



Striking the Balance between
Centralisation and Decentralisation in Higher Education:
The Case of King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi

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- Nearly 150 public and private universities and colleges under the Commission of Higher Education-CHE with 2.04 millions students
 - Four common basic mandates/missions
 - Common regulations and measures
 - Gradual delegation of authority and decentralization to university councils and presidents

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- Thai public universities are a part of the Civil Service
 - 1970s conceptualization of autonomous universities
 - The First 15-Year (1990-2004) Long Range Plan of Higher Education with one flagship on university autonomy
 - : new universities autonomous from beginning
 - : 10-year transition of existing univ.

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- Transition was more difficult than expected, involve a legislative process, resistance within universities, doubts on possible good governance
 - First transition attempt of 16 public universities unsuccessful(1992)
 - KMUTT made the successful transition (3 rd attempt) in 1998, the first public university
 - Reorientation of mindsets v.s. legislation

- What comes with university autonomy
 - : setting up and dissolution of academic and admin. units, appointments into academic positions
 - : annual block grant/non itemized budget, consolidated university budget, procurement regulations
 - : personnel management system - recruitment, salaries and compensation
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- University Council needs empowerment and restructuring

- Difficulties encountered

 - : reluctance of civil service staff to be recruited into the new system-

 - contracted university employee v.s. civil servant with life long employment

 - : negotiations with government agencies budgets for transition, recognitions and official privileges

- Imperative issues to be addressed within University

- : Ignorance of university autonomy

- : Confidence in self-governance and management

- : Realignment of mindsets

- : Voluntary transition of personnel –

- “One university, two systems”

- : One standard of work and evaluation

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- Human management, good communication, face to face dialogs, understanding
 - Charting a new direction by participatory processes
 - University Vision and Missions
 - Flagships as strategic goals
 - Build up of University cohesion and synergy
 - Shared values and purposes
 - Participation
 - Cross-functional and cross-discipline groups

- What has been achieved

Governance and management

Equity and social commitments

Efficiency

Excellence

Finance and assets management

Personnel

- Autonomy of 4 Thai public universities has been practiced, understood, appreciated, shown to be practical, with good results

- Seven more public universities have made autonomy transition in 2007-2008, making a total of eleven autonomous public universities

Road to university autonomy in Thailand
will be widened.

