THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON INTERNATIONALIZATION OF MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

In a knowledge-based global economy, higher education institutions (HEIs) are undergoing great changes in various aspects. The internationalization of HEIs is a natural and inevitable consequence of the globalized economy. With the increasing importance of internationalization in HEIs, the school administrators and stakeholders spare more emphasis on the internationalizing process in their own institutes. Organizational aspects have been assessed by many researchers as a means to understand how it foster or inhibit the process of internationalization of HEIs. Influence of organizational culture on internationalization, has been widely studied in western and European context, but not in Southeast Asia. Thus, this study seeks to assess how organizational culture influences the internationalization of a Thai HEI as a pilot research. The aim of this study is to equip Mahidol University administrators with the ideas that internationalization can be optimized by developing the organizational culture towards the entrepreneurial direction. Understanding the influence of organizational culture on internationalization will increase the leadership effectiveness of Mahidol University management team. It also provides a means for other HEIs in Southeast Asian to assess institutional culture readiness for internationalization.

Keywords

Internationalization, Organizational Culture, Higher Education, Thailand

1. Introduction

With the intensification impacts from social, cultural, economic and political developments, internationalization of HEIs is necessary for their own survival and development.

An HEI is not an independent body within a country but a part of the global education connecting with other counterparts around the world. Internationalization of HEIs is a country's response to the impact of globalization whilst, the country maintains its own culture and identity. Many countries perceived internationalization as crucial in achieving academic standards (Knight, 2004).

As the importance of internationalization of HEIs increases, researchers began to assess relevant factors that foster or inhibit internationalization. Organizational culture is one of these factors (Agnew & VanBalkom, 2009). The assumption that the organizational culture is an important variable that explains how institutions make decisions has made the study of universities' organizational culture very popular (Gonzalez, 2002). Considering the organizational culture is a critical influence on the members' behavior and school development, a clear understanding of the organizational culture is necessary. Given that the study on influence of organizational culture on internationalization is rare in Southeast Asia context, it is in great need to conduct relevant researches in ASEAN countries.

To investigate the impact of organizational culture on a HEI's internationalization, the selection of appropriate institution was most important. The researcher has considered a large number of HEIs in Thailand. Two criteria were set to select one for in-depth analysis. First, it should be a HEI that were acknowledged for the quality of their teaching and learning, excellence of graduates and academic programmes would be involved. This aspect could be demonstrated by the rankings of that institution. Secondly, the policies and mission statements emphasize in internationalization and it is well known for some international programs or colleges. Based upon the selection criteria, the HEI selected in this research is Mahidol University.

Mahidol University is ranked the 1st among Thai universities pertaining to QS University 2014-2015 ranking. It was the first public university in Thailand to set up International Student

Degree Program (ISDP) back in 1986. Ten years later, Mahidol University International College (MUIC) was established as the first international college at a public university. Mahidol University currently offers 150 international degree programs out of 301 degree programs covering a wide range of disciplines, 49% of degree programs are international programs. These programs have attracted students from over 50 different countries. Upon the university record up to 2013, these 150 international programs are the most among Thai universities. Mahidol University emphasizes internationalization in the vision of becoming a world class university. It is one of the most internationalized HEIs in Thailand.

This study, thus, initially drew attention to culture types at Mahidol University on the basis of McNay's organizational culture model (1995), then employed Davies' entrepreneurial culture model (2001) to address the research question: how organizational culture influences internationalization of Mahidol University?

2. Clarification of Terminology

It is critical to begin by attempting to understand the terms used in this research. This section seeks to clarify the similar terms usually mistakenly used in academic research.

2.1 Internationalization versus Globalization

Internationalization and Globalization are originated from economics. When internationalization is applied in the academia, it is often erroneously taken as globalization. Due to no common definition of these terms is concluded in the context of higher education, many scholars have developed different relationships between these two terms from their researches.

2.1.1 Globalization Is the Advanced Stage of Internationalization

Lapiner (1994) applied the metaphor of industrial world into higher education. The four phases are: domestic, multidomestic, multinational and the last one is global or transnational phase. In his articulation, multidomestic and multinational represent different phases of internationalization, then globalization is the ultimate form.

2.1.2 Internationalization and Globalization are contrary with each other

Enders (2004) referred internationalization as the process of intense cross-border cooperation between states, however, globalization is mainly about the inter-dependency between states. Internationalization of HEIs create the challenges for the institutions to build their own academic culture while the activities are financially supported by the national funds. Whereas, globalization blurs the concepts of national boundaries and encourages a new universal

culture instead. Characteristics of globalization are expressed in the economic environment reconstruction, markets' accessing and the dominance of notions like professionalized management, high efficiency and competitiveness.

2.1.3   Internationalization is the Response to Globalization

Many researches (Chan & Dimmok, 2008; De Wit, 2009) revealed that there is dynamic interconnection between these two terms. The phenomenon of globalization serves as a catalyst for internationalization process of HEIs. Knight (2008a) described internationalization of higher education is how a country reacts to the impact of globalization phenomenon featured by the effusion of knowledge, people, technology, ideas and values, while maintaining the cultural identity and uniqueness of its own education system. Thus, the influence of globalization on each country varies depending on its acceptance level, historical and cultural backgrounds.

The third statement clarifies the dialectical relationship of these two terms by clearly stating their identity. Hence, the researcher of this study adopts this causality of globalization and internationalization - globalization is a catalyst for internationalization and internationalization represents a prompt response to globalization. This study refers internationalization as the response to the phenomenon of globalization, is a process integrating international and intercultural activities into the teaching, researching and other academic activities, serving as a means to its long-term sustainable development with the essential goal to improve the quality of higher education.

2.2 Organizational Culture versus Organization Culture

Reviewing the literature, one can remark Organizational culture and Organization culture are cited interchangeably by many researchers. Despite these terms share some common theoretical components, they are essentially different. These two terms emerge from the two schools of thought in terms of organizational research (Kucinskas & Paulauskaite, 2005).

Organizational culture is rooted in the American approach to culture as an organizational variable that have impacts on the effectiveness of organizations. According to the American philosophy of organizational culture, a culture aiming for a particular organizational outcome can be created and manipulated. In understanding the process of planned change and transformation in an organization, culture is seemed as an important element. Organizational culture is the culture that reflects the ideology of the organization authority.

Organization culture is based on Phenomenological/Interpretive epistemology (Kucinskas & Paulauskaite, 2005) in the German academia. This view defines that organization

is a culture that emerges from human communication and individual interaction which has developed by itself, its values and approaches. The culture will only change under the conditions such as: natural evolution, trauma or infusion of new members. The essential differences when comparing organizational culture in American definition are: the culture in an organization is unique; an organization's culture is not duplicated; and an organization's culture will not be controlled or changed by the management.

Based on the researcher's opinion, the mistaken citation of these two terms is happened due to the lack of English language competence. European or Asian scholars whose native language is not English might take these two terms as synonyms. Organizational culture has increased the amount of studies about university. It is considered as a force that can provide increasing efficiency to organization's activities and the leadership, thus, the research employ the term organizational culture herewith with the aim to provide some useful suggestions for the authority in this HEI to improve the management of the organization, and to make possible efficient use of human capital. In this research, Organizational culture refers a set of physical and mental activities shared by all members in the organization that determines their feelings, thoughts and behaviors, which can be created, manipulated and changed upon the influence of external and internal environment.

3. Rationales for Internationalization

The rationales or justification for integrating an international dimension into higher education are various. As process of internationalization is complex and multifaceted in different context and emphasis, there are no exclusive or absolute reasons for internationalization. These motivations can be generally divided into the external impacts from the globalization trends and internal factors to increase the competitiveness of the HEI.

Bartell (2003) identified three aspects justifying internationalization within or across disciplines and areas:

The influence of advances in communication and transportation across national borders. The knowledge in contemporary time are highly complicated and compressed faster than ever before. The role of higher education can not only stay with delivering universal values but also promote the learners to understand through practical, interpersonal, cross-cultural and international experiences.

Diffusion of cultures through expanded international system of media, television and high-tech technologies such as satellite transmission. All countries and communities are interwined with each other regardless their location.

Economic and political interdependence between nation states cause the growth of common norms and people are increasingly apt to move to other countries for work or travel. The international economic competition has increased influenced by economic activities, namely, the privatization trend of state enterprises, mergers and acquisitions, restructuring and downsizing of companies.

4. The Influence of Organizational Culture

This research is to analyze the organizational culture's impact on internationalization of Mahidol university. To study the influence of organizational culture, the prioritized step is to identify the predominant culture types in this HEI.

Two models will be employed in this research. Firstly, McNay's (1995) organizational culture model will be used to find out the culture types. Then, Davies' model (2001) of approaches to internationalization through the organizational culture perspective will be applied to address the answer of the central research question.

McNay (1995) introduced an interesting connection between organizational culture and higher education, suggesting the culture can be categorized upon the extent of operational control and policy definition. This model yields four types of culture:
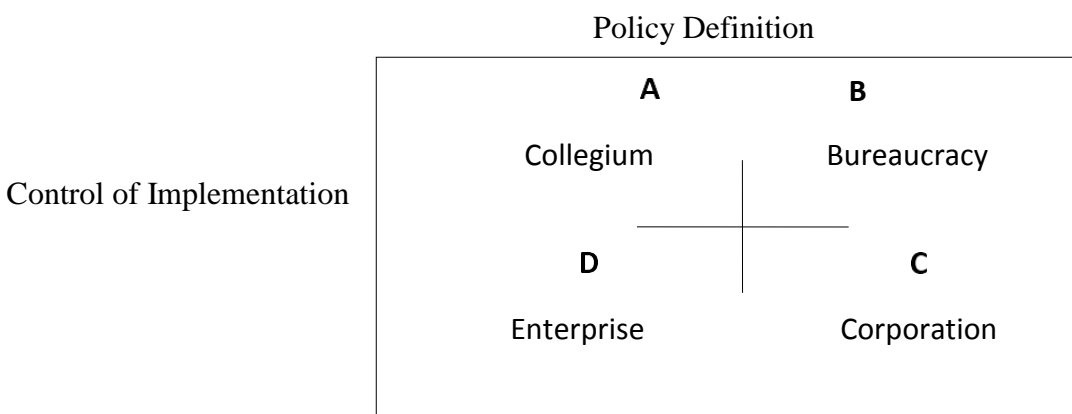
Policy Definition

	A	B	
Control of Implementation	Collegium	Bureaucracy	
	D	C	
	Enterprise	Corporation	

Figure 1: *Model of university as organization*

Collegium (loose policy and operation), refers to the freedom of the policy and operation of the university activities. Bureaucracy (loose policy and tight operation) means regulation domains the institutional life. Corporation (tight policy and tight operation) emphasizes power of the management with tight policy and control of implementation. Enterprise (tight policy and loose operation) promotes the practical functions of the academic activities in serving community and society, under a well-defined policy framework as the guide.

To connect organizational culture with internationalization of HEIs, Davies' model (2001) suggested the link between these two variables. Davies (2001) categorized four development phases of entrepreneurial culture by identifying the status of internationalization of a HEI.
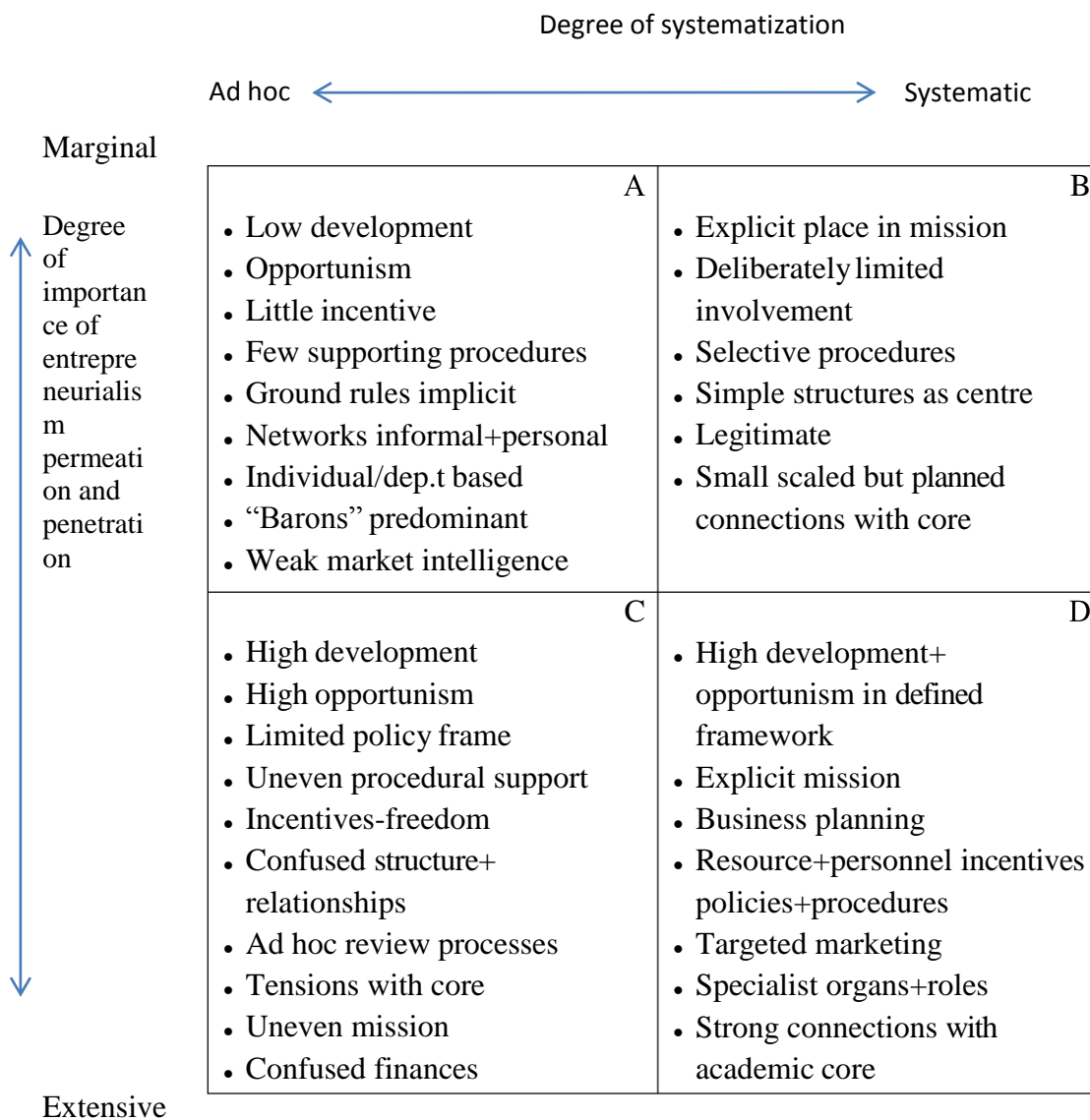
Degree of systematization

Ad hoc ⟵—————————————⟶ Systematic

Marginal

A	B
• Low development • Opportunism • Little incentive • Few supporting procedures • Ground rules implicit • Networks informal+personal • Individual/dep.t based • "Barons" predominant • Weak market intelligence	• Explicit place in mission • Deliberately limited involvement • Selective procedures • Simple structures as centre • Legitimate • Small scaled but planned connections with core
C	D
• High development • High opportunism • Limited policy frame • Uneven procedural support • Incentives-freedom • Confused structure+ relationships • Ad hoc review processes • Tensions with core • Uneven mission • Confused finances	• High development+ opportunism in defined framework • Explicit mission • Business planning • Resource+personnel incentives policies+procedures • Targeted marketing • Specialist organs+roles • Strong connections with academic core

Degree of importance of entreprneurialism permeation and penetration

Extensive

Figure 2: *Means and style of development of entrepreneurial culture Source: Davies (2001)*

In Davies' model (2001), Entrepreneurial culture, similar to enterprising culture in McNay's model (1995), is featured by the strategic policy framework as a general guidance for the organization, whilst respecting the freedom of individuals in practical operation to encourage creativity. Whilst the other types of culture in McNay's model (1995) is categorized as Pre-entrepreneurial culture. Davies (2001) argued that entrepreneurial culture possesses the characteristics of open communication and willingness to embrace new opportunities and challenges, ability to valuate the risk and tackle with it with good preparation, and transfer the learning through the experiences. Entrepreneurial culture is more supportive and conducive for the development of internationalization of a HEI.

5. Conclusion

Thai higher education is undergoing the third decade of the national education reform aiming to aspire towards good education quality. To enhance the process of internationalization is one of the main emphases of development of Thai HEIs. Through a review of literature, no empirical studies investigate the influence of organizational culture on internationalization of a HEI in Thailand. Therefore, this study seeks to study Mahidol University as a pilot research.

The conclusion can be drawn that organizational culture plays a role in impacting the internationalization of HEIs. HEIs with entrepreneurial culture will be relatively easier and more efficiently to internationalize themselves as respondent to globalization. This study will analyze the means and style of development of entrepreneurial culture in the presenting form of internationalization.

In the above light, the main purpose of this study is to bring insights on how Mahidol University has responded to globalization which is referred as internationalization, to identify the organizational culture types at Mahidol University and to analyze how organizational culture influences internationalization. The findings will provide directions for the university administrators on the culture development in their future policy planning. After understanding the influence of organizational culture on the internationalization, suggestions will be made for policy makers to develop international activities towards entrepreneurial culture with the goal of building Mahidol University as a world-class university. This study can serve as a sample for other thai higher education institutions to assess cultural readiness for internationalization, then they can achieve their internationalization objectives more effectively with the ultimate goal to

improve their international standards and academic excellence.

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