

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

**CHALLENGING JOURNEYS:  
THAI STUDENTS' TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY**

A dissertation submitted by

Kittiporn Raksasat

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## **Abstract**

As the number and diversity of students attending universities in Thailand grows, the need to understand and to be familiar with students' cultures, as well as to effectively communicate and work with them, becomes increasingly important. Accordingly, understanding the various transitional experiences of students is essential in building a positive study environment and in improving the well-being of students while they are at the university.

This study aimed to investigate the first-year experiences of Thai students in a Thai university context. The study investigated experiences associated with social integration and academic integration during students' transition period in their first year at university. Influential factors and barriers that hinder the smooth transition were also examined. The study was conducted at Naresuan University, Thailand during May to August 2010. In examining the transition phenomenon, an ethnographic approach was applied. The semi-structured interview was the primary instrument for gathering data. The quantitative survey, observations of classrooms and special events were also employed. Other sources of data were generated from written documents such as student's reflective journals, the researcher's field notes, and relevant documentation. The analysis focused on coding and highlighting any recurrent themes related to the nature of university practices, students' transitional processes, and their perspectives and attitudes toward their transition to university.

The findings from the study provided valuable insights into the transition phenomenon among Thai first-year students at the Thai university. Insights were also provided on issues associated with the students' potential for academic success during their first year of study at the university. The first-year experience phenomenon should continue to be investigated to further explore student experiences in the Thai context. The ultimate goal of the further investigations should be to identify issues that may hinder student academic and personal success and to improve the quality of education in the Thai higher education sector more generally.

**CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION**

I certify that the ideas, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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Signature of Candidate

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Date

**ENDORSEMENT**

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Signature of Supervisor

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Date

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## Lists of Abbreviation

ASEAN	: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CHE	: Office of the Higher Education Commission
CAE	: Computer Aided Engineering
DEEP	: Documenting Effective Educational Practice
FYHE	: The First Year in Higher Education
FYE	: The First Year Experience
FYS	: First-Year Seminar
GPA	: Grade Point Average
HE	: Higher Education
MPCL	: Mooney Problem Checklist: College Form
OECD	: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHEC	: Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand
SACQ	: the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire
UNESCO	: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	: United States Agency for International Development
WEF	: the World Economic Forum