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# Educational Reform and Change in the Asia Pacific Region

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## The Evolution of Educational Reform in Thailand: The Quest for Equity and Empowerment

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This paper examines the evolution of Thai educational reform since the initial reform introduced by King Chulalongkorn more than a century ago. Five phases of reform are identified. The first is the reform of King Chulalongkorn which transformed Thai education into a centralized secular system which emphasized the development of a unified Thai identity in Siam. The second reform was that introduced after the student revolution of October, 1973. This reform emphasized the need for greater equity, administrative unity, intellectual openness, and more data-driven decision-making. The third reform came in the mid-1990s as a Thai response to the powerful forces of globalization and Thailand's aspiration and vision to become more economically competitive and an international education hub. The fourth reform mandated by the 1997 Constitution and reflected in the progressive National Education Act of 1998 was a direct response to the Asian economic crisis of 1997-1998. It emphasized student-centered learning, decentralization, utilization of local wisdom, and "education for all and all for education". The fifth and current reform is that of the current Aphisit government which emphasizes *pracha wiwat* (the people's mandate) and revitalization of the fourth reform. All these reforms are analyzed critically with respect to their impact and implementation, drawing upon both indigenous and international scholarship. The paper also identifies key Thai educational reformers and the roles they have played in these reforms.

