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Change and Change Management in Higher Education in Thailand

Abstract

This research focuses on change and change management in higher education in Thailand, specifically in six Rajabhat universities in Bangkok. Systems thinking is linked to chaos and complexity theory to provide a theoretical framework to help explain and interpret fieldwork findings in this study. These theories suggest new perspectives for thinking about research which includes how people respond to change and how leaders manage change. Change is unpredictable and people who are leading change in higher education have to understand their environment and the impact of change upon the behaviour of their members.

Numerous educational reforms have been introduced in Thailand since the financial crisis in 1997. The first changes were introduced through the National Education Act of 1999, and then in 2004 the Rajabhat University Acts transformed the former Rajabhat Institutes to Rajabhat University status. A case study approach has been adopted to analyse the changes and the change management practices occurring in six of the new Rajabhat Universities, all located in Bangkok. Systems theory is adjusted to explain how organisational respond to change. The four major environments that have changed the policies and the strategies of Thai Higher Education are Western ideas or Globalisation, Thailand Financial crisis in 1997 and the role of International Monetary Fund (IMF), Political-legal and Technological (ICT).

The four major factors of environmental impact on Thai Higher Education have been continued until today. The longer they have impacted the more changed have been the universities in Thailand. The economic crisis in 1997 which led to

change in the National Education Act and the innovation of Rajabhat University Act in 2004, have impacted on Thai people and Thai society to think and understand the new environment in the different ways.Universities have adopted a new role to change the Thai people into higher quality workers enjoying more quality of life.This study focuses upon how six Rajabhat universities reacted to this policy change and how they become autonomous universities under the supervision of the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC).

In the Thai context autonomy is seen as a significant step toward strengthening public higher education institutions so that they will be more accountable to the public, more adaptive to educational and social needs and market demand, and more proactive and dynamic in prioritising their goals, outputs and outcomes.

Changes that have happened within six Rajabhat universities are consistent with the explanation of Dooley (1997) and organisations are showing potentially chaotic behaviour. The Presidents from six Rajabhat universities and their senior executives have played important roles in setting priorities and encouraging their staff in the move towards becoming autonomous universities which generate innovations, and address issues of cost-effectiveness, accountability, performance-based assessment, good governance and long-term social and economic development. This study involved in-depth interviews with each president and a number of vice-presidents from the six Rajabhat universities in the Bangkok region. Change and change management in higher education in Thailand has been considered as one of the most important factors that will affect the development of the country. However, to understand change and to implement change is complex and the results are unpredictable. In this research three major areas are the foci of this study into change and change management in Rajabhat universities.

The research focuses on the way in which the new Rajabhat universities have changed as a result of the National Education Act (1999) and the Rajabhat Universities Act (2004). The following three major questions are addressed:

1. How has the National Education Act (1999) and the Rajabhat Universities Act (2004) changed the new Rajabhat universities operate in term of policies, structures and programs?
2. How did the senior management team of the new Rajabhat universities respond to meet the requirements of the Acts? Why did they implement these changes?

3. How will these changes impact on the Rajabhat universities in the future?

Every Rajabhat University has adopted the Rajabhat University Act 2004 as the master plan for their policies and their objectives. However, each Rajabhat University has been implementing the Rajabhat University Act 2004 in different ways and they all believe that they are doing the correct and appropriate things for their universities. Rajabhat Universities were given a high level of autonomy and were able to interpret the new policies in different ways and create a variety of projects and activities depending on their resources and their experience.

The most common change was to empower more people to make decisions by devolving authority from the former National Council to the President, the Vice – Presidents and the Deans. In the first year after the Rajabhat institutions became universities, new faculties were created and the number of students increased. If they had not decentralised, they would not be able to compete and provide a good quality education service as did other more established universities. Decisions about which changes to introduce needed to be made quickly, so that it was very important for each President to have a senior executive team whose members could contribute to the decision-making process. The research
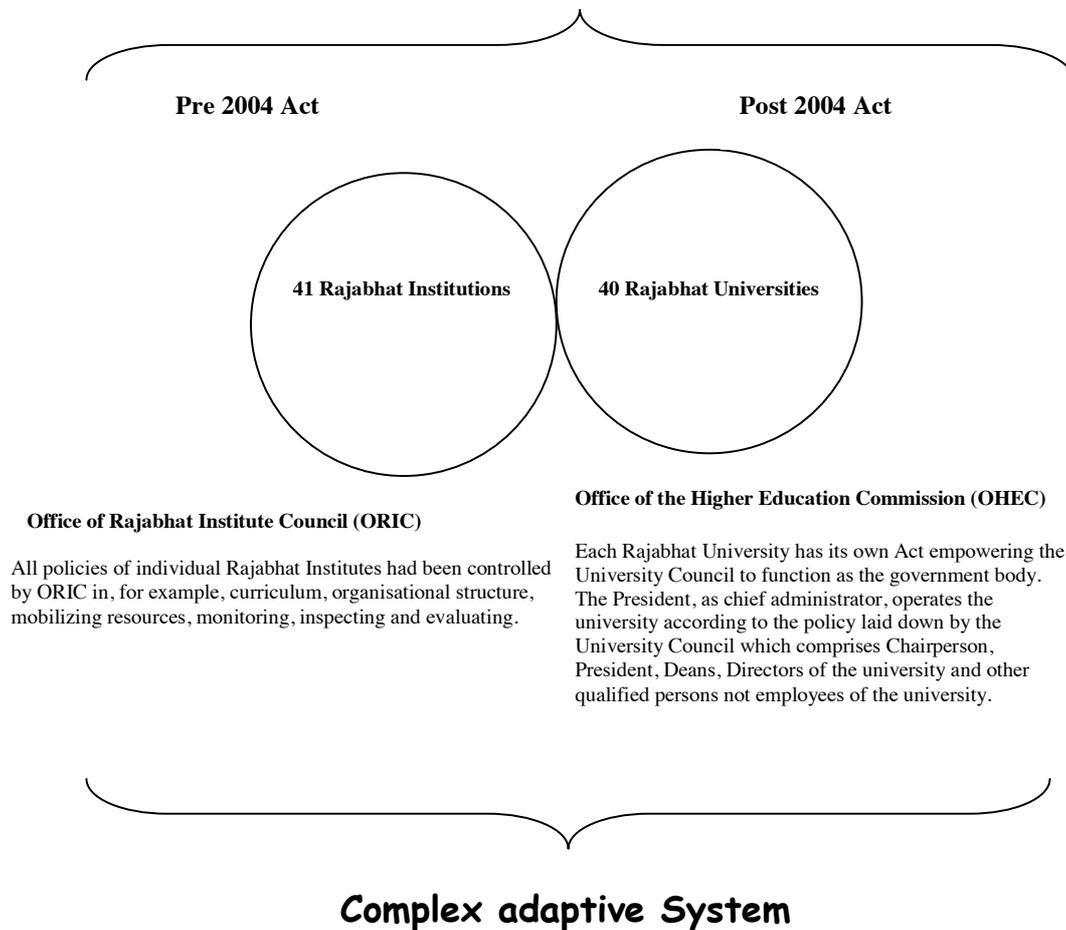
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approach adopted in this study is qualitative. Change and change management is studied in the actual settings of six Rajabhat universities.

The six universities are studied as six individual case studies, but commonalities and differences among the universities will be identified.The data for this study was obtained through interviews with university presidents and vice-presidents, as well as analysis of reports and documents of the universities, the Ministry of Education, the National Education Act (1999) and other documents related to Rajabhat universities. This study investigates change and change management policies, processes and practices in six Rajabhat universities in Bangkok, Thailand. These universities have been chosen because they are closely located geographically and are partners in the Office of Rajabhat Universities Council (ORUC) in which they collaborate to provide information about how they have responded to the National Education Act (1999) and the Rajabhat University Act (2004). This study focuses on change policies and practices which have occurred and how the Rajabhat universities plan to survive in the new milieu of higher educational reform in Thailand.

Introduction

In 2004, the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) proposed a plan to improve the quality of higher education and transform existing public institutions into autonomous universities. Rajabhat Universities throughout Thailand have changed their organisational structures and policies in response to the new government policy. It has been accepted that "higher education is essential to human resource development, especially in this era of globalisation, where a country's international competitiveness depends a great deal on the capacity of its citizens to thrive in a knowledge-based economy and society" (Office of the Education Council, 2006, p. 71). However, the change under consideration in this thesis has been a major transformational change which created the new Rajabhat Universities from the former Rajabhat Institutes, which had begun as teachers colleges, with the first one being established in 1892.

Before the Rajabhat University Act (2004) was enacted, every Rajabhat Institute was similar (Office of the Prime Minister, 2004). All had the same organisational structure and curriculum. Students, lecturers and staff were able to move and work in any Rajabhat Institute around the country. Every policy had been provided by the Ministry of Education and was under the supervision of the Office of Rajabhat Institute Council (ORIC). However, when the environment changed and the new Acts were implemented, every Rajabhat University had to adapt itself to the new system, so that it could achieve its objectives. Figure 1, shows the process of transformational change of the new Rajabhat Universities after 2004.

Pre 2004 Act

41 Rajabhat Institutions

Office of Rajabhat Institute Council (ORIC)

All policies of individual Rajabhat Institutes had been controlled
by ORIC in, for example, curriculum, organisational structure,
mobilizing resources, monitoring, inspecting and evaluating.

Post 2004 Act

40 Rajabhat Universities

Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC)

Each Rajabhat University has its own Act empowering the
University Council to function as the government body.
The President, as chief administrator, operates the
university according to the policy laid down by the
University Council which comprises Chairperson,
President, Deans, Directors of the university and other
qualified persons not employees of the university.

Complex adaptive System

Figure 1.. Transformational Change from Rajabhat Institute to Rajabhat
University.

Figure 1, shows the major change of Rajabhat Universities reacted to this Act
and how they become autonomous universities under the supervision of the
Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC). In the Thai context,
autonomy is seen as a significant step toward strengthening public higher
education institutions so that they will be more accountable to the public, more
adaptive to educational and social needs and market demands, and more
proactive and dynamic in prioritising their goals, outputs and outcomes.

Transformational change that has led to new Rajabhat Universities might be explained by complex adaptive systems (CAS), developed to manage change in many organisations (Dooley, 1997). The original theory of CAS is found in chaos theory and Dooley (1997, p.89) concludes as follows:

> …there is not necessarily a consistent pattern of change. Change may occur rapidly or slowly; it may accumulate linearly or nonlinearly; it may be constant or have bursts of punctuated equilibrium; it may be resisted or encouraged; it may take little or many resources; it may have a profound or no effect on system outcomes.

To consider Rajabhat Universities as CAS can facilitate an understanding of the roles of leadership in the changed higher education environment. The changed qualification requirements of the labour market and the impact of globalisation suggests a new paradigm for leadership is required to manage change in higher educational institutions. "A leadership paradigm that focuses on enabling the learning, creative, and adaptive capacity of CAS within a context of knowledge-producing organizations" will be more beneficial than the old model of leadership (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007, p. 298).

Changes that have happened within six Rajabhat Universities are consistent with the explanation of Dooley (1997) and organisations are showing potentially chaotic behaviour. The Presidents from six Rajabhat Universities and their senior executives have played important roles in setting priorities and encouraging their staff in the move towards becoming autonomous universities which generate innovations, and address issues of cost-effectiveness, accountability, performance-based assessment, good governance and long-term social and economic development. This study involved interviews with each President and a number of Vice-Presidents from the six Rajabhat Universities in the Bangkok region.

Thai Culture Conditioning to Leadership styles

Geert Hofstede (1980) conducted research to understand the different perspectives of people who live in different countries. He argued that the major concept that makes people interpret things differently is their culture. He wrote:

> I define culture as the collective mental programmeming of the people in an environment. Culture is not a characteristic of individuals; it encompasses a number of people who were conditioned by the same education and life experience. When we speak of the culture of a group, a tribe, a geographical region, a national minority, or a nation, culture refers to the collective mental programmeming that these people have in common; the programmeming that is different from that of other groups, tribes, regions, minorities or majorities, or nations. (Hofstede, 1980, p. 43)

Hofstede (1980) explained that culture is difficult to change because it lives in people's minds and it is shared by the group of people. "The core element in culture are 'values'. […] So management is subject to cultural values. Cultural values differ among societies, but within a society they are remarkably stable over time" (Hofstede, 1999, p. 35). There are four major types of culture that have been discussed in his works; there are Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism-Collectivism, and Masculinity-Femininity.

In the societies that have high Power Distance, the members have been accepted that power is not for everyone. Some groups of people have more power than the others. Uncertainty Avoidance refers to situation that members do not want to encounter any ambiguous situations. They try to avoid every conflict or argument with other people. People in the societies that have been ranked as a high Uncertainty Avoidance are likely to have characteristics as a polite and respectful person. Individualism is the society that focuses on themselves and their families. They give the priority to look after themselves and their families before the societies which is opposite to Collectivism. Masculinity is the society

that people think highly of the successful hard working, money and achieving their goals which is opposite to the societies that have been recognised as high Femininity. People in high Femininity have been leading by feeling and concerning about the quality of life before other things.

According to Hofstede, Thailand ranks high on Power Distance, high as a Collectivist Culture, high on Uncertainty Avoidance, and high on Femininity. This means that Thai culture accepts that some people have greater authority than others, and Thai people are more concerned about 'we' rather than 'I'. Moreover, Thai people have tendency to avoid any conflicts and arguments and find that change is an uncomfortable situation (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000). Hofstede's research indicated the importance of maintaining good relationships with people rather than following rules or regulations.

Understanding the roles of leaderships and how six Rajabhat Universities respond to change, the four dimensions of national culture were found as a set of criteria whereby the characteristics of leaders can be meaningfully described. Every policy that the Presidents and the Vice-Presidents introduced is related to the perspective of staff and the Thai culture. It is important to consider that Western styles of management are helpful to support change in the organisations. However, as Hofstede says the most "important is that 'management is always about people' (Hofstede, 1999, p. 34) if the administrators are not able to understand the cultural values of staff they will not achieve the universities' goals.

Higher Education in Thailand

Higher education in Thailand is recognised as formally beginning in late 1900 when King Rama V, King Chulalongkorn, planned to modernize the country after he had visited many countries in Europe (Bhumibol & Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand., 1988). One of his main objectives was to establish formal

education and universities throughout Thailand. Due to the lack of highly educated professionals in, for example, law, medicine and engineering, professional knowledge had not been taught to the same standards as Europe (Thailand. Khana Kammakåan åEkkalak khøåong Chåat., 2000). The first university, established in 1917, was given the name Chulalongkorn University, and it is the best-known university in Thailand (Office of the Education Council, 2006). Most Thais regard the quality of students and standard of teaching in this university as being very high.

After the political transformation in 1932, when a national constitution was developed and an elected government was set up, more universities were established namely, Thammasat University in 1933, and Mahidol University, Kasetsart University, and Silpakorn University in 1942. Later, when Thailand developed a policy to expand higher education for the people in regional areas, three provincial universities were set up: Chang Mai (1964), Khon Kaen (1964), and Prince of Songkhla (1967). During the 1970s and 1980s, more universities were established, such as the National Institution of Development Administration (NIDA), King Mongkut's Institute of Technology, and Srinakharinwirot University (Office of the Prime Minister, 2000). These universities play an important role in developing the nation and raising the number of Thai people who graduate from universities each year, increasing Thailand's intellectual and skills capital.

King Rama V also created Phranakhon Teachers College, which opened in 1892, before any universities were established (Phranakhon Rajabhat University, 2005). King Chulalongkorn wanted to give all Thais a chance to study, regardless of their economic and social status by creating teachers colleges to train more teachers for the nation. By 1995 thirty-six teachers' colleges had been established throughout the country. In 1995 the teachers colleges became known as Rajabhat Institutes and additional courses in management science, science, engineering and arts were introduced to broaden the opportunities for people to gain a higher education.

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The present King of Thailand, King Bhumibol Adulyadej gave the name 'Rajabhat' to every 'Teachers' College' in Thailand, emphasising that 'Rajabhat' means the people that belong to the King and the King always looks after his people. If you serve the King, you also have an obligation to serve the people (Phranakhon Rajabhat University, 2005). These Institutes became Universities in 2004. Today there are forty Rajabhat Universities in Thailand, of which six are located in Bangkok. The objective of all Rajabhat Universities is to develop local wisdom and provide the necessary skills for students to become productive members of their society (Sangnapaboworn, 2003). Together with other higher education institutions in Thailand, Rajabhat Universities have been radically changed from single-purpose teacher education institutions to multi-faculty universities and have to cope with a new decentralised decision-making environment.

The OHEC is responsible for the standards and quality of all the higher education institutions in Thailand. Every plan that has been formulated for the higher educational institutions has to follow the government's policies, National Economic Social Development Plan and National Education Plan. Especially, the Ninth Higher Education Plan (2002-2006) states that four major strategies will be implemented by every Higher Education Institution: (1) building up the capacity of higher education institutions to reach quality at an international level by relying on Thai local wisdom; (2) supporting and providing opportunities for sustainable academic strengths in higher education; (3) creating a network of higher education institutions to enhance stability in communities and localities; and (4) restructuring organizations of higher education administration and management for quality and efficiency (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2007).

Currently, they are 163 higher education institutions in Thailand. The main objective of every higher education institution is "to produce Thai citizens who are of high quality both academically and professionally, equipped with knowledge and skills needed for national development" (Office of the Higher Education

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Commission, 2007, p. 9). However, all the 163 higher education institutions can be separated into the two major types of institutions, shown in Table 1, They are 96 institutions called 'Public Higher Education' and 67 institutions called 'Private Higher Education.' Rajabhat Universities are called 'Public University' and are supervised by the OHEC.

Table 1. Directory of Thai Higher Education Institutions.

96 Public Higher Education Institutions	67 Private Higher Education Institutions
☺ 20 Limited Admission Universities and institutions	
☺ 2 Open Admission Universities	
☺ 4 Autonomous Universities	
☺ 2 Buddhist Universities	
☺ 40 Rajabhat Universities	
☺ 9 Rajamangala Universities of Technology	
☺ 1 Pathumwan Institute of Technology	
☺ 18 Community Colleges	

Education at every level of Thai society is playing an important role to transform Thailand into a learning society with a knowledge-based economy (Sangnapaboworn, 2003). Schools and universities are required to adjust their knowledge and practices the way they teach people. The government wanted to use Rajabhat Universities to encourage students who are from a lower economic status background to achieve more skills and to increase their income. However, the government did not have sufficient financial resources to support each Rajabhat University at the previous level to improve their knowledge and equipment for teaching and learning. Every Rajabhat University now is more autonomous, but has to increase its revenue and performance to compete with other universities in Thailand (Office of the Education Council, 2004). It is a problem for every Rajabhat University to find solutions to these issues.

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Much government funding is linked to the number of students enrolling at the Rajabhat Universities. If enrolments are to be increased, recruitment strategies must aim to widen access for every student to have a chance to go to university. In Thailand, Rajabhat Universities are the second choice for students who cannot gain entry to Chulalongkorn University or other longer established universities. There are also some effects when the students graduate, in that they are disadvantaged in the labour market relative to Chulalongkorn University and Thammasat University graduates who have applied for the same jobs. From the problems described above, it can be seen that Rajabhat Universities have became the group of universities that will face trouble in the near future, if they do not develop effective strategies to improve their reputations.

In 2002 the Ministry of University Affairs attempted to move public institutions out of a government bureaucratic system to become more autonomous. Autonomous universities would have a more flexible funding allocation, competitive personnel management and greater accountability for higher education quality (Office of the National Education Commission, 2001). The staff would be hired on a contractual basis with the status of employees (Office of Education Council, 2004). They are no longer given the status of government officers and do not receive the same benefits and pension funds, as was the case in the past.

There are many government officers who already work in these universities who feel worried and disagree with these policies, but the government has given the reason that when the universities' managements have adjusted to the new environment, they will have increased flexibility to provide a higher quality of employment for their staff. It has been argued that such changes in the practice and nature of their employment will lead to increased salaries and benefits (Office of Education Council, 2004).

This policy has had a big impact on the attitudes of the Thai people. In Thai society it is believed that working for the government provides secure, life-long

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employment (Mulder, 1990). Government officers are mostly people who have been used to working within these organisations until they retire. They have seen this as a lifetime career and do not expect to lose their jobs, so long as do nothing wrong, and the organisations do not become bankrupt. Many university employees, presently government officers, are concerned about the effects of this new employment policy on their careers (Sundarasaradula, Hasan, Walker, & Tobias, 2005).

To further complicate and increase competition among higher education providers, many foreign universities from developed countries look at Thailand as a big market to expand their student base. Many of them have staff with more advanced skills in teaching and learning than the staff in Thai universities (Sangnapaboworn, 2003). This situation will make Thai universities pay more consideration as to how they construct plans to achieve their future strategic objectives (Office of Education Council, 2004).

Recent Education Reform in Thailand

In this section recent reforms in Thai education will be discussed with reference to the higher education sector and the establishment of the new Rajabhat Universities. The Education Reform Act of 1999 was a wide-ranging act which emphasised government support for nine years of basic education for all, and the concept of life-long learning. This Act impacted upon all levels of education in Thailand. The Rajabhat University Act of 2004 related specifically to the conversion of the existing forty one Rajabhat Institutes into autonomous universities designed to serve the local community.

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The National Education Act (1999)

Three principles underpin this Act: the provision of lifelong education; the participation of the community in every level of education; and continuing development of knowledge and learning processes (Office of the National Education Commission, 2002).   Section nine of the National Education Act (1999) provides a master plan to reorganise the structure of all higher education institutions. In Section nine of the Act, mention is made of unity in policy and diversity in implementation; decentralisation of authority to educational service areas, educational institutions and local administration organisations; and the setting of educational standards and the implementation of a system of quality assurance for all levels and all types of education (Office of the Education Council, 2006).

To ensure the quality of the academic programmes offered, The National Education Act (1999) required all Thai educational institutions to implement a system of quality assurance. Every year the OHEC makes visits to assess the quality of all universities to ensure improvement of their educational quality and standards. Every university has to submit annual reports to the OHEC and make these reports available to the public for the purpose of improving the educational quality and standards and for the external quality assurance process (Office of the Education Council, 2006).

The Rajabhat University Act (2004)

After June 2004, all the Rajabhat Institutes which were established under the Rajabhat Institute Act (1995) became Rajabhat Universities. This legislative change meant that all the Rajabhat Universities became independent and were able to develop their own administration and management systems. Prior to this Act, Rajabhat Institutes had been centrally controlled through a Council which set the policies, the staffing levels and conditions of employment, the budget and the

curriculum. The previous centralisation of authority meant that all forty-one Rajabhat Institutes were similar throughout Thailand (Office of the Prime Minister, 2004), having identical administrative structures and the same curriculum.

Section seven of the Rajabhat University Act (2004) specifies that the main purposes and responsibilities of all the Rajabhat Universities are that they are to be institutions for local development, to maintain Thai arts and culture, and to provide lessons, research, and academic services to society. This general idea from the Act has been implemented in every Rajabhat University and has changed the ways they provide education and service to their local communities (Office of the Prime Minister, 2004). According to the Rajabhat University Act (2004), each Rajabhat University can develop their own administration and management system, with academic liberty and greater freedom in making financial decisions. The Presidents and the Vice-Presidents play an important role in implementing this Act.

The Rajabhat University Act (2004), Section seven, states:

> The University is an institute of higher education for local development in order to help reinforce national intelligence, revive the learning force, promote local wisdom, create artistry for secure and sustainable prosperity of the people, take part in managing, maintaining, utilising natural resources and environment on balance and sustention basis under the objectives of providing education, enhancing advanced knowledge and professionalism, providing lessons, researching, providing academic services to society, improving, transferring and developing technology, maintaining arts and culture, generating teachers and enhancing the academic standing of teachers. (Office of the Prime Minister, 2004, p. 2)

Every Rajabhat University has adopted the Rajabhat University Act (2004) as the master plan for their policies and their objectives. However, each Rajabhat

University has been implementing the Rajabhat University Act (2004) in different ways and they all believe that they are doing the correct and appropriate things for their universities. Rajabhat Universities were given a high level of autonomy and were able to interpret the new policies in different ways and create a variety of projects and activities, depending on their resources and their expertise. The most common change was to empower more people to make decisions by devolving authority from the former National Council to the President, the Vice-Presidents and the Deans. In the first year after the Rajabhat institutions became universities, new faculties were created and the number of students increased. If they had not decentralised, they would not be able to compete and provide a good quality education service, as did the more established universities. Decisions about which changes to introduce needed to be made quickly, so that it was very important for each President to have a senior executive team whose members could contribute to the decision-making process.

Research Questions

Three questions formed the focus of this study:

1. How have the Acts changed the way that Rajabhat Universities operate?
2. How did the senior management team of the new Rajabhat Universities respond to meet the requirements of the Acts? Why did they implement these changes?
3. How will these changes impact on the Rajabhat Universities in the future?

The Presidents and the Vice-Presidents of each of the six Rajabhat Universities in Bangkok have cooperated and provided information to answer these questions. The responses indicated that each Rajabhat University considered their options and prepared themselves for change.

Question 1: How have the Acts changed the way that Rajabhat Universities operate?

In 2002 the Ministry of University Affairs sought to move public institutions out of a bureaucratic system to become more autonomous. Autonomous universities would have a more flexible funding allocation, competitive personnel management and greater accountability for higher education quality. New staff would be hired on a contractual basis with the status of employees. They would not government officers and would not get the same benefits and pension funds as those who were employed formerly.

There are many government officers who work in these universities who feel worried and disagree with these policies, but the government has given reasons that when the administration and management have adjusted to the new environment, they will have increased flexibility and provide heightened quality of employment for their staff. Such changes in the practice and nature of their employment will provide increased salaries and benefits (Office of Education Council, 2004).

This policy has made a big impact on the attitude of Thai people. In Thai society it is believed that working for the government provides secure lifelong employment. The government officers or the government employees are mostly people who have been used to working with these organisations until they retire (Kamoche, 2000). They have seen this as a lifetime career and do not expect to lose their jobs if they do not do anything wrong, and the governmental organisations do not become bankrupt (Sundarasaradula et al., 2005).

Under the National Education Act (1999), the government is obliged to provide 12 years of basic education free of charge (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1998). As a consequence, demand for higher education will be even greater every year with a higher flow of high school graduates into tertiary education (Office of the Prime

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Minister, 2000). It can be seen that not only does every university have a big opportunity to get more students, but this also increases the competition in the higher education sector between competing providers than has ever been seen before.

To further complicate and increase competition among higher education providers many foreign universities from developed countries look at Thailand as a big market to expand their student base. Many of them have more advanced skills in teaching and learning than staff in Thai universities. This situation will make Thai universities pay more attention to how they construct plans for their future strategic plans (Office of Education Council, 2004).

Not all Rajabhat Universities became autonomous in 2004, only a few were ready to transformation their status (Office of Education Council, 2004). It is difficult for them to change into something that they have not been prepared for, and in the situation where a market becomes highly competitive. Forward thinking institutions have to have sound business strategies to expand their business opportunities and be financially responsible. If the universities do not have good business plans they will find it difficult to survive in a less regulated higher education sector.

Rajabhat Universities attract mainly students from the lower socioeconomic strata of Thai society who are less likely to be able to pay for their studies. The main objective of Rajabhat Universities is to work closely with their communities through problem-based research (Office of Education Council, 2004). Each Rajabhat University has to improve their strategy and adapt to become a university for local people and change their policies to respond to the demands of their communities. Every person who works in the Rajabhat Universities understand that the word 'Rajabhat' means people who serve the King and the King has a major responsibility to look after his people. According to this, Rajabhat Universities are the universities which take good care of the local

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people who are lacking opportunities in higher education and provide support to develop local communities (Phranakhon Rajabhat University, 2005).

When the Rajabhat University Act (2004) was enacted, every Rajabhat University became an autonomous university. They developed new organisational structures. They had greater freedom to make their own decisions by submitting every project to their University Councils for approval. The role of leaders became an important factor for the new universities. CLT and Leadership dimensions have been used and managed changes in six Rajabhat Universities. The six Presidents in this study used different characteristic of CLT and a number of leadership dimensions, depending on the environment and background of each Rajabhat University. Most of the Presidents have used more than one style of CLT and leadership dimension. Six of the Presidents have a strong believe that they know how to change and understand the behaviour of staff; especially they are able to support staff to implement changes in the Rajabhat Universities better than other people in the organisations.

Leadership has become very important in changing organisational behaviours. All the Presidents and administrators have to understand how to encourage their members to accept continuous change and improve their qualifications all the time. The impact of the Rajabhat University Act (2004) had changed the scheme which Rajabhat Universities receive their income. Before 2004, all the Rajabhat Universities were supported by the government. There is no problem to manage their budget or pay for all their expenses. Now the Presidents and the Vice-Presidents confirmed that they have to think about how to increase their income and funding themselves, and this places greater pressure upon them.

After the Rajabhat Institutes became Rajabhat Universities, the government reduced financial support. It is difficult and challenging for the Presidents to overcome this funding problem. Many Rajabhat Universities have introduced different kinds of projects in order to increase their income. However there are

many of them are not able to generate sufficient income as they were expected. It is surprising to find most of Rajabhat Universities believe that if they cannot survive financially, the government will help and support them.

However, if the Thai government cannot support the Rajabhat Universities the universities themselves will have to generate their own solutions to achieve their missions. It is possibly that in the future the government will cut all the funding to the higher educational institutions and every university has to prepare for that. One of the major concerns is that all the Rajabhat Universities are newly universities when compared with the other universities in Thailand and most of them cannot reach the same standards of teaching and research as other older universities.

Question 2: How did the senior management team of the new Rajabhat Universities respond to meet the requirements of the Acts? Why did they implement these changes?

Question 3: How will these changes impact on the Rajabhat Universities in the future?

Question two and question three can be answer together. Six Rajabhat Universities have been changed and implemented change management in a number of different ways. Because they have introduced different techniques, in the future the will be moving in different ways. Most of them have been changed their organisational structures by empowering deans and encouraging staff to participate in policy making of their universities. Many of Rajabhat Universities motivate staff to change by setting reward and promotion criteria for people who can achieve the university's goals. Some leaders apply both reward motivation and punishment techniques if staff could not achieve the university's goals. The Presidents and the Vice-Presidents play an important role in change management and create the environment that is suitable for change processes.

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The Presidents of the six Rajabhat Universities accepted that change is difficult and required the use of many techniques and the experience of leaders to make change happen. Two way communication techniques have been used in six Rajabhat Universities and the Presidents believe that they will not achieve any change if they cannot understand and work with other members in their universities. Change cannot happen to only one group of members in the organisation, but change needs to involve everyone.

ICT and modern computer software technology have been used to replace the traditional ways of operation and management in six Rajabhat Universities. Attempts have been made to improve infrastructure such as classrooms, libraries, and all the resources for teaching and learning to reach the same standard as established universities in Thailand. Moreover, staff have to conduct research and produce their own textbooks. It is important that each Rajabhat University increases the amount of research and the qualifications of staff to reach the minimum standards set by the OHEC in Thailand.

Competition with other higher educational institutions is a new idea in Thailand. Most staff realise that they need to improve their qualifications and create new knowledge during the time that they have been working. If they still work in the same ways and do not want to change, it is unlikely that they will reach the new universities' standards and might not be able to keep their positions in the future. Staff have been frightened by the new policies which some Rajabhat Universities have introduced which are included the evaluation of staff performance. If Staff cannot pass the evaluating processes, the University Councils will demote those staff to the lower positions and salaries or some worst cases they have to find the new jobs.

In the past, staff have to undertake administration and teaching jobs at the same time, but after the former institutes became universities many separated teaching roles from administrator roles, and if anyone wanted to conduct research they

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can reduce the number of teaching hours to focus only on their research. Salaries and benefits have been changed to pay by negotiation rather than by government standards in some Rajabhat Universities. If staff want the higher salaries and greater benefits they have to show what they can achieve in order to get more money or a higher position. Many people who have been working with Rajabhat Universities feel uncomfortable with the new salary scales, but there are a number of people who agree with this concept.

In order to gain a good reputation and creditability equivalent to established universities the new universities as Rajabhat Universities need to respond to the demands of labour market and the target students. Interview with the Presidents and the Vice-Presidents of the six Rajabhat Universities led to the identification of four key areas in which major changes were taking place. These were the human resource management and development, the introduction of new programmes and curricula, the development of international relationships, and the financial considerations.

Overall, the four major areas that six Rajabhat Universities responded to change are similar. They want to improve the quality of staff by having more with doctoral qualifications, more in the highest academic positions, and staff which are highly respected by Thais in teaching and conducing research. Most of them were concerned about introducing new curricula and adjusted their courses to compete with other universities. International relationships with overseas universities have been encouraged since they became the universities and most of them focus on opening combined degree with foreign universities. Most Rajabhat Universities are concerned about funding and financial issues for their future time. Only one Rajabhat University has found a solution for financial management. The others are still finding the best way and preparing for the possibilities.

According to the results from this study, the future of six Rajabhat Universities is very dependent on the attitude and character of the Presidents. The procedure that each President selected to manage and respond to change became the most essential techniques to change staff's behaviour and organisational culture. Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) and seven major leadership dimensions have been exercised in six Rajabhat Universities. The Presidents and the Vice-Presidents have confirmed that the characters and the roles of leaders are the most important and necessary to implication changes. Most of them have mixed between CLT and dimensions of leadership to make change happen. Figure 2, show the relationship between CLT and seven dimensions of leadership.
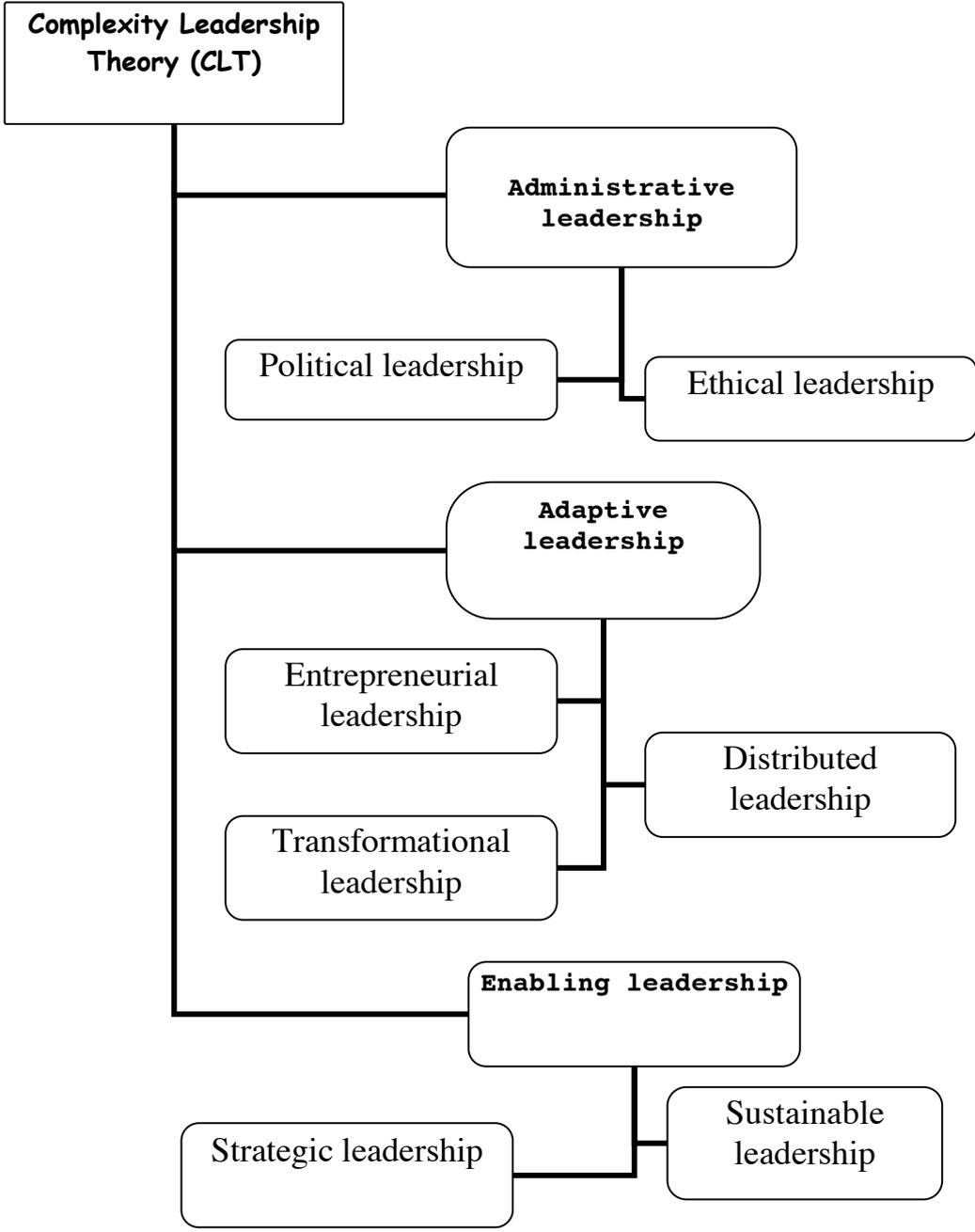
Figure 2. Relationship between seven dimensions of leadership and Complex Leadership Theory (CLT).

Transformational leadership has been applied by the Presidents who believe that change is necessary. Every Rajabhat University wants to change to become a successful university, but staff cannot change immediately and they need to understand how to achieve and respond to change. It is important to give them enough time to adjust their behaviour and move forward to the new environment. Every President accepts that they know how to create a good implementation for responding to change, but they introduce change management in a number of different ways.

Strategic leadership has been supported by many Presidents. Creating a proper channel of communication with staff is the most important ways to have a clear vision about their universities' future and get every staff involves with writing the strategic plans. The many of the participants' numbers, the better the plans that they can create. The Presidents who use strategic leadership dimension have to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their universities which are included the opportunities and threats.

Distributed leadership is more popular in democratic organisational structures. If the Presidents want to empower deans and other people to participate in university's businesses, distributed leadership is the first technique that they want to apply. However, Thai culture and Thai styles of management have to be understood when introducing any leadership policies. The Western concept cannot be adopted into the Thai organisational structure without recognising the Thai values of working and Thai society.

Sustainable leadership have been used after other leadership dimensions were applied already. The Presidents and the Vice-Presidents changed their organisations and every thing was going well, they will apply sustainable leadership into the final process of change. The Presidents who are going to use sustainable leadership dimension should have experience about change

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management and many of their members understand and realise their roles and responsibilities to their universities.

Political and ethical leadership are the most popular leadership dimensions among six Rajabhat Universities. It is accepted that Thai culture which focuses on interpersonal relationship and face-saving value more than anything else has been influenced on the styles of management and the characters of the leaders. Every President knows that they have to rely on staff's support and avoid making anyone lose face as much as they can. A few Presidents indicated that they were not concerned about this which is unusual in Thai society.

Entrepreneurial leadership dimension has been introduced in one Rajabhat University. It is a new style of management and differs from the way of Thai people's concepts. Most of government officers are not familiar with this style of management. However, entrepreneurial leadership has proved that it is successful in changing staff's behaviour and has resulted in that university moving to respond into the new environment of higher educational institutions.

In the processes of change of six Rajabhat Universities it is important to discuss about the roles of CLT which have been combined with seven dimensions of leadership at the beginning of change management processes. CLT and seven dimensions of leadership have been implemented through the new environmental changes and the CAS of higher educational institutions in Thailand. The three CLT that has been mentioned above is: Administrative leadership which is included political leadership and ethical leadership dimension; Adaptive leadership which is included entrepreneurial leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership dimensions; Enabling leadership which is included strategic leadership and sustainable leadership dimensions.

The Presidents of six Rajabhat Universities have been applied and combined CLT with seven leadership dimensions successfully. Moreover, Thai culture and Thai value of working have been supporting CLT concept. Administrative leadership which has been implemented by political and ethical leadership dimensions is working well with Thai culture that has high Power Distance, high Uncertainty Avoidance, and high Femininity. It can be seen that the Presidents have to avoid any conflict and arguments as much as they can and concern about the personal relationships between staff and administrators during the processes of change. At the same time, staff have accepted that the Presidents have more power and authority than other people in the universities. It is common that staff have to respect the Presidents' decisions and obedience.

After the universities have been through the first step of change which is called 'unfreezing' the Presidents have been used adaptive leadership by selecting from three leadership dimensions; entrepreneurial leadership, transformational leadership and distributed leadership dimension. Which leadership dimensions will be used is depended on the environment and the background of each Rajabhat University and the experience of the Presidents. From the six case studies, there is only RA that has been applied entrepreneurial leadership dimension, three of them applied distributed leadership dimension and six of them applied transformational leadership dimensions, but not exactly in the same ways.

Some Rajabhat Universities from the case studies have been arrived the last state of change which is called 'refreezing' and the Presidents have already introduced enabling leadership with expression in the from of strategic leadership and sustainable leadership dimension. When considering about Thai culture which is high in the scale of Collectivism and focusing on face-saving as the major social etiquettes. If the Presidents select to use strategic leadership or sustainable leadership dimensions to refreezing change processes, the Presidents have to train staff for the new roles of behaviour which ensuring them

to get involve with every university's plan. Staff have to share the feeling of 'we' or working as a team, which Thai culture has played significant parts of it and staff are ready to increase their knowledge and skills in order to move the universities into the desired directions.

It can be seen that there is no best solution for change and change management. By using chaos theory and CAS to understand change management and the impact of the new environmental changes in the Thai higher educations, the researcher has assumed that change is unpredictable and a variety of results might be happening in the nonlinear ways. As mention before that change is a continuous process and every change agent can introduce it in many different ways, and most surprsingly the results can be in different things also. It is depends on the leaders and the environment of each situation during the time of change.

Western style of Change in Thai Higher Education

Change in six Rajabhat Universities came from external more than internal factors. Everyone who was involved with the six Rajabhat Universities could not avoid this impact. They need to adopt and adjust to the new environments to be employable and to survive in the future. The three steps model of Lewin (1952) can be used to explain the way that the six universities responded to change. The unfreezing had been done by the Presidents introducing new policies and using personal skills and experiences to persuade and control staff. The moving processes have been done by providing budgeting and many workshops to change staff attitudes and increase their knowledge. The refreezing process has been done by giving rewards or punishments to staff who can or cannot achieve the goals of the universities.

It is important to combine the Lewin's model with Thai culture. Within the three steps, unfreezing, moving and refreezing, the Presidents have to receive the

strong support from staff. Working in Thai organisations has to combine change with fun and happiness. Staff need to feel excited to work and achieve their goals. RA and RF have created competitive environments and strong discipline for their staff, but staff have confirmed that they are feeling fun to go along with that environment. The other Rajabhat Universities have created a family atmosphere and friendly relationships in their workplaces. It is noticed that the core idea of having fun have been insert in every strategic plan.

The four types of change strategies which have been explained by Dunphy and Stace (1992) can be seen in the role of leaders from six Rajabhat Universities. Charismatic transformation and dictatorial transformation are introduced through the personalities of the Presidents. RA and RF have applied dictatorial transformation strategies and within Thai concept, the Presidents became the most important person and highest power in the university. Both universities use the same style, but RA focuses on a business model of management and RF focuses on a bureaucratic model.

It is not common for Thai leaders to use dictatorial transformation strategies, if they have other choices. However, RA and RF believe that this is the best way to change staff behaviour. Most of Thai leaders prefer to use charismatic transformation strategy and considerate personal relationships are the most important ways in management. RB, RC, RD and RE have been adopted charismatic transformation concept and some of them focusing on cooperation with staff as the most critical way of change.

The important research that has been conducted by Geert Hofstede in 1980 sates that Thai culture has shown high Power Distance, high Uncertainty Avoidance, high Collectivism and high Femininity are still correct and can be seen in every organisation around the country even though in years 2004. However, the impact of Western culture and globalisational style of management have been changed the attitude of Thai academic executive administrators. Many

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Thai traditional culture and value have been gradually changed and new generations of academic people who graduated from overseas universities have adopted a lot of Western style of culture.

In the future, it is difficult to identify that six Rajabhat Universities will be following the same patterns of culture as Hofstade's study, and the Presidents have to concern about the Thai culture as the major factors to change staff 's behaviour at all the time. The one true things that has been accepted is that change is chaos and people's mind and behaviour are unpredictable. One leadership dimension might be working well in one Rajabhat University at a certain period of time; however when the environments or other factors have been change the same leadership dimension might not be working anymore even though has been implementing at the same Rajabhat University.

Limitations and opportunities for further research

This research involved six case studies conducted in Rajabhat Universities located in Bangkok. As case studies it was not intended to be able to generalise the findings to all Rajabhat Universities throughout Thailand. However, the findings of this study can be used to explain the process of change and how new universities cope and deal with change, especially in Thailand.

The decision to study Rajabhat Universities instead of other universities was made because the charter of these universities is to focus on developing local communities and addressing issues at the local level. Currently, there are more than sixty-four universities located in Bangkok. However, it was only the Rajabhat Universities that were changed to universities in 2004, the other universities became universities before that time and have been operated as universities for a number of years. Other universities did not undergo such a large transformative change as a result of the changes to laws. It has been a complex and complicated time for all Rajabhat Universities to get through this process of

change from teacher colleges in 1892 to Rajabhat Institutes in 1995 and to Rajabhat Universities in 2004.

This thesis collected data from six Rajabhat Universities in Bangkok. The decision to focus on these universities in Bangkok when Rajabhat Universities are located in different regions throughout Thailand was made because those universities in Bangkok face similar issues, whereas Rajabhat Universities in other parts of Thailand have different cultures, value, social norms, local languages, and demands of their labour markets. Although it would be interesting to study how this other Rajabhat Universities responded to the changes the process would be complicated by their different histories and local environments.

This study only involved interviews with the senior executive team of each of the six universities. It can be assumed that there are a number of other perspectives that would have been revealed if interviews had been conducted with the University Council members, staff, students, or key people in the local communities. The study of these other perspectives will await on-going research into the issues revealed in this study.

Change is unpredictable and every leader creates a unique style of management. The data from the six case studies have shown that different leaders and the different ways of working with people and addressing the issues they considered important led them to respond in a number of special ways. The study reveals that some factors, not considered important in all of the universities, were very important in bringing about change in other universities. Change is complicated and difficult to identify and manage. Only experienced leaders and change agents who have skills in motivating others working in the university can become successful at leading change. The six Presidents interviewed revealed themselves as highly skilled leaders in higher educational institutions. They know how and when they have to introduce change. They know and understand their new environment and staff behaviours. It is a big step for

Rajabhat Universities to walk on the road of change and the high competitive of higher education market. Regardless of the types of changes they implemented and the future success, or otherwise, of these changes their commitment to their institutions and their concern for their institutions and their staff cannot be questioned.

Conclusion

After interviewing, analysing the data from documents and strategic plans of six Rajabhat Universities the information has been shown that in the future six Rajabhat Universities will develop their identity which will be different and unique. It is surprising that every Rajabhat University originally was the same. However, when they became universities they want to be different. Six of them came from the same parents which was called the ORIC. When they grown up and moved out they created their new characters and became new person which is beyond the expectation of their parents.

RA became a university that focused on business education and highly quality in teaching hospitality subjects. RB wants to maintain Thai culture and gains its reputation in Buddhist studies. RC has been developed to be a well-known social research university and has incorporated Chinese education. RD focuses on international courses, combined degrees with overseas universities and business education. RE wants to promote tourist education and support everyone to go overseas. And RF is concerned about ethical education of Thai society. Students who graduate from RF will be acknowledged as people who have highly morality.

As the parents of six Rajabhat Universities, ORIC should be proud of them. Each of them has been developed to become a university for local communities and supports local students. They have been following the main concepts of the Rajabhat University Act (2004) and strive for continuous improvement. Their

future might be unpredictable, but they planned carefully and are prepared to serve the best quality of higher education for Thai people.

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