

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING THAI PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TOWARDS RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract: The role of higher education institutions on research has become more important at international level. Both universities and industrial sector need to cooperate for creating innovations for economic growth and country development. This study firstly aims to raise awareness among higher education institutions and stakeholders concerned with the necessary participation in upgrading Thai higher education quality research. (The Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2009). The main point is to propose the new vision and strategies for developing the Thai private universities, which still lack of efficient researchers and research works, to become the global research universities. Conducting research on Thai private universities that have potential to be research universities by learning the success experiences from universities abroad besides the national research universities in Thailand. The research finding showed strategies that offers keywords of the V-A-L-U-E which comprised of 5 keywords which represent (1) Vision Creatively (2) Accreditation on Quality (3) Utility of Research (4) Linkage and network 5) Efficiency of Management.

Keywords: Strategies, Private Higher Education Institutions, Research Universities

Introduction

Global economy is changing the relationship between higher education, government and private sectors. Government need to provide a source of quality manpower, economic development and a better society. The university not only to create new knowledge for academic goal but also to recognize the needs of job and market. Even though, the changing of academic values becomes to economic value added. The important issue of higher education is to keep the balance of academic value and economic value added. The framework of the 2nd 15-Year Long Range Plan on Higher Education of Thailand (2008-2022) and the 10th Higher Education Development Plan (2008-2011) takes an integrated and holistic approach to university system development of high quality. The goal is to improve the quality of Thai education., produce and develop quality human resources, enhance the competitiveness of the country. in the globalization era.

The UNESCO's concept on Education, emphasizing the potential of major aspects of university role in teaching, research and academic services to society, is fully included the quality of teachers and curriculum, quality of research, internationalization of university, quality assurance, investment and equality in education. The improvement of the potential development and competitiveness occurs continuously in higher education in order to create knowledge and innovation which is to enhance the competitiveness of the country. However, the universities generate new knowledge through research and to serve society based on the variety of academic freedom, required more co-operation across and between the various sectors, public and private higher education institutions, local mechanisms and contribute to sustainable development under the CHE's framework (15-Year Long Range Plan on Higher Education of Thailand, 2008-2022) and systematic supervision and comprehensive. According to this CHE's plan, the role of higher education institutions in respect of its research as a mechanism to enhance the competitiveness of the country. The main task of raising general quality of Thai education is to produce and develop more quality human resources, to encourage themselves to adapt for the changes.

Objective of the Study

1. To study factors that lead to research universities of both private and public higher education institutions in Thailand and abroad.

2. To study current situation and readiness to become research universities of private higher education institutions in Thailand

3. To propose strategies for developing Thai private higher education institution towards research universities.

Research Questions

1. What is a research university?

2. What are factors that lead research achievement?

3. What are the present conditions, problems and obstacles of Thai private university?

4. What are strategic developments of Thai university to become Research University?

Literature Review

Concept of Research Universities

The university in the United States has used the concept of a research university in Germany which focused on scientific research deeper and broader a

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long time ago. The Johns Hopkins University in the United States was the first university that has research-oriented courses (Advanced Research-Based Curricular) with emphasis on graduate education and research, as concept of research university, teaching and research-oriented seminar focused on laboratory experiments fully. (Paitoon Sinlarat, 2006)

Even though, there is no clear evaluation criteria for nation research universities. The Association of American Universities and the Center for Measuring University Performance are two organizations that have developed some evaluation criteria such as alumni support, doctorates granted, endowment assets, excellence in undergraduate education, faculty recognition, National academy members, number of doctoral programs, and number of doctorates awarded, postdoctoral appointees, and total research expenditures.

The criteria and standard of research universities based upon several indicators of research performance, including alumni and staff Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, highly cited researchers, articles indexed in major citation publications and academic performance of an institution, as following: (Vichan Panich, 2008)

- total costs of research.and total amount from research agencies.
- number of teachers who have been selected as a member of National Academy
- number of teachers who received various awards.
- number of students who received a doctorate and post doctoral.
- total amount of endowment.and donations per year.

Thailand’s National Research University

Nowadays, higher education is being driven towards commercial competition by economic forces resulting from the development of global education industrials. Without supporting of government funds force private

In 2009, the government has issued an emergency policy to develop the national research university to reach a standard, in order to promote Thailand as a central hub of education, research and development and academic convention into the region. Then, the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education in Thailand had announced and approved a list of nine outstanding research universities under National Research University initiative to be world-class universities. There were Chulalongkorn University, Chiang Mai University, Kasetsart University, Khon Kaen University, King Mongkut’s University (Thonburi), Mahidol University, Suranaree University, Thammasat University and Prince of Songkla University. (Commission on Higher Education, 2009)

Strategic Management

Strategy is defined as a course of action aimed at ensuring that the organization will achieve its objectives. Since, Schendel and Hofer (1979) define strategic management as a process that deals with work of the organization, with organizational growth, and more particularly, with developing and utilizing the strategy which is to guide organization’s operations. Certo and Peter (1991:5) confirm this by stating that is a continuous process, aimed at keeping an organization as a whole appropriately matched to its environment. There are five major steps of strategic management process.

SWOT technique is the first stage of planning and helps administrators to focus on main issues and formulate strategic plans. Each letter in the word SWOT represents key words, as following S = strengths, W = weaknesses, O = opportunities, T = threats Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors while opportunities and threats are external factors. SWOT can be used in conjunction with other tools for strategic planning, and very popular in marketing because it is quick, easy, and intuitive.

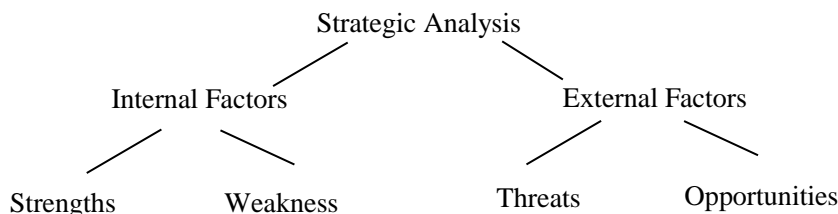


Figure 1: SWOT Model

universities seeking for other sources of financing. The private higher education institutions had to be concerned more with not only the academic abilities and quality of their graduates but also abilities to increase research more productivity. (Ginsberg, 1991)

TOWS matrix analysis is similar to the SWOT method but simply looks at the negative factors first in order to turn them into positive factors.

Methodology

This research used mixed methodology method, which can be divided into two parts:

1) Qualitative data:

The documentary analysis from theories, principles and researched was done to conceptualize a research framework relevant to research universities of both private and public higher education institutions in Thailand and abroad.

2) Quantitative data:

The 130 samples were collected from 1) administrators of overseas public and private universities 2) administrators of Thai public and private universities 3) senior experts who were the administrators of research-related units 4) administrators of research units of Thai private universities. 5) experts who were the administrators of higher education institutions and research-related units who attended the seminar and participated in the validation of certification of the strategies.

The research instruments were content analysis form; data survey form, interview form and questionnaires. Data were collected and analyzed by using frequencies, percentage, mean and standard deviation. To formulate strategies by using SWOT and TOWS Matrix analysis technique. The research study comprised of 3 parts, as following:

Conceptual Framework

(see figure 3 in next page)

Summary of Finding

1. The success factors leading to the research university consisted of the organization’s structure, modern technologies, and academic freedom culture in the organization, environment, and supports for research works such as budget, buildings, and research facilities. The internal factors that most affected the success were potential faculty members and students to engage in research works, effective management systems, and visionary and creative leaders. The availability of strategies as the roadmap for developing towards the research university was the most important.

2. The current situations and readiness of private higher education institutions, the lack of faculty members to do research quantitatively and qualitatively was found. There was no motivation systems for encouraging faculty members to do research, especially those who had high potential resulting in less dissemination and utility of research works. Private education institutions’ engagement in doing research was thus merely to fulfill their respective missions and was driven to do so according to the standards under Education Quality Assessment Criteria. Further, it was also found that, due to budgetary constraints, most private education institutions were not capable to invest research database for retrieval purpose in the same way to the public education institutions. It was therefore necessary to be prepared by introducing the integrated strategies for determining clear targets and directions for research works prior to moving forwards the research university.

	External Opportunities (O)	External Threats (T)
	1..... 2..... 3.....	1..... 2..... 3.....
Internal Strengths (S)	SO	ST
1..... 2..... 3.....	Maxi-Maxi Strategy Strategies that use strengths to maximize opportunities.	Maxi-Mini Strategy Strategies that use strengths to minimize threats.
Internal Weaknesses (W)	WO	WT
1..... 2..... 3.....	Mini-Maxi Strategy Strategies that minimize weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities.	Mini-Mini Strategy Strategies that minimize weaknesses and avoid threats.

Figure 2: TOWS Matrix Model

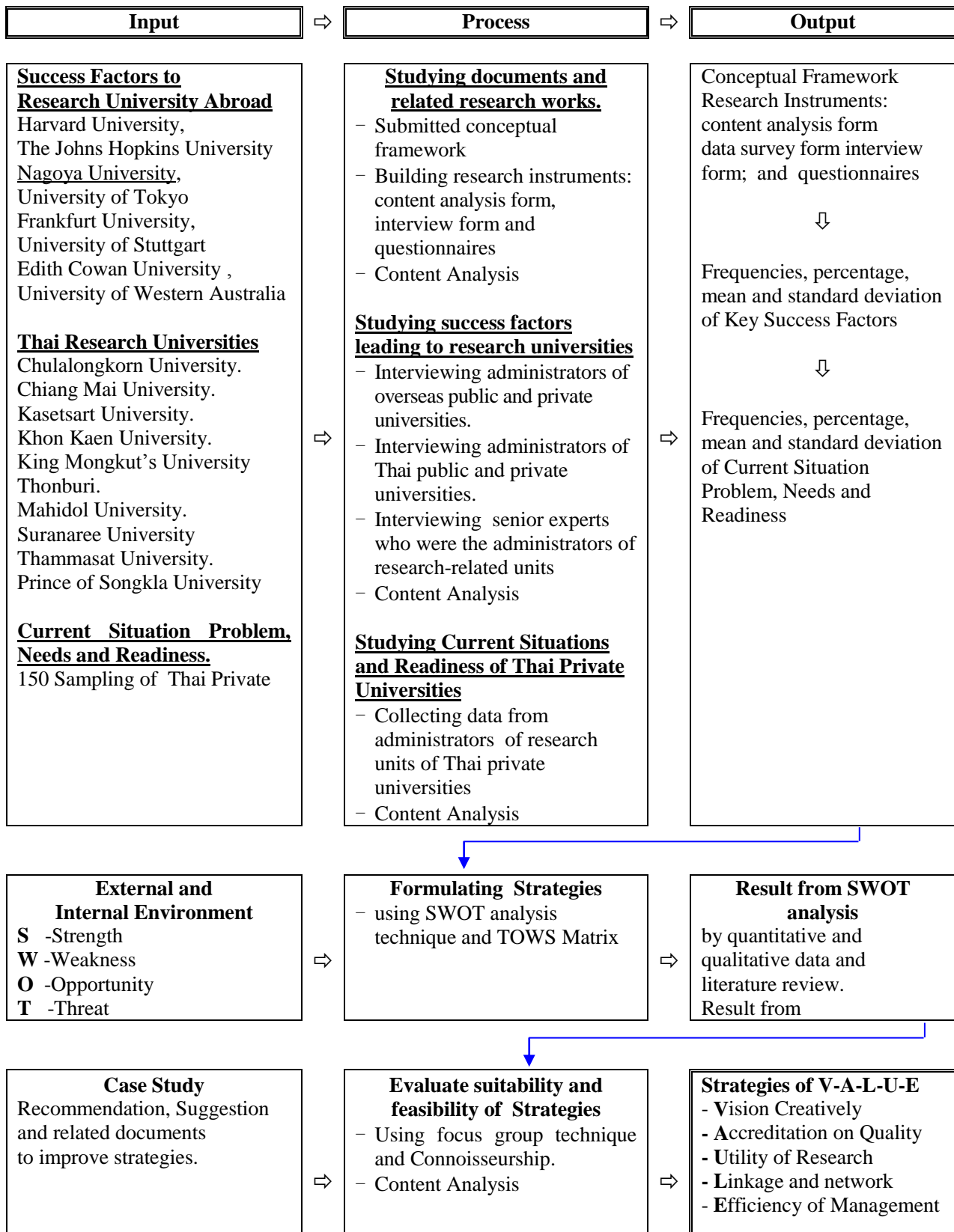


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework of Research

3. The strategy set by the TOWS Matrix. The strategies that are appropriate to the situation in the Thai private higher education institutions to become research universities in three categories are efficient management, productivity research and networking or research collaboration. Based on the synthesis of such information, the study found out that there are two more strategic issues essential to the development of private higher education institutions; there were creative vision and assuring quality of research to society. The proposed strategies were V-A-L-U-E representing 5 keywords: (1) Vision Creatively; (2) Accreditation on Quality; (3) Utility of Research; (4) Linkage and Network; and (5) Efficiency of Management. This was to propose the overall strategy for developing Thai private education institutions towards research universities and be the case study of Siam University. (see figure 4 and table 1 in next page)

Discussion and Conclusion

From the research analysis, it found out that the strength of Thai private universities are linkage and network of partnerships with external agencies. There are many professors in the graduate level, most scholars who have both experience and talent for teaching and research. The new staff, young generation is easy to develop a positive attitude and new paradigm to the challenge and creative culture by using research-based learning and social services. The weakness side, private universities lack of researchers, both quantitative and qualitative research, and still full of teaching workload and no time to do research. Budget support is limited. The opportunity in seeking a small amount of external research funding, the same as research productivity has been minimal, lack of incentives to encourage faculty to do research, especially those with high research capabilities.

In term of characteristic and meaning of research university, it is an institution of advanced teaching and research that undertakes research to discover new knowledge, which communicates this new knowledge to the rest of the world and engages with the community and end-users in its application, and which trains future researchers through undergraduate and postgraduate courses that encourage an enquiring mind.

The key success factors that lead research achievement are following:

- 1) High quality staff with a proven track record of achievement.
- 2) Good research infrastructure, internal factors such as budget, effective management systems, visionary and creative leaders and academic freedom culture
- 3) Collaboration with partners across the world

The university ranking has been a subject for discussion at both international and national levels, for example, Times Higher Education Supplement and the Academic World Ranking. The results of the rankings are affected not only by the indicators used, but also by the amount of information retrieved, including from national and international databases. Many more researches conducted worldwide focusing on university ranking by evaluating research performance through publications and citations. It also found that Asian countries' performances were below the world average.

However, it appears that most universities in Thailand have never been listed or given the ranking system as a result of being taken out of the initial selection by a short-listing process. In other words, there are no research data available sufficient for the purposes of setting strategic research goals and budget allocations, and making policies and decisions for the improvement of the research performance of Thai universities. In Thailand, ranking of universities is yet to be accepted among the academic community, especially for the purposes of obtaining budget allocations from granting agencies and for academic promotions.

The results of the rankings are affected not only by the indicators used, but also by the amount of information retrieved, including from national and international databases. There has been a number of researches conducted worldwide focusing on university ranking by evaluating research performance through publications and citations. A suggestion indicated that Thailand's research should be immediately improved in respect of three main issues, which include:

- increasing investment in research and development;
- building more high quality personnel in the research and development fields.
- supporting the participation of the private sector in research and development.

Suggestion for the future research study

None of Thai private universities that had highest average number of published articles. It indicated that, in terms of research productivity and impact, the top nine national research universities corresponded to those approved for government support in reaching international standards and research performances have never been evaluated clearly.

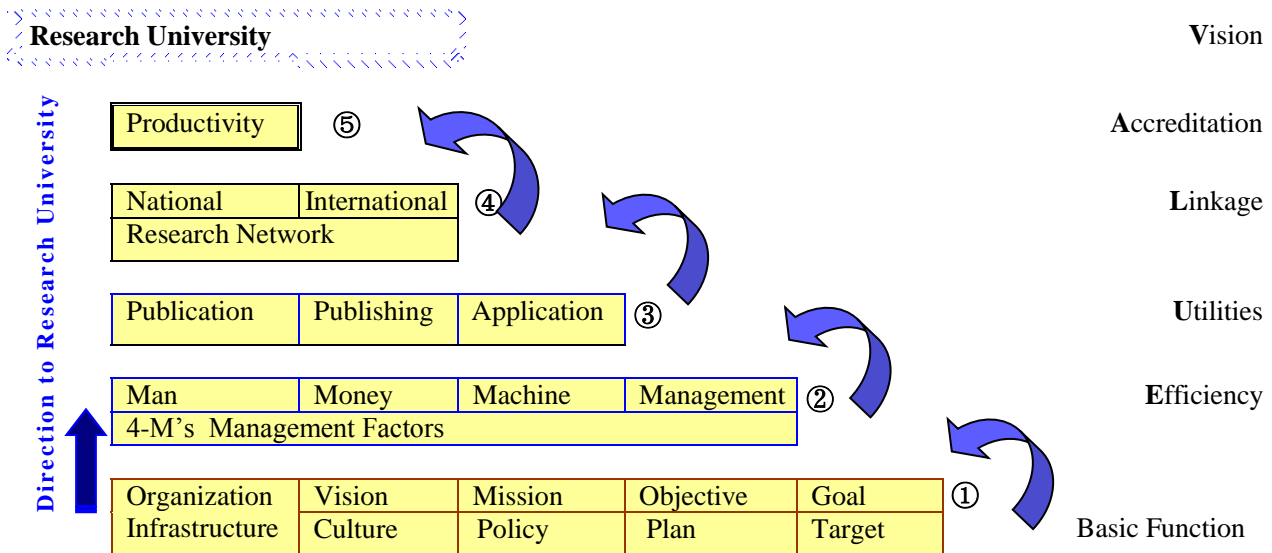


Figure 4: Strategy Move

Table 1: V-A-L-U-E Strategies for developing Thai Private Higher Education Institutions towards Research Universities.

Goal	Strategies	Meaning
1. Building new culture of cooperation more productively and creative thinking.	Vision Creatively	Strategies that promote new culture of creative thinking, corporatizing together outstanding professional, determining the direction of research and innovation policy, mission and goals of research in the university can be implemented to meet the needs of society and nation.
2. Assuring quality of research	Accreditation	Strategy-driven organization, quality standard control by PDCA cycle (Deming, 1950) continuously monitoring how system is maintaining and acceptable to society.
3. Research linkage Network and collaboration.	Linkage	Strategies to build collaborative research with other agencies, both local and global network. To develop quality and increase research. Participation to be accepted by society
4. Conducting more research production to public utilization and commercial.	Utility of Research	Strategies to produce quality research production and innovation that can be used for public, commercial and academic purpose, can be integrated and combine academic to solve real problem of community and society,
5. Moving to Performance management systems.	Efficiency	Strategies to enhance the strategic management of all aspects and levels of infrastructure. (4 Ms?: management, money, manpower, materials), also methods and process, Output, and social impact.

The present conditions of overseas higher education institutions, research conditions are good. Only some problems relate to the funding available to cover the costs of doing research at world standard, and to teaching future generations of students. The university has completely revised its teaching curriculum to provide a broad-based undergraduate degree program that emphasizes the acquisition of research skills from the beginning. Reviewed the

research centers and institutes, organizing a cross-cutting structure that encourages multi-disciplinary groups of researchers to tackle problems of global interest and significance. The prioritized research activities to focus on areas where universities have strategic strength or opportunity. Moreover, the overseas universities also study and benchmark their achievements against the Top 100 universities world-

wide and setting annual goals to improve their research performance on the various ranking systems.

The result of comparative studies found that Thai private universities still lack global impact. To achieve global research standard Thai private universities need to focus on high-quality English, collaboration with partners all over the world, strategic focus at several areas where Thailand has a comparative advantage, investment in high quality infrastructure, and benchmarking with other universities worldwide.

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