

Challenges and Opportunities for Internationalism Impacts Towards Thai Higher Education

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Abstract – The flow of internationalism towards Thai higher education dramatically impacts on the variety of Challenges and Opportunities, including the Constraints, within the Thai context. The discussion shares some of the critical reflections on how Thai politicians, scholars, and policymakers, in particular, the educational administrators might move the Thai higher educational systems forward in the future. Drawn from two key positions of Challenges, this paper covers the Time to learn from the East and West, the impacts of teachers and learners on the learning, teaching, and research paradigms, and the Time for good governance and management through quality assurance and academic standard. Opportunities, the second key position of chances, propose the Time to increase the cohort participation rate regarding affordability, marketing, and funding of higher educational systems; and the Time to reconceptualise the apex of reputation hierarchy. Finally, Constraints such as English language skills as a significant communication barrier to respond to the impact of internationalism have been raised in this paper.

Keywords – Internationalism, Globalism, Academic Standard and Quality Assurance, Affordability, Cohort Participation, English as a Language Barrier.

I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of internationalism has emerged in higher education systems worldwide because the higher institutions have to respond to the force of globalization which is spreading out in developed as well as developing countries. Therefore, the organizations in higher education have practically integrated the international and intercultural dimensions and principles of their university's missions. Then, all international activities have been designed to achieve their missions. For example, international curricular offerings, promotion of staff and student exchange programs, collaborative research with foreign universities, promotion of other activities such as cooperative education, university-industrial linkages, and cultural exchange, as well as the hiring of foreigners and bilinguals as staff members will be adjusted accordingly. Once internationalization takes place in the higher education system all around the world, then international integration in higher education will allow the organization's culture, mission, and vision to be understood (Deem et al., 2008). Therefore, the policy makers of each institution have to raise their awareness on how to balance localized and globalized contextualization. This means that thinking globally but acting locally needs to be weighed because the internationalization of higher education has become a vital tactic to awaken professionals working in higher education institutions to

new challenges, as well as to generate skilled graduates for countries around the world (Moussa & Somjai, 2015).

With respect to the Thai higher educational system, three influential keys have pushed Thai higher universities upholding international scenarios. First, the latest Thai Education Act (1999) and amendments made in 2002 and 2008 authorized the Thai education system to be more autonomous when it comes to course and materials design since the early 2001 (Boriboon, 2011; Wongsothorn et al., 2003). These laws mainly focus on the decentralization of educational authority in local communities and schools, in which they can play more significant roles and actively participate in preparing curriculums suitable to actual situations and serving their real needs (Kangkha & Mungsiri, 2012; Wongsothorn et al., 2003). This means that the educational institutions have been allowed to select or create their own curriculum by using needs analysis. Second, the changes in the neighbourhood and the westernization of the country have been mutually forced by educational policy makers to expand their international participation and collaboration. As a consequence, the internationalisation of formal and informal curriculums is a dynamic interplay of teaching and learning processes, content, and experiences in and out of the classroom (Leask, 2009). Last, the influx of the English language through the Information and Communication Technology for decades has dramatically affected the use of English language among Thais, particularly in the daily conversations of tertiary students (Luksaneeyanawin, 2005). The challenges and opportunities including the limitation of the flow of internationalism towards Thai higher context will be discussed below.

II. CHALLENGES

The phenomenon of internationalism in the higher education system faces many challenges. It helps serve the rapidly growing demands for the access to higher education, and it stimulates cross-national educational innovations. Furthermore, it prepares students for work in the global economy. Hence, because of the growth of transnational education and cross-border exchange during the internationalism era, Thai higher education systems have also been forced to rethink of retaining, refining, and improving their indigenous capabilities and knowledge to achieve the most sustainable and favourable balance between local wisdom and global knowledge. According to Chang (2011), the higher education institutions in Thailand which aim to provide international programmes

should guarantee that the programmes contain the following characteristics to reveal the proper features of international education: a) quality and management efficiency of the programmes; b) international standards and criteria in issues of curricula; c) qualifications and diversity of instructors; d) a diverse student body; e) an international academic learning environment, and f) international standard facilities and services.

Similarly, other ASEAN countries such as Thailand have become more internationalized because Thailand has become the destination for higher education in the Southeast Asian region and other countries. Tran and Pham (2016) noted that the number of international students such as Americans, Australians and British who desire to further their studies in ASEAN such as Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand is increasing. For instance, the endeavours to internationalize by three dominant and leading public universities in Thailand namely, Chulalongkorn University (CU), Mahidol University (MU), and King Mongkut University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) have moved their focus more towards internationalization, and evidence proves that the number of international activities has increased remarkably (Moussa & Somjai, 2015). It can be said that it is time for educational system leaders to raise their awareness of learning from Western to Eastern by shifting their focus on teaching and research paradigms.

2.1. Time to Learn from the East and West

It is not only the external forces like the quality assurance that the Thai higher tertiary institutes have to perform a better academic standard to reach out the international or world ranking (Lao, 2016), but also the expansion of neighbourhood and westernization of the country for its international participation and collaboration around Thailand in order to approach regional, international, or even world recognition. Thus, it is time for Thai higher education administrators and policymakers to adopt and adapt their educational and institutional policies which suit their home contextualization. Furthermore, the internal forces known as the latest Thai Education Act (1999) and amendments made in 2002 and 2008 authorizing the Thai education system to be more autonomous when it comes course and materials design are directly influenced by all stakeholders in each educational areas i.e. school administrators, local administration officers, employers, students and parents, and so on (Boriboon, 2011; Kangkha & Mungsiri, 2012). These laws mainly focus on the decentralization of educational authority in local communities and schools, in which they can play more significant roles and actively participate in preparing curriculums suitable to actual situations and serving their real needs. This means that the educational institutions have been allowed to select or create their own curriculum by using needs analysis. However, the flood of information and communication technology for decades has dramatically affected the learning and teaching paradigms among towards Thais particularly in the daily conversations of tertiary students.

We cannot deny that to make a better quality assurance and academic standard in order to hit the world ranking for

the Thai higher education systems, politicians, policymakers, and university administrators have to be conscious of these two key academic paradigms, learning and teaching paradigm and research paradigm, as they are directly affected by the movement towards academic world class education system.

2.1.1. Impact on Teaching and Learning Paradigms

The core duty of all universities is to be in-charge of transferring academic knowledge to university students in order for them to develop learning skills for survival in the real world or as support to their professions. The learning and teaching paradigms in the 21st era have been shifted from an inside classroom to an outside classroom world because university students have always been exposed to massive amount of information since they can easily access online sources anytime and anywhere. Some various cyber sources have been designed for the users/students to share their opinion freely e.g. blogs, facebook, youtube, among others. Moreover, many networks have combined users' lived experiences and face to face interaction (Nam et al., 2013). Information and communication technology provide many changes and conveniences for the university students' everyday life. Furthermore, online delivery of education is also expanding rapidly to meet the career-specific education and training needs of the adult population. While such educational opportunities, including many at the sub-degree or certificate level, are increasingly important for social advancement and economic development, they are often not effectively accommodated within traditional higher education governance, financing, and quality control mechanisms. Unlike what the students have faced inside the classroom where the lessons are traditionally discussed by the lecturers and printed materials, the students then have to listen to lectures and take notes based on what might be written on the board. However, some new teachers have learnt from such practices that they have started to shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred atmosphere.

Therefore, the higher education administrators and policymakers need to be conscious of the differences of learning and teaching paradigms for better academic performance.

There is no doubt that a learner-centred learning paradigm has replaced the teacher-centred mode. Thus, the roles of teacher and learners have mutually changed for better learning performance, as claimed by the long-term sustainable development of Thai education in 2017-2031, which has proposed five key factors: 1) a better learning society; 2) a learning-based society; 3) a wisdom-based society; 4) a life-long society; and 5) a supportive learning environment (Marusteri, 2015; Sachdeva, 2015).

In teaching mode, firstly the teachers have to raise their awareness that learners can learn more from their access to online sources which are always present in their real world. Thus, the teaching or lecturing should be based on to real world problems, and students are then offered opportunities to share their opinions and thoughts and feelings. Thus, university lecturers can become the guide, facilitator, and supporter in the teaching process.

A *guide* refers to a teacher who can exchange and exemplify fruitful sources with various positive and negative values for the students to search and learn more about. Furthermore, the students can weigh pros and cons in selecting appropriate techniques to solve their learning problems or real world problems.

A *facilitator* is defined as a teacher who can create a supportive learning environment even within limited sources in order to gradually hone their students surrounded by the learning based and wisdom society. For instance, the teacher as a facilitator can design a learning webpage which can easily connect and access varied sources. Creative facilitators can lead their students to become more active learners. The students can feel less-worried because they can access the data freely. Then the students can exert more effort on their studies by employing a scientific process: planning, observing by comparing and selecting, practicing, evaluating and synthesizing. This can be achieved through the richness of information provided by the teacher facilitator.

A *supporter* knows who can be approached in order to bridge the communication gap among the university lecturers and students. For instance, in the past, the lecturers and their learners can only meet each other only during class hours; therefore, it is difficult for the learners and the lecturers to keep contact. In case the learners faced some learning problems outside of class time, they rarely found support or confirmation of their solutions from their lecturers. However, such situations have changed nowadays due to the cyber era. Some university students spend most of their time on the internet which can have both advantages and disadvantages. For instance, the teacher as a supporter can always stand by the students' side and be ready to pull them back from failure for them to stand again. This strengthens the relationship among teachers and students in the university level. In particular, when the students feel secured to learn, they can learn more.

In an Asian context like Thailand, generally, teachers and students have a good relationship, but this good relationship is not commonly observed in the university level. The gap becomes bigger because they meet each other only during class hours; therefore, in order to bridge this communication gap, the cyber connectivity among teachers and students can bring back valuable relationships any time.

Generally, though the teachers in the university level can become guides, facilitators, and supporters, they can also enrich their roles by being life-long learners in terms of their subject matter and their world knowledge. Most importantly, they can learn more skills in identifying their students' learning skills and adjusting their approach in guiding their students.

In learning mode, the university students' demands are also changing. They have moved towards real life learning, or they increasingly seek courses that enable them to update their knowledge throughout their working lives. Then they can share their thoughts, feelings and messages freely on interactive channels. Therefore, they prefer classroom activities that are similar with their real

world. The new learning paradigms, therefore, have been involved in the experienced-based models tending to be genuine pathways inside the classroom. The richness of what the students can reach outside their classroom world through the rich massive cyber media and social network can be achieved. The classroom has become virtual and may exist everywhere at any time of the day. The learning-based models designed from the real world will gradually mould the students to become more active and autonomous learners.

Active learners refer to university students who are motivated to find the answer to the problem or project designed based on their realizations. They then will plan, search the right ways to study, and solve the assigned problem (Nilson, 2016).

Autonomous learners refer to students who can set their learning goals and select study skills to strengthen their subject and world competency in order to achieve their learning goals. In other words, the learners seek to acquire particular knowledge or skills to satisfy labour market needs, as more students prefer to choose courses from the most suitable providers, rather than studying a traditional clearly defined programme at one institution (OECD, 2008).

Educators will have to spend much more effort and creativity on the use of learners' data and analytics to predict and guide student learning. While teachers and educators may always have had some data and support systems to advise their students, it is imperative that an environment where the responsibility for the design of the learning trajectory shifts from educator to student must provide much more information to guide the students.

As learners become more active and autonomous, more researches will be conducted because the scientific process in learning will be studied, and this will bring about changes in the research paradigm.

To become part of world ranking, all Thai universities have raised their awareness, for instance, the researches and publications of King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), and Mahidol University (MU) are the key impact factors that lead to world recognition. However, according to Lao (2016), Thai universities did not consider teaching intensive research important. Thai academicians seem to have perceived themselves as lecturers rather than as researchers.

2.1.2. Impact on Research Paradigms

According to Lao (2016), there are three trends that transform Thai universities to become more research-oriented and to receive higher ranking. First, research publication in international journals is considered as a new phenomenon in Thai academia. According to Liefner and Schiller (2008) research activity, even in the sciences, only became a regular activity as only 10 percent of science researches were conducted for 15 years ago in Thailand; meanwhile only 20 percent of full time academics are engaged in some forms of research. Secondly, Thailand's research strategy is based on a piecemeal, rather than a comprehensive approach. The intention to write and to publish is just part and parcel of the whole picture. The status quo continues to favour

teaching. Teaching loads are regular three classes per week which are already demanding, time consuming and labour intensive. Meanwhile, many need to work part time in different universities for extra income.

In order to move to an international level, more financial resources are now available to incentivise academics to conduct research and publish internationally. Many Thai universities reiterate the increasing importance of research in their universities. Moreover, when the institutional administrators have embedded the learner-centred mode and become more learning-based society for training both lecturers and students, then lecturers and students will become life-long learners who can learn subjects based on the real world through research. Hence, they will produce more research and publications in their real world.

2.2. Time for Become a Good Governance and Management

One of the challenges confronting the operation of internationalism in Thai higher education system is related to both key performances identified as Quality Assurance and Academic Standard which will be formed by good governance and management. Thai universities are responsible for developing curriculums, overseeing academic standards, conducting examinations, and awarding of degrees to all students enrolled in university departments and affiliated colleges. The existence of multiple regulatory bodies and funding arrangements poses challenges to institutional governance and management, and the system of affiliated colleges exacerbates these challenges.

Good Governance and Management refer to the capabilities and effectiveness of the practices of institutional heads. It may be that political influence in the selection of institutional heads is one of the reasons for the erosion of institutional authority and autonomy. Most institutions have their own governing bodies. However, the process of nominating the numbers of the governing board is not always free from political interference. Institutional autonomy is essential for effective management. Except for selected areas such as the faculty, universities regulated and controlled by the government, some universities may lack funds and may appeal to the government for financial assistance. At times, institutions complain that they receive more directives than funds from public authorities.

2.2.1. Quality Assurance

Universally, the notion of quality is recognized as amorphous and contextual, and it concerns the world of higher education. However, despite the confusion about the concept and how academic quality should be defined and measured, quality assurance has become prominent in higher education systems. Various quality assurance techniques and approaches have been applied and implemented to promote a culture of quality within institutions of higher learning. It is believed that with good quality control and assessment, a higher education institution will provide high quality education to its stakeholders at an appropriate cost. Consequently, quality assurance exists as a governmental instrument to ensure the national academic standard to obtain the budget for

education to run institutions. Therefore, both state and private universities have challenged the different forms of joint ventures to inevitably get better academic performance in order to gain bigger budget (Rattananunapat, 2015).

Currently, promoting quality assurance in both public and private higher education institutions is an important concern for the Thai Government. One must always be mindful of the fact that Thai higher education system is now facing both qualitative and quantitative crises. Higher education institutions, both public and private, are trying to expand and improve to respond to the dramatically rising social demands. Furthermore, to cope with a greater number of enrolments, many higher education institutions tend to create a more diverse academic system. The government is willing to grant a larger budget considering equity principles to provide equal opportunities of access to higher education for people from any social class. Moreover, the growing demands for quality in higher education have raised concerns in making higher education institutions more accountable to their constituencies and in making the issue of quality assurance as the focal agenda of higher education policy. Consequently, today's governmental agencies and higher education institutions are expected to pay special attention to issues of quality and to increase quality control and customer satisfaction. In most countries, state governments and national quality assurance agencies have significant roles and functions in ensuring quality performance of higher education institutions.

Higher education in Thailand has entered an era of continuous change. The latest development of Thai higher education is currently in the second decade of the national education reform, with the goal of achieving quality education. According to the 15-Year National Plan for Higher Education Development for 2008 to 2022 formulated by the office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC), the Thai Government has given high priority to upgrading the quality of Thai colleges and universities to achieve international standards of excellence while upholding their academic freedom and social responsibility (OHEC, 2008). But if the quality of higher education is poor, it can be reflected in its product – low quality graduates. This means that national resources are spent on social problem enlargement instead of social well-being development. Therefore, caution must be taken to ensure that the increase of enrolments either at public or private institutions is accompanied by higher educational standards and quality assurance measures.

Quality assurance is a systematic review of educational institutions and programs to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being maintained (Brown, 2004). Thailand has undergone various stages of development to provide quality higher education. Different experiences have been developed to search for satisfying and effective quality assurance policies and practices within the confines of national needs and circumstances. In order to move forward, it is of utmost importance for the higher education policymakers and practitioners to understand the roles and their

implementation of quality assurance policies in Thai higher education system at present. In a more recent work, Dew (2009) emphasized the concept of quality as continuous improvement and the growing appreciation of quality management systems through the application of new technology. Therefore, the quality in higher education is not just the product, but also a process and should be focused on a whole range of factors associated with the fulfilment of the higher education's mission, namely the quality of inputs, outputs, and processes.

Consistent with the 15-Year National Plan for Higher Education Development for 2008 to 2022 formulated by OHEC, the categorization of Thai higher education system had been designed to reflect the strengths and aspirations of higher education institutions in four sub-systems namely: 1) research and postgraduate universities, 2) specialized universities, including those that focus on science and technology, 3) universities that offer four-year courses and liberal arts colleges, and 4) community colleges (OHEC, 2015).

2.2.2. Academic Standard

Over the last decade, a number of university rankings systems had been increasingly used around the world. The proliferation of ranking exercises, which compare the performance of different institutions, is primarily based on an attempt to provide information about the excellence of academic institutions and programs in relation to their stakeholders. From a government standpoint, quality is achieved when a proper balance among quality, opportunity, and cost is maintained. Accordingly, the government is interested both in accountability and quality improvement in which the emphasis is demonstrating justifiable decisions on higher education policy (e.g., allocation of funding or termination of academic programs) to the society.

Guaranteeing the credibility and acceptance of the quality assurance process requires clarity in policies, appropriateness of the quality assurance framework, transparency of the procedures, integrity of the people involved, and the desired impact on the system (Martin & Stella, 2007, p. 91). The quality assurance system produces information on academic quality and communicates the outcomes and activities of the institution to the management, personnel, students, and external stakeholders (Kettunen, 2012, p. 519). However, many existing quality assurance instruments such as the traditional output measures, performance indicators, common exams or tests, common surveys of student experience, and quality rankings by commercial publications, explicitly have limitations in providing useful information on academic quality to the public and helping maintain and improve academic standards.

III. OPPORTUNITIES

3.1. Time to Increase the Cohort Participation Rate

In order to respond to the impact of internationalization and globalization, the higher educational institutions focus more on international participation by making and broadening their institutional mission towards

multinational, multicultural and multilingual contexts. As a consequence, international students bring an important aspect of diversity to the classroom and the university campus, giving Thai students access to global perspectives without leaving Thailand. Another benefit of foreign student participation in Thai universities is the additional revenue stream to finance higher education. In 2003, it was estimated that foreign student enrolments contributed 2.5 billion baht (around USD 75 million or USD 15,000 per student on average) into the subsector (Chang, no date). At many institutions, tuition contributions and fee payments for non-Thai students are nearly double those charged for Thai students. The most popular fields of study among foreign students are business administration, marketing, business English, Thai language, general management and international business management (Collin, 2011).

The enrolment of international students in Thailand is also encouraged by branch campuses of several foreign higher education institutions, such as Webster University and Stamford International University. Franchise universities are at present a limited segment of the existing higher education market. As noted, greater participation from the private international sector could be a growth factor in the supply of tertiary educational services. This often becomes a cause for concern for the stakeholders. The developments are taking place in other regions with the development of the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP6) Credit Transfer Scheme (UCTS) to promote university student mobility in the Asia Pacific region (Mongkhonvanit & Emery, 2003). The key players in international education are involved in either the ECTS or UCTS schemes. The influence of the ECTS or UCTS on the practices of other countries is likely to increase in the future.

3.1.1. Affordability

As the higher education is considered as a long-term investment in human capital, usually involving a large budget, the participation rate of youth ages 18 to 25 with a parent whose highest educational level achieved was primary education was 13 percent. Eighteen percent of them had parents who completed secondary education while 34 percent of them had parents who completed tertiary education. The participation rate of people living in municipal areas is three times higher than that of the people living in non-municipal areas.

To achieve affordability, government policy and higher education institutions should facilitate greater access for all groups of people in Thai society. Specifically, students from poorer families have to get the equal opportunity of access to higher education institutions. Higher education institutions need to provide more direct admission places for socio-economically disadvantaged students, and there should be more scholarships for these students to study within the country and abroad. The move of higher education from elite to mass participation, together with the concept of lifelong learning and advancements in technology, will involve increasing numbers of students participating in higher education.

3.1.2. Marketing

The emergence of global rankings and their growing importance is illustrative of this compelling search for signals and recognition (Van Vught & Ziegele, 2012). Market mechanisms have a significant impact on the ability of schools to attract top scholars, the most competent students, and research funding. Market mechanisms have thus placed increased emphasis on signaling mechanisms to ascertain their value and build their legitimacy to attract the best students. Marketing mechanisms have been used as a context ranging from competitive research grants, to contract research, performance-based funding formulas for teaching and learning activities, and public funding based on the number of students with a view to reduce the reliance of HEIs on public funding in the context of tight education budgets (Kaiser et al., 2000). Likewise, the needs of the local community and labour market become critical as soon as HEIs compete with each other for additional sources of funding. Meanwhile, the emergence of new providers in the public or private sectors has been possible, thanks to the deregulation policies in many countries which have lifted entry barriers to the higher education market.

3.1.3. Funding

Both teachers and administrators have worked under pressure to improve the quality of their teaching and research, despite decreasing resources due to mounting funding constraints. Performance indicators and external quality evaluations are integral aspects of the new model of distant steering, and a number of countries have introduced some degree of performance-based funding (Borden & Banta, 1994; OECD, 2008).

Public higher educational institutions are funded by the government. However, the private sector is faced with severe financial constraints, which seriously limit its ability to provide quality higher education. The failure of the private sector to provide quality higher education could hinder the Government's strategic objective of making Thailand become an international and regional education hub.

The notion of an autonomous university is springing to solve the financial problem in Thai higher education. An autonomous university is defined as the status of a government agency that is neither within the government bureaucracy nor a state enterprise. It becomes a legal entity under state supervision after the approval by the Minister of Education. The University Council can formulate rules and regulations for personnel administration, as well as stipulating staff welfare and benefits. With respect to budgeting and assets, the Government provides a block grant sufficient to guarantee the quality of education the university delivers. This block grant is considered as the university's own income. An autonomous university needs to stipulate its own budget systems, accounting, finance, and asset management. The State Audit Office audits the accounts and follows up on the budget expenditures. The autonomous university does not need to remit its income to the Ministry of Finance. In cases where the income generated is not sufficient to sustain the university's operations and funds which cannot

be procured from other sources, the Government will allocate additional funds from the national budget. The university has the right to manage, maintain, and benefit from the state property owned by the institution. The income generated from other various sources will be utilized to strengthen the academic capacity and overall quality of provision (Bovornsiri, 2006).

3.2. Time to Reconceptualise the Apex of Reputation Hierarchy

According to Loa (2016), the Thai university reputation has not only occurred at a regional level, but has also taken place at a national level. Previously, the Thai university reputation was closely matched to its institutional legacy, particularly the years it established. Chulalongkorn and Thammasat University, the first two universities in Thailand, stood at the apex of the reputation hierarchy. International league tables have challenged this mythical view. Over the years, universities such as Mahidol University, King Mongkut University of Technology Thonburi, and Chiang Mai University revealed better academic performance than these two universities in various international rankings. In the 2015 Time Higher Education (THE) World Rankings, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (55th), and Mahidol University (91th) are among the best universities in Asia. These results can boost international ranking. At the meantime, Chulalongkorn and Thammasat University are not in a better listed. Furthermore, scholars, policymakers, and academicians have to accept that this is the time to reconceptualise the *Apex of Reputation Hierarchy*. The quality of Thai universities has been remarkably judged by evidence-based, and not imaginative-based mechanism.

IV. CONSTRAINTS

English Language Skills as a Significant Communication Barrier

In dealing with and managing today's international businesses, it is important to recognize that language plays a crucial role. English has currently become well-established as the most powerful international medium. Without sufficient English communicative competence, Thai tertiary students are unable to utilize the professional knowledge and rich experiences they have accumulated for years; this could then result in low self-confidence in performing their daily tasks in the workplace. Moreover, the importance of English language competency affects the professional development of the company personnel. It creates greater demands for the workforce to develop high level English language skills for business communication. Such demands can be seen in business organizations requiring their employees to have highly functional language skills to be able to perform their tasks efficiently. Many jobs require the applicants to be fluent in English. Knowledge of English as a second language is a requirement at this time. According to McInnes, James and Hartley (2000), international competition, new developments in teaching and learning, and larger student population contribute to a significant change in the

landscape of tertiary education. The private sector has urged universities to be responsive to their identified needs in business. Each university places a great emphasis on the teaching and learning of English. As Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy (2006) states, there are 29 public higher education institutions and 23 private higher education institutions which initiate new international education programs to address those requirements.

Established as the dominant global language in the internationalisation of business and for multi-national cooperation, the English language has brought and continues to bring co-partners and co-workers together so they can share a common vision, exchange ideas, and drive collective agenda. Thus, proficiency in the English language has become an opportunity, and at the same time, a key competitive differentiator for individual workers, corporations, and entire economic systems (Cameron, 2002; Graddol, 1997; and Pennycook, 1998).

Due to the limitations in the English language proficiency and the goal to upgrade the professional knowledge of the current labour force, the Thailand English Language Development Centre (ELDC) was established on December 23rd, 2003 under the Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006). It acts as an information and coordinating centre to advance the country's workforce in various job disciplines with workers having competent skills and knowledge of the English language. It also aims to conduct needs analyses, design effective training programs, support and coordinate the role of the government and the private tertiary institutes. It also serves as a consultation centre for both the government and the private sectors, as well as for the general public in terms of learning English as a global language in career enhancement and job performance.

Since the English language is considered as a communication barrier for Thai tertiary students, they need to improve their English communication skills. They need to improve their proficiency in English in communicating, encountering the barriers and methods to improve communication skills.

V. CONCLUSION

In the coming years, Thailand will face more challenges to its competitiveness as internationalism increasingly emerges in tertiary education worldwide. The Thai higher education has inevitably been affected by both challenges and opportunities because internationalism brings about ways on how to exploit positive ideas and raises awareness of the negative ones based on the learning, teaching, and research paradigms of the East and the West. These paradigms can be realized through good governance and management in terms of quality assurance and academic standard. The opportunities for the cohort participation rate regarding affordability, marketing and funding, and reputation rank are a great deal for them to achieve. Meanwhile, a major trend has been the increase in university autonomy and the continued expansion of private higher education. Thailand's strategy and policies

keep the country deeply committed to improving both the efficiency and equity of its higher education system. However, language plays a significant role in the communication process when dealing with all international dimensions; on the other hand, it is also a significant barrier in moving towards internationalism. It is obviously seen that English language competency is a major consideration and challenge for Thai education to achieve international recognition.

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