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## **Management Strategies Used by Thai Private Educational Institutions in Support of the ASEAN Community**

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### **Abstract**

The objectives of this research were to investigate *strategies* of educational management in Thai private higher education institutions in the context of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Community. The questionnaire was used to collect data from 424 administrators and faculty members from Thai private higher education institutions. The data then were analyzed by exploratory factor analysis to extract education strategy factors by using the principle axis method and varimax orthogonal rotation technique. The results were as follows: there were *high levels* in general administration, arts and culture preservation, curriculum and teaching management, research and academic services for society, and *6 factors or elements* including (1) collaboration in doing research regarding the ASEAN knowledge, (2) ASEAN public relations via various types of multimedia, (3) development of infrastructure and communicational skills in teachers and education personnel, (4) awareness of different traditions and cultures in ASEAN, (5) cooperation of ASEAN educational policy, and (6) development of international curriculum.

**Keywords:** *Strategies of educational management, Thai private university, the ASEAN Community*

### **1. Background of the Study**

Private higher education institutions in Thailand have a mandate of four functions (1) teaching, (2) conducting research, (3) providing academic services for society, and (4) preserving arts and culture of the nation as stated in Private Higher Education Institutions Act 2003. The management of private higher education has been adapted into the ASEAN Community; the community has 10 ASEAN member countries--Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. There are three main objectives on the stability of ASEAN: (1) to stabilize the ASEAN Political-Security Community by promoting political cooperation and security, and maintaining peace of the region, (2) to support people welfare, good hygiene, good environment and a sense of belonging/ caring/ sharing, and (3) to consolidate a single market and production base with free movement of goods, services, investment and skilled labor to enhance ASEAN competitiveness (Kaenwong, 2012). The Community also focuses on human resource development and facilitates access to modern information resources and technology for equitable economic development among the member countries. It will help raise the level of economic development including the livelihoods of the people becoming professional with more opportunities to work in the ASEAN countries. The ASEAN Joint Professional Recognition Agreement specifies eight professions: doctors, dentists,

engineers, architects, surveyors, nurses, accountants, and hospitality and tourism providers. This is to reduce the shortage of skilled labor with free movement in the member countries.

What has been agreed by the ASEAN Community offers the opportunity for skilled personnel to work in that ASEAN country, and this new opportunity has direct impact on university graduates to get prepared for the work environment different from their own. On the positive side, Thai graduates equipped with needed skills and competencies will be able to work in the ASEAN countries. It is important for Thai higher education institutions to equip their graduates with technical/ soft and communication skills to compete in the job markets in the ASEAN Community. Guidelines are given to develop the potential of Thai graduates to be competent in English communication skills, updated knowledge and technical skills in technology. Yurarat et al. (2011) reported that the President of Sripatum University (one of the leading Thai private universities) asserted that private universities need to adjust themselves in training graduates for the ASEAN Community, particularly English skills development. Vongsinsirikul (2012) also pointed to the same limitation in English language proficiency in Thai university graduates compared with those from Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and China. Thailand's Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) has currently imposed the target English proficiency level for university graduates as well as the faculty staff. As a result, most Thai universities have developed international or bilingual programs in which English is used as the medium of instruction and communication. This is to ensure that their graduates can communicate in English oral and written communication. They have also arranged for student exchange with other ASEAN countries and campus visits to universities in the neighboring countries. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) is on its way to establish the ASEAN higher education policy for Thailand. It is therefore important to secure information for what constitutes the higher education system of ASEAN countries. Such information is necessary to make a relevant development of ASEAN higher education.

From the aforementioned issues, the researcher aimed to identify the elements of educational management strategy for operations of Thai private higher education institutions. This was also to explore teaching and learning management, faculty staff development, student development, use of technology, students' extracurricular activities and internship, measurement of academic achievements, evaluation of staff and student performances and other relevant academic, social and cultural activities. It was expected that the obtained results of the study will help university administrators, faculty, and educators to make practical decisions on planning, and improving strategies to produce competent graduates for the ASEAN labor market.

## 2. Research Objectives

There were two objectives in the study:

(1) To study the *educational management strategy* of Thai private higher education institutions to support the ASEAN community.

(2) To identify the important *factors or elements and variables of the educational management strategy* used by Thai private higher education institutions to support their graduates' access to the ASEAN Community.

### 3. Research Conceptual Framework

Based on the strategic framework of Kaenwong (2012), the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) has three strategies:

*Strategy 1: Enhance the capabilities of graduates to meet international quality standards* by promoting the teaching and learning of English. This means universities need to develop their ESL teachers to do a good job in training the graduates to the expected level of English proficiency, and arrange for student exchange programs to have the opportunity to use English as well as the local language of the visited country.

*Strategy 2: Strengthen higher education institutions for the development of the ASEAN community* by developing teachers to have international competencies, and promoting new knowledge, research and innovation. This strategy includes research finding dissemination, promoting international courses in the fields of Thailand's expertise, infrastructure development, international facilities, and surroundings.

*Strategy 3: Promote the role of Thai higher education in the ASEAN community* by strengthening leadership for the three foundations of ASEAN Community: economic, social and cultural aspects of the ASEAN Community. The strategy includes promoting Thailand to be an information center for higher education in countries under the ASEAN Community.

### 4. Research Methodology

#### 4.1 The Participants

There are 71 Thai private higher education institutions: 40 universities, 22 colleges and 9 institutes. On the voluntary basis, 17 higher education institutions joined the study with 30 participants who were administrators or lecturers from each—making a total of 510. The researcher used a questionnaire and obtained *424 returned responses* of 510 (83.18%).

The 17 joining Thai higher education institutions were: (1) Payap University, (2) North Chiang Mai University, (3) Far Eastern University, (4) Northeastern University, (5) Hat Yai University, (6) Southeast Asia University, (7) Sripatum University, (8) University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, (9) Dhurakij Pundit University, (10) Thonburi University, (11) Siam University, (12) Kasem Bundit University, (13) Wong Chawalitkul University, (14) Rajapruk University, (15) Siam Technology College, (16) Southeast Bangkok College. (17) Panyapiwat Institute.

#### 4.2 The Research Tool

The researcher used a questionnaire as a research tool to collect data in the study. The questionnaire has two parts: (1) Personal status including gender, age, administrative position and/or academic position, (2) Viewpoints on strategic issues: strategy characteristics and indicators, policy guidelines, plans, missions, visions, direction, method, and activity/ strategy model. The participants were asked to give their viewpoints on a 5-level scale. The content was validated by five experts in educational management, obtaining IOC at 0.8,  $\alpha$ -coefficient = .985.

## 5. Data Analysis

Data analysis covered frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and exploratory factor analysis being analyzed by Principle Component and perpendicular rotation using Varimax Orthogonal method.

## 6. Results of the Study

The results of the study were given in Tables 1-9 as follows:

6.1. The educational management strategies of Thai private higher education institutions to support the ASEAN community have been implemented in all aspects at a high level. The first strategy was General Management, followed by preservation of arts and culture, the curriculum and instructional management, research, and academic services for society, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Educational Management Strategies of Thai Private Higher Education Institutions for the ASEAN Community

Strategies	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. General management	3.90	.74
2. Art and Culture Preservation	3.86	.81
3. Curriculum and Instructional Management	3.83	.85
4. Research	3.71	.98
5. Academic Services for society	3.62	.89

6.2. The researcher showed the educational management strategies of Thai private higher education institutions for the ASEAN community in 6 elements: (1) Building research cooperation in ASEAN learning management, (2) Multi-media public relations, (3) Infrastructure development and communication skills development for faculty members and educational personnel, (4) The continuation of the country's traditions and cultures to the youth of Thailand and ASEAN, (5) Jointly formulating ASEAN educational policies, and (6) International curriculum development. The elements are shown in Table 2 and the weight of each element in Table 3-8.

**Table 2:** Educational Management Strategic Elements of Thai Private Higher Education Institutions for the ASEAN Community

<b>Elements</b>	<b>Eigen Value</b>
1 Building research cooperation in ASEAN learning management	32.380
2. Public relations through various media channels	4.331
3. Development of infrastructure and communication skills development for personnel	3.245
4. Continuation of the tradition of the country and culture to the youth of Thailand and ASEAN	2.308
5. ASEAN educational policy co-ordination	1.179
6. International curriculum development	1.029

**Table 3:** Element 1 on Building Research Cooperation in ASEAN Learning Management

<b>No.</b>	<b>Educational Management to Support Entry into the ASEAN Community</b>	<b>Weight on Element</b>
3.5	Support and promote the preparation of information in support of research	.801
3.3	Build research networks among private higher education institutions abroad	.793
3.1	Focus more on ASEAN research in institutions	.786
3.8	Promote research cooperation activities among private higher education institutions	.780
3.9	Promote research cooperation activities to make Thailand a research center among neighboring countries	.779
3.2	Build more research networks among private and state higher education institutions	.779
3.4	Promote cooperation as a research center in ASEAN countries	.779
3.6	Promote dissemination of research by Thai and ASEAN scholars	.777
3.7	Promote / support / allocate budget for foreign teachers to do research	.770
2.14	Support for credit transfer among Thai higher education institutions and ASEAN member countries	.769
3.10	Develop information centers for ASEAN research in Thai private higher education institutions	.764
2.16	There are periodic assessments of teaching and learning about the ASEAN Community	.755
2.15	Encourage teachers to create new knowledge and innovation about ASEAN institutions	.753
2.13	Organize teaching and learning activities to enhance experiences related to ASEAN	.740
2.9	Offer Teaching programs in at least two languages for both students and faculty	.736

No.	Educational Management to Support Entry into the ASEAN Community	Weight on Element
2.7	Promote exchange of faculty members with expertise in ASEAN member countries	.736
2.11	Promote the teaching and learning of English in regular curriculum subjects	.733
2.8	Use textbooks in the language of ASEAN member countries for learning management	.729
2.10	Use electronic modern media and information communication technology in learning management	.707
2.12	Develop modern teaching materials.	.706
3.11	Study the impact of the ASEAN Economic Community on Thai society in the future	.704
2.5	Gear teaching and learning toward students' awareness of ASEAN matters	.700
2.6	Prepare students for language preparation of ASEAN member countries	.681
2.4	Make an agreement with ASEAN universities to jointly develop student potential	.681
4.1	Organize meetings and exchanges of higher education experiences with ASEAN member countries	.674
	Eigen Value	32.380

Table 3 shows variability of all variables on the component (Eigen value) at 32.38 with the variable with the highest element weight supporting and promoting the preparation of information to support research. Various research activities about ASEAN are followed by the creation of a research network among foreign private higher education institutions. ASEAN research in institutions requires cooperation among private higher education institutions. There is a point on Thailand as a center for educational research in neighboring countries by building more research local networks between private higher education institutions and public higher education institutions in the country. Dissemination of research work by Thai and ASEAN scholars was emphasized with support/ allocated budget for foreign professors with high abilities and expertise. The research element focuses on ASEAN knowledge building, and the teaching and learning of ASEAN. The Executive Director of the ASEAN University Network (AUN) also emphasized that ASEAN universities must try to develop in three areas: (1) Improving the quality assurance, (2) Focusing on ASEAN awareness, and (3) Working on research collaboration. Therefore, the major element was *Research Collaboration in the ASEAN Learning Management*, which requires collaboration in doing research on issues of the ASEAN Community.

**Table 4:** Element 2 on Public Relations through Various Media Channels

No.	Variables	Weight on Element
4.7	Organize an exhibition to provide advice on studying in Thailand for students from ASEAN member countries	.751
4.5	Promote ASEAN integration operations through <i>multiple media channels</i>	.745
4.6	Give advice on trade liberalization and negotiations with the negotiating countries for society	.743
4.9	Organize cooperation between educational institutions and related agencies	.720
4.8	Provide advice on the prevention of impacts caused by moving multinational manpower	.706
4.3	Organize activities for the community to show their international talent to the world	.688
4.10	Encourage institutional teachers to teach research to ASEAN higher education institutions	.674
4.2	Compile information about the ASEAN Economic Community	.667
4.4	Organize activities to raise awareness of ASEAN citizenship	.637
5.3	Arrange for cultural exchange with ASEAN member countries	.613
5.4	Extend knowledge in arts, traditions and cultures to neighboring countries	.539
	Eigen Value	4.331

Table 4 shows the education management strategy on *Public Relations through Various Media Channels* according to opinions of the participants with the Eigen value of 4.331. The variables with the high weight are organizing an exhibition on studying in Thailand for students in ASEAN member countries, followed by the process for the integration of ASEAN to the community continuously via various media channels, advice on the movement of trade liberalization, negotiations with negotiating countries, and organized activities to show talents on the international stage. Lecturers are encouraged to do/ teach research, provide academic services for society. Also important are the preservation of arts and culture for ASEAN higher education institutions, and raising awareness of ASEAN citizenship. Ketsang (2012) asserted that the factors of great influence deal with public relations and media in preparing students for the ASEAN community. Therefore, the major element was *Composition of Public Relations via Various Media Channels* in promoting ASEAN integration operations through multiple media channels.

**Table 5:** Element 3 on Development of Infrastructure and Communication Skills Development for Personnel

No.	Variables	Weight on Element
1.14	Develop information and communication technology systems with additional facilities in various fields	.727
1.7	Create an atmosphere conducive to learning about the ASEAN Community	.712
1.11	Develop the institutional infrastructure for international quality	.704
1.8	Provide sufficient budget and support in organizing activities related to ASEAN	.673
1.9	Organize the ASEAN corner in educational institutions	.666
1.12	Provide appropriate personnel for the preparation of institutions into ASEAN	.658
1.10	Develop and improve the environment as a learning resource for the modern ASEAN community	.630
1.6	Provide appropriate equipment to support the ASEAN Community activities	.617
1.13	Provide training for personnel to have good command of English for communication	.613
	Eigen Value	3.245

Table 5 reports the education management strategy on *Development of Infrastructure and Communication Skills Development for Personnel* according to opinions of the participants with the Eigen value of 3.245. The highest component weight is *the development of information and communication technology systems*. An increase in facilities in various fields is followed by the creation of an atmosphere conducive to learning about ASEAN, and development of the institutional infrastructure with international quality. Also important are sufficient funding for activities related to ASEAN, the ASEAN corner in educational institutions, the environment as a learning resource for the modern ASEAN community. A good command of English was emphasized by Kaenwong (2012) in developing the infrastructure with international quality. Therefore the major element was identified as *Infrastructure development elements and communication skills development for teachers and educational personnel*.

**Table 6:** Element 4 on Continuation of the Tradition of the Country and Culture to the Youth of Thailand and ASEAN

No.	Variables	Weight on Element
5.7	Build awareness of the inheritance of the country's traditions for all personnel	.801
5.6	Lead in the preservation of arts and traditions of Thai culture by organizing activities that carry on traditions	.790
5.8	Cooperate with communities to carry on the tradition and culture of Thailand to pass on to the youth of the country	.770
5.9	Collaborate with local community organizations for activities honoring good people for maintaining Thai cultural traditions to share with ASEAN.	.746
5.1	Promote awareness of Thai identity	.738
5.5	Disseminate indigenous cultures to the ASEAN community	.621
5.2	Promote relations activities among the personnel of Higher Education Community and the youth of ASEAN	.611
	Eigen Value	2.308

Table 6 reports the education management strategy on *Continuation of the Tradition of the Country and Culture to the Youth of Thailand and ASEAN* according to opinions of the participants with the Eigen value of 2.308. The highest element weight is *to raise awareness of the inheritance of national traditions for all personnel of the institutions*. The less weight variables are: leading in the preservation of arts and traditions of Thai culture by organizing activities to carry on the traditions, cooperating with the community organization to carry on the tradition and culture of Thailand to pass on to the youth of the country, and cooperating with local community organizations to organize activities in honor of prominent people for maintaining Thai cultural traditions. Also important are: disseminating Thai identity and cultures to the ASEAN community and promoting activities for the youth to enter the Higher Education ASEAN Community and the youth of ASEAN. Kaenwong (2012) emphasized the role of Thai higher education institutions in the ASEAN community in promoting the leadership role of Thai higher education institutions in the ASEAN Community with awareness of different ASEAN traditions and cultures.

**Table 7:** Element 5 on ASEAN Educational Policy Co-ordination

No.	Variables	Weight on Element
1.1	Establish ASEAN as part of the policy institutional action plan	.788
1.2	Concretize institutional development plan for both short term and long term to support the entry into the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015	.739
1.3	Set the direction, goals, institutional management plan in accordance with the ASEAN higher education system	.720
1.4	Measure and monitor the results of institutional management toward ASEAN	.658
1.5	Promote the participation of all sectors of the institutions in implementing the ASEAN strategy	.631
	Eigen Value	1.179

Table 7 shows that the education management strategy on *ASEAN Educational Policy Co-ordination* according to opinions of the participants with the Eigen value of 1.179. The highest element weight is *Establish ASEAN as part of the policy institutional action plan*. This variable is followed by concretizing institutional development plan for both short term and long term to support the entry into the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, setting the direction, goals, institutional management plan in accordance with the ASEAN higher education system, measuring and monitoring the results of institutional management toward ASEAN, and promoting the participation of all sectors of the institutions in implementing the ASEAN strategy. The findings are consistent with the study by Saengnaphaboworn (2013) who asserted that the second decade of education reform (2009-2018) is to promote participation of all sectors of society in developing the new management quality for preparation into the ASEAN Community. The significant element was identified as *ASEAN Educational Policy Co-ordination*.

**Table 8:** Element 6 on International Curriculum Development

No.	Variables	Weight on Element
2.1	Increase the arrangement of international courses	.658
2.2	Organize a curriculum focusing on teaching and learning management at the international standards	.566
2.3	Develop teachers to have functional English language proficiency	.515
	Eigen Value	1.029

Table 8 displays the education management strategy on *International Curriculum Development* according to opinions of the participants with the Eigen value of 1.029. The highest element weight is *Increasing the arrangement of international courses*. This is followed by organizing a curriculum focusing on teaching and learning management at the international standards, and developing teachers to have functional English language proficiency. These findings are consistent with the study by Yurarat et al (2011) regarding readiness of graduate development by Thai private higher education institutions in support of the ASEAN Economic Community. Therefore one of the major elements was identified as *Development of international curriculum*.

## 7. Discussion

### 7.1 Educational management strategies of Thai private higher education institutions to support the ASEAN community

As reported in the Results section, *general management* comes first as part of the educational management strategies to be implemented in line with the country's higher education strategy. This was reported earlier by Kaenwong (2001) that the general management strategy was to strengthen the higher education institutions to be part of and take a leading role in the ASEAN community. This point was also emphasized by Mintzberg (1998) that administrators were to use talents to drive their operations toward the management goal on higher education as well as cooperation with members. Liberalization of trade without borders and relevant management strategies to handle external factors were highlighted by Lunenburg & Ornstein (2012) in adjustment of operations in the organization structure.

### 7.2 The six critical elements of the educational management strategy of Thai private Higher education institutions to support entry into the ASEAN community

**Element 1** on *Building Research Cooperation in ASEAN Learning Management* is for building research partnerships. This element consists of important variables in support of promotion on various research activities and research network about ASEAN, followed by cooperation activities in putting Thailand as a center for educational research in neighboring countries. There should be plans for exchange of faculties/ students/ researchers/ personnel, and transfer of credits between Thai higher education institutions and ASEAN member countries. Communication in exchange programs could be done in at least two languages for both students and faculty members, and regular curriculum subjects could be taught in English with local language textbooks in ASEAN member countries for practical learning management. The research by MacIntyre & Thanh (2005) emphasized network in economic research to create a research proposal for the Southeast Asian economic researchers; this standpoint was also supported by Saengnaphaboworn (2013). It was to help build the ASEAN identity in learning together via courses in ASEAN Studies for collective understanding among neighboring countries.

**Element 2** on *Public Relations through Various Media Channels* is to promote continuing education in Thailand for local students and those in ASEAN member countries. The process for the integration of Thailand into the ASEAN community requires various media channels. Various media channels are to support the movement of trade liberalization and negotiations with member countries via information communication technology. Talents in member countries could have

their work on the international stage. This point was earlier raised by Ketsang (2012) that the greatest influence on the variables of preparing for the ASEAN community of students rested on the modern media.

**Element 3 on *Development of Infrastructure and Communication Skills Development for Personnel*** in fact focuses on an increase in facilities in various study fields, followed by the creation of an atmosphere conducive to learning about ASEAN, development of the institutional infrastructure with international quality, sufficient funding for activities related to the ASEAN corner or learning resource in educational institutions in the ASEAN community. As reported earlier, training of personnel for a good command of English communication with the use of information communication technology can spur up the planned academic/social and economic activities for the great good of the ASEAN Community. Kaenwong (2012) also emphasized the significance of academic and research excellence in the ASEAN higher education system as a major tool for all planned activities.

**Element 4 on *Continuation of the Tradition of the Country and Culture to the Youth of Thailand and ASEAN*** signifies contributions of Thai youth and Thai culture to the ASEAN youth groups. Leadership is needed in the preservation of arts and traditions of Thai culture in organizing activities with local communities and disseminating information on outcomes for awareness of the Thai identity. As stated by Kaenwong (2012), the role of Thai higher education institutions cannot do without promotion of Thai traditions and culture into the ASEAN community.

**Element 5 on *ASEAN Educational Policy Co-ordination*** is to co-define the ASEAN educational policy among member countries. An institutional action plan needs concretized activities in short and long term to support entry into the ASEAN Community. The desired direction, identified goals, and institutional management plans should be in line with the ASEAN Higher Education System. It is certain that measures be established to monitor the results of institutional management via participation of all sectors concerned. Umemiya (2008) pointed out that quality assurance characteristics and driving forces in higher education in Southeast Asia need support from the ASEAN University Network under the supervision of the ASEAN countries. There should be collaborative efforts among organizations responsible for quality assurance in each country to observe established criteria at the regional level as well as the international level.

**Element 6 on *International Curriculum Development*** in fact aims at international standards and developing lecturers/ course instructors to have highly functional English language proficiency. Yurarat et al (2011) and Kuboon (2012) drew attention to readiness of instructors and graduates in Thai private higher education institutions to be able to work in the ASEAN Community. Besides the requirement of English language proficiency, Thai private higher education institutions need to adjust further in the areas of learning support, curriculum, teaching and learning management, the faculty and support personnel, and career guidance for those who wish to pursue their career in ASEAN countries.

## 8. Recommendations

As shown in the study, Thai private higher education institutions need to seek cooperation in the development of ASEAN research of high quality. It is desirable to establish a Research Hub to support various research activities and networks for subsequent research finding dissemination.

Since the Thai identity and art/ cultural preservation are one main function required of Thai higher education institutions, the institutions concerned need action plans for local and ASEAN activities. They may consider seeking collaboration in cultural exchange programs for the youth. Research into Thai culture in relation to other ASEAN cultures can be initiated for collaboration from other host institutions in ASEAN countries.

The desired establishment of the ASEAN Center that could offer international and ASEAN-based courses with international quality as well as help develop communication skills of the faculty and educational personnel. The ultimate goal for Thai private higher education institutions is for good prospects of higher education and research, and cultural harmony under all five identified educational management strategies for Thailand and the ASEAN Community all alike.

## 9. The Author

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