private Consultative Committee (Pathmanand, 2001).
Because of the rapid growth in the enrollment in higher education during the 1960s, a large number of students were exposed to new ideas offered by young faculty who had been educated abroad. In 1965, the National Student Center of Thailand was established. Students began to discuss social and political issues and criticize government policies. The student demonstrations in 1973 brought an end to almost two decades of military dictatorship. Student groups also played an important role in helping labor and farmers find their organizations in the mid 1970s (Keyes, 1987; Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). However, the roles of student organizations in Thai politics started to decline after the October 1976 incident. During demonstrations demanding the removal of amendments to the constitution and the resignation of the military Prime Minister in 1992, the majority of demonstrators were middle-class, over thirty, and married, with relatively high education and good incomes (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1995). Today, college students—especially those in private universities and elite public universities—are more self-centered and less involved in politics. Mulder (1996) observed that “at present, most students seem to prepare themselves for a career in society rather than for changing it, and if they are politically active, they tend to protest corruption or the abuse of ‘democracy’; if they are active at the grass roots’ level, they are typically engaged in NGO activities” (p. 27–28). The higher education invested by the government also serves only to develop individual professional skills and does not prepare and encourage students to become more involved in participatory democracy.

Since the 1980s, the numbers and types of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in Thailand have increased substantially, together with the expansion of the urban middle class. In 1970, there were only 3,300 registered NGOs, but in 1997 the number increased to 10,878. In addition, today there are a large number of
unregistered NGOs that want to have flexibility and avoid the reporting and fund requirements of the registration process. Various NGOs are actively campaigning on behalf of the underprivileged to get the government’s attention on environmental problems, social injustice, and the inequity of land distribution. They often criticize the government for paying little attention to the problems of the poor in rural areas (Bunbongkarn, 1999a). Political organizations, such as the Poll Watch, the Campaign for Popular Democracy, and the Confederation for Democracy, also campaign for democratization and political reforms (King & LoGerfo, 1996). Bunbongkarn (2001) concluded that nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations in Thailand “aim mainly at assisting and strengthening local communities, the rural poor, the underprivileged, women, and children. Their objective is to empower these groups to fight for social justice, human rights, improve environmental conditions, and a better life” (p. 81).

Summary

Since the beginning of the Ayutthaya, Thai politics has been an elite system in which the masses have believed that they have no right to be involved and the ruling elites have always wanted to maintain the stability of their control. From the Ayutthaya period to the end of the absolute monarchy, the masses were excluded from politics by the legal system, social structure, and religious beliefs. After the coup in 1932, the legal barrier was removed, although not completely. The social structure and religious beliefs, however, were untouched. The concept of participatory democracy has never been truly promoted by the ruling elites. Even though the class structure has changed, Thai society today is still a predominantly hierarchical society, as it was centuries ago. The results of socioeconomic changes have affected, to a certain extent, the belief in and practice of Buddhism. The
fundamental belief in Buddhist teachings, however, remains unchanged. The structures and processes of the Thai social system constitute the normative and cultural frameworks that constrain the choices of political participation of the masses. The cultural system that informs the masses of who they are and what ways of action are sensible for them in a given situation and the normative framework that tells the masses what is expected of them (Scott, 1995) have resulted in the exclusion of the masses from Thai politics.
CHAPTER 4: A CASE OF THE 1999 NATIONAL EDUCATION ACT

Section 81 of the 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand stipulates that “The State shall… provide law relating to national education… develop the teaching provision.” In compliance with the requirement in the constitution, the National Education Act (NEA) was promulgated in August 1999 to serve as the fundamental law for the reform of Thai education. Concerning educational rights, Section 10 of the NEA of 1999 states, “In the provision of education, all individuals shall have equal rights and opportunities to receive basic education provided by the State for the duration of at least 12 years. Such education… shall be of quality and free of charge.” In addition, the six years of compulsory education was extended, as it is specified in Section 17: “Compulsory education shall be for nine years, requiring children aged seven to enroll in basic education institutions until the age of 16 with the exception of those who have already completed grade nine.” The NEA has thus provided the masses with a better social component of citizenship concerning the right to receive education (Marshall, 1964). What follows is a brief discussion of the educational system in Thailand and detailed examination of the conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, which occurred during the implementation of the NEA.

Overview of Thai Education

Formal education in Thailand consists of two elements: a 12-year basic education and higher education (see Figure 4). Basic education includes preprimary education, a six-year primary education, and a three-year lower and three-year upper secondary education. Pre-primary education is for children from three to six years old. At the age of seven, all children must enroll in the nine-year compulsory education. After students have completed the lower secondary education, they can select between an academic track and a vocational track.
Transition between the two tracks is feasible, as the credits accumulated can be transferred. However, in practice, it is difficult for vocational students to gain admission to the highly competitive public university system. Students who have completed the upper secondary education and want to continue their studies in public universities have to take a national university entrance examination for admission to those universities. Otherwise, they can pursue their education in private universities or in one of two open, public universities.

Administration of Education

The decentralization of educational administration is an aim of the NEA. According to the NEA of 1999, three major educational agencies, the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA), and the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC) will be merged into the Ministry of Education, Religion, and Culture by August 20, 2002. Public educational administration will be decentralized to local administration organizations and educational institutions. However, until October 2002, the decentralized administrative structure was still unresolved.

In the current, centralized system, educational administration is the responsibility of four ministries: the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Interior (MOI), the MOE, and the MUA. Three agencies under the Office of the Prime Minister, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, the Budget Bureau, and the ONEC, are responsible for national education policy-making. The MOE and MOI are in charge of the administration of basic education, whereas the MUA is responsible for the administration of higher education. The three ministries, the MOE, the MUA, and the MOI, implement national education policies and set their operational policies in accordance with the national policies. Other ministries, such as Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Public Health, also
Figure 4. Organization of the formal education in Thailand.

provide and supervise education for their specific purposes. For example, the Ministry of Defense administers the Armed Forces Academies, and the Ministry of Public Health supervises various colleges of nursing (ONEC, 2000).

The administration of basic education has been highly centralized under the MOE since it was established in 1887. Raksasatara (1969) described:

The Ministry of Education controls all schools from kindergarten up to private schools and colleges. It supervises all school activities, sets tuition rates, approves
books, and provides grant-in-aids to all private schools. It investigates any deviation from ministerial orders and is empowered to close any school which fails to comply with its instructions. (p. 56)

Because education was seen by the authorities as a means to ensure the stability of the government and to maintain order in the society (Sukontaman et al., 1996), in addition to the MOE, the administration of public primary education was given to the MOI. However, after the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, the administration of primary education was handed back to the MOE. In 1943, all municipal primary schools under the supervision of the MOI were transferred to the Department of General Education, an agency of the MOE. Five years later, all local schoolteachers were promoted to become civil servants under the MOE.

During the period of military regimes, from 1951 to 1973, the administration of primary education was transferred from the MOE back to the MOI. In 1954, local schools were handed over to municipalities, and from 1961 to 1963 all public primary schools within municipal areas were transferred to local administrative organizations under the MOI. Six years later, in 1969, all public primary schools outside municipal areas were also given to local administrative organizations. This change, however, was not decentralization of educational administration to the locals; it was only a competition between the MOE and MOI for control of educational resources and teachers (Sukontaman et al., 1996). Another major change came in 1980, during the period of semidemocratic governments. This time, all schools under the local administrative organizations, except for municipal schools, were handed back to the Office of the National Primary Education Commission under the MOE, and there has been no change since then.
For the administration of basic education at the regional and provincial levels, the 76 provinces in the country are divided into 12 educational regions. Each region has a Bureau of Regional Education Religion and Cultural Development under the MOE to oversee educational, religious, and cultural matters. In each province, the authority of the MOE is delegated to a Provincial Education Superintendent Office and a number of District Education Offices. At the local level, municipalities, including Bangkok, are responsible for the provision of education in their own jurisdiction with financial support from and under the supervision of the MOI. The Teacher Civil Service Commission, an agency of the MOE, is in charge of the issuance and amendment of laws, regulations, criteria, and procedures relating to all civil service teachers under the MOE. Municipal schoolteachers and administrators are under the supervision of the Municipal Civil Service Commission, an office under the MOI (ONEC, 2000; Tankjitsomkit, 1996).

Provision of Formal Education

Various agencies of the MOE are responsible for the provision of education, from preprimary education to degree levels (see Table 6). The Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC) supervises the majority of public primary schools. The Department of General Education is responsible for the administration of secondary education. A larger number of public schools under the ONPEC also offer lower secondary classes (Dechakup, Utairat, Sirisombunvej, & Sakolruk, 1996). The Department of Vocational Education Administration is in charge of public vocational education. The administration of private education from preprimary education to the diploma level is the responsibility of the Office of the Private Education Commission. In addition, under the MOI (see Table 6), primary and lower secondary education in municipal areas is provided by
municipal schools under the supervision of the Department of Local Administration and Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. The primary education in rural areas is also provided by border-patrol police schools (Sukontaman et al., 1996).

After students have completed their secondary education, they can pursue higher education, which consists of the diploma and degree levels. The diploma level requires three years of study and is normally offered in vocational and teacher education programs under the Department of Physical Education, Office of Rajabhat Institutes Council, and Rajamangala Institutes of Technology in the MOE. Those institutions also offer bachelor’s and master’s degree programs. The MUA is responsible for educational administration at the degree level (see Table 6). Depending on the program of study, a bachelor’s degree requires from four to six years of study for those finishing upper secondary education or equivalent courses. A master’s degree requires at least 36 credit hours and no more than five years of study, and a doctoral degree requires at least 48 credit hours of study following a master’s degree (Borvornsiri, 1996). The numbers of schools, higher education institutions, students, and teaching staff of the 2001 academic year under the administration of the MOE, MUA, and MOI are presented in Table 7.

The Bill Establishing the Council of Teachers and Educational Personnel

Because the NEA was developed to serve as the major framework for education reform, the provisions in the act are mostly the principles of education and education-related subjects, such as educational administration, educational standards, and technologies for education. The act stipulates what must be achieved and when. It, however, does not specify
### Table 6

**Organization and Administration of Thai Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry Department</th>
<th>Ministry of Education (MOE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre Primary</td>
<td>Office of the National Primary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Department of General Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. Secondary</td>
<td>Department of Vocational Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses offered</td>
<td>Department of Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>Office of Rajabhat Institutes Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
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</table>

(Table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Ministry of University Affairs (MUA)</th>
<th>Private Higher Education Commission</th>
<th>Border Patrol Police</th>
<th>Department of Local Administration</th>
<th>Bangkok Metropolitan Administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre Primary</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
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<tr>
<td>L. Secondary</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td>U. Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offered</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>Ministry of Education (MUE)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of the National Primary Education Commission</td>
<td>Department of General Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Vocational Education</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Rajabhat Institutes Council</td>
<td>Rajamangala Institute of Technology Council</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Private Education Commission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Schools/Institution | 30,476 | 2,668 | 413 | 27 | 41 | 33 | 3,269 |
| Teaching staff | 344,581 | 125,797 | 17,679 | 1,673 | 7,522 | 4,718 | 222,354 |
| Students | 6,633,809 | 2,590,392 | 592,406 | 24,902 | 275,737 | 92,179 | 2,049,150 |

(table continues)
Table 7 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Ministry of University Affairs (MUA)</th>
<th>Ministry of Interior (MOI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of University Affairs</td>
<td>Private Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities/Schools</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>20,799</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>955,759</td>
<td>233,810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Dashes indicate that the data could not be obtained.

*aOf which 28 are private colleges
in detail how to achieve those goals. For instance, in the case of the establishment of the
council of teachers and educational personnel, Section 53 of the NEA states that

There shall be an Organization for Teachers, Educational Institution Administrators,
and Educational Administrators. The Organization shall enjoy the status of an
independent body administered by a professional council under supervision of the
Ministry. The Organization shall have the powers and duties for setting professional
standards; issuing and withdrawal of licenses; overseeing maintenance of professional
standards and ethics; and development of the profession of teachers, educational
institution administrators, and educational administrators.

Teachers, administrators of educational institutions, educational
administrators and other educational personnel of both the state and private sectors
shall have professional licenses as provided by the law.

The NEA does not indicate how the organization should be established, how the
administrative committee should be created, or what the criteria for issuing and revoking
teaching licenses should be. Because of the nature of the act and support from the
government led by the Democrat Party during the time that the act was passed, conflict
during the development and passage of the NEA was minimal. The implementation of the
act, however, initiated extensive resistance from various interest groups and agencies in the
MOE. Because a major aim of the NEA was to decentralize the educational administration
from the MOE, it caused intense resistance, initiated by some senior civil servants in the
MOE, to the implementation of the NEA as a whole. Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva, a former Deputy
Prime Minister overseeing education during the passage of the NEA, described the act:
Because the act is about the principles, so it’s not easy for people to argue against the principles. For example, we may say in principle that there should be decentralization, there should be evaluations, or there should be professional licenses. But in the stage of drafting the bills, they are more tangibles and the involved parties could see clearly how the bills would affect them. So, it is not unusual that the resistance was high after the National Education Act was passed.

To implement the NEA, a total of 32 legislations and regulations required either preparation or amendment (ONEC, n.d.). The NEA also provided for the establishment of the Office of Education Reform (OER) as an ad hoc public organization to facilitate the implementation of the act. The OER is authorized to prepare bills regarding the structure of educational administration, the professional development of teachers and other educational personnel, and the mobilization of education resources and investments in accordance with the NEA and propose those bills to the government. After about 15 months of work, on April 25, 2001, the OER submitted the report for education reform and 23 education reform bills to the government (OER, 2002). The bill establishing the council of teachers and education personnel, which is the focus of this study, was one of those 23 education reform bills.

The Authorities

The Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC)

The Office of the National Education Commission had played a major role during the development and passage of the NEA. It was first founded as the National University Council in 1956. The council consisted of 25 members (see Table 8): 6 of them were the Prime Minister and other ministers in the Cabinet, 5 were rectors of elite public universities, and 12 were appointed by the Cabinet on the basis of their knowledge, experience, and
expertise. The remainder of the council members were the Educational Permanent Under-Secretary and the Secretary-General of the council. The Council was responsible for setting education appropriations for public universities, approving educational programs and curriculum of higher education institutions, and improving the standards of higher education institutions (National University Council Act of 1956). In 1959, the Council became the National Education Council. It consisted of the Prime Minister, a Deputy Prime Minister, the Director of the Budget Bureau, all public university rectors, the Secretary-General of the Office of the National Education Council, and other members appointed by the Cabinet. The responsibilities were extended to include developing national education plans for all levels of education and serving as an advisory body to the Cabinet on educational matters (National Education Council Act of 1959). In 1969, the Council was restructured. Four high-ranking civil servants—the Educational Permanent Under-Secretary, the Directors-General of the Department of Teacher Education and the Department of Local Administration, and the Secretary-General of the Office of the National Economic Development Board—were introduced into the Council (National Education Council Act of 1969).

The Office of the National Education Council was developed into the Office of the National Education Commission in 1978. The seventeen members of the commission consisted of a Minister or a Deputy Prime Minister; the Permanent Under-Secretaries of the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of University Affairs; the Director-General of the Department of Local Administration; Directors of the Bangkok Office of Education and the Budget Bureau; the Secretary-General of the Office of the National Economic Development Board; the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Office of the National Education Commission; and seven members appointed
by the Cabinet (National Education Commission Act of 1978). The structure of the commission was changed again in 1992. The current commission is composed of 26 members: the Prime Minister or a Deputy Prime Minister; a minister of the Office of the Prime Minister; education and university affairs ministers; Permanent Under-Secretaries of the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Health, and Ministry of University Affairs; the Director of the Budget Bureau; the Secretary-General of the Office of the National Economic Development Board; the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Office of the National Education Commission; and 12 members appointed by the Cabinet. Mr. Pongpol, a Deputy Prime Minister, was the chairman of the commission. The major responsibilities of the ONEC are developing short-term National Education Development Plans and long-term National Education Schemes for education at all levels, collaborating with all agencies responsible for education to implement those plans, as well as monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the plans (National Education Commission Act of 1992).

*The Office of Education Reform (OER)*

As an ad hoc organization founded to facilitate the implementation of the NEA, the OER is authorized to prepare and propose education reform bills to the Cabinet. The executive committee of the OER was composed of 9 members, 3 of whom were nongovernment officials nominated by the search committee and appointed by the Cabinet. To search for the nominees, the Cabinet appointed the search committee, which consisted of
Table 8

*The Structure of the Council in Different Periods*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*aThe total number of the council members must not exceed 70.

bAt least 4 of the 7 appointed members must be nongovernment officials.

cAt least 5 of the 12 appointed members must be nongovernment officials.

15 members: 5 members who were elected representatives from public and private universities and 5 others who were representatives from academic and education professional associations. The rest were senior civil servants, that is, education and university affairs permanent under-secretaries, secretaries-general of the Council of State and the ONEC, and the director of the Budget Bureau. The search committee selected 18 nominees, at least 6 of whom were nongovernment officials, and proposed the nominees to the Cabinet for its consideration. A nominee could not be a political official or a member of a local assembly or a political party. Members of the executive committee of the OER had a single term of office of three years. Their tenures were ended when the OER was dissolved (Royal Decree on the Establishment of the Office of Education Commission of 1999). The OER and its executive committee were established during the time that the Democrat Party, currently the leader of the opposition, was the leader of a coalition government. After its establishment, the OER
had three years to complete its tasks and was dissolved in January 2003 (OER, 2001). Mr. Abhisit mentioned a major reason for the establishment of the OER:

The way that we chose to create the OER instead of allowing the existing agencies to implement the National Education Act indicated that if we allowed them to do, they might hesitate to propose any changes that might greatly affect them. We believed that we should have an independent organization with people from various involved parties and allow them to do the work and propose to the government.

The establishment of the OER could be considered an attempt by the ONEC to limit the scope of conflict (Schattschneider, 1975) that would occur during the implementation of the NEA by taking away the political citizenship (Marshall, 1964) of those agencies that would be offended by the implementation of the act in order to exclude them from the drafting process of education reform bills. Schattschneider asserted that “the most important strategy of politics is concerned with the scope of conflict” (p. 3). The scope of conflict is the extent to which the audiences become involved in it. He suggested that there had been a long-standing struggle between the conflicting tendencies toward the privatization and socialization of conflict. Privatization of conflict ranges from the restriction of the scope of conflict to preventing the public from getting involved in the conflict. In contrast, socialization of conflict is an effort to make the conflict contagious by inviting outsider intervention in the conflict.

As discussed later in this chapter, the establishment of the OER did not successfully prevent various departments in the MOE from affecting the education reform bills prepared by the OER. Because the OER was an ad hoc organization established specifically for preparing education reform bills, it was seen as an outsider trying to change the education
system. It was also criticized for drafting bills without input from those who worked in the system. Such complaints could be heard from Mr. Thawin Noikhiew, the chairman of the Federation of the Elementary Education Teachers Associations of Thailand (FEETAT). The FEETAT is one of the 48 teacher organizations that are members of the Center of Organizations of the Teaching Profession founded by the Teacher’s Council of Thailand (TCT). Mr. Thawin stated,

The OER drafted the bills without listening to teachers’ voices. We had teacher meetings all over the country, 33 locations, proposed to the OER, proposed to the OER, proposed to the OER. Accepted, accepted, accepted, but they didn’t really listen. Sometimes, they listened but did nothing.

The OER, however, did not entirely separate from those who were in the education system. As Professor Surapol Nitikraipoj, a member of the executive committee of the OER and the Dean of the Faculty of Law at Thammasart University, stated,

This public organization is not totally disconnected from the ministry [Ministry of Education] or the implementers. A representative from the ministry was one of the 15 people [on the search committee] who selected [committee members of the OER] and representatives from the ministry were also selected .... The Kurusapa [Teachers’ Council of Thailand] claimed that the OER doesn’t understand teachers. We are academics; we close our eyes and think. We said that in the OER there are three or four committee members from the ministry .... They couldn’t say that we don’t understand because these people are also board members of Kurusapa.

In collaboration with the ONEC, the OER developed and submitted the report for education reform and 23 education reform bills, including the bill establishing the council of
teachers and education personnel, to the government in April 2001 (OER, 2002). In the drafting process of the bill establishing the council of teachers, the ONEC founded a research team led by Professor Somwung Pitiyanuwat to conduct studies of the licensing system for teachers. In addition to documentary research, the research team organized conferences and public hearings in five regions of the country, including Bangkok, to gather data from teachers, university faculty, and parents. Findings from the research were used in the development of the proposal on the establishment of the teaching licenses system and the criteria for issuing teaching licenses. The research team found that 66.1 % of the conferences’ attendees agreed that a new council should be established to undertake the responsibilities as specified in Section 53 of the NEA, whereas only 31.5 % believed that the current Teachers’ Council of Thailand (TCT) should be improved to become the council of teachers and education personnel. In a meeting of the National Education Commission in November 1999, the Commission approved the proposal of the research team. The recommendations for the establishment of the council of teachers and education personnel and criteria for issuing and revoking teaching licenses proposed by the research team can be summarized as follows (Pitiyanuwat, 2000):

1. A new organization should be established and the council should be composed of 25 members of which 15 members are teacher representatives from nationwide elections. Five other members are appointed by the Cabinet, and these 20 members will select the other 5 distinguished scholars.

2. A licensed teacher must have received at least a bachelor’s degree in pedagogy. If awarded a bachelor’s degree in other subjects, the teacher must have studied pedagogy or received teacher training for at least 24 credit hours.
3. A preservice teacher must have received a two-year professional training with successful assessment before being awarded a standard teaching license.

4. A teacher with at least two years of teaching experience and requisite qualifications will be awarded a standard teaching license, renewable every five years.

5. All teachers are required to improve their professional development on a continuous basis; otherwise, licenses will be suspended and revoked.

The proposal and comments of the National Education Commission were proposed to the OER. On the basis of the proposal, the OER developed the bill establishing the council of teachers and education personnel. It proposed in the bill that a new council of teaching profession, independent from the current TCT, should be established to be responsible for issuing and revoking teaching licenses as well as other duties as specified in the NEA. The council should be composed of 27 members of which 3 members should be the Education Permanent Under-Secretary, the Secretary-General of the Compulsory Education, and a representative from the private-education sector. The remaining council members should be 7 distinguished scholars, 4 deans of the faculties of education, 12 teacher and administrator representatives, and a representative from the local administrative organizations. In the bill, the OER also proposed the criteria for issuing teaching licenses (see Figures 5 and 6), which can be summarized as follows (OER, 2002).

1. A preservice teacher with at least a bachelor’s degree in education must have received a one-year professional training with successful assessment before being awarded a standard teaching license. Those graduating from traditional, four-year bachelor’s degree programs must have at least two years of teaching experience and pass the
assessment set by the council of teachers and education personnel before being awarded standard teaching licenses.

2. An in-service teacher with at least a bachelor’s degree, two years of teaching experience, and other requisite qualifications will receive a standard teaching license. A teacher with at least a bachelor’s degree but possessing less than two years of teaching experience will receive a temporary teaching license. The teacher will receive a standard license after he or she acquires at least two years of teaching experience and meets the criteria set by the council.

3. An in-service teacher with less than a bachelor’s degree will receive a temporary five-year teaching license. Within five years the teacher must earn a bachelor’s degree in education or must show that his or her experience and achievements meet or exceed the criteria set by the council of teachers and education personnel in order to receive a standard teaching license.

The Teachers’ Council of Thailand (TCT), or Kurusapa

Jumpala (as cited in Bunbongkarn, 2001) stated that in Thailand, teacher associations, agricultural cooperatives, and labor associations were all created at the impetus of the bureaucracy and that all serve to extend the reach of the bureaucracy. This is the case with the TCT. As a teacher organization, the TCT was established in accordance with the Teachers Act of 1945. The act also specified that every teacher must become a member of the TCT. The TCT is a juristic person under the supervision of the MOE. Its major responsibilities, as stipulated in the Teachers Act of 1980, are to serve as an advisory body to the MOE regarding educational management, curriculum, textbooks, and assessment; to supervise teachers for adherence to the professional codes of ethics; to protect teachers’
rights; to promote teachers’ welfare; and to support teachers’ professional development (Teachers’ Council of Thailand [TCT], 2001). As specified in the Teachers Act of 1945, the executive committee of the TCT consisted of the education minister; the education permanent under-secretary, directors-general and secretaries-general from every department in the MOE; and 10 elected teacher representatives (Teacher Act of 1945). In the current structure, the committee is composed of 26 members: 16 members are the education minister, the education permanent under-secretary, directors-general and secretaries-general of the MOE; and 10 members are elected teacher representatives (TCT, 2002).

The TCT already worked on the issue of creating a teaching-license system before the passage of the NEA. The declines in the quality of teachers and educational standards have been recognized for decades. The use of teaching licenses is seen as a means of raising the standards of the profession, of motivating talented individuals into teaching careers, and of screening out unqualified teachers (Pitiyanuwat, 1999). In a seminar organized by the TCT in July 1980, the majority of teachers showed their support of the use of teaching licenses. They also believed that the TCT should be responsible for setting standards and issuing and revoking licenses. Since the seminar in 1980, the issue of how to implement a licensing system has been occasionally discussed. In 1993, the TCT held two seminars on this issue. Later on, it formulated the guidelines for the implementation of a teaching-license system and amendments to the Teachers Act (TCT, 1996).

Although the guidelines for the implementation of a licensing system developed by the TCT in 1993 were not implemented, the TCT did not abandon the idea. In August 1997,
In-service teacher

- Bachelor’s degree or higher
  - Yes: Receives a 5 years Provisional license
  - No: Possesses at least 2 years teaching experience and receives a bachelor’s degree or demonstrates requisite experiences and achievements
    - Fail: Evaluation
    - Pass: Receives a standard license

- At least 2 years experience
  - Yes: Receives a 2 years Provisional license
  - No: Possesses at least 2 years teaching experience
    - Fail: Evaluation
    - Pass: Receives a standard license

*Figure 5.* The OER’s criteria for obtaining teaching licenses for in-service teachers.
Figure 6. The OER’s criteria for obtaining teaching licenses for preservice teachers.
it established a committee to conduct studies of teaching-profession organizations in various countries. In 1999, it organized nine seminars in Bangkok and other provinces to prepare a proposal for the amendment to the Teachers Act so that it would become the Council Of Teachers And Educational Personnel in accordance with the NEA. The proposal was presented to the Subcommittee for the Reform of Teachers and Education Personnel of the MOE. In addition, during March and April 2000, the TCT organized 30 public hearings on the proposal for the amendment to the Teachers Act. The results of the hearings were used to improve the proposal. In November 2000, the TCT had a meeting with the OER for the first time and presented its proposal to the OER in March 2001 (TCT, 2002). To support its proposal, the TCT claimed that it was the existing teachers’ organization responsible for supervising teachers and supporting teachers’ professional development. Therefore, with minor improvement, it would be ready for the work of the proposed teaching profession organization. The TCT also stated that 73.45% of the people attending public hearings during March and April 2000 agreed that the TCT should be improved to become the Council Of Teachers And Educational Personnel (TCT, 2001). The OER, however, rejected the proposal of the TCT, as Dr. Chakrapat Wata, the deputy secretary-general of the TCT, stated,

We tried to work with them [the OER]. During the drafting process, we had meetings with them in their office and reached agreement on some issues, and we invited them to our office many times until we reached agreement on many issues. But when the OER proposed its drafts to the government, they rejected our proposal that we had previously agreed upon.
In practice, the OER was not the only office that proposed education reform bills to the government despite the fact that it had legal authority (Weber, 1924/1968) as given by NEA to prepare bills for the government. Although there is no law or regulation regarding the consideration process of a bill by the government, it is a tradition for the Cabinet to send the bill to the involved ministries for their consideration and suggestions. In the case of education reform bills, the OER’s bills were sent to the MOE and the MUA; as Mr. Chamlong mentioned, “It was a normal administrative routine that the bills must be sent to the involved ministries for their opinions, especially from the implementers.” After consideration, the MOE found that there were various disagreements over the bills—including the bill establishing the council of teachers and education personnel—between its departments and the OER. Although its had no political citizenship (Marshall, 1964) or legal authority (Weber, 1924/1968) to prepare education reform bills, with support from the MOE, which had traditional authority to present suggestions and opinions about the bills to the Cabinet, the TCT proposed its bill on the establishment of the council of teachers and education personnel to the Cabinet through the MOE.

Summary

The bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel is one of 23 education reform bills required in the implementation of the National Education Act (NEA) of 1999. A major force behind the development and passage of the NEA as well as the establishment of the Office of Education Reform (OER) was the Office of the National Educational Commission (ONEC). The ONEC is a central agency responsible for national policy-making for education at all levels, collaborating with other agencies to implement the policies and monitoring and evaluating that implementation. The administration of basic
education is centralized under the Ministry of Education (MOE), which implements national education policies and sets their operational policies in line with the national policies. In accordance with a requirement in the NEA, the OER was created as an ad hoc public organization to facilitate the implementation of the NEA and was dissolved in January 2003, three years after its establishment. It was provided with legal authority (Weber, 1924/1968) to prepare the education reform bills. In the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, the OER proposed that a new organization be established as the council of teachers to be responsible for setting professional teaching standards, supervising teachers, and issuing and revoking teaching licenses.

One major aim of the NEA was to decentralize educational administration from the MOE to local administrative organizations, and the ONEC believed that the implementation of the NEA would face strong resistance from agencies in the MOE. Therefore, the establishment of the OER was intended to exclude the agencies in the MOE, including the Teachers’ Council of Thailand (TCT), from the policy-making of education reform bills. The TCT is the teacher organization under the supervision of the MOE. It serves as an advisory body to the MOE regarding educational management, curriculum, and assessment. It is also responsible for supervising teachers for adherence to a professional codes of ethics, for protecting teachers’ rights, and for promoting teachers’ welfare. While the OER was drafting the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, the TCT proposed to the OER that the TCT take on the responsibilities of the proposed council. The proposal, however, was rejected by the OER.
The Conflict

The TCT’s bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel and the criteria for issuing teaching licenses were quite different from those of the OER. As Dr. Chakrapat mentioned, “There were differences between the two proposals in many areas… and these two groups stood firm on their proposals .... It took quite a long time to converge these two ideas.” A major difference between the two bills is that the OER suggested that a new independent organization, not the TCT, should be established as the council of teachers and educational personnel to issue and revoke teaching licenses and undertake other responsibilities as prescribed in the NEA. Additionally, and most important, the OER proposed that the current TCT should be changed to become the Teachers’ Association of Thailand, which would be responsible for only teachers’ welfare. This meant that the responsibilities of supervising teachers for adherence to the professional codes of ethics and supporting teachers’ professional development would be taken away from the TCT. The reason that the OER wanted to create a new organization is the conflict between the current roles of the TCT and the responsibilities of the proposed teaching profession organization. The TCT currently operates on the fees collected from its members and in turn protects the rights and promotes the welfare of its members. The OER stated that conflicts of interest could not be avoided if the TCT were in charge of setting professional standards, regulating, and evaluating its members (OER, 2002). On the other hand, the TCT claimed that it has already been responsible for the supervision of teachers and teachers’ professional development. Therefore, with some improvement, it could take on the responsibilities of the proposed council, and this could reduce the government’s expenditure.
Another major difference is the criteria for issuing teaching licenses. The TCT proposed that for preservice teachers to receive the licenses, they must have at least a bachelor’s degree in education with a minimum of one year of teaching experience and must pass the assessment set by the council. If the teachers have a bachelor’s degree in other fields, they must have studied at least 24 semester credits in teaching courses. For in-service teachers, the TCT proposed that all teachers with at least a bachelor’s degree, regardless of their teaching experience and other qualifications, would unconditionally receive standard teaching licenses (TCT, 2002). On the other hand, the OER proposed that only in-service teachers with at least a bachelor’s degree and two years of teaching experience would receive standard teaching licenses and only after they passed the assessment set by the council of teachers and educational personnel (OER, 2002).

An implicit difference between the two proposals is the renewal of the licenses. The OER proposed that every five years teachers must show the evidence of their professional development in order to renew their licenses (OER, 2002). The TCT, however, suggested that there be assessments of license holders every five years to collect data used for teacher development, not for renewal of the licenses. A license would be withheld or withdrawn if the teaching performance of the holder does not meet the standards or if the results of professional development do not meet the criteria set by the council (TCT, 2001). Nonetheless, it did not specify when and how often such performance assessments, if any, would be conducted. Therefore, the TCT was accused by the OER and the ONEC of wanting to give life-long teaching licenses to all in-service teachers regardless of their qualifications, and the TCT could not plausibly reject the accusation.
After a bill is proposed to the government, the Cabinet will consider the bill before sending it to the House of Representatives. Because there is no law or regulation governing the consideration process of a bill by the Cabinet, the procedure within this stage can be slightly different depending on the government. For the Thaksin government, the Cabinet Agenda Screening Committees were established to screen bills and other issues prior to presenting them to the Cabinet. In this screening process, the bill will be sent to the involved ministries for their consideration. Those ministries will study the bill and present their opinions, findings, and suggestions to the committee. On the basis of this information, the committee will finalize the bill and present it to the Cabinet. The consideration process of education reform bills, including the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, is presented in Figure 7. The bills were considered by the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee, which was responsible for screening all social issues before presenting them to the Cabinet. The committee was composed of 16 members (see Table 9) from the ministries and offices responsible for social matters, which are the MOE, MUA, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labor, Office of Civil Service Commission, Office of the Prime Minister, and ONEC. Six of the committee members were a deputy prime minister and ministers, and the rest were permanent under-secretaries and secretaries-general in those ministries and offices. The committee had Mr. Pongpol Adireksarn, a deputy prime minister, as the chairman. Because there were various disagreements over the education reform bills causing a long delay, in November 2001, the ONEC, of which Mr. Pongpol was also the chairman, appointed the Subcommittee for Education Reform to oversee and facilitate the education reform process. The subcommittee consisted of representatives from the MOE, MUA, Ministry of Finance, Office of Civil Service
Commission, Office of the Prime Minister, Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, Budget Bureau, Council of State, ONEC, and OER. Of the 29 subcommittee members, as shown in Table 9, 5 were a deputy prime minister and ministers; 13 were permanent under-secretaries, deputy permanent under-secretaries, directors, secretaries-general, and deputy secretaries-general from those agencies and offices; and 11 were appointed by the ONEC on the basis of their knowledge, experience, and expertise. Mr. Pongpol, the chairman of the Screening Committee, was also the chairman of the subcommittee. The subcommittee tried to create agreements on the conflicting issues of the bills before presenting them to the screening committee. In addition to the subcommittee, the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee appointed various ad hoc committees to study the education reform bills in detail.

In January 2002, the Subcommittee for Education Reform considered both the MOE version and the OER version of the bill on the establishment of the council of teachers and educational personnel but could not reach the agreement. The chairman of the subcommittee thus decided to forward the two bills to the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee for further consideration (TCT, 2002). When I asked how the subcommittee worked to reach agreements on those conflicting issues, Professor Surapol, a member of the subcommittee, dolefully explained:

Nothing much, since the committee members were mainly from the MOE and they were more concerned about the politics. A lot of senior civil servants in the MOE were unhappy with the proposals that would close down their departments or reduce their roles .... It doesn’t matter whether we have or don’t have the committee, the bills were still delayed. Or to the extent that they were amended until they [senior civil
Figure 7. A Simplified diagram of the government’s consideration process.

Table 9

The Structure of the Screening Committee and the Subcommittee for Education Reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of members</th>
<th>Screening committee</th>
<th>Subcommittee</th>
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<td>Prime Minister and ministers including education minister</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior civil servants (total)</td>
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<td>From MOE</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>From ONEC</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other as appointed by the ONEC</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
servants] were satisfied, which means creating least change. After they were satisfied, the bills could move on.

Professor Somwung, another member of the select committee, also shared a similar viewpoint, as he mentioned that “They [the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee] brought in representatives from each group to create the subcommittee and ad hoc committees. In reality, it didn’t work since the problem was at the top [the minister of education].”

In April 2002, the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee assigned the bills to an ad hoc committee composed of representatives from the involved agencies, such as the OER, the MOE, the MUA, and the Council of State, and led by the ONEC. The ad hoc committee studied the conflicting issues in detail and finalized them before reporting back to the Screening Committee (“Screening Committee,” 2002). The committee reached agreement on some issues after three meetings in April 2002. However, the five following issues were left to the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee for its decisions (TCT, 2002, May 9).

1. The organization that will take on the responsibilities of the council of teachers and educational personnel and the organization that will be responsible for teachers’ welfare.

The OER proposed the establishment of a new council, called the Teachers’ Council of Thailand, to undertake the responsibilities of the council of teachers and educational personnel. It also proposed an amendment to the Teachers Act to change the TCT to become an association, called the Teachers Association of Thailand, to be responsible for teachers’ welfare.

The MOE proposed an amendment to the Teachers Act of 1945 stating that
the TCT would take on the responsibilities of the proposed council. It also proposed an establishment of a new office to promote teachers’ welfare and operate the current business divisions of the TCT.

2. Membership of the council of teachers and educational personnel.
   
The OER proposed that the council have no membership.
   
The MOE proposed that all license holders be members of the council.

3. Types of licenses.
   
The OER proposed that there should be two types of licenses: for administrators and for teachers.
   
The MOE proposed that there should be only one type of license, teaching licenses, for both teachers and administrators.

4. The criteria for granting licenses to in-service teachers and administrators.
   
The OER proposed that in-service teachers with at least a bachelor’s degree would receive standard teaching licenses according to the procedures and criteria developed by the council. In-service teachers who do not have a bachelor’s degree would have to earn the degree within five years in order to receive a standard teaching license.
   
The MOE proposed that all in-service teachers would unconditionally receive standard teaching licenses. The government would support the professional development of in-service teachers who do not have a bachelor’s degree in accordance with the criteria set by the council.

5. The component of the council of teachers and educational personnel.
   
The OER proposed that the council consist of 27 members. Four members
would be the education permanent under-secretary and the secretaries-general of the Compulsory Education, Tertiary Education, and Vocational Education Commissions. The remainder of the board would be composed of 3 deans of faculties of education, 6 distinguished scholars, 12 teacher and administrator representatives, a representative from the private education sector, and a representative from local administrative organizations.

The MOE proposed that the council consist of 27 members. Six members would be the minister of education, the education permanent under-secretary, and the secretaries-general of the Compulsory Education, Tertiary Education, and Vocational Education Commissions and the Teachers’ Council of Thailand. The remainder of the board would be composed of 4 deans of faculties of education, 4 distinguished scholars, and 13 teacher representatives.

After the meeting of the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee in May 2002, Mr. Pongpol announced that the committee agreed with the MOE that the current TCT should undertake the responsibilities of the council of teachers and education personnel and the office for the promotion of teachers’ welfare should be established. The structure of the council would be the one as proposed by the OER. Concerning types of licenses, the committee decided that all basic education teachers and administrators must have standard teaching licenses. Other types of licenses, such as licenses for administrators and for other educational personnel, would be later developed by the council in compliance with Section 53 of the NEA. In-service teachers who do not have a bachelor’s degree would be allowed to teach in classrooms. Nevertheless, they must improve themselves to meet the criteria set by the council within five years in order to receive standard teaching licenses (“Finding the
Resolution.” 2002). The criteria for issuing and revoking the licenses, however, remained unresolved. They were left to the council that would be established to decide. A summary of the bills of the MOE and the OER and the decisions of the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee is presented in Table 10. In June 2002, the Cabinet approved the principles of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel as proposed by the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee. After the Cabinet’s approval, the bill was sent to the Office of the Council of State, which is responsible for preparing draft legislation as assigned by the Cabinet and submitting recommendations on the need for new legislation or revision, amendment, or repeal of existing legislation. In August 2002, the bill was presented to the House of Representatives.

The consideration processes of a bill by the Cabinet, the House of Representatives, and the Senate are an instrument for the expansion of the scope of conflict, as they provide arenas for conflict situations and allow various groups to get involved in the conflicts (Schattschneider, 1975). Schattschneider stated,

> There is nothing intrinsically good or bad about any given scope of conflict. Whether a large conflict is better than a small conflict depends on what the conflict is about and what people want to accomplish. A change of scope makes possible a new pattern of competition, a new balance of force, and a new result, but it also makes impossible a lot of other things. (p. 17)

The consideration of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel by the Cabinet can be seen either as a means of improving the bills or a means of delaying and altering the original bills. For the OER, which was authorized by the NEA to develop the
original bills, the consideration process was a delay and an opportunity for the MOE to alter

the original bills, as Professor Surapol mentioned:

    The OER sent the bills to the government in April 44 [2544 B.E. or 2001 A.D.]. At
that time, the government had until August [2002]; the government had about one
year and five months. But nothing happened, no progress until the last two months,
which was almost to the deadline. Then they just started. So, it depends on how we
will interpret this period of doing nothing.

Likewise, Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva, a deputy leader of the Democrat Party, the leading
opposition, stated,

    The OER knows well that these bills must be completed within three years, so they
spent half of it—a year and a half—and sent the bills to the government in April last
year. The main point is that the processes after that seemed to intentionally delay the
bills of the OER. So, the bills were the targets of criticisms, and finally, the political
turmoil was created and there were the attempts to amend the NEA .... Finally, the
resolution was to compromise and propose the bills that we see today.

However, for the MOE, the consideration process was an opportunity to improve the bill
because it allowed the involved parties to present the information to support their proposals.

As Mr. Chamlong, an advisor to the minister of education and a former deputy education
minister in the current government, mentioned, “Time opened up opportunities to improve
the bills to suit the environments and to be more practical.”
### A Comparison Between the Bills of the OER and the MOE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>OER’s bill</th>
<th>MOE’s bill</th>
<th>Screening Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council of teachers and education personnel</td>
<td>Establish a new organization called Teachers’ Council of Thailand to be in charge of issuing/revoking teaching licenses and other responsibilities relating to the teaching profession, and change the current TCT to become the Teachers Association to promote teachers’ welfare</td>
<td>TCT will be in charge of issuing/revoking teaching licenses and other responsibilities relating to the teaching profession, and a new office will be established to be responsible for teachers’ welfare</td>
<td>Agreed with the MOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership of the Council</td>
<td>Not included in the bill</td>
<td>License holders are members of the council</td>
<td>Not included in the bill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of licenses</td>
<td>2 types: for teachers and administrators</td>
<td>Only teaching license for both teachers and administrators</td>
<td>At the beginning, there will be only teaching license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granting licenses</td>
<td>All teachers must undergo the assessments to receive standard teaching licenses that must be renewed every 5 years</td>
<td>All in-service teachers will receive licenses without undergoing the evaluation</td>
<td>In-service teachers without bachelor’s degrees will receive teaching licenses, and the government will support professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council’s Committee</td>
<td>27 members without the minister of education and secretary-general of the TCT; 12 are teacher representatives</td>
<td>27 members including the minister of education and secretary-general of the TCT; 13 are teacher representatives</td>
<td>Agreed with the OER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite the fact that the Subcommittee for Education Reform could not reach agreement on various important issues because each side stood firm on its proposals, there was a certain degree of negotiation and compromise at the higher levels at which the decisions were made. As Mr. Chamlong described how the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel proposed by the OER and the MOE became the one approved by the Cabinet, he said,

It was the political attempt that tried to reach a compromise between the two ideas. It is the nature of Thai society that we don’t like to contest .... So, we used a Thai style, which is finding neutral points, everyone gets what they want, maybe half for each side.

Mr. Chamlong’s comment is analogous to one of Professor Surapol’s about the OER’s stance toward education reform; he stated, “The OER sets its position not to create many conflicts since it wants the bills to pass .... Recently, disagreements and resistance or differences have decreased since we compromised on some issues so that the reform can move on.” Professor Somwung mournfully pointed out that “This is a Thai style, which is compromise on everything. Even though it may not be the right thing to do, we can still compromise.” Mr. Thawin also dolefully expressed, “In Thailand, when we passed a law or negotiated, it turned out to be only I would get half of what I wanted and you would get half of what you wanted, something like that. Not truly think about the benefits of the country.”

Who Truly Supported the Bills?

Both the OER and the TCT claimed that the majority of teachers supported their bills and argued that the claim of their opponent was unfounded. The TCT, which received strong support from some senior civil servants in the MOE, including the minister himself, stated
that its proposal corresponded to the needs of teachers. Dr. Chakrapat described how the TCT developed its bill: “In addition to researching from documents and brainstorming, the draft of the bill was brought to public hearings to get input from teachers all over the country and was revised to meet the needs of teachers.” On the other hand, Professor Somwung Pitiyanuwat, an executive member of the OER, did not agree that the majority of teachers supported the TCT’s proposal, as he stated:

If we met with teachers outside Bangkok… they all agreed [with the OER’s proposal]. When the TCT asked those teachers, the teachers said they wanted only their signatures, nothing more than that. It was clear that the majority supported our principles but their voices were silent. But the minority who claimed that they were representatives [teacher representatives in the board of the TCT] had louder voice.

The results from public hearings and surveys were used by both the OER and the TCT to support their proposals. Both sides claimed that the majority of attendees supported their proposals. Each argued that the hearings organized by the other were invalid because the attendees had been selected and those hearings had predetermined objectives. Dr. Chakrapat, the deputy secretary-general of the TCT, stated,

The MOE held seminars in the places where teachers could easily come, such as local education offices and hotels, and the public hearings were held in many regions so more people could attend .... The MOE held 30 public hearings all over the country; on average, each hearing had people from two provinces attending. This was different from the OER who held the hearings only in the four regions of the country, once in each region and in the universities where not many teachers attended.
Mr. Thawin, the chairman of the FEETAT, also shared a similar opinion as he asserted, “When the OER held public hearings, I ask you, who did they invite? ... They did not invite teachers to the hearings. They invited academics, lecturers, and parents to their hearings.” Professor Surapol, however, denied the accusation. When I asked him about the problems of public hearings organized by the OER and the TCT, he stated,

I want to make a comparison. The OER is an organization that has no stake in this and will be closed down in the next few months .... On the other hand, the TCT is an existing organization and is about to be changed in a way that they don’t like. This is the fact .... We had no predetermined objectives .... I think that we have to look at the facts, what we should believe; and from logic of the conflict, who can thoroughly explain?

In the past few years, public hearings have been frequently organized by government agencies to collect input from the public as well as to support public policies proposed by those agencies. A large number of those hearings, however, were not properly organized and were used by some agencies to advance their agendas. When I asked Mr. Abhisit about the problems of public hearings in Thailand, he pointed out,

The format of public hearings, I think we still have a lot of problems. In many cases we can see that they were organized as meetings and a lot of people attended, but there were experts who introduced the issues and kept talking until almost the end of the hearings .... We have to understand that a public hearing is not a public voting and is not a poll or survey… not asking whether the majority agrees or disagrees, because it depends on who were invited.
Mr. Chamlong Krudkhunthod, an advisor to the Prime Minister, also shared a similar viewpoint. He explained, “It is the problem of what groups the organizers invited .... The second issue is that a lot of hearings had questions that the organizer intentionally designed so that the results would support what they wanted.” In the case of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, although both the OER and the TCT organized public hearings to socialize the conflict, at the same time, they both limited the scope of conflict by selecting where they wanted to organize the hearings and whom they wanted to come so that they could choose whom they wanted to socialize with or “who can get into the game” (Schattschneider, 1975, p. 102). In addition to who can get into the game, there is an issue of what part of the game those people can get into. After the TCT and the OER finalized their bills and proposed them to the government, teachers, parents, and university faculty from which the TCT and the OER claimed their support played no part in the conflict. They had no active roles in the conflicts occurring during the consideration of the bills by the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee, the Subcommittee for Education Reform, and the Cabinet.

According to the OER’s proposal, in-service teachers who do not have bachelor’s degrees have to earn a degree within five years to receive standard teaching licenses. Otherwise, after five years they will not be allowed to teach in classrooms. In 2000, about 78,080 teachers in Thailand did not have bachelor’s degrees (OER, 2002). I asked Mr. Thawin whether those teachers who did not have bachelor’s degrees came out to oppose the OER’s proposal and support the TCT’s proposal, and he said,

They didn’t come out because teachers who don’t have bachelor’s degrees—first, they are old. Most of them are about 40 to 50. Second, they are teachers in vocational
schools… and their friends in vocational schools did not help them …. So, teachers who have bachelor’s degrees have to stand up and take care those who don’t have bachelor’s degrees.

In the same way, when I asked Professor Somwung why the teachers supporting the OER’s proposal in the hearings did not come out to present their opinions, he explained, “The system of teacher representatives is a monopolistic system in which members of the TCT elected their representatives …. They are always re-elected, so… teachers who have agendas became representatives. Those who are not representatives do not dare to speak out.”

Although there was no evidence that teachers, parents, and university faculty were intentionally excluded from the conflict during the consideration process of the bills, in February 2002, a group of farmers and activists demonstrated at the MOE demanding that the ministry allow public participation in the consideration process (Bunnag, 2002). Their demand, like in many other cases, was in vain. Even though some groups of teachers, parents, and university faculty were involved in the drafting process of both the OER’s and the TCT’s bills, they still did not completely have the political component of their citizenship (Marshall, 1964) to participate in policy-making because they had no role during the consideration process of the bills in which the conflict occurred. They were, to a large extent, selected by the OER and the TCT to take part in the drafting process so that the agencies could use numbers from the surveys conducted in the hearings to support their bills. The validity of those numbers, however, was questionable because the authorities were able to manage the scope of conflict (Schattschneider, 1975).
Where Was the Public?

Similar to other public policies, the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel received little attention from the public. Both the OER and the TCT used the mass media to present their proposals and perspectives and attack the ideas of the other during the consideration of the bill by the committees. It was one-way communication in which the public was only informed. The OER and the TCT did not mobilize support from the public or even from those groups of teachers, university faculty, and parents whom were claimed as their supporters. The public had no involvement at all in the conflict; they only received the information given to them by the authorities. As Mr. Chamlong stated, “As I have seen so far, the people did not start [the participation]. Mostly, there were initiatives from the authorities, and then they asked for opinions from the public .... So, mostly the participation is only just listening to the ideas from the authorities.” When I asked Professor Surapol what the OER had done to support its bills, he explained, “The OER followed through, met with ministers, informed the media and teachers, created an understanding of the bills.” Similarly, Mr. Thawin explained how the TCT tried to win support for its bill; he said, “[We] developed an understanding of the bill with the media, political parties, committees, and academics. We tried to show them the reality .... We tried to inform, to educate all teachers in the country… including the citizens on some occasions.” The public also did not want to get involved in political conflicts, as Professor Surapol mentioned: “For the issue that may benefit the public, if there are proponents and opponents, the masses usually take a neutral position, do nothing.”

In his discussion on the nonvoting phenomenon in American presidential elections, Schattschneider (1975) argued that the ignorance, indifference, and shiftlessness of the
people were not the only factors that caused widespread nonparticipation in the lower classes. “Abstention reflects the suppression of the options and alternatives that reflect the needs of the nonparticipants .... *Whoever decides what the game is about also decides who can get into the game*” (p. 102). His argument could be applied to explain the phenomenon of the political passivity of the masses in Thailand. Although there have been a number of general elections in Thailand because of the instability of the governments, popular participation remains relatively low. If the turnouts were high, the successes were the results of mobilization by officials of the Ministry of Interior. Electoral participation by the masses is ritualistic or mobilized rather than voluntary (Samudavanija, 1995). The masses still do not have the political component of their citizenship (Marshall, 1964), as Mr. Thawin commented: “Some say that Thai people have power only one day, which is the election day. They are somebody from the day the election campaign started to the election day .... After that, they will become followers, as usual; under the power, as normal.” A reason for the political inactivity of the public in Thailand is that, generally, whatever happened in the politics or whatever the results of political changes were, they did not reflect the needs of the masses. When the absolute monarchy was ended, the masses did not initiate or participate in the coup, and only a handful of people took part in the inauguration of the new constitutional government. In addition, after seven decades of constitutional governance, the masses still believe that the government pays too much attention to the financial sectors and the middle class and overlooks the problems of the poor (Bunbongkarn, 2001). Mr. Thawin pointed out that “in Thailand, the things that help people to have better living are in papers, in books. They were not implemented .... So, whatever law will come out, it won’t really affect them. So they take things easy as they normally do.”
Schattschneider (1975) also asserted that political participation is not an isolated social phenomenon. It is a part of the social condition of the people. The political system operates largely through processes of which people are unaware; the process is automatic, unconscious, and thoughtless. He stated, “Stratification and isolation and segregation are to a great extent the unconscious or semiconscious by-products of the way a social system operates to organize the community” (p. 106). The exclusion of people from the political community by extralegal processes, by social processes, by the way the political system is organized and structured may be far more effective than the law. Although Schattschneider did not discuss in detail how the extralegal structures and processes of social and political systems resulted in the exclusion of the masses from politics and political passivity among the people, the interplay and effects of these factors on the political exclusion of the Thai people can be observed from the cognitive view of institutional theory. Scott (1995) stated that the cognitive view emphasizes “the importance of social identities: our conception of who we are and what way of action make sense for us in a give situation” (p. 44). Individuals construct and continuously negotiate social reality in everyday life within the context of preexisting cultural systems that provide orientation and guidance (p. 41). Schneider (as quoted in D’Andrade, 1984) suggested that “culture constitutes a body of definitions, premises, statements, postulates, presumptions, propositions, and perceptions about the nature of the universe and man’s place in it .... Culture tells the actor how the scene is set and what it all means” (p. 93).

Thailand is a Buddhist country; in 2002 approximately 95% of the 62 million Thais were Buddhists (Central Intelligence Agency, 2002). Several Buddhist teachings have deeply influenced Thai cultures and norms. Some of the teachings resulted in the two commonly
believed and often misunderstood concepts of reincarnation and kamma, or karma in Sanskrit. Sumedho (1995) argued that reincarnation is a Hindu teaching, not a Buddhist teaching. In the reincarnation of the Hindu, “if you’re born into a low caste, you must wait for the next reincarnation, your next lifetime, when you might be reborn into a higher caste” (p. 52). Instead of reincarnation, the word *rebirth* is used in Buddhist teachings, and rebirth is mental, not physical. Three types of desire cause rebirth: the desire for pleasure, the desire for becoming, and the desire for annihilation. Rebirth is, thus, the reoccurrence of desires. For example, a desire to have things that provide pleasure or a desire to become some things, which is something that happens again and again in one’s everyday life (Sumedho, 1995).

The introduction of Hindu beliefs by the Ayuthaya kings in the mid-thirteenth century resulted in the incorporation of Hinduism into the Thai Buddhism received from Sri Lanka in the late eleventh century. Today, the concept of reincarnation is commonly believed as a Buddhist teaching and more widely accepted than the Buddhist rebirth.

A basic explanation of kamma is that “if you do good actions, you get a good result. If you do bad actions, you get a bad result” (Sumedho, 1995). The description, however, left some room for interpretation. Integrated with the belief of reincarnation, a commonly believed concept of kamma is that the present circumstances of one’s personal life are largely predetermined by one’s positive and negative actions in a previous existence; “individual’s fate is the outcome of what he has done during the course of innumerable life-spans” (Mulder, 1996, p. 105).

How do reincarnation and kamma influence the Thai way of life and politics? The Ayuthaya kings introduced Hindu beliefs to strengthen the concepts of King as the Lord of Lives and the caste system. The rulers exploited the concepts of reincarnation and kamma to
exclude the masses from the political system by suggesting that those who have authority or were born in the ruling castes had accumulated religious merit in their previous lives and now are enjoying the fruits of their past merit. Nartsupha (1984/1999) stated that the masses were convinced that they faced difficulty, poverty, hunger, and misery because they had sinned or had done bad deeds in previous lives, whereas the nobles had done good deeds in the past. Kaewthep (as quoted in Nartsupha, 1984/1999) asserted, “It’s not that farmers cannot see the exploitation or do not feel exploited. Just the opposite. In reality farmers feel exploited. But the farmers explain to themselves that the reason behind this exploitation is that they lack ‘merit’” (p. 42).

The acceptance of this belief by the masses created a culture that, to a great extent, still influences political participation and the way of life of the Thai people. Today the masses generally continue to believe that their misfortunes are the results of sins or bad deeds in previous lives and there are not many things they can do to change their hardships in the present lives. So, the only thing they can do now is only to accept the situations and hope for better lives in the next reincarnation by making good religious deeds. As Professor Surapol pointed out,

Thai society is a society in which one of our ways of life is acceptance. We accept the authorities, accept the rules that were previously set, accept our status, even accept [that our current situations are] the results of our previous lives. These are Buddhist ways of life and there is no right or wrong. They make the society peaceful. But these ways of life, I think, they don’t, they don’t encourage the people to participate in the government’s activities or political and administrative activities, which in the past were sacred; they were the business of the royalty, the king, of another caste. We are
the subjects of the country; we must do nothing, not get involved. These ways of life, we have had them for very long time. Buddhist society also makes us believe in the law of kamma, sin, virtue, merit, consequence, and other things. So don’t try; don’t get involved in the subjects that are out of our Vas-sa-na [reach].

Although the absolute monarchy ended in 1932, and the class system and slavery were abolished, the monarch and social hierarchy still exist. As Fieg (1980) observed,

Very few Thais have social equals, whether it is because of age difference, family role, or occupational status. Even twins born a few minutes apart have different statuses because of their miniscule difference in age. In fact, there are no words in Thai corresponding to the English “brother” and “sister.” Instead it must be “older brother” or “younger brother,” “older sister” or “younger sister.” (p. 26)

Today, Thailand is still a predominantly hierarchical society. Respect of hierarchy, obligation, and deferential manners are among the first things a child learns (Mulder, 1996). The complexity of the hierarchy is also reflected in the elaborate system of pronouns in the Thai language that enables a person to show just the right amount of respect, deference, and intimacy (Fieg, 1980).

Despite all the changes in the governing and social systems since 1932, the cultures and beliefs of the masses towards the government and people with authority are still relatively unchanged. Fieg (1980) observed that royal titles still possess prestige value, although not as much as in former times. A lot of people continue to view bureaucratic careers as the road leading to high status, prestige, and power because working for the government means serving the king and the country. The Thai word for government official or civil servant, Kha-ra-cha-kan, means “servant of the king.” The caste system and the belief
in kamma and reincarnation not only supported the exclusion of the masses from politics but also influenced the ways that the masses perceived and interacted with the authorities. Bunbongkarn (2001) stated that traditionally, rural Thais were politically weak and tried to avoid confrontation with government authorities. Likewise, in his research on Thai villages, Nartsupha (1984/1999) stated that the acceptance of the belief of kamma and reincarnation “made villagers afraid of people who had higher merit and power (barami)” (p. 41). He concluded that on the basis of the culture of the caste system, villagers strongly believed in morality and avoided conflict. In dealing with officials, they showed both gratitude and fear. Mr. Thawin suggested that “Thai people are less likely to fight to protect their rights?… They don’t protect their rights and don’t get involved in politics .... What don’t Thai people like? They don’t like troubles .... They don’t want to be in conflict with those who have power.” When I asked him about the absence of teacher involvement in the conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, he said, “Thai teachers are Thai people, right? And the culture of Thai teachers, they are submissive and humble .... In general, they are peaceful, afraid of their bosses, afraid of everything. Although they teach democracy, they are not democrats.” Mr. Chamlong also shared a similar opinion as he mentioned the political passivity of the masses, “I think it is our culture that we have been doing for such a long time. In the past, we believed the authorities. The authorities were always right .... We believed the authorities too much.”

**Summary**

In the government’s process for considering a bill, it is a tradition that the proposed bill is sent to the involved ministries who will study the bill and present their suggestions and opinions to the Cabinet. After the education reform bills prepared by the OER were
submitted to the Cabinet, the bills were sent to the MOE. In the MOE, the TCT was assigned to study the bill on establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel. Because the TCT disagreed with the bill proposed by the OER, it prepared its own version of the bill and proposed it to the Cabinet through the MOE. The two versions of the bill were sent to the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee and the Subcommittee for Education Reform, who tried to resolve the differences before proposing the bill to the Cabinet.

During the process of drafting the bill, both the OER and the TCT allowed the public to get involved by organizing public hearings. They both claimed that the majority of teachers supported their bills. However, during the Screening Committee and the Subcommittee’s process for considering the bill, there was no channel for the public to get involved in the conflict. Both the OER and the TCT tried to obtain support from members of the Cabinet and committees who could influence the outcomes, but they did not socialize the conflict (Schattschneider, 1975) with the groups who were claimed as their supporters during the drafting process. The absence of public involvement in policy-making is a result of both the policy-making process that was created by the authorities and the cultural beliefs that influence the masses’ conceptions of politics and their place in it.

*The Biases*

Schattschneider (1975) stated, “All forms of political organization have a bias in favor of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of the others because *organization is the mobilization of bias*” (p. 69). Every legislative process is equipped with devices for controlling the flow of explosive materials into the governmental apparatus. Some conflicts are organized into politics, whereas others are organized out. He added, “The government above all else, is never fully neutral in political struggle” (Schattschneider, 1957,
In the case of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, if there had been no support from the education minister—Mr. Suvit Khunkitti, who was removed from his post on October 4, 2002—the TCT would not have been able to exploit the conflict over the bill. Professor Surapol stated,

> Because our political sector is not strong enough, I mean, in general, the Cabinet is not decisive enough and administrative power was given to the minister of education to oversee [education reform] too much. Other agendas that the government perceived as its main policies were considered by various ministries; no individual minister had the authority to decide. However, this issue was left to the minister of education [Mr. Suvit], who agreed with some senior civil servants in the ministry.

Mr. Suvit was replaced by Mr. Pongpol, a Deputy Prime Minister who was the chairman of the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee, the Subcommittee for Education Reform, and the National Education Commission, which oversees the ONEC. Mr. Suvit did not agree with the concept of education reform as specified in the NEA, as the decentralization would reduce the authority and control of the education minister over local agencies. He was largely criticized for his opposition to the reform (Bunnag, 2002; Prateepchaikul, 2002; Ruangdit, 2001), as Professor Somwung stated: “The problem was the minister who doesn’t agree with the reform. It doesn’t matter how the bottom decided; it would get stuck at the top.” Mr. Abhisit also expressed a similar opinion:

> As I say,… the minister who is currently in charge seems to disagree with the principles of education reform. I can say that… Minister Suvit, who was a Deputy Prime Minister in Chuan’s government [1997–2001], was one who showed that he
was uncomfortable with the NEA since the beginning, especially on the issues relating to teachers.

In the current government, Mr. Suvit was a Deputy Prime Minister overseeing education during the time that Dr. Kasem Wattanachai was the first education minister. Dr. Kasem, an academic with a solid background in education, was accepted by both educators and opposition parties as the most suitable education minister. He, however, resigned after only four months in the position. A major cause of his resignation was the serious disagreements over the education reform between him and those opposing the reform, including Mr. Suvit and some senior civil servants in the MOE (Antaseeda, 2001; “What made Dr. Kasem go?” 2001). After the resignation of Dr. Kasem, Prime Minister Thaksin, to calm down the resentment among politicians and educators, took the education portfolio himself. Nonetheless, he made little progress in reform, as Professor Somwung stated: “During the time that he was the PM and also the education minister, he didn’t spend enough time on this issue. If he did, it would be a lot easier.” Four months later, in October 2001, Mr. Thaksin gave the portfolio to Mr. Suvit.

Mr. Suvit extended the scope of the conflict by supporting the TCT in getting involved in the conflict. His role can also be seen as one of providing opportunities for teachers to present their voices, as Dr. Chakrapat mentioned: “The current Minister of Education provides opportunities for teachers to present their ideas and listens to teachers very, very much. After he took the portfolio, there were meetings in every region and more than 10,000 teachers attended.” However, the problems, as discussed earlier, are who came to present their voices and whether the voices were the true majority’s voices.
Another factor supporting the exploitation of the conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel was the change of government in January 2001. The reform was initiated during the time that the Democrat Party was the leader in the previous coalition government. In the January 2001 general elections, the Thai Rak Thai Party won the elections, and the Democrat Party became the leader of the opposition. Although at the beginning the current government, led by the Thai Rak Thai Party, pledged to support the reform initiated by the previous government, it has made little progress since the resignation of Dr. Kasem. Various goals as specified in the NEA that must be achieved by August 2002, such as the establishment of the council of teachers and educational personnel and the amendment of the Teachers Act of 1945 (ONEC, 2000), could not meet the deadline. Professor Somwung stated,

Ajarn Sippanondha [Mr. Sippanondha Ketudat] said that in Thailand, large governmental programs must be finished in one government [for them to be successful], and I believe that it’s true .... I believe that the problem was from the fact that the government that started this reform could not come back after the elections.

So, the new government might feel that they have better ways of doing this reform .... The pole of power has changed… therefore the political conflicts are strong.

Dr. Chakrapat, likewise, stated, “When the government was changed, the new government came with new ideas and wanted to do things differently .... This is where the problems occurred.” Professor Surapol also shared a similar viewpoint, as he expressed,

This reform started by the previous government, the current government may not think much about it, but they think, for sure, that it will be an achievement that has
various initiators. It doesn’t mean that they won’t work on it, but its priority is lower than those they initiated.

The Legislative Process: The House of Representatives’s Consideration

After a bill is introduced to the House of Representatives, it is considered on three separate occasions. In the first reading, the House of Representatives considers the bill and votes whether or not to accept the bill. If the bill is accepted, the House will assign the bill to one of its standing committees, or it may appoint a select committee to consider the bill. A select committee can be composed of both MP and non-MP members, whereas the standing committees consist of only MP members. A select committee will be dissolved after the deliberation of the bill is completed. In this stage, members of the committee and MPs can propose amendments to the bill to the chairman of the committee. The committee can demand documents from any individuals or call in individuals to give statements of facts or opinions. After the committee has completed its deliberation, it will prepare a report and return the bill—with or without amendments—to the parliament for the second and third consideration, in which MPs debate and vote on the bill, respectively. The detailed legislative process is discussed in chapter 3 of this study.

At the end of September 2002, the bill establishing the council of teachers and education personnel was under the deliberation of a select committee appointed by the House of Representatives. The committee was composed of 35 members who were representatives from each political party in the House. The number of representatives of each party depends on the number of members of parliament it has in the House. The consideration process of a select committee of the House of Representatives provides opportunities for various groups to advance their agendas, as the committee may call them in to present their cases. In some
cases, those groups might even have their representatives in the committee through the quotas of their affiliated political parties. In the select committee considering the bill on establishing the council of teachers and education personnel, the secretary-general and teacher representatives in the TCT were on the committee under the quota of the Thai Rak Thai Party, whereas an executive member of the OER was on the committee under the quota of the Democrat Party.

As I asked Mr. Chamlong, the chairman of the select committee, how the committee decided whether or not to amend the bill, he said, “We invited both parties. Mostly I tried to bring the conflicting issues to the meetings with both parties and decided, listened to causes and reasons and decided.” Likewise, Mr. Pibul, a deputy permanent under-secretary of the MOE and a member of a select committee, stated,

The committee called in representatives from the involved parties to present their information. On this bill—the bill on the Teachers’ Council—the OER, the ONEC, and the MOE were called in to present information. The committee considered the data and the bill and decided whether to amend or not.

Mr. Abhisit has a positive opinion about the committees of the House of Representatives, as he asserted, “The committees of the House are more open, since they have smaller numbers of members .... And they try to brainstorm and listen to input from various groups, and normally don’t need to vote to reach the solutions.” Professor Surapol and Professor Somwung, members of the House’s select committees, also shared similar opinions.

Professor Surapol talked about the select committee: “It is a better arena because it’s smaller than the parliament and we have enough time to discuss and we have not many people. Many issues reached agreement reasonably.” Professor Somwung asserted,
In general, they are reasonable people .... But politics are everywhere .... In conclusion, I think that about 60 to 70 % are reasonable people. And it also depended on how many people from the conservative groups and the TCT came to the meeting. If there were a lot of them, it could be a problem since they had similar opinions and didn’t give any reasons. But lately they have become more reasonable .... I think that this is a good sign.

In October 2002, the bill was still under the consideration of the select committee of the House of Representatives. After the consideration is completed, the bill and report from the committee will be presented to the House and the members of parliament will debate and consider the bill in a step-by-step manner. Then they will vote on the bill. In this process, Mr. Abhisit described how the majority of votes of the government could affect a bill:

After a committee has finished its consideration, the bill must be returned to the parliament. If the parliament does not agree with the amendments, it can vote to use the government’s version of the bill. For the current government, from several bills, we have seen that it finally rejected the amendments of the committees and used the majority of votes to return to the government’s drafts.

If the House of Representatives passes the bill, the bill will be forwarded to the Senate, which will consider it on three separate occasions similar to those of the House. If the Senate agrees on the bill passed by the House, the bill will be presented to the king for his approval before promulgation. Otherwise, the Senate can amend the bill and return it to the House. The Senate and the House then appoint a joint committee to consider the bill. After the consideration, the Senate and the House will vote on the bill. Therefore, as of October 2002, it was still unresolved as to how the bill would turn out, as Professor Surapol stated:
No one knows, because the bills are in the legislative process. How they will end up, we don’t know. We say that they will end up like these now, but they may be changed in various ways. Now we say that they look similar [to what we have proposed], in the future they may change. Or if we say that they are different from what we’ve proposed, they may become similar, at the end.

Summary

The conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel was a private conflict among executive members of the Office of Education Reform (OER), members of the Cabinet, especially the education minister, and elite civil servants in the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC), the Teachers’ Council of Thailand (TCT), and the Ministry of Education (MOE). The authorities managed the scope of conflict by deciding “who can get into the game” (Schattschneider, 1975, p. 102) and at what points of the game. The ONEC, which is a central agency responsible for national education policy-making, played an important role in the development and passage of the National Education Act (NEA) of 1999. It was also behind the establishment of the OER, which was equipped with the legal authority (Weber, 1924/1968) to prepare 23 education reform bills, including the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel.

The OER was an ad hoc organization created to facilitate the implementation of the NEA, and it had three years to complete the assignment before being dissolved in January 2003. The establishment of the OER was intended to exclude agencies in the MOE from the policy-making of education reform bills, as a major aim of education reform was to decentralize educational administration and the ONEC believed that those agencies would not propose any changes that might reduce their authority. However, the exclusion was
unsuccessful because the education minister, Mr. Suvit, extended the scope of conflict to involve the agencies under his supervision, including the TCT, in the policy-making. The TCT is a teacher organization serving as an advisory body to the MOE regarding educational management, curriculum, and assessment. It is also responsible for supervising teachers for adherence to professional standards and for promoting teachers’ welfare.

In the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, the OER proposed that a new organization be established as the council of teachers and education personnel and the current TCT become a teacher association responsible for teachers’ welfare. While the OER was developing the bill, the TCT proposed to the OER that it wanted to take on the responsibilities of the proposed council, which are setting professional standards and issuing and revoking teaching licenses. The OER, however, rejected the proposal and proposed its bill to the government. After a bill is proposed to the government, it is a tradition that the Cabinet sends the bill to the involved ministries for their opinions. In the case of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, after the bill was sent to the MOE, the TCT was assigned to study the bill. Although it did not have legal authority to prepare education reform bills, with the support of Mr. Suvit, the TCT proposed its version of the bill to the Cabinet through the MOE.

Because there were various differences between the OER’s and the TCT’s bills, the Cabinet assigned the bills to the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee to resolve the differences before sending the bills to the House of Representatives. The Screening Committee in turn sent the bills to the Subcommittee for Education Reform, which attempted to create agreement on some issues before sending the bills back to the Screening Committee. The Screening Committee consisted of ministers and senior civil servants from
the ministries responsible for social issues, including the MOE. Similarly, the Subcommittee was composed mainly of senior civil servants from the agencies involved in the conflicts.

During the bills’ drafting process, both the OER and the TCT organized public hearings to obtain input from teachers, parents, and university faculty, and both claimed that the majority of teachers supported their bills. However, after the bills were sent to the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee, in which the conflict began, those teachers, parents, and university faculty had no involvement at all in the conflict. They did not have the political citizenship right (Marshall, 1964) to fully participate in policy-making. Neither the OER nor the TCT tried to socialize the conflict (Schattschneider, 1975) with the public and those groups who were previously claimed as their supporters during the drafting process. The conflict occurring during the consideration process of the bill was privatized, or kept out of the public arena (Schattschneider, 1975), by the authorities who were directly involved in the conflict. The OER and the TCT only socialized the conflict with members of the committees, the Cabinet, and political parties who could influence the results of the conflict.

In Thailand, it did not take much effort for the authorities to privatize conflicts occurring in policy-making, as the public also did not want to get involved if the policies would not severely affect them. An explanation for the absence of public involvement in policy-making as well as in politics is that for more than six centuries, the Thai political system has been an elite system in which the ruling elites have competed with each other for political control. No matter what the results of political changes or policy-making were, they did not respond to the needs of the masses. Additionally, the Hindu beliefs in reincarnation and karma integrated into Thai Buddhism and the structures and processes of the social as
well as political systems have influenced the masses’ perceptions of politics and their place in it, which in turn constrained their options for political participation.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 of this study provided an introduction to the research. In chapter 2, the research questions, conceptual framework, and research methodology employed in this study were introduced. The research findings and discussions were presented in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 presented the historical development of Thai politics, society, and education from the Ayutthaya period (1350–1767) to the present. In chapter 4, the research focused on the political conflicts occurring during the policy-making of the bill on the establishment of the council of teachers and educational personnel. Chapter 5 begins with a summary of the case study. Then, the theoretical implications of the research, implications for practice of educational leadership in Thailand, and suggestions for future research are presented.

Summary of the Case Study

The purpose of this study was to understand educational policy-making and the nature of Thai politics. The historical development of Thai politics, society, and education and the case of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel were examined. The study followed an institutional approach to political research adopted by sociohistorical theorists (Kato, 1996; Scott, 1995). Institutional approaches in political science emphasize the roles of political institutions without denying the importance of the social context of politics (March & Olsen, 1984). Sociohistorical institutionalists employ historical investigation and qualitative analysis with broad perspectives of institutions including factors such as culture, norms, and routines (Kato, 1996). They postulate that “institutions construct actors and define their available modes of action; they constrain behavior, but they also empower it” (Scott, 1995, p. 27). Because an understanding of the nature of Thai politics would help to make sense of educational policy-making, I first examined the historical
context of Thai politics and society in order to trace the development and understand the nature of politics. The case of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel was then examined to advance an understanding of educational policy-making.

**Historical Development of Thai Politics, Society, and Education**

In his study of the historical context of Thai politics, society, and education, I traced the development of the political, social, and educational systems from the Ayutthaya period (1350–1767) to the present day. Weber’s (1924/1968) concept of authority and Marshall’s (1964) concepts of elements of citizenship were applied in the study. Parsons (1969) defined authority as “the legitimated right to make certain categories of decisions and bind a collectivity to them” (p. 322). Weber categorized authority based on the types of claims to legitimacy into three types: legal, traditional, and charismatic authority. Citizenship, as defined by Marshall, is “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed” (p. 84). He classified the elements of citizenship into three types: civil, political, and social elements. In this study, I examined how the citizenship rights of the members of various classes in Thai society changed over time and how the authority of political actors changed in the course of the history.

**Ayutthaya (1350–1767)**

*Governance.* Before the reign of King Trailok (1448–1488), the authority of the Ayutthaya’s kings centered largely in the capital. The territories were governed by the feudal princes, who were succeeded by their sons. To gain control of the territories, King Trailok restructured the governing system by creating the military and civil administration divisions and a number of departments under these two divisions. He assigned administration of the
territories to the senior aristocrats in these two divisions. He also promulgated administrative laws to specify the rank, or sakdina, and the duties and privileges of every official. The laws legitimated aristocrats and equipped them with legal authority (Weber, 1924/1968), and they became and were the king’s men with prestigious status and powerful position. The Ayutthaya kings also enhanced the traditional authority (Weber, 1924/1968) of the monarch by promoting the belief in divine kingship adopted from Brahmanized Khmer. The concept of the King as the Lord of Lives became unquestioningly accepted by the masses. In addition, King Trailok strengthened the monarch’s traditional authority by promulgating the Palace Law, which formulated the customs, ceremonies, rules, and regulations related to the court and royal family and specified types of severe punishments for all kinds of offenses.

Society. The caste and labor systems, which had a significant influence on the development of Thai society and politics, were legalized and given legitimacy in the Ayutthaya period. In addition to the administrative and palace laws, King Trailok passed a law to legitimize the caste, or sakdina, system. The system was designed to regulate land tenure by classifying the Ayutthaya population into four major classes and specifying the amount of land that members of each class could own. The distribution of power coincided with the control of lands and labor. King Ramathibodi II (1491–1529) also created the system of controlling and distributing labor, or the prai system. The system defined the numbers of commoners, or prai, that different levels of ruling elites could have under their control. Every commoner was prai and obliged to serve the state. All prai men had to work for the king in various departments or for members of royal and noble families for a certain period during a year. Thus, the level of citizenship rights of the Thai people in the Ayutthaya period was a function of caste. The king, royal families, and nobility had every element of
their citizenship: civil, political, and social (Marshall, 1964), whereas commoners, or prai, and slaves had no citizenship at all.

**Education.** Education for both the elites and the masses in Ayutthaya was based primarily on monastic schools in the Buddhist temples. The main purpose of the monastic education was ethical and religious. Parents who wished to have their sons educated in monastic schools had to send them to stay at the temples. Monastic education was only for males, as females were and still are not allowed to stay in temples. Additionally, education for the elites and females was organized in the palaces and houses of the nobility.

Education and Buddhism were exploited by the Ayutthaya ruling elites to cultivate the belief in the legitimacy of their authority among the masses and to exclude them from the political and governing systems. Hindu beliefs from the Khmers were adopted and integrated into Thai Buddhism, which came from Sri Lanka in the late eleventh century. The beliefs in reincarnation and karma were used by the ruling elites to legitimate their right to rule and to keep the masses out of politics. In Hindu, reincarnation means that “if you’re born into a low caste, you must wait for the next reincarnation, your next lifetime, when you might be reborn into a higher caste” (Sumedho, 1995, p. 52). The concept of karma is that the present circumstances of one’s personal life are largely predetermined by one’s positive and negative actions in a previous existence (Mulder, 1996). The Ayutthaya ruling elites suggested that those who had authority had accumulated religious merit in their previous lives and therefore deserved the privilege. The masses were convinced that they faced difficulty and misery because they had done bad deeds in previous lives (Nartsupha, 1984/1999). Because education for the masses from the Ayutthaya period to the reign of King Rama V (1868–1910) of Rattanakosin was based on monastic schools, the beliefs in divine kingship,
reincarnation, and karma were greatly implanted in the masses and thus profoundly influenced the current attitudes of the masses towards politics and authorities, and vice versa. This in turn affected the masses’ participation in Thai politics.

The end of the Ayutthaya period came in April 1767, after the second successful invasion of Ayutthaya by Burma. Seven months later, King Taksin liberated the Thais from the Burmese and established the new capital in Thon Buri. After the end of his reign, King Ramatibodi (Rama I) moved the capital to Bangkok and inaugurated the Rattanakosin period under the Chakri dynasty.

*Rattanakosin (1782–1932)*

*Governance.* The governing and social systems of Rattanakosin were transferred from those of the Ayutthaya. The foundations for the reform of the governance and society were laid by King Rama IV (1851–1868), and the reform was carried out by his son, King Rama V (1868–1910). In the face of colonial threat from the West, King Rama IV signed a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Great Britain and other western powers. As a result of the treaties, Siam opened up to foreign trade and western influences. This later on led to social and political changes. To minimize the threat of colonialism, King Rama V started a series of government and social reforms. He replaced the military and civil administration divisions used since the Ayutthaya kingdom with 12 ministries and replaced conservative hereditary aristocrats with the younger generation of western-educated members of the royal and noble families. For provincial administration, King Rama V divided the country into circles, provinces, districts, communes, and villages. The villagers elected their own leader, and a group of village leaders in a commune elected a leader among themselves. Officials
appointed from Bangkok were sent to govern the circle, province, and district levels. The new administrative system became the foundation of the current Thai governing system.

*Society.* Regarding social reform, the sakdina system was ended in the reign of King Rama IV, and the slavery and prai systems were abolished by King Rama V. Although the masses received increased civil and social citizenship rights, they still had no right to participate in politics. The Chinese, who were and still are the most important minority group, also emerged during the Rattanakosin period. The early Rattanakosin kings had encouraged large-scale Chinese immigration to replenish the scarce labor resource. Chinese laborers were hired by the state to build infrastructures. A large number of Chinese also came as traders. The Chinese took advantage of an increase in the exportation of rice to dominate trade in Siam. They bought up crops and sold imports of western manufactured goods. They also took charge of the various state monopolies, such as opium, gambling, and the lottery, which provided about 40 to 50% of state revenues.

*Education.* Formal education in Thailand was first developed in the reign of King Rama V. The Department of Education was established in 1887, and traditional monastic-based education for the masses was formalized and centralized under the department. Monks, teachers, and standard textbooks were sent from Bangkok to those schools to assist provincial abbots in opening formal schools in their monasteries. Education was seen as a means of producing a new generation of officials to facilitate the reform of the governing system. Monastic-based formal schools were the producer of low-level officials. The Civil Service School and Chulachomklao Military Academy were established for members of the royal families and noble families. Later on, opportunities to be admitted to those schools were also given to children of wealthy families. These elite institutions became the producers of high-
ranking aristocrats. The Primary Education Act was proclaimed in October 1921, and Siam became the second country in Asia, after Japan, to have enforced compulsory education. However, it was not until 1935 that compulsory education had been extended to include the whole country.

*Rattanakosin (1932–Present)*

*Governance.* The first attempts to end the absolute monarchy appeared in 1885, when 11 young men—most of them recently returned from studying in Europe—petitioned King Rama V urging him to move toward a system of parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy. In 1912, at the beginning of King Rama VI’s reign, a group of junior military officers plotted a coup against the king. Ninety-two men were arrested, but none of them suffered capital punishment. Finally, on June 24, 1932, a group of military and civilian aristocrats calling themselves the People’s Party overthrew the absolute monarchy of King Rama VII and established a quasi-parliamentary constitution.

A major factor leading to the coup was the resentment about the royal monopoly of power among the leaders of the People’s Party who had been educated in Europe. This was because members of the royal and noble families occupied most of the top positions in the government and military. Because the masses played no part in the coup and were not even aware of the significance of it, the coup was not a popular revolution. It was a victory of one group of aristocrats over the royal princes and the nobility. It was only a substitution of one oligarchy for another. The People’s Party did not give the masses political citizenship rights. The first general election after the coup was an indirect election. Each village elected its representatives. The representatives elected district representatives. These representatives elected provincial representatives who become members of the National Assembly. The
unicameral legislature in which half of the members were appointed by the government
continued for more than a decade. Thai politics after the end of the absolute monarchy
became a contest between the civilian and the military aristocrats in the People’s Party. After
the coup in 1947, Prime Minister Pridi, the intellectual leader of the People’s Party, escaped
from the country, and the civilian faction lost its domination to the military counterpart.

The growth of higher education during the 1960s and an economic downturn
beginning in the early 1970s were major factors leading to a student uprising against the
military regime. On October 14, 1973, a demonstration for a new constitution and the release
of 13 political prisoners led by students ended with a bloody clash between the protesters and
armed forces, and hundred of students were killed. King Rama IX intervened to end the
bloodshed. Then, a new faction in the military staged a coup. The three regime leaders left
the country. The new military group kept a low political profile and allowed general elections
to be organized. Democratic governments were formed, and the numbers of interest groups
and their activities increased considerably. A large number of those groups were laborers and
farmers who had no access to power. They organized protests and strikes in order to have
their voices heard. Communism, spreading from China to Southeast Asia, also interested a
large number of students and gained support from peasants in the rural areas. The ruling
elites saw those activities as a threat to the stability of their political control. They organized
the right-wing groups and used violent actions to control and intimidate their opposition.

In 1975, the conflict over the return of a former military dictator who had left the
country in 1973 was replaced with the conflict over the invasion of communists who wanted
to eliminate the king and royal family. In September 1975, two people demonstrating against
the return of the dictator were found hung. To protest the false investigation of the deaths,
students at Thammasat University staged an act showing the hanging of the victims. Pictures from the play published by two newspapers were modified so that one of the hung actors looked like the crown prince. The students were accused of being communists who wanted to abolish the monarchical institution. As Schattschneider (1975) stated, “the substitution of conflicts is the most devastating kind of political strategy” (p. 71). The ruling elites defined the new conflict and used it to legitimize the use of force against the students. Only three years after the victory over the military regime, on October 6, 1976, right-wing groups and armed forces broke into Thammasat University and murdered more than 300 students.

At the end, a new military group known as the Young Turks staged a coup and started an aftermath purge. New members of parliament were appointed, and a timetable of twelve years before the restoration of an elected assembly was imposed. However, general elections were held in 1978. After the elections, the government allowed more political freedom, and the bicameral assembly in which members of the Senate were selected by the government and appointed by the king was restored. The Young Turks lost their political influence after two unsuccessful coups in 1981 and 1985 against Prime Minister Prem, who, ironically, was promoted by the Young Turks to become the Prime Minister in 1980. After the elections in 1988, Prime Minister Chartchai became the first Prime Minister since 1976 who came from the party with the majority of votes in the House of Representatives. It was also the beginning of widespread vote buying and corruption in the government, which opened up the opportunity for a new military group to stage a coup in 1991.

Because of the corruption and failure of democratic governments, the coup in 1991 gained support from the public during its first few months. However, the support became resistance after the coup group showed that it had staged the coup for its own sake, not for
the good of the country, as it had claimed. The constitution was amended so that a leader of
the coup group could become the Prime Minister without being a member of the House of
Representatives. Although the assumption of the Prime Minister’s office by the coup leader
was legalized, the legitimacy of his authority was questioned by the public. On May 17,
1992, a demonstration demanding the resignation of the military Prime Minister and the
removal of amendments in the constitution ended with a violent army crackdown and
hundreds of deaths. King Rama IX intervened to end the bloodshed. An interim government
was established, and general elections were held in September 1992. Despite the incident,
politics after the elections largely remained unchanged. Vote buying, corruption, and an
unstable coalition government resulting from the fragmented party system still continued and
even got worse. It was not until 1996 that the pressure from pro-democracy groups inside the
government could lead to the development of a new constitution aiming for the reform of
political system. After about a year of the drafting process, the new constitution was passed
in November 1997. However, after the passage of the constitution, some ruling elites in the
government and National Assembly continued to amend the constitution, giving as their
reason that they wanted to make it more suitable for “Thai-style democracy.”

*Society.* In spite of the 1932 coup, peasant life continued with only small changes,
and the government remained a distant force. At the time, the urban working class was small
in size. The urban middle class was also small and composed of two groups: the Thais and
the Chinese and those of part-Chinese descent. The ethnic Thais were found mostly in the
civil service, military, and teaching profession, whereas the Chinese were in business sectors.
The relationships between the Thai ruling elites and the Chinese traders declined after the
end of King Rama V’s reign in 1910. They prospered again after the end of the nationalist
government in 1957. The cooperation between military regimes following the 1957 coup and the Chinese business elites benefited both sides. The ruling elites provided protection and privileges to the Chinese corporations and in return received financial benefits.

The economic growth during the 1980s and 1990s created a large urban middle class throughout the country. The urban population increased from 16.7% of the total population in 1975 to 35.5% in 1995. Most people in this social class have received higher education and are more concerned with political issues than those in the lower strata. Urban middle class groups played a major role in the demonstrations that overthrew the military regime in 1992. The protestors were mainly middle-class residents of Bangkok and its vicinity. A survey of 2,000 of the hundreds of thousands of demonstrators showed that nearly 60% of the survey participants had bachelor’s degrees or equivalents and nearly 50% were employed in the private sector.

*Education.* The foundation for the governmental control of education through textbooks, curriculum, examinations, and inspections created by King Rama V developed into the centralized system of basic education under the Ministry of Education. Beginning in 1961, short-term education policies have been outlined in the five-year National Education Development Plan (NEDP), which is an integral part of the five-year National Economic and Social Development Plan. During the 1960s, higher education in Thailand grew significantly. Between 1961 and 1972, the number of universities increased from 5 to 17, and student enrollment increased from about 15,000 to 100,000. A large number of students were introduced to democratic views as well as communism from abroad. They became more aware of the social and political problems in the country and played a major role in the 1973 uprising against the military dictators. However, only three years later, students’ political
activities were suppressed after hundreds of students were massacred by the government armed forces in the October 1976 incident. Today, college students—especially those in private and elite public universities—are more self-centered and less involved in national politics. Also, higher education invested in by the government serves only to develop individual professional skills and does not prepare and encourage students to become more involved in participatory democracy.

_A Case of the 1999 National Education Act_

Policy-making of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel was controlled by executive members of the Office of Education Reform (OER), the members of the Cabinet (especially the education minister), and senior civil servants in the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC), the Teachers’ Council of Thailand, and the Ministry of Education (MOE). They decided “who can get into the game” (Schattschneider, 1975, p. 102) and at what points of the game. The ONEC, an agency under the Office of the Prime Minister, is a central body responsible for national education policy-making. It played a major role in the development and passage of the National Education Act (NEA) of 1999. The National Education Commission consisted of 27 members: 11 were high-ranking civil servants, 4 were ministers and the prime minister, and 12 were appointed by the Cabinet.

The ONEC was behind the establishment of the Office of Education Reform (OER). In compliance with the NEA, the OER was established as an ad hoc public organization in January 2000 to facilitate the implementation of the NEA and was dissolved in January 2003. It was equipped it with the legal authority (Weber, 1924/1968) to prepare 23 education reform bills, including the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel.
The creation of the OER was intended to exclude the agencies in the MOE from the policy-making of education reform bills. This was because a major aim of the NEA was the decentralization of educational administration from the MOE to local administrative organizations, and the ONEC believed that those agencies would not propose any changes that might reduce their authority. Nonetheless, the exclusion was unsuccessful because the education minister, Mr. Suvit, extended the scope of the conflict to allow the agencies under his supervision, including the TCT, to get involved in policy-making.

The TCT is the teacher organization under the supervision of the MOE. It serves as an advisory body to the MOE regarding issues of educational management, curriculum, and assessment. It is also responsible for supervising teachers for adherence to the professional codes of ethics, protecting teachers’ rights, and promoting teachers’ welfare. The administrative committee of the TCT was composed of 26 members: 16 members were the education minister and senior civil servants in the MOE, and 10 were elected teacher representatives. While the OER was developing the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, the TCT proposed to the OER that it wanted to take on the responsibilities of the proposed council, which were setting professional standards, supervising teachers, and issuing and revoking teaching licenses. The OER, however, rejected the TCT’s proposal and proposed its own bill to the government.

Although there is no law or regulation governing the consideration process of a bill by the government, it is a tradition that the Cabinet will send the bill to the involved ministries for their consideration and opinions. In the case of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, after the bill was sent to the MOE, the TCT was assigned to study the bill. In the bill, the OER proposed that a new organization be
established as the council of teachers and education personnel and the current TCT become a teacher association responsible for teachers’ welfare. The TCT disagreed with the bill proposed by the OER and believed that the TCT should be upgraded to undertake the responsibilities of the proposed council. Although it did not have legal authority to prepare education reform bills, with the traditional authority (Weber, 1924/1968) of the MOE to propose suggestions to the Cabinet and support from Mr. Suvit, the TCT proposed its version of the bill to the government through the MOE.

As there were various differences between the OER’s and the TCT’s bills, the Cabinet assigned the bills to the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee to resolve the differences before sending the bill to the House of Representatives. The committee consisted of 16 members of ministers and senior civil servants from various ministries responsible for social issues. During the process of drafting the bills, both the OER and the TCT organized public hearings to collect input from teachers, parents, and university faculty, and both claimed that the majority of teachers supported their respective bill. However, after the bills were sent to the 4th Cabinet Agenda Screening Committee, where the conflict over the bill began, those teachers, parents, and university faculty had no involvement in the conflict at all. Neither the OER nor the TCT tried to mobilize the support from or, in other words, socialize the conflict (Schattschneider, 1975) with those groups who had been claimed as their supporters during the drafting process. They only used the mass media to communicate their positions on the conflicting issues to the public and to criticize the other. The conflict occurring during the bill’s consideration process was kept out of the public arena, or privatized (Schattschneider, 1975), by those authorities who were directly involved in the
conflict. The ONEC, OER, and TCT only socialized the conflict with members of the committees, Cabinet, and political parties who could influence the results of the conflict.

It did not take much effort for the authorities in Thailand to privatize the conflict occurring in policy-making because the public generally had no interest in policies if the policies would not directly affect them. An explanation for the absence of public involvement in policy-making as well as in politics is that for more than six centuries, the Thai political system has been an exclusive system in which the ruling elites have competed with each other for political control and the masses have believed that they have no right to be involved. Furthermore, whatever the results of political changes or policy-making were, they did not reflect the needs of the masses.

Until the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, the masses were completely excluded from politics by the legal system, social structure, and religious beliefs. After the coup in 1932, although the legal barrier was partly removed, the social structure and cultural beliefs were untouched. Even though the class system has ended, Thai society today is still a predominantly hierarchical society, as it was centuries ago, and Buddhist teachings remain unaffected. The way the political system was organized has been largely unchanged, and the concept of participatory democracy has never been truly promoted by the ruling elites. These factors constitute normative and cultural frameworks that constrain the masses’ choices for political participation and result in the exclusion of the masses from Thai politics.

Theory: Concepts and Sources

The following is a discussion of the four concepts employed in this study, namely, the concepts of three types of authority (Weber, 1924/1968), three elements of citizenship (Marshall, 1964), political conflict (Schattschneider, 1975), and three pillars of institutions
(Scott, 1995). Although the research findings from this study may not be generalized to other political systems or policy-making, I hope that the concepts used in this research can be applied to use to make sense of the data in other contexts.

*Types of Authority*

Weber (1924/1968) stated that no domination limits itself to only material or ideal motives as a basis for its continuance, but it also attempts to cultivate the belief in the legitimacy of its authority. Ruling institutions rarely depend on only one of the three types of authority, which are legal, traditional, and charismatic authority. He asserted, “It should be kept clearly in mind that the basis of every authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige” (p. 263). Over time, traditional authority will become routinized and rationalized and transform into legal authority. In the case of the early Ayutthaya kings and aristocrats, their traditional authority transformed into legal authority as administrative and palace laws were promulgated. Today, the legal authority of the Thai king is specified in the constitution. However, a traditional belief in the concept of the King as the Lord of Life from the Ayutthaya period still influences the people’s belief in the traditional authority of the current king. This belief raises the king’s authority beyond what is prescribed in the constitution. Even though the constitution does not provide the king with political power, he became the final arbitrator of political crises in 1973 and 1992. Likewise, the authority of high-ranking government officials in Thailand exceeds the scope of the legal authority of their offices. The public’s traditional perceptions of the authorities, which are expressed in the forms of fear, deference, and obedience, still largely exist in Thai society. The belief in traditional authority has influenced the roles of the public in Thai politics.
Traditional authority has always been a crucial factor in policy-making in Thailand. Even though the office of Education Reform (OER) was provided with the legal authority to prepare educational reform bills, the agencies in the Ministry of Education (MOE) that did not have legal authority to prepare bills but had traditional authority to propose suggestions to the Cabinet were able to alter the bills prepared by the OER. Occasionally, the legitimacy of enacted rules may be in question, as in the case of a military leader of the 1991 coup. Despite the fact that his assumption of the Prime Minister’s office was authorized by the constitution, he was overthrown by the people who did not believe in the legitimacy of his authority.

Weber’s (1924/1968) typology of authority can be applied to the study of politics at any level: national, local, or organizational. Because ruling institutions or leaders generally depend on more than one type of authority, researchers could examine the types and the development of authority that political actors or institutions have. In addition, because authority is the legitimated right to make and enforce certain categories of decisions (Parsons, 1969), the researchers could investigate how authority affected political conflicts and how the actors or institutions involved in those conflicts exercised their authority to achieve their goals. As Weber suggested, the basis of every authority is a belief. Therefore, how the political actors or institutions cultivated and maintained the belief in the legitimacy of their authority should also be examined.

Elements of Citizenship

Citizenship is “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community” (Marshall, 1964, p.84). The political element of citizenship is a requirement for political participation. During the period of the absolute monarchy of Ayutthaya, citizenship rights
were a function of caste. The commoners, or prai, and slaves had no citizenship at all. They had limited civil rights, no political rights, and no rights to receive social services. They also had to work as laborers for members of royal and noble families for up to six months a year. They were excluded from the political and governing systems. The royalty and nobility had full citizenship and were the only groups that could participate in politics. Their political citizenship was supported by the religious beliefs that, at the same time, took away the political rights of the masses.

The social reform and economic development begun in the reign of King Rama IV (1851–1868) of the Rattanakosin period resulted in increased civil and social citizenship rights for the masses. The abolition of the labor system and slavery gave the masses more civil rights. The development of public services, such as health care, education, and transportation, provided them with better social rights. The political citizenship of the masses, however, was unchanged. They still had no right to take part in the political and governing systems. Members of royal families and aristocrats remained in control over the politics.

The coup in 1932 brought an end to the domination of the politics by the hereditary aristocrats and royalty. The newcomers, modern-educated aristocrats from wealthy and official families, however, did not give political citizenship to the masses. Instead, they kept the political rights for themselves and competed with one another to become the dominant political force. Through the constitution, they limited the political citizenship of the king and members of the royal families. They created political structures and processes that worked to their advantage and that kept the masses out of the political system. For decades, half of the members of the House of Representatives and all the members of the Senate were appointed
by the government. Moreover, during the periods of military regimes, there were no elected members of parliament at all. Nonetheless, an elected parliament did not mean that the people had an opportunity to participate in politics, as vote turnouts were usually low and mobilized rather than voluntary. Although the right of the masses to participate in the political community has been provided by the constitution, in practice the Thai people still do not completely have the political element of their citizenship. Schattschneider (1975) suggested that the exclusion of the masses from the politics by extralegal processes, by the social structure, and by the way the political system is organized may be far more effective than exclusion by law.

The process of the policy-making for the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel was designed to take away the political element of citizenship of the Teachers’ Council of Thailand (TCT). Instead of allowing the agencies in the MOE, including the TCT, to develop education reform bills, the NEA allowed the creation of the OER and authorized it to prepare the bills. However, during the consideration process, a bias in political organization (Schattschneider, 1975) provided the TCT with the citizenship to participate in policy-making. The bias or support from the education minister allowed the TCT to propose its bill to the Cabinet through the MOE. The Thai people, especially teachers who would be directly affected by the bill, still did not have full citizenship to participate in the policy-making process of the bill. They were allowed to participate in the drafting process in which there were no conflicts. However, when the conflicts began during the consideration process, they became the audience who were not invited to take part in the game.
Marshall’s (1964) concept of elements of citizenship can be used to examine the nature of polities and how polities are organized. The concept can be applied to the study of polity at any level, whether it is the national, local, or organizational level. Researchers could investigate who are members of the polity; what elements of citizenship that individuals, groups, or institutions have or do not have; and how their citizenship has changed over time. As citizenship determines various rights of members of the polity, the researchers could also examine how citizenship affects the roles of individuals, groups, or institutions involved in political conflicts happening in the polity.

*Concepts of Political Conflict*

Schattschneider (1975) stated that in a free political system it is difficult to avoid public involvement in conflict. During the period of the absolute monarchy, the Thai political system was not a free system; it was an exclusive system. Thus, political conflicts were contests among only members of the royal families and aristocrats. The conflict leading to the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932 was also a private conflict between the elites in which the masses had no involvement. After 1932, Thai politics was still not a free system; it became a contest between the civilian and military aristocrats. Later on, the elite business politicians joined the game. The conflicts were private, and political structures and processes were created to exclude the public. The cycle of a civilian government and a military regime mirrored the shift of political control between these two poles and, occasionally, the coalition between the two powers during the semidemocratic periods.

The development of higher education and the economy allowed groups of college students and the middle classes to enter the political system, though only for short periods. The growth of higher education in the 1960s was a major factor resulting in the student
uprising that ended the military regime in 1973. However, the situation after 1973 became a threat to the political control of both the military and civilian elites. In the eyes of the ruling elites, student and farmer protests and labor strikes were a danger to their authority. They thus collaborated to redefine the conflict by replacement of the conflict over the return to Thailand of an exiled regime leader with the conflict over the expansion of communism in Thailand brought about by the students. The redefinition of the conflict allowed the authorities to use force against their opposition and to exclude the masses and students from the political system by 1976.

The conflict between a civilian government and the military leaders again led to a coup in 1991. The government broke the tradition of giving the defense portfolio to military leaders and also cut the military allocation. The masses had no involvement in the conflict, and when they tried to take part in the politics they were once more excluded by the use of armed forces. The economic growth of the 1980s resulted in an increase in the middle-class population who took part in the uprising against the military regime in 1992. The conflict was defined by the middle classes as the question over the legitimacy of the coup leader who became the Prime Minster even though he had previously announced that he would not accept the position. Despite the fact that the uprising could overthrow the regime, the public’s participation in Thai politics was largely unaffected.

Concerning the implementation of the NEA of 1999, the ONEC knew that the decentralization of educational administration, which was an aim of the NEA, would face resistance from the MOE. It thus tried to manage the scope of conflict by limiting the involvement of the MOE’s agencies in the policy-making of the education reform bills. The exclusion of the MOE’s agencies was unsuccessful because the education minister used his
authority to extend the scope of conflict to include the agencies under his supervision. The public was largely excluded from the conflict. It was allowed to get involved only through public hearings during the drafting process of the bills, in which the conflict had not begun yet. Nonetheless, those hearings were organized to support predetermined proposals of the authorities. During the consideration process in which the conflict occurred, there was no channel for the public to become involved: no public hearings and no mobilization of public support by either side of the conflict.

Schattschneider’s (1975) concepts of conflict offer an effective way to understand the dynamics of politics. Researchers could examine how political conflicts were defined and organized and by whom. They could investigate who were involved in such conflicts, who were excluded, and how the inclusion and exclusion occurred. By examining the strategies used to socialize, privatize, and replace the conflicts, the researchers could gain insight into the political processes in a polity.

Pillars of Institutions

Scott (1995) postulated that “institutions consist of cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior” (p. 33). Regulative processes include rule setting, monitoring, and sanctioning activities created to constrain and regulate behavior. The normative framework of an institution is composed of values and norms that introduce a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life. Cognitive elements consist of the rules that constitute the nature of reality and the frames through which meaning is made. Cognitive theorists postulated that what we do is, to a large extent, a result of “who we are and what ways of action make sense for us in a given situation .... Compliance occurs in many circumstances because other types of behavior are
inconceivable” (Scott, 1995, p. 44). Individuals construct and continuously negotiate social reality in everyday life within the context of wider preexisting cultural systems.

In the Ayutthaya period, laws were passed to legitimize the caste and labor systems, which in turn excluded the masses from the political and governing systems. The Hindu beliefs in divine kingship, reincarnation, and karma integrated into Thai Buddhism were exploited to support the caste system and the exclusion of the masses. These religious beliefs, implanted into the masses through socialization and monastic-based education, and the caste system influenced the masses’ conceptions of who they were and what choices of actions they had. These same factors also had an effect on the Ayutthaya elites’ perceptions of their own place in the society and their role in the politics and gave them the legitimacy of their right to rule. Although the Ayutthaya kingdom ended in 1767, the beliefs and cultures were carried on to the Rattanakosin kingdom by the people, and the caste and governing systems were transferred to and maintained by the Rattanakosin ruling elites.

The continuation of the caste and labor systems for almost four centuries had created cultures, values, and norms that changed minimally, if at all, when the systems were ended. Despite the end of the caste system more than a century ago, Thailand is still a hierarchical society. The end of the absolute monarchy in 1932 slightly affected the attitudes of the masses toward their king, and the coup did not bring any abrupt changes to the cultures, values, and norms of the people in Thai society. Fundamental Buddhist teachings were unaffected by the changes in politics. The social reform program initiated by a military leader after the coup was unsuccessful and abandoned shortly after he fell from power. The constitutions, in practice, have had minor impacts on the political participation of the masses in Thai politics. The class system that transformed into today’s hierarchical society, the

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attitudes of the masses toward the authorities and politics, and Buddhist beliefs have shaped the masses’ conceptions of self and their place in the political system. These factors as well as the way the political system is organized by the authorities have contributed to the persistence of the exclusiveness of the Thai political system and Thai semidemocracy or, in another phrase, “Thai constitutional autocracy.” An understanding of this development helps to explain the absence of public involvement in the conflict over the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel.

The concepts of the three pillars of institutions could be used to make sense of how the institutionalization of structures and processes within a polity occurred and what contributed the institutionalization. They could be applied at any level of analysis: national, local, or organizational. Researchers can examine how each pillar of institutions, that is, the regulative, normative, and cognitive, influenced the ways the polity and politics were organized and how legal requirements, norms, and belief systems affected the structures of a polity and the processes of politics occurring in that polity. They could study the development of a polity or a political system to gain an understanding of how each pillar of the institution provides legitimacy to the structures of the polity and its political processes.

Implications of the Research and Suggestions for Further Research

Schattschneider (1975) stated that every conflict consists of two parts: the few individuals who are actively engaged at the center and the audience who is attracted by the conflict. The audience is likely to get involved in the conflict and do things that determine the outcome of the conflict because the audience is never really neutral. This does not apply to Thai politics because the Thai political system is an exclusive system, not a free system. Although today a large number of the public follow political conflict closely through the
mass media, more often than not they are still an audience who has never truly participated in the conflicts. They have fulfilled their political involvement by casting their votes in the general elections. In some cases, such as the policy-making of the bill establishing the council of teachers and educational personnel, public participation was extended into the drafting process of the policy-making. After that, the public was excluded from the rest of the policy-making processes.

An implication of this study is that political processes go beyond vote casting and public hearings organized during policy-making. To become participants, the audience must be able to see the big picture of the political system and processes. Therefore, educational leaders in Thailand who want to participate in educational policy-making need to understand the nature of Thai politics and policy-making. Thai politics is an elite system in which only those who are in the system and outsiders who have connections can take part in political activities. Policy-making in Thai education is a part of the political system, and exclusiveness is the nature of the process. The exclusion of the public and educators from educational policy-making could result in policies that respond to only the needs of certain groups that participate in the process. The diversities of input from intellectuals as well as practitioners, however, would contribute to the development of Thai education. Thus, educational leaders must have an understanding of how the system works, who the players in the system are, who controls the system, and how they do it. After they gain insight into the nature and processes of the system, they will be able to know how to get involved effectively and how to influence educational policies.

Another implication of this research relates to the concepts and theories used in the study. Even though the findings of this research may not be transferred to other contexts, the
concepts and theories can be applied in the studies of other political systems and policy-making processes at the national, local, or organizational level. In a study of a polity or a political system at any of those three levels, researchers can use the concept of types of authority (Weber, 1924/1968) to examine authority that the political actors in the system have, how that authority has helped them, and how they have used that authority to maintain their dominance or to win conflicts. In the same study, the concept of elements of citizenship (Marshall, 1964) can also be applied to examine the citizenship of political actors in the system. The researchers can investigate who has what types of citizenship and who does not have any, how they obtained their citizenship, and how their citizenship supports or how their lack of citizenship limits their activities. By answering those questions, the researchers could gain insight into the nature of the polity.

In a study of politics or political processes, researchers can employ Schattschneider’s (1975) various concepts of political conflicts. For instance, the researchers can examine how conflict was defined, what the conflict was about, and who defined the conflict. They can also investigate who organized the conflict, how the conflict was organized, what political strategies were used, who were involved in the conflict, and who were excluded from the conflict. Finally, institutional theories and the concept of the three pillars of institutions can be used to make sense of how a political system was maintained or institutionalized. The researchers can examine which pillars of the constitution, the regulative, normative, or cognitive, provided legitimacy to the structures of the polity and processes of the politics, how those pillars were used, and by whom.

The findings of this research have revealed certain aspects of Thai politics and educational policy-making and created more questions that deserve further investigation.
Additional research can be conducted to understand the public’s conceptions of political participation and their place in Thai political system. Examinations of the masses’ perception of public education and their roles in the development of public education in Thailand could further comprehension of the public’s involvement in educational policy-making. Further research should also be conducted to determine how the involvement of the public in Thai politics can be increased and to identify effective ways for the public to influence policy-making. The knowledge obtained from further research would assist educational leaders in Thailand to develop their understanding of educational politics and to influence education policies.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Document of Analysis Operations

Research Issue being explored: ________________________________________________

Date: _______________________

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Appendix B

Human Subjects Committee Approval