

# **The Internationalisation of Higher Education in Thailand: Case Studies of Two English-Medium Business Graduate Programs**

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## **Declaration**

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Supaporn Chalapati

28<sup>th</sup> August 2007

**Dedication**

*To my father, Koo Jatmaneerat (Siang-Jen)*

*Without his constant love, courage and compassion, this thesis would not exist.*

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# Abstract

This thesis discusses the impact of economic globalisation on Thai higher education and society. Thailand's severe economic crisis in the second half of 1997 through 1998 has led to education reform at all levels. Since the crisis, Thailand has been focusing on the development of its human potential and creativity and enhancing the capability of communities, societies and the nation as a whole. The education system of Thailand is being redirected away from nation-building objectives towards 'human capital' creation; education is seen as a form of economic investment.

Thailand, like its industrialising neighbours in Southeast Asia and close Western neighbours, is striving to adjust to the pressures of economic globalisation. As a result, Thailand's higher education system is undergoing significant intellectual and strategic reorientation to meet the demands of the modern global economy. Urged by government and employers to produce graduates with more globally relevant knowledge and skills, Thai universities are attempting to redefine their relevance with increased emphasis on proficiency in English. This imperative explains the expansion of full-fee English-medium education and the emergence of government policies encouraging the internationalisation of curricula.

Since the mid-1990s, successive Thai governments have paid some attention to the concept of internationalisation but have yet to produce a clear statement of what internationalisation means in the Thai context. Thailand's internationalisation policy, such as it is, aims to cultivate a globally skilled workforce and has directly encouraged the establishment of English-medium business graduate programs, branded as 'international' at a number of leading universities in Bangkok. This thesis examines concerns as to the level of English proficiency achieved by students passing through these programs and questions the appropriateness of the term 'international' for programs, many of which appear to be cloned from business studies degrees offered in major native English-speaking countries.

While government policies assert the need to reform education at all levels, both the idea and the parameters of 'internationalisation' remain ill-defined. Consequently, this thesis maps out the scope of internationalisation in education from a global and a local Thai perspective to present a more integrated framework for analysing the implications of the policies. The approach taken presents a multilayered and holistic reading of significant economic and

cultural change taking place in Thailand through the lens of higher education reforms and public debates about globalisation and education. More specifically, this thesis examines internationalisation of Thai higher education as an aspect of globalisation and 'global' practice at the 'local' level, observable in the policies, statements, actions and intentions expressed by political leaders, government officials, university administrators, teachers, students and employers. Significantly, Thai cultural characteristics have a profound impact on these key actors' attitudes towards practice of international education, particularly in the cross-cultural teaching and learning settings. This thesis argues that a more holistic and integrated approach to internationalisation across all related policy domains is needed if the country is to more effectively respond to the challenges of a globalising world.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## *1.1 Introduction*

This thesis investigates the challenges of internationalisation in Thailand's higher education system. In particular, it addresses local responses to global trends in education at the public policy and institutional levels. Thailand, like its industrialising neighbours in Southeast Asia and close Western neighbours, is striving to adjust to the pressures of economic globalisation. As a result, Thailand's higher education system is undergoing significant intellectual and strategic reorientations to meet the demands of the modern global economy. Urged by government and employers to produce graduates with more globally relevant knowledge and skills, Thai universities attempt to redefine their relevance with increased emphasis on proficiency in English. This imperative explains the expansion of full-fee English-medium education and the emergence of government policies encouraging the internationalisation of curricula.

Since the mid-1990s, successive Thai governments have paid some attention to the concept of internationalisation but have to produce a clear statement of what internationalisation means in the Thai context. While the policies assert the need to reform education at all levels, both the idea and the parameters of 'internationalisation' remain ill defined. Consequently, this thesis maps out the scope of internationalisation in education from a global and a local Thai perspective to present a more integrated framework for analysing the implications of the policies. This thesis also seeks to inform decision makers in government agencies and the Thai university system about how global economic and social changes are reshaping tertiary education. The approach taken presents a multilayered and holistic reading of significant economic and cultural change taking place in Thailand through the lens of higher education reforms and public debates about globalisation and education.

More specifically, this thesis examines internationalisation of Thai higher education as an aspect of globalisation and 'global' practice observable in the policies, statements, actions and intentions expressed by political leaders, government officials, university administrators, teachers and students. Policy, as understood here, is encapsulated in dispersed sources of ideas and actions rather than limited to specific official statements. In the same vein, Thomas Dye (1972) defines public policy as "whatever governments choose to do, or not to do" which implies both action and inaction chosen by governments during the process of policy

implementation. Special attention is given to the emergence of English-medium graduate programs in business studies which reflect the influence of both global economic trends and the education policies in many Western countries. In so doing, this thesis examines curriculum internationalisation in Western countries, in particular Australia, as a response to competitive global and regional trends in international education.

While emphasis is given to government policies and university practices associated with internationalisation in the period after the Asian financial crisis of July 1997, there is also a significant socio-cultural dimension to this study. The success or failure of policies can be significantly influenced by the cultural as well as the economic factors. Regardless of government policies initiated and university efforts to expand into new academic endeavours, there is corresponding willingness among Thai students to undertake English-medium instruction in Thailand. This represents a cultural as well as economic challenge for Thai universities and raises many questions about the relationship between culture and curriculum development in a globalising world.

With a greater number of Thai students being given the option to study English-medium business graduate programs in Thailand, the investigation was extended to encompass student and academic staff perceptions concerning English-medium business graduate programs, cross-cultural teaching, learning practices, quality assurance and international collaboration; all of which are important aspects of ongoing changes in Thai graduate education. This three-fold approach of government policy, university initiatives, and student participation, allows for a comprehensive analysis of the factors most closely associated with the core concern of this thesis, namely ‘the role of English-medium business graduate programs in the internationalisation of Thai higher education.’

## ***1.2 Responding to Globalisation***

Globalisation is not a singular or easily definable phenomenon. According to a widely cited definition by Roland Robertson, ‘[globalisation] refers to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole’ (Robertson, 1992, p. 8). Economic globalisation has reputedly weakened the power of national governments to exert policy control over economic activity conducted within their national borders. By adjusting economic policies to attract flexible or free investment capital and make local industries internationally competitive, governments expose their populations to the changes and

alternations of regional and global markets. However, economic globalisation is but one process among many linking the fortunes of localities to patterns of global exchange. Globalization, as defined by Joseph Stiglitz (2003), “is a set of processes that operate simultaneously and unevenly on several levels and in various dimensions.”(p.36). Globalization, writes Manfred Steger (2003), breaks down barriers to global “flows,”

we use the term *globality* to signify a *social condition* characterized by the existence of global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make many of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant (p.7)

More pervasive and transformative are new communications technologies that facilitate instantaneous symbolic exchange and which enable trillions of dollars to be traded daily on global financial markets. Information communication technology (ICT) and the Internet allow people in developed countries to communicate globally on a daily basis thereby eliminating physical space as a determining factor in social, cultural and economic exchange. Theoretically, we can engage in real-time conversation with anyone anywhere in the world. Despite the increasing multilingualism of the Internet and the growth of world languages like Chinese and Spanish, English is still the global lingua franca, and, as the language of global business, English language skills are in high demand across the world. This places English-medium education at a premium in countries like Thailand where the dearth of English languages skills is almost legendary.

Societies are subject to different forms of global impact depending upon their openness to the world outside. The internationalisation of Thai higher education is but another phase in the country’s longstanding practice of adopting ideas from abroad and adapting them to suit local circumstances. Initial European influence has been evident since the founding of Thailand’s first university, Chulalongkorn University in 1917, when ‘curriculum was patterned after English models’ and ‘classes were mainly taught by foreign teachers’ (Sinlarat, 2004, p.204). After the Second World War, American models dominated Thai higher education. There are many factors pushing Thailand to develop its higher education system. Firstly, at the international level, the movement towards more autonomous and commercialised education is already well advanced in many of Thailand’s major trading partners. International expectations in the global education marketplace are now shaped by measures and perceptions of service standards or ‘quality’. Entrepreneurial universities, largely from the US, the UK and Australia, actively seek ‘commercial relationships’ with Thai academic institutions as thousands of Thai students opt for expensive education in these countries. In the wake of the

1997 financial crisis, Thailand has been forced to review its education system 'root and branch' to devise ways to educate professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to launch the country into the global knowledge economy.

This thesis argues that Thailand's response to international trends lacks coherence. There is a lack of coherent views from the government in terms of what higher education is or should be directed towards. The higher education sector is differentiated and hence there are differing responses in dealing with changes in the international education market. The increasing establishment of international programs signifies greatest attention being given to the economic dimension of globalisation while other relevant dimensions, namely cultural change and social development are ignored. It is one thing to acknowledge that internationalisation, 'is the process of integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service of the institution' (Knight, 1994), but quite another to define how extensive this 'dimension' should be. 'Curriculum' encompasses every practice associated with the learning experience at schools, colleges and universities, from teaching to pedagogical design, to the provision of a stimulating and supportive education environment. Internationalised curriculum, according to Bremer and van de Wende (1995), should have 'an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally and socially) in an international and multicultural context and designed for domestic students and/or foreign students' (p.10). An internationalised curriculum must then involve the modification of all such practices to accommodate global changes. This aim is achieved by rethinking teaching practices and educational program design to acknowledge cultural diversity and by ensuring that program content makes students aware, where appropriate, of the implications of global changes and challenges in their chosen vocational field. An internationalisation strategy at the level of government but also at the institutional level must acknowledge these diverse concerns in order to create an overarching framework to guide policy and practice.

Changes in Thailand's higher education include public policy reforms, institutional restructuring to accommodate a more entrepreneurial approach, changes to curriculum and teaching methods, recruitment of international students and the development of strategic partnerships with foreign universities. There is a danger however that the nation-building role of education will be lost and forgotten through the sole pursuit of economic objectives. Education is an important social institution that passes on the traditions, values and common experiences of the nation from generation to generation. Ideally, universities should seek to

develop human potential by inculcating a sense of tolerance for differences in nationality, religion, culture and language in addition to practical professional training. Thai higher education policy has yet to resolve the contradictions between the stated priority of education for all, and the demands of global industry, which currently can only be met through the expansion of full-fee degree programs open to a narrow social elite.

Pressure for reform comes from Thailand's domestic business constituency, which demands graduates with more marketable business skills, as well as from international agencies, especially the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) who have been instrumental in funding higher education reforms particularly in the aftermath of the 1997 economic crisis. In this regard, education is seen as a critical source corresponding with the idea of 'human capital' as promoted by the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The idea of people as capital reflects broad acceptance of the relationship between levels of education and economic productivity and productivity growth. The emphasis is shifting towards the English-medium professional education for the country's growing private sector. With the notion of 'international professional' in job demands, it is widely recognized that English communication skills of graduates are essential. In addition, English-medium degree programs are increasingly perceived as better providers of professional education than Thai-language programs.

### ***1.3 Background to the Study***

The purpose for this study is to examine the role of English-medium business graduate programs in the internationalisation of Thailand's higher education system. In addressing this question, particular attention is given to the following issues: government policy on internationalisation of higher education and its implementation, autonomous universities, social and cultural values and practices as evident in higher education settings, the nature of English-medium instruction, international teaching and learning and Thailand's evolving higher education market. It is argued that internal and external globalising pressures influence reforms in Thai higher education.

One can argue that Thailand was first impacted by the emergence of globalisation in the nineteenth century. The Bowring Treaty with Britain in 1855 is usually regarded as the beginning of a long history of relatively free trade in Thai society and open interaction with the West. From this time onwards, the country's leaders have attempted to borrow and adapt

Western forms of knowledge and Western practices to strengthen the country vis-à-vis the West. These changes and adaptations were driven largely by the country's ruling class and, by and large, served the interests of only a small section of Thai society. Thailand's elite school system and universities were fashioned after European models and were accessible only to the nobility and selected members of the country's Chinese dominated business community. Following the Second World War, American educational ideas became prominent reflecting the economic and cultural power of the United States. The country achieved universal primary education and, through the expansion of labour-intensive manufacturing, joined the ranks of Asia's industrialising nations in the 1980s. Access to university education however remained limited by birth and affluence.

While the economic benefits of the reorientation of Thai intellectual life can be read into the Kingdom's survival as an independent nation state and more recently as one of Asia's dynamic 'tiger' economies, the cultural consequences of this shift are much harder to detect. The further opening up to the world economy in the late twentieth century brought momentous social changes and created a pervasive 'consumer culture' that threatens to undermine the cultural basis of Thai social order (Mulder, 2000). Significantly, Thailand was once referred to by the World Bank as the fastest growing economy in the world during the decade 1987-1996 (Anderson, 1998; Hewison, 1999; Phongpaichit and Baker, 1996; Reynolds, 2001; Slagter and Kerbo, 2000; Warr, 2005). It appeared to the country's business leaders that Thailand was responding effectively to globalisation. From the economic 'boom' from 1985 to the economic 'bust' of 1997 and afterwards, Thailand has experienced problems arising from the mismatch of graduate profiles and skills required in the employment market, particularly, in the international sector (Phongpaichit and Baker, 1998, 2000). Due to a shortage of quality human resources, many private industries employed graduates regardless of qualifications and skills base, during the economic boom period (Kirtikara, 2001).

Financial mismanagement and official corruption bore the brunt of the blame for Thailand's crash. International institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but also the multilateral banks stepped in to restructure the country's financial system. Obviously, these international organisations are instrumental in many of Thailand's national development agendas due to loan conditions that require the government to liberalise the market economy. This, in turn, resulted in a wide range of social and economic impacts. Most significant for this study, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) influenced Thai policy makers to alter higher education administration and make universities autonomous in terms of finance and



administration. In addition, the economic crisis also stressed the importance of ‘quality’ of human resources (knowledge workers) including English competency of Thai graduates in a new environment of workforces managed by foreign investors who had taken over businesses in the aftermath of the crisis. Accordingly, Thailand has been intensely focused on a global competitiveness in the areas of economy, industrialisation and technology.

Government policies and university practices have as a consequence of these trends and pressures shifted towards internationalisation of higher education to achieve international recognition and international competitiveness. This is reflected in the expansion of English-medium degree programs in business related subject areas offered to primarily Thai students by Thai universities. Foreign collaborations of programs have been and are being promoted by the government and university since the beginning of the policy in 1990s for the purpose of upgrading educational quality and local branding attractiveness.

### ***1.3.1 English-medium Business Graduate Programs***

The growth in global competition in English-medium education has resulted in the current debate on the low levels of English proficiency required to gain entry into academic programs in English-speaking countries. Transnational higher education associated with the dominance of English language is a global issue and that is the focus of attention in the Asia-Pacific Region. At the moment, Australia and the United Kingdom are among the most active providers of transnational higher education in the region. The economic imperative and the intense competition of English-medium graduate programs in popular business and management disciplines are altering university’s decisions on English standard requirements by lowering English scores to attract the enrolments of non-English-speaking background students. A similar practice is also taking place in Thailand’s English-medium business graduate programs in order to attract local Thai students as well as other students from non-English-speaking Asian countries, particularly those from China and Vietnam. According to Achara Wongsothorn, the director of the Higher Education Commission’s English proficiency development centre, in comparison to other ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, the English proficiency of Thai students was ranked the second worst in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) between July 2004 - 2005 (Bangkok Post, August 10, 2005).

The term English-medium program, where English is used as the sole medium of instruction, is used interchangeably with the term ‘international’ degree program by Thai universities and Thai institutions at the moment. The rapid growth in the number of English-medium graduate programs was evident by 2002, when 78 public and private universities offered 446 international programs using English as the medium of instruction. Of these, 31 institutions offered bachelor degrees, 29 institutions offered masters degrees and 18 institutions offered doctorate degrees (Ministry of University Affairs (MUA), 2003). A total of 4,343 foreign students were enrolled in Thai universities in the same year – 2,057 in bachelor degrees, 1,673 in masters degrees, and 182 in doctoral programs. According to the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) (2003), foreign students were defined as students who do not have Thai nationality. Today, over 727 English-medium degree programs are offered across the country and English is obviously the most popular foreign language used in both Thai public and private sectors (Commission on Higher Education (CHE), 2005). According to the Department of Export Promotion, Ministry of Commerce (Weekly Matichon, 5-11 December 2003, p.101) there were 1,800 international students in 2000, 2,500 in 2001 and 4,000 in 2002, enrolled in Thailand. It is estimated that up to 6,800 international students currently study in international degree programs in Thailand. This ‘educational business’ was also predicted to bring up to 3.0 billion Baht to Thailand in 2004 as the number of international students was growing.

Thailand’s internationalisation policy, such as it is, aims to cultivate a globally skilled workforce and has directly encouraged the establishment of English-medium business graduate programs. Thailand now offers various forms of international masters degree programs in business management studies with English as the sole medium of instruction. Local universities in Thailand are offering programs from both their own established international masters degree program and with the ones from mutual agreements with international institutions mainly from native English-speaking countries. Master of business administration (MBA) and master of management (MM) programs are among the most popular offered by Thai institutions. This is in line with regional trends in Asia Pacific where English-medium graduate programs in business management and Information Technology (IT) studies are still popular in the international education market. In Thailand, such programs are both established and managed by local Thai institutions and with international collaboration. This latter element is part of a strategy to ‘upgrade’ educational quality in terms of the international dimension of curricula on offer. The internationalisation of education in

Thailand creates a culturally diverse scenario in terms of educational business relationships as well as the teaching and learning environments that are critical for the students who are preparing themselves to interact with and work in the global society.

The globalising trends outlined above have contributed to the formation of a local higher education market in Thailand. Again, paralleling developments elsewhere, educational services have become tradeable products available to students as consumers at different prices. International programs are confined to marketable disciplines such as business and information technology management but discerning students are looking for a broader option of programs and educational services at negotiable cost. Discerning students view education as an investment for international employment markets and personal status which lead them to the elite community and society. They demand international degree qualifications including English language skills from institutions. While Thai public universities deal with budget constraints, both Western offshore degree programs as well as English-medium graduate programs run by Thai universities, have expanded.

As education becomes a lucrative source of foreign exchange and profit, educational institutions around the world are becoming increasingly aggressive in their recruitment of international students, applying corporate marketing strategies to increase international enrolments. International education in the Asian-Pacific region is a growing industry/market at the moment. Australia is an obvious example in this regard as the leading transnational education provider in the region, particularly in Southeast Asia. In the same manner, education in Australia is also seen as the fastest growing export industry. However, countries such as Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, China and India are considered as growing and potential international competitors in providing English-medium graduate programs among Western countries. The OECD reports that there are increasing flows of international students into the Asia-Pacific region. These student enrolments include 3.4% in Malaysian tertiary education in 2000 (a rapid increase from 0.7% from previous year), 0.1% each in India, the Philippines and Thailand. Significantly, there is growing evidence of the use of English in education in the region. In particular, English use is in areas such as science and mathematics in countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Chinese Taipei and Korea (Marginson & McBurnie, 2004). The question here is how well prepared are Thai institutions to meet these competitive challenges and take advantage of new opportunities?

Undoubtedly, both Thai and non-Thai students (who have long been consumers of international education in Western countries) have increasingly more choices in obtaining international qualifications in their home countries. While making decisions on program selection, they are concerned as much about the price as the quality of education. Consequently, Thai institutions are being urged to be more market-oriented and more entrepreneurial in their approach to curriculum design and student recruitment.

Education becomes focussed upon satisfaction ratings, upon 'selling' and 'buying', thus attracting disparaging slogans: 'Education for Sale' or 'Fast Food Education' which are posted in public spaces around the world. It appears that education driven by these priorities is about knowing what customers want and making customers 'feel good' about products and services. The current English-medium business graduate programs in Thailand are one of alternative forms of internationalisation of higher education. Knowing students' perspective on the quality of the program and their experiences with international aspects of higher education in Thailand is significant for any stakeholder in educational settings in the global market.

Although the international education market in Thailand is still small, it is, nonetheless, a rapidly growing market in terms of international student enrolments. Philip Altbach (2004) predicts that "a majority of the world's enrolment growth will take place in Asia" (p.13) resulting from globalisation pressure on Asian countries' economies. Significantly, Asian economic growth is expected to demand well-trained university graduates/personnel to ensure the economic success. One of the significant requirements for future success is proficiency in English. This, in turn, will increase the use of English in higher education and research (Altbach, 2004 & Marginson, 2004) as 'research and development' will become more important in Asian countries (de Wit, 2002). It is surprising how little research has been done on the role of English-medium education in Thailand and the ways in which the Thai government monitors these programs.

The literature on internationalisation of higher education highlights similar issues that suggest common concerns across countries, including aims, strategies, and rationale. International perspectives on the 'international dimension' to be integrated into higher education curricula are less prevalent suggesting a general difficulty in establishing the international utility of certain forms of knowledge apart from English proficiency (University of South Australia, 2004 & Leask, 1999). Altbach (2004) argues that universities in Asia are drifting away from

their cultural origins and have “voluntarily” adopted Western academic models and traditions. According to Sinlarat (2004, p.212), Thai universities depend on Western knowledge largely because there was no tradition of higher education in Thailand until the twentieth century. Consequently, teaching and learning depend on foreign knowledge and strongly influence academic practice in Thailand. This again begs the question, ‘how well equipped are Thai tertiary institutions to compete?’.

#### *1.4 Rationale*

Research into the course and consequences of internationalisation in Thai higher education is in its infancy. This inadequacy stands in stark contrast to the level of research interest in neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore. In addition, research on internationalised business curricula and their effect on the quality of a student learning especially, in a cross-cultural environment, is also inadequate. While English-medium business graduate programs are continuing to grow, the research and policy literature published up to now have mainly focused on the development of the Thai education system.

Being an international postgraduate student in Australia and observing the development of international education in Thailand, has helped me understand the phenomenon from the perspective of a non-English speaking student. My attitude towards English language is that of a ‘means’ to access international education and to work in international business. I was also aware of problems faced by Thai students who used English only in institutional settings while being immersed, on daily basis, in Thai culture and environment. Given the challenges that I faced in developing academic proficiency in English, I was thus able to empathise with my student respondents. Many of my Thai participants shared similar experiences, particularly those who had been educated in English-speaking countries. This study is interspersed with my own personal experiences.

In the 1950s, according to Mulder, ‘it was almost impossible to find English speakers outside two or three elite university campuses...’ (Mulder, 2000, p.141). Today, the provision of English-medium education at all levels, and degree programs in particular, have been booming and have been in continuous demand. As Gerald Fry (2002) observed, the economic crisis created an ‘international education boom’ locally as more Thai students chose the less expensive option to access an international education at home (p.16). The dramatic

devaluation of the Thai baht in July 1997 made study abroad impossible for many Thai students and, as a consequence, created a local market for international education.

With the notion of the demand for “international professionals”, it is widely recognized that English communication skills of graduates are essential. Currently, Thai and international businesses (from both public and private sectors) are increasingly seeking proof of English proficiency from their prospective employees. Significant social and economic status of English as a ‘global language’ (Graddol, 1997, 2006) or ‘international language’ which has its ‘global position’ in this economic globalisation (Pennycook, 1998) has a long history in Thailand. In fact, English language degree programs are popular among Thai students and Asian students from China, India and Vietnam. The possibility of obtaining international degrees at a competitive price near home is very attractive.

International student learning experiences in English-speaking countries generates considerable academic interest and debate (Biggs, 1999, 2001, 2003, Ramburuth, 2000) however it is very rare to find written research about cross-cultural teaching and learning related to the context of English-medium graduate programs in business-related management fields in Thailand. Emphasis in the literature on internationalisation is skewed towards the experiences and concerns of Western tertiary institutions and yet internationalisation, as an area of academic and professional specialisation, should recognise the significance of cultural uniqueness. Defining ‘internationalisation’ remains problematic. Hans de Wit’s (2002) work has highlighted the need for research on internationalisation of higher education. Research into transnational higher education or cross-border higher education in Australia is dominated by a concern with English language competence, regulations (Marginson & McBurnie, 2003, McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001, 2007, McBurnie & Pollock, 1998), and teaching offshore (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003). Research publications addressing the cultural challenges of internationalisation in non-English speaking countries are negligible.

It is also very rare to find a research study on cross-cultural management in academic settings in a Thai context. Interestingly, few Thai educationalists contribute to the research literature in this field, but rather academics from other fields such as economics, political science and medicine feel empowered to write on educational issues and contribute strongly to educational research in Thailand. Internationalisation can bring a lot of benefits to students and the international education community, such as, the knowledge and appreciation of other languages, cultures and societies. There is, therefore, an urgent need for a thorough

investigation into the processes and practices associated with international education in Thailand from a social science perspective. However, research in this area should be interdisciplinary and should involve education specialists.

### ***1.5 Thesis Structure***

This chapter has introduced the main components of the thesis. The following outline will help the reader to fully understand the direction of the thesis. Chapter 2 reviews related literatures in regards to the dynamic relationship between the process of internationalisation of higher education and economic globalisation. Leading Western and Thai scholars viewed globalisation and Thailand in relation to global economic development from different perspectives, including leading Thai economists, social and political commentators. The chapter also reviews the role of ‘economics’ or the rationale of laissez faire in setting the norms of internationalisation practice. In addition, it gathers together the diverse strands of reasoning and research relevant to the internationalisation of education in Thailand, from international management to cross-cultural teaching and learning and the importance of English as the global *lingua franca*.

Chapter 3 discusses the policies introduced by the Thai government in response to the challenges of globalisation from the mid-nineteenth century onwards from the perspective of education reform. Special attention is given to the expansion of higher education under Thailand’s first National Economic and Social Development Plans in the 1960s and to the challenges of globalisation and internationalisation in the 1990s during which time the country’s higher education policy shifted from nation-building towards human capital creation as economic investment. The chapter explains why higher education, and education in general, is now treated as a factor of economic growth and international competitiveness. English-medium instruction, English language learning, internationalisation and quality assurance have become key elements of the country’s human capital strategy.

Chapter 4 provides a short explanation of the background for this research project and to the choice of a qualitative research methodology. The chapter explains how and why the field research element complements the overall aims of the thesis and discusses the research design, covering sources of data, methods of data collections chosen including each phase of conducting a research project both in Melbourne and in Thailand. The chapter also discusses

cultural issues and cross-cultural challenges in relation to data collection and international research.

Chapter 5 presents the results derived from the analysis of both student and academic staff interviews and student questionnaire responses. The results are presented in key themes that describe how students and academic staff perceive the concept and process of internationalisation of higher education. The chapter combines qualitative and quantitative data in presenting an integrated discussion of internationalisation as conceived on Thai university campuses.

Chapter 6 presents a synthesis of the research data and the theoretical perspectives canvassed in the literature review. It explores theoretical and practical connections between internationalisation, cultural continuity and change in Thai education, educational policy and practice and the growing global market for higher education. The chapter locates Thailand's cultural and economic challenges in responding to globalisation in global perspective. While economic imperatives are perceived as main incentives, Thai cultural issues and values in relation to the curriculum and teaching and learning are also being revealed as a significant dimension in the process.

Chapter 7 is a final chapter of this thesis that concludes by drawing a distinction between market-oriented and more culturally informed 'paradigms' of internationalisation. It reaffirms the close and dynamic relationship between globalisation and internationalisation practices in relation to higher education in Thailand. The chapter examines the economic but also the social and cultural imperatives which shape international practice at the institutional level. It makes recommendations on how the Thai government can internationalise higher education in comprehensive and effective ways that are appropriate to the Thai cultural and social context.

### ***1.6 Thesis Statement***

Given that Thai educational practices and institutions have reflected the hierarchical structure of Thai society, globalisation poses a challenge to the traditional role of education as a pillar of continuity and stability. In its broader anthropological sense, culture is understood as the shared constellation of symbols, patterns of belief and codes of behaviour that inform the everyday thoughts and actions of members of a community or people. One of the pioneers of intercultural management research, Geert Hofstede (1991), writes of culture as the 'software of the mind,' implying that culture creates the structures and processes through which we



interpret and engage with our surrounding social and physical environment. Culture in this sense is an observable entity acquired consciously and subconsciously through immersion in the practices of everyday life and subject to change over time. In Thailand, there is now grave concern for the direction of cultural change. Consumer culture has come to dominate society in every aspect, including education. The practical implications of this shift, and the concerns expressed by the like of Mulder form a backdrop to this thesis. As Mulder (2000) argues in relation to the projection or marketing of a Thai identity and culture,

Now the question that has arisen is whether this opening up, internally and to the external world, is threatening to deform Thai culture and its style, whether these will be 'modernized' in the process of the globalization of culture to the point of becoming a mere caricature of their time-hallowed image.(p.141)

Concerned educators are aware that the pace of change in the modern world makes career planning an extremely risky enterprise. Equipping today's students with the knowledge and skills to survive and prosper as professionals in globally competitive work environments is therefore not an easy task. One thing about which we can be sure is that the modern world of global markets and instantaneous communication is not eliminating cultural difference. Cultures are dynamic and changing rather than static systems, thus the acculturation of Western ideas and tastes should not be taken as an indication of nascent cultural homogeneity (Battersby, 2003). However, despite policy statements advocating a holistic approach to internationalisation, in practice, in Thailand, as in many developed countries, the market paradigm of internationalisation dominates at the institutional and governmental levels. The introduction of a 'global dimension' into university business-related education must go beyond recycling of American business textbooks and teaching methods. As Marginson (2006a) states '...if it is to be effective... it must combine the global, national and local dimensions. It must be adapted to local industry, and serve national and individual needs in terms of national traditions, and modern aspiration. Thai business education is Thai business education.'

Having a full understanding of various models of international education and their operationalisation in regard to curriculum internationalisation will help the Thai government to more effectively implement its higher education policy. The research findings of this study will inform the policies of Thai government about internationalising higher education in ways that are appropriate to the Thai cultural and social context including the regulation and quality assurance direction of English-medium degree programs in general. This research will also help both Thai educators and international (especially Western) educators at all levels to

better understand the cultural dimension of transnational practice. The research will also offer insights to the processes of internationalisation in Thailand and provide data of selected case studies that will assist the development of Thailand's higher education sector. Market imperatives are enormously persuasive from both a student and an institutional perspective. However, sustaining an effective internationalisation strategy requires a much stronger emphasis on 'process' rather than 'competition' or commercial gain. Indeed, it is evident that culturally informed internationalisation and the more widely practiced market-driven paradigm are in many ways not just compatible but complementary.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

It is generally accepted that globalisation is having a significant impact upon local and global cultures for better or for worse. In Thailand as in many other industrialising countries, educational institutions, like businesses and government agencies, are subject to new risks but also able to take advantage of new opportunities arising from the growing national and international market for education services. Whether these new risks and opportunities are viewed positively or negatively depend upon the standpoint of the observer. It is clear however that significant changes in thought and practice are taking place within Thai universities in response to new challenges. The next chapter, chapter three, examines developments of educational policies in a global perspective.

This chapter reviews the existing literature on economic globalisation which is widely interpreted as the leading factor stimulating the internationalisation of Thai higher education and the popularity of the English language among Thai graduates and in Thai society in general. This includes Thai and Western thinkers' views on globalisation and Thai society, which reveal various interpretations of the role of English language in Thai society. The Thai scholars reviewed in this chapter are among the top ten leading intellectuals who criticise the economic, social, political and religious contexts of globalisation in Thailand.

This chapter also surveys studies of Thai culture and society for insights into the potential cultural challenges posed by educational reform in Thailand. As cultural differences can also affect the success of English-medium business graduate programs, significant characteristics and behaviour of Thai students in relation to classroom practices are reviewed. As already stated, the scope of the internationalisation of curriculum is very wide and encompasses issues that are usually seen as separate. Hence, there is a vital need to view Thai higher education through an interdisciplinary 'wide-angle lens'.

### ***2.2 Globalisation and Thailand in Relation to Global Economic Development***

Globalisation and its consequences have been studied and analysed through many subject disciplines and applications. Though there is still a lack of perfect definition, research into the nature of globalisation and its impacts has become a major academic endeavour. Globalisation as defined by Robertson (1992) is a global world viewed as a whole due to the compression of

time and space. As Scholte (2004) points out notions of 'globality' (the condition) and 'globalization' (the development) first appeared in research and policy circles only 20 years ago (p. 3). Waters (1995) stated that globalisation was the (key) concept of the 1990s, which placed emphasis on the understanding of 'the transition of human society into the third millennium' (p. 1). He then further elaborates that "globalisation" is a concept associated with "modernisation" propelled by the expansion of Western culture and of capitalist society. In the same way, he suggests that there are potential forces 'operating beyond human control that are transforming the world' (p. 3). These transformations are far reaching as the sociologist, Currie (1998) argues,

It is important to distinguish between globalization as a process that has indeed made communication instantaneous and encouraged people to think in more global terms and a conception of globalization that combines a market ideology with a corresponding material set of practices drawn from the world of business (p. 1).

Sociologists agree that 'globalisation' is a "most overused and under-specified" term and it has created academic debate regarding its nature (Higgott and Reich, 1998:1 cited in Hewison, 2000). Apparently, there is no agreed definition of the term but many have accepted that globalisation has "real impacts", both negative and positive in terms of its "rapid processes of change" for business, government and, indeed, ordinary people (Hewison, 1999, 2000). The broad nature of 'globalisation' is summarised by Hewison (1999),

'Globalisation' catches the essence of a historical movement, a triumph of a neo-liberal and characteristically Anglo-American ideology, a more intense stage of capitalism, a confluence of events and technologies, or some combination of these.

This complex process involves economic, political and cultural factors that lead to increasing interdependence between countries and more importantly between different people. Economic globalisation is considered the most advanced factor stimulating changes in many nations, societies and local institutions through the increasing cross-border movements of capital, goods and services including people and ideas. International capital movements are driving local business enterprises to operate with a global perspective in mind. An international institution such as World Trade Organization (WTO) promotes the liberalisation of global economy and trades. Similarly, international organisations, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), provide loans and technical assistance to developing countries 'in conjunction with market-friendly structural reforms' (McCulloch, 2002, p.6).

According to the influential sociologist, Manuel Castells, the revolution of information technology helped the implementation of “a fundamental process of restructuring of the capitalist system from the 1980s onwards” and led to a major technological shift in the late 1990s due to communication power of the Internet technology and new developments in telecommunications and computing (Castells, 2000, p.13). Communication networks and emerging international capital markets intensified and accelerated economic competition. Local governments and policy makers had to be more focused on global perspectives and willing to modify their policies and practice accordingly. As Waters (1995) asserted, globalisation ‘does not imply that every corner of the planet must become Westernized and capitalist but rather that every set of social arrangements must establish its position in relation to the capitalist West’ (p. 3).

To a certain extent, globalisation creates diversity in global practice due to differences in each nation’s economic, political and social conditions. However, local policies and conditions also affect ‘global practices’ (e.g. trade and investment). Indeed, global actors, whether corporations or, from the standpoint of this thesis, universities, must adapt to local circumstances. The apparent contradictions between the ‘global’ and the ‘local’ and between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’ are played against each other to demonstrate their significant differences in terms of religion, custom, traditions and cultures. It is commonly agreed that culture is not universal so, valuing these differences is essential for any international enterprise. There are some significant and predictable differences in structures of government, law and administration with which global players must engage if they are to operate successfully in different localities. However, there are also less tangible differences such as non-verbal language and attitudes. They can affect the ways in which individuals and organizations think and act. Managerial capacity and the experiences of international managers are influenced by these subtle local variations. The well-known national cultural differences research on ‘Culture’s Consequences’ by Geert Hofstede (1991) has been reflected in much cross-cultural training and management research (Walker, Walker and Schmitz (2003), Thomas (2002)). A general knowledge of ‘international management’ is acknowledged as a crucial business skill in multinational firms. This also includes managers who have contacts with other cultures only through ‘information technology’ (Thomas, 2002). This is an important qualification to the interpretation of the term ‘globalisation.’ As Simon Marginson (2000) argued,

Globalisation did not lead to the formation of one world, or even one world economy. Although some networks were now ordered on a global basis, national identity and national governments still mattered. Nevertheless, it changed the setting in which national entities worked. It meant that economic and cultural isolation was no longer possible (whether for nations or for individual universities) and all governments faced the question of how to orient to the global level (p. 138).

Leading Thai scholars have either intensely criticised the ideology of free markets and highlighted the damaging consequences of trade liberalisation for Thai identity and society or have accepted the inevitability of change. A former professor of Thammasat University, Saneh Jamarik (2001) saw the development of globalisation in Thailand in two phases: before (as an industrial revolution) and after the Second World War (as a new version of a process of globalisation). Significantly, the post-war version of globalisation had been developed under the capitalist system, a free market economy, along with the information technology revolution. A leading Thai economist, Rangsun Thanapornpun (2001), highlighted that the economic liberalisation has long been a dominant theme since Thailand opened up the country to the world economy. As he pointed out, the Bowring Treaty was a founding document in the country's gradual economic liberalisation.

Jamarik (2001) also blamed the free market economy and Western influences for weakening the national spirit of many developing countries. Global institutions, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and GATT, are identified as the primary agents of economic globalisation. Another Thai scholar at Chulalongkorn University on the Thai economy, Professor Pasuk Phongpaichit, and her co-author, Chris Baker, are also very critical of the free market ideology and its impact on the lives of ordinary working people. Phongpaichit and Baker (1998, 2000) explained in *Thailand's Boom and Bust* (1998) and *Thailand's Crisis* (1998) how the transformation of Thailand's economy from the 'boom' period after 1985 to the 'bust' period in 1996 led to Thailand's severe economic crisis in July 1997. Consequently, Phongpaichit and Baker pointed out the failure of Thailand's bureaucracy and politicians to deal with the crisis and particularly when dealing with the IMF crisis resulting in negative economic, social and cultural impacts in the country.

The concept of globalisation was widely and hotly debated in Thailand in the early 1990s. However, since the country's economic crisis in July 1997, the term has been viewed more critically. According to Phongpaichit and Baker (2005), Thai perceptions of globalisation shifted as a consequence of the 1997 crash. They commented that,

Before 1997, globalisation had seemed unproblematic. Afterwards, it seemed to threaten swift bankruptcy through wild financial-market swings, unwelcome foreign buyouts, and painful reforms mandated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (p. 62).

Thai scholars define and interpret the term ‘globalisation’ differently depending on their experiences and standpoint. Generally, it is reasonable to surmise that Thais agree that globalisation has lifted the standard of living, in aggregate terms. Further, because globalisation is seen as something they cannot completely avoid, Thai people have tried to respond actively rather than submit entirely to globalising pressures. Yet for many Thai people, ‘progress’ was and is equated with ‘modernisation’ leading to, among other things the formation of an increasingly materialistic society. Professor Chai-Anan Samudavanija of Chulalongkorn University is one of highly recognised Thai scholars who embraced the concept of globalisation. He believed that globalisation is neither anti-society nor anti-culture but ‘it enables “small holes in the net” to link up and join forces across state boundaries’ (Samudavanija, 2002, p.184). At the same time, it is apparent he explained, that globalisation has its dark side, such as excessive consumerism, economic speculation, and unwise allocation and utilisation of resources (Samudavanija 2002). To have the best balance in regard to economic and other cultural and political values, Chai-Anan suggested more cooperation and compromise as well as self-development and self-governance are needed rather than placing emphasis on pure economic competition. He further argued that,

Globalisation is inherently market “driven”; good governance is management-oriented, but democracy is people-centered and requires both free and fair treatment of individuals (p.194).

Interestingly, he distinguishes globalisation from ‘Westernisation’ and ‘Internationalisation’ to the point where globalisation “decentres the hegemony of the West. Globalisation is multi-centred rather than exclusively belonging to the West.” He highlighted the potential benefits of opening up to globalisation and the free trade market. This view places Chai Anan at odds with advocates of cultural traditionalism or localism.

There is considerable scepticism about economic globalisation delivering any significant benefits to Thai society as a whole. Social and cultural critiques are bolstered by analyses of the policy challenges that globalisation poses for Thailand’s government. Thai critiques of globalisation emphasise the incongruence of free market capitalism and allegedly core Thai cultural traditions and values. Critiques from a practical and moral rather than an academic perspective also voiced by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who through his public speeches alerts Thais to the dangers of a growing infatuation with consumerism. Advocating a

return to more ‘traditional’ values, the King advocates a philosophy of self-sufficiency, known in Thailand by the title, ‘Sufficiency Economy.’ As will be discussed in Chapter 3, this philosophy is integrated into national economic and social development planning. The National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) defines ‘sufficiency economy’ thus,

“Sufficiency Economy” is a philosophy that stresses the middle path as an overriding principle for appropriate conduct by the populace at all levels. This applies to conduct starting from the level of the families, communities, as well as the level of nation in development and administration to modernize in line with the forces of globalization. (The National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB, 2005)

This definition does not reject globalisation nor does it advocate the isolationism of rural traditionalists such as Sulak Sivaraksa. Traditionalism lies at the far end of a spectrum of Thai critiques of globalisation. Sivaraksa and Hutanuwatr, Thai Buddhist philosophers, viewed globalisation from Buddhist perspectives. Sivaraksa (2005) pointed out that,

globalization has brought all suffering in this world which directly or indirectly linked to the three root causes of suffering which are greed, anger and delusion. (p.3)

Similarly, Hutanuwatr (2000) also explained,

The very core of the globalization process is the globalization of *tanha*, or craving. According to Buddhist analysis, *tanha* is the root cause of all suffering. (p.2)

Globalisation is highlighting the “truth of suffering”: the more *tanha* becomes globalised, the more suffering will pervade the world. Consequently, this will create “individualism” and “consumerism” in the process of globalisation which seeks the ultimate personal achievement measured “in terms of wealth, power, recognition, and futile attempts to satisfy insatiable sensual pleasure have become the dominant values of globalised society” (Hutanuwatr, 1998, p.92). In addition, globalisation does not only fail to enrich local community values in general such as local wisdom, compassion, generosity but also ignores interrelatedness which is an essential concept in Buddhism. As a result, localisation is recommended over economic globalisation (Hutanuwatr, 1998).

Many Thai scholars have viewed the impact of globalisation on the Thai education system and social norms in terms of cultural values and the overwhelming influence of Western styles, ideals, models and practices. According to Professor Dr.Prawes Wasi, “the crisis resulted from bad development policies which undermined the foundations of society” (as cited in Phongpaichit and Baker 2000, p. 11). He then further explained...



The idea of development which originated from the West promoted capitalism, industry, and greed. In doing so, it destroyed the “foundations of society” which were local communities, the natural environment, morality, and social harmony: “In search of big money, we do not hesitate to oppress, exploit, or destroy just about anyone and anything that we cannot turn into money” (BP, 14 Jan 1998) (p. 11)

Prawes Wasi, is one of Thailand’s leading intellectuals, who emphasizes the importance of Buddhism and Thai culture in his public statements. His social credentials are impeccable as he served as the king’s doctor with close royal connections and he had won the Magsaysay award (An Asian prize for social contributions) for his work with health NGOs, and was a recognized leader of the NGO movement. He played a significant role in the promotion of constitutional reform, the framing of the Eighth Plan, and change in the education system. He suggests that,

Thailand should turn away from Western-style capitalism, develop on the basis of its own resources, both cultural and natural, and build a balanced economy which truly suited the needs of humanity (p. 11).

There has been a major shift of the country’s economic strategy from economic nationalism to build a strong foundation for ‘local capitalism’ in the 1950s to economic internationalism from the 1980s leading to greater openness to and reliance upon ‘foreign capital’ including imported technologies (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2000). In addition, Anand Karnjanaphan (2001) further explains Thai economic development between the decade of 1987-1997 as a final stage of the capitalist development which transformed labour, resource and culture, feeling, values and even people’s mind into a product. This form of capitalism it is argued by critics of economic globalisation, degraded culture and influenced people’s daily life in a negative way. People tended to consider only one side of globalisation and thought that there was nothing they could do. Information technology, the Internet, e-mail and digital technology have been recognised as powerful instruments in a society.

Consequently, Thailand has quickly accepted the global economy and its attendant free flows of information technology and technologies of social management over the last decade. Accordingly, Thailand has intensely focused on a global competitiveness in economic, industrialisation and technology as it is reflected in the government’s policy documentation. Consequently, there is an apparent growing conflict between the economic and social goals of the country, at least as far as the opponents or critics of this policy drift are concerned. Phongpaichit and Baker (2000) observed that some social critics urged the government to re-examine social foundations and social goals to save the country from crisis both locally and

globally. In addition, they pointed out that much of this debate tends to be misunderstood by outsiders as a return to the ‘old ways’ rather than as a legitimate exploration of alternative options for Thailand to retain a sense of ownership over the cross-cutting processes of economic and social change.

Explanations for Thailand’s economic crisis in 1997-98 vary in their emphasis upon structural or personal factors. The established view of the crash is that it was the result of official corruption, which left the country’s financial management incapable of responding to the financial shock caused by the rapid selling of the Thai baht on global currency markets. The International Monetary Fund (IMF)’s structural adjustment policies were severely criticized as they ‘exacerbated the crises’ in Thailand. Joseph E. Stiglitz (2003)’s famous book, *Globalization and Its Discontents* highlighted the IMF’s problem of ‘governance: who decides what they do’ and the IMF’s decisions were based on their own ‘commercial and financial interests’ of the country they were helping. Structural adjustment policies implemented by the Thai government in response to IMF conditions were also criticized for their lack of transparency.

However, some commentators identified a shortage of professional skills as a long-term reason for Thailand’s crisis. Thai universities and schools were deemed deficient in that they lacked the capacity to prepare graduates for work in a globalising world. The argument that education can stimulate innovation is very new indeed. It is generally agreed by many scholars that economic growth in developed and industrialising countries was enhanced through significant investments in education and major educational reforms. In Thailand, the policy connection between education, entrepreneurship and economic development became explicit in Thai political discourse in the late 1990s. Leading business figures such as Thaksin Shinawatra (the Prime minister from 2001-2006) propagated more business-driven policies and a more entrepreneurial approach to education – echoing the policy approach and rhetoric that characterised the neo-liberal reform agendas of Britain and the US in the 1980s under prime minister Margaret Thatcher and president Ronald Reagan respectively. According to Phongpaichit and Baker (2005) Thaksin Shinawatra as leader of the Thai Rak Thai [Thai Love Thai] (TRT) party argued in 1997 that,

“A company is a country. A country is a company. They are the same. The management is the same” (cited in p.62).

Thaksin's views were reflected in Thai education policy after he assumed the prime ministership in 2001. Educational reforms were regarded as synonymous with advancing the cause of national competitiveness. His aim was to educate a new generation of entrepreneurial business leaders who would lift the country's economic growth rate and ensure that growth was sustainable. This connection between education and international competitiveness was made more explicit following publication of the annual Institute for Management Development (IMD)'s *World Competitiveness Yearbook 2006*. Thailand was ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 61 countries in terms of economic competitiveness among the world's industrialised and emerging economies, a considerable fall from the 27<sup>th</sup> in 2005. Patrawimolpon and Pongsaparn (2006) from the Economic Research Department of Bank of Thailand argued that the factors responsible for the fall were poor economic performance, government inefficiency, lack of transparency and corruption. They recommended improvements in the areas of education and human resource development, innovation, research and development, technology including improving regional cooperation. Higher education, they concluded, had a crucial role in producing quality graduates who, in turn, could improve the country's international competitiveness. This kind of instrumental attitude towards education is a clear historical theme in Thai educational policy, except that today it is used to enhance the private sector while in the past it was used to strengthen the public sector alone.

### ***2.3 Internationalisation of Higher Education***

The internationalisation of Thai higher education is driven at the policy level by two historical processes: the spread of British and American cultural influence, and by the dominance of English as the global language of business. The internationalisation of Thai education is not a recent phenomenon. Historians of Thailand have long recognized the impact of Western colonialism on Thai attitudes to knowledge. David Wyatt in his major study of Thai history revealed how Western-model of education and the English language influenced Thai society during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910). He focused especially, on the instrumental attitude of building a skilled work force for the country. Gerald Fry's (2002) historical analysis of educational reforms sets out a framework for understanding upon which to develop an appreciation of educational concerns of King Chulalongkorn. Fry identified four distinct periods of reform each defined by a different emphasis,

- Phase 1: King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) (late 1800s/early 1900s) was a visionary reformer whose policies laid the foundation for the later transformation of the country's approach to education and the creation of a modern secular system.
- Phase 2: A student revolution in October 1973 prompted educational reforms based on equity, unity, and freedom of expression.
- Phase 3: In the early and mid-90s, another attempt at educational reform emphasized Thailand's need to adapt to the challenges of globalization and internationalization
- Phase 4: Thailand's current educational reform initiatives stem from the shock of the Asian economic crisis and subsequent political reforms such as the new October 1997 Constitution, which mandated educational reform and decentralization. Thus, Thailand as part of its strategic path to economic recovery, initiated new education sector reforms, which have been supported by a technical assistance project from the ADB.

Fry overlooks the significance of the period after the Second World War when Thailand became a recipient of international assistance, from the US and the World Bank, to expand education at the primary level. This era coincided with the adoption of more American educational models and the expansion of the country's university system. However, Fry's conclusions echo those made in the popular press that Thailand must re-invest and re-invent its entire education system if the country is to keep pace with rapid changes in the global economy. The question remains as to what Thailand can do to influence as shape the ways in which globalisation impacts upon Thai higher education.

Globalisation of education is also bound to 'the emergence of a knowledge society that trades in symbolic goods, worldwide brands, images-as-commodities and scientific know-how (Scott, 1998, p.127). Altbach (2004), a highly regarded international scholar in the area of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education, argues that globalisation affects universities differently depending upon geographical location but even the most peripheral institutions cannot escape the impact of global pressures and influences. He points out "countries that use English benefit from the increasingly widespread use of the language for science and scholarship" (p.1). Furthermore, there are global pressures to revise the content of curriculum in the academy, especially to prioritise English-medium education in science, technology, economic and business management disciplines particularly in Asian-Pacific region in response to the Delors's Report (1996). However, many postgraduate programs offered in developing countries are unable to compete internationally due to a lack of what

generally perceived as “world-class” quality standards and a shortage of specialists (Altbach, 2004). This problem is compounded in countries where English is not a first language and where there is a shortage of linguistically skilled academic staff.

There is a considerable debate on the meaning of the ‘international dimension’ of higher education. The ‘international dimension’ of higher education has been emphasised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) since the early 1990s (Knight and de Wit, 1997). In relation to the discussion about the international dimension, Knight and de Wit (1997) viewed globalisation and internationalisation as different in relation to the discussion on the international dimension, but “dynamically linked concepts.” The term globalisation is often used interchangeably with internationalisation (Knight, 1997). Jane Knight (1996) viewed globalisation as the “catalyst” while internationalisation is the “response” as she explained,

Globalisation is the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas...across border. Globalisation affects each country in a different way due to a nation’s individual history, traditions, culture and priorities.

Internationalisation of higher education is one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalisation yet, at the same time respects the individuality of the nation. (p.6)

In this context, the national identity and culture are important if frequently overlooked aspects of internationalisation. Internationalisation is not a new term as it has its histories centuries ago in political science and governmental relations (see Knight, 1999, 2003, de Wit, 2002). Defining the term has still remained problematic as it means different things to different nations. It is unlikely that a universal definition will be found. Even the most quoted definition of internationalisation by Jane Knight (1994) has been limited to “institutional strategies and policies” which ‘excludes national governments’ (van der Wende, 1997, p.18-19). Jane Knight (2003) recognized that the international dimension relates to all aspects of education and its role in society. Each element of internationalisation is different across countries and institutions in terms of rationales, outcomes, benefits, activities and stakeholders. It is significant to understand internationalisation at national, sector and institutional levels. Jane Knight (2003) later updated her working definition of internationalisation as she proposed the new one that,

Internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education

Institutional approaches to internationalisation however exhibit a much narrower concern with economic values and highlight how internationalisation is being driven by largely economic priorities. Attracting students to enrol in universities is given a high priority as global student recruitment efforts show. Hans de Wit (2002) analysing the international dimension of higher education from a historical perspective, elaborated on the development of today's global higher education market using examples from the US, Australia and Europe. De Wit (2002) noticed that internationalisation intensified in the 1980s when government's international education policy shifted emphasis from aid to trade in Australia and the United Kingdom. Internationalisation has become a 'strategic process' driven by the incentive to compete for international student dollars. One attendant consequence of this is the premium now attached to English-medium instruction at all academic levels. A further consequence, we are now witnessing, is the proliferation of 'international programs' in universities across the world.

The literature on internationalisation reflects local concerns and presents many different working definitions relevant to individual national contexts. There are, however, common issues including recognition of a need to integrate an 'international dimension' into university teaching and research in response to globalisation (University of South Australia, 2004). There is an emphasis on the 'quantity' of international student enrolments in each major destination country and their economic contribution to national economies. Among them, the US's international education contributed US\$12 billion to the national economy and the US has still maintained its status as the most popular English-medium education destination among international students (Sidhu, 2006). It is also interesting to note that in the US recruitment of international students "is not driven by export considerations" which is a strategic practice in Australia and the United Kingdom (Sidhu, 2006, p.77). According to Sidhu (2006),

American universities are motivated to enrol international students for two major reasons: as a form of cheap academic labor and as a strategy for maintaining enrolments in disciplines such as science and engineering where domestic interest is waning...(p.77)

Since the establishment of the Institution of International Education (IIE) in 1919, the strategies of American academic institutions rely on the promotion of an image of educational diversity. Apart from its large and diverse economy, the US has also long been a major attractor of international students because of the government's willingness to hire well-qualified foreigners, and to pay high salaries in a variety of professions including academe (Altbach 2004 ). Similarly, British universities have long been perceived as prestigious and

elitist. However when the government subsidies ended in 1979, they introduced fees for international students as a part of their new 'market strategies' and later transformed into exporters of professional education (Sidhu, 2006). According to the report by Middlehurst and Woodfield (2004) of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the UK was the first European country to promote higher education from an export and trade perspective. Australia's international education is not only offering a more affordable alternative (including the incentive of the skilled-migration policy) compared to the US and the UK. At the same time, Australia is an aggressive marketer of transnational higher education in the Asian Pacific region (see McBurnie and Ziguras, 2007).

Altbach (2004) reveals the significant implications of the expansion of the world's higher education in Asian countries, particularly China and India, which represent about one-third of the world's population. The desire to build the 'world class' universities and the expansion of higher education system in line with the growing desire to use English in teaching and research of universities will continue to grow in the coming decades. Inevitably, this also includes Thailand, a nation where education consumes "almost half" of its annual budget. (Sinlarat, 2004, p.217). Market-oriented internationalisation offsets budgetary constraints caused by a withdrawal of government funding support for higher education. This reality is reflected in the growing provision of English-medium business graduate programs which respond to incentives from business sector and demand from aspiring business graduates. However, Sinlarat (2004) points out that there is still a lack of the "production of new knowledge" (p.212) and research to serve the country's needs as historically the production of knowledge did not have its root in higher education.

Thai higher education policy has shifted from the preparation of manpower for the advancement in bureaucratic systems to the preparation of graduates for business industries that are increasingly multinational. The internationalisation of higher education in Thailand has been introduced as a strategy to upgrade the quality of education and global skills of the graduates including improving English competency of Thai graduates to make them employable in the international employment markets. One of the top priorities challenging the role of universities and higher education worldwide is producing and training graduates who meet the characteristics of the new 'global professional' and the new knowledge economy. However, as Marginson argues, 'improvements in the relations between education and work should not weaken the role of education institutions as knowledge-oriented institutions in

which the development of new knowledge is often centrally important' (Marginson, 1994, p.2).

Hence, a university's curriculum needs to also embrace and sustain national or local values and knowledge systems while at the same time incorporating the best and most appropriate international 'bodies of knowledge.' Internationalised curriculum is the key element to implement the various levels of social and cultural sustainability. The definition of internationalised curricula provided by Bremer and van de Wende (1995) can be considered broad, but it has been influential guide for practice in many nations. Significantly, it highlights the 'international content' and global-focused skills, such as problem solving and communication, as essential for students' knowledge. Students learn to identify and analyse issues and examples relating to international and cultural diversity. It is also evident that an internationalised curriculum has been successfully implemented in business and economics as is shown in the six cross case analysis, Australia, Germany, Denmark, The Netherlands, Japan and France described in van der Wende (1996). As Jane Knight defined internationalisation as a "process" rather than an "event", the internationalisation of curriculum is a significant element in the process to provide opportunities for domestic students who are 'non-mobile' to experience international education at home.

Modern Thai education was introduced to modernize Thai society. This led to the establishment of modern schools and universities. Indeed, Western concepts, methods and values are still reflected in Thai universities. However, Thanapornpun (2001) argues that, at their inception, Thai universities when first established in Thai society were focused on producing "human resources" not "knowledge". This attitude has reflected on the current lack of academic infrastructure, such as libraries, operation rooms/science laboratories in higher education. Alarmingly, the pressure to emphasise the economic and market-driven sides of internationalisation is opposed to the cultural and linguistic dimensions.

#### ***2.4 Role of English Language***

Globalisation has also brought with it, the expansion of English language usage and the 'global positioning' of English as the business *lingua franca*. (Pennycook, 1998, p.18). In addition, the globalisation of communications technology accelerated the use of English as a global language (Graddol, 2006). According to Altbach (2004) English is the Latin of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Indeed, higher education worldwide has contributed to the dominant role of English



(Crystal, 1997). It has been a dominant language in international academic materials, scientific journals, databases, textbooks and online study materials. The market for English language testing materials and English language programs for English language learners who intend to access English-medium education at all levels both overseas and in their home countries has been consistently growing.. By and large, English-language products of different kinds and levels have dominated the international academic marketplace (Altbach, 2004). Marginson (2004) pointed out that “English is the linguistic instrument of the Anglo American strand of economic and cultural globalisation, and this is both reflected and reproduced in the trans-national markets in higher education” (p.220). The growth on international education in particular in those major three study destinations, the US, the UK and Australia is stimulating the adopting of English as the medium of instruction in higher education worldwide and recently this trend is also apparent in Asian countries.

Recently, there has been much debate about the role of English language and its influence in Asia such as ‘Englishes in Asia’ (Yoneoka, 2002) and ‘English as an Asian Language’ (Kachru, 1997). Yoneoka makes an argument that English has been a means of political and economic influence (Kachru, 1997). Currently, English is overwhelmingly regarded as the necessary medium in internationalising higher education in Asia. This is important as Graddol (1995:29 cited in Yoneoka, 2002, p.18) predicts that Asia will dominate the global economy during the next fifty years.

Historically, the importance of the English language had been recognized and used by royal families and elites in Thailand to encourage modernisation. By and large, English has maintained its role in relation to communication power in global relations through education. In times of globalisation, the economic competitiveness of English language is increasingly seen as an ultimate goal of stakeholders: learners, parents, governments, employers, schools and publishers (Graddol, 1997, 2006). The 1997 economic crisis in Thailand highlighted both the demand and weaknesses of English language skills of graduates in an employment market in relation to international business industries. The Thai government recognized English language as the key to internationalise the higher education system and to keep up with international competition. Nevertheless, there is an increasing criticism of the country’s failure to encourage the study of other world languages such as Chinese, Hindu and Spanish, English remains the ‘preferred language of international communication within Asia’. (Graddol, 1995:58 cited in Yoneoka, 2002, p.18)

Thailand was never colonised and hence, unlike its neighbours in Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Myanmar, did not acquire a strong tradition in teaching English at secondary school level (Yoneoka, 2002). As a foreign language in Thailand, English has three significant roles: *firstly*, in education as an instruction medium of international programs, *secondly*, in the employment market as the most popular foreign language required by employers and *lastly*, it is used to upgrade personal status. There has also been a significant observation about the close connection between “linguistic and economic power” (Yoneoka, 2002).

English proficiency has become one of the necessary criteria for university graduates. Graduates from international degree programs with English as the main medium of instruction are likely to be quickly employed in the job market in general. Marginson (2004, p.220) maintains that “the acquisition of linguistic and cultural skills in English” has become the key objective of many students in higher education. To some extent, this phenomenon accelerates the expansion of English-medium graduate degree programs in Thailand. Although these programs are recognized in terms of its economic and social competitive advantages, their quality is often questioned. Graddol (1997) explained...

...it has been argued that where teachers are not fully proficient in the English language and where there is little use of English in the community the aspirant language learner will be condemned to a second-rate education. English-medium education is thus accused of undermining attempts to improve educational provision and encouraging educational mediocrity amongst aspirant, not-elite groups (p.38)

## ***2.5 Cultural Challenges***

At what point does economic globalisation begin to chafe against the established social order and cultural traditions? The preservation of social hierarchy is central to Thai cultural practices. It has been observed by many Western scholars that the Thai educational system reinforces the hierarchical stratification of Thai society. According to Valenti (1974), the system has historically and traditionally prepared the upper and upper-middle classes to function within the government bureaucracy and to occupy leading positions in finance, international affairs and commerce. Elite education ensures continued elite privilege and power (p.78). Despite the emergence of a large business class, this elitist system endures to the present day where only students from higher income groups, higher status occupations and higher educational backgrounds will likely to be selected for the top universities. International education is only open to students from affluent backgrounds with sufficient means to pay

high tuition fees. This group is most open to outside cultural influences because of their propensity to consume Western products and to adopt cosmopolitan fashions and tastes. As such, one would expect students from this social category to be more open and receptive to new approaches to education.

In order to highlight the cultural dimension to curriculum internationalisation and the cultural impacts of economic globalisation, a discussion of what constitutes Thai cultural values is warranted. Although cultures are dynamic, multifaceted and elude sharp categorisation, the extent to which cultural traditions underpin professional and institutional practice should not be underestimated. Mulder (1997) made an interesting observation on how local Thai knowledge encourages the maintenance of harmony with life and nature in the community,

Local Thai knowledge is not only holistic, but also considers non-empirical causes, such as spirits, to be influences on natural and social events affecting human existence. (p.168)

This observation of rational value has been highlighted as useful in terms of the operation of transnational education by Western partners in Thailand. Eldridge (2007) suggested “we perhaps should not be surprised when our Thai partner in transnational education decides to open a program for enrolment not when details are finalised (rational) but on a date deemed auspicious by a spiritual advisor (transrational)” (p.7). Then again, Suntaree Komin (1990), a former research fellow at National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), is among very few Thai scholars who has completed a thorough research on Thai behaviour and social systems. She found that the Thais place a low value on wisdom as knowledge, and that they have instrumental attitudes towards learning. Her observations point to a strength within Thai culture, the ability to rationalise and to retain or discard knowledge according to its use value; principles that seem in harmony with utilitarian or instrumentalist approaches to education prevalent in the West.

Globalists assert that there are universal cultural values, or more precisely, values that societies appear to share in common. This is not the same as accepting that cultures are converging or that cultural differences are superficial and merely disguise or masque cultural commonalities. While there are similarities between cultures in attitudes to the sanctity of human life or in the popularity of certain ‘global’ consumer brands such as Pepsi, KFC or Levi jeans for example, agreed universal human values and superficial commonalities in consumer taste can disguise subtle cultural differences. The methodological individualism of Western liberalism should not, for example, be equated with the ‘individualistic’ Theravada

Buddhist idea of 'self-reliance'. The example here is a well-known Buddhist phrase *ton pen thiphung khongton*, which, according to Mulder (2000) means that a person needs to be self-reliant in thought and action (p. 65). In addition, a self-reliant person should not be easily upset by any kind of misfortune, fate or social judgements, but should, instead, seek to cultivate "a cool heart" (*jai yen*). This valuing of serenity or calmness explains the popular Thai expression, *mai-pen-rai* (it does not matter)" which, rather than being a dismissive statement is in fact "an expression of optimism," (Mulder, 2000, p.66). Similarly, Komin (1990) explained this Thai cultural-specific characteristic of *jai yen* as being "calm and cautious" which is very important to "calmly control situations by taking a slow, calm and careful step" (p.179). She regarded it as one of very important "social smoothing" values that the Thais often display to achieve a good social relation. Yet, this value has no Western equivalent. Individualism in the west implies achievement-orientation, self-interest and competitiveness. Self-reliance in a Thai context requires more connectedness to family and society. The expectations regarding professional performance depend as much upon the relationship of individuals to their social group as upon individual attributes or qualities.

A Thai scholar, Weerayut Wichiarajote (1973) observed Thai social systems and behaviour from the point of view of 'individualism' which emphasizes self-sufficiency as a core characteristic. He believes that Thai's society is "affiliative" as "people are highly dependent upon each other and find their security in dependence and patronage rather than in individualism" (cited in Komin, 1990, p.13). Thais have a strong need for affiliation because they want to establish and maintain "networks of personal relationships" (p.13). Komin (1990) explained every Thai has been brought up and oriented towards the value of 'bunghun' (indebted goodness), a gratefulness relationship. She explained *bunghun* as,

A psychological bond between someone who, out of sheer kindness and sincerity, renders another person the needed help and favors, and the latter's remembering of the goodness done and his ever-readiness to reciprocate the kindness. The bunghun relationship is thus based on the value of gratitude (p.168).

It is significant to note that Thai principle of gratitude and obligation (*khwam katanyoo kata we thi*) is highlighted as a 'hierarchical and obliging model' and it is central to the social construction where hierarchy exist naturally, e.g., students depend on teachers (Mulder, 1997, p.36). The attitude of gratitude is a highly valued trait in the Thai society and Thais have been socialized to value this (*katanyuu*) quality in another. According to Komin (1990), 'being grateful to *bunghun* constitutes the root of any deep, meaningful relationship and friendship'

(p.168). Traditionally, this value has been highlighted in terms of teacher and student relationship, a teacher is regarded as a knowledge provider to a student in an educational setting at all levels.

The polite and humble approach is very important for Thais and these have been observed among Western academics who engage with Thai educational settings. Moreover, if a person happens to show his/her aggressiveness and superiority and even overt self-confidence, it is likely that the person will be perceived negatively of '*man-sai*'. Komin (1990) explained this culturally specific behaviour of '*man-sai*' a 'feeling indicating a mixture of jealousy and disgust from the interactor and audience in general' (usually talking about someone behind his/her back) (p.178).

Such significant differences in value and outlook raise questions about the 'commensurability' of Western and Eastern modes of knowing and learning. Traditionally, family and school are two important institutions reflecting Thai hierarchical social system which imply 'unequal position' (*tha-na*) of individuals which must be respected and practised (Mulder, 1997). Teachers and professors, in the academic community in particular, are expected to be respected by students (Komin, 1990; Mulder, 1997, 2000 and Klausner, 2000). Thai academics are observed to "silently revel in the respect accorded to them and in their highly exalted status and importance", "they do not expect or take kindly to being challenged and are content to dispense wisdom from on high"(Klausner, 2000, p. 59). Economic, political and cultural changes have led to changes in Thai universities. Klausner (2000) observed that the environment of Thai universities was that of a "comfort zone" in which prestige and assured tenure mattered more than "intellectual give and take" (of Western universities) and one that is not likely to change to a more "favourable climate for intellectual combat". To some extent, this change has been influenced by the educated middle-class since the economic boom. Students are traditionally trained to be obedient and listen to the teachers and this characteristic is known among Western academics as 'passive' learning behaviour. Currently, rote learning and memorising are still considered to be 'preferred choices' by both academics and students in Thai education. However, this cultural behaviour of passive learning is not helpful to the current skill requirements of global graduates in global environments which require creative thinking and intellectual challenge and response (Mulder, 1997, 2000 and Klausner, 2000).

Changes to higher education policy and practice in response to the challenges of globalisation should logically affect the culture of education in Thailand and induce some cultural change at the individual and institutional levels. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, cultural changes are not easily detectable at the level of practice. Education policies are changing and so are Thai universities, but the experience of globalisation as reflected in the data collected for this thesis suggests the persistence of tradition in Thai educational settings. Perceptions of knowledge and learning have deep roots in Thailand's historical experience. Further, and consequently, the cultural dimension of teaching and learning still however receives scant attention from practitioners and policy makers in Thailand.

Though academic programs and educational services are being internationalised, the national Thai context exerts a strong influence over education provision. While the distinctions between Asian and Western philosophies of individualism are not the concern of this thesis, it is important to emphasise the different starting points for educational practices within these traditions and to highlight the potential conflict of values. For example, individual educational achievement/success confers social status not just on the individual but the whole family. Hence, the family exercises an enormous influence over individual choice and achievement. Thai university students study as much to earn approval of their families and peers as to gain professional advancement. Status demand or social demands weigh as heavily as individual aspiration in shaping student behaviour.

Increasingly, questions are asked why Thai students/graduates are still inadequately prepared in terms of English language and skills demanded by the current job markets, especially, in the international working environments. Many Thai students continue to graduate from universities without having been taught how to question, analyse and respond to a problem. By and large, the criticism reveals weaknesses in Thailand's education system. Niels Mulder (1997) who has been researching on Thai society criticises the traditional way of training and teaching in Thailand's education system. Thai students up to university level he argues are subjected to a rigid pedagogy of rote learning which does not encourage student participation in class. Traditionally, Thai students have been family-oriented and trained to listen passively with less challenging seniority. Likewise, in an educational setting, a teacher is meant to be respected and not to be challenged. University curricula are developed according to subject content and assessed based on the content presentation instead of promoting engagement of the content. This encourages memorization of detail rather than learning in the fullest sense of the word. Students mainly listen passively in the lecture and student engagement with the

subject content is observed as optional even at the degree levels. This characteristic causes difficulties in promoting deep learning or creative thinking and, this, following the logic of Mulder, does not prepare students for employment in companies that require staff to exhibit creativity, independence and leadership.

What then should we expect of international professionals working in Asian education settings? John Biggs (1999, 2003) a leading Western scholar researching cross-cultural approaches to learning of international students, believes that 'teaching is individual'. He suggested that it is a teacher's responsibility to modify teaching methods to suit students' learning circumstances in the context of cross-cultural environments. He believes that there will never be one 'right' method of teaching. International students are likely to bring with them differences in learning habits acquired in their home countries. This fact makes the cultural mix of any classroom even more complex– at least to those educators who can detect and interpret cultural dynamics in their classroom and the wider institution.

### ***2.6 Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning***

Educational provision of Thai higher education in the past (until 1970s) was to prepare 'skilled workers' to work for the bureaucracy. However, the processes of globalisation changed professional expectation. Nowadays, the 'skilled workers' need to be prepared to engage with the knowledge- based global economy. They are also required to have a stronger understanding of other cultures/societies in a workplace. In terms of lecturers' perceptions of student learning, Entwistle (1997, p.4) suggests that 'most lecturers viewed university as having general effects on the quality of students' learning and thinking'. It is notable that learning does not only occur in educational institutions, but it "also occurs in household production and community activities". Significantly, this type of informal learning is crucial in education, 'but it is usually unobserved and undocumented' (World Bank, 2002, p.14). Therefore, cultural context can influence individual attitudes and behaviours since birth through family institutions and orientation. Cultural differences play an important role in international education. Ballard and Clanchy (1991, p.11) suggest that 'the most significant difference, however, is not the lack of resources nor the use of a foreign language, but the nature of the education system itself; the ways in which teachers conduct their classes and the ways in which students are trained to study'. Teaching and learning in an international context should train students not only to fill industrial vacancies but also to become independent 'life-long learners' who take ownership over their own learning.

Biggs (1999, 2003) suggests that problems in teaching and learning in a cross-cultural context can be divided into three kinds: social-cultural adjustment, language, and learning/teaching problems related to “culture”. Firstly, social-cultural adjustment is considered to be a major problem for international students adjusting to a new culture. At this stage, universities have to facilitate student support services. Secondly, language is not as much of a problem as fighting with ‘educational cultures’ (Ballard and Clanchy, 1997: vi as cited in Biggs 1999, 2003). Lastly, learning/teaching problems related to ‘culture’ usually refer to different teaching styles in the host country. Apparently, many of these problems have not been identified in this context.

In addition, Ballard and Clanchy (1991) offered some examples of mutual stereotyping concerning “cultural difference” between teaching staff and overseas students in Australia. Ballard and Clanchy (1991) noted the following dismissive comments from teachers,

That student is just your typical Asian/ Chinese/ Korean/ Japanese/ Tongan/ African/ German etc. student- so what else can you expect? They’re all like that [or] overseas students coming to Australia now are not selected based on ability, just on whether their parents are rich. These students are probably just lazy spoilt kids, so why bother trying to improve their work. They’ll go home to a safe job anyway. Also, some poor academic works can easily be stereotyped, and then abandoned as being beyond help: Well, the student comes from overseas, so the real problem is certain to be lack of English. (p. 6)

Similarly, overseas students also stereotype their Australian teachers even though they seldom criticize them openly. Some examples are

smells of beer, beef and cheese’, never wants us to get better marks than Australian students’ (p. 6).

Ballard and Clanchy (1991) pointed out that these misunderstandings are eased ‘when a lecturer and a student can recognize that each is an individual within a different cultural setting’ (p. 6)

Many studies have found that curriculum design is one of the key factors that affect the quality of student learning (Biggs, 1987; Gibbs, 1992a, 1992b and Ramsden, 1992). Biggs’s discussion of intercultural pedagogy tends to place emphasis on the teacher as the main facilitator of learning and transmitting knowledge. Cultural awareness among foreign recruited educators especially is crucial to effective curriculum design and teaching practice. Logically, an educator’s level of cultural awareness has a significant influence on student learning and hence, cultural awareness should be incorporated into professional development programs for international educators.



Intercultural teaching requires a substantial understanding of different approaches to teaching and learning as well as cultural differences in student attitudes towards learning. Ballard and Clanchy (1991, p. 16), observed a 2<sup>nd</sup> year Thai undergraduate's attitude thus:

When I am in class and the professor asks questions, and we have a discussion, I never say anything. Often I think of answers, but I cannot express my ideas well, so I wait for someone else to speak for me. I have never asked a question. The other students ask many questions and even argue with the professor. I could never do that, because I do not think that is right behaviour. I do not want to be like Australian students.

Above is an example of what Western educators would call "passive" learning. It reflects the difficulties of a Thai student adapting to the teaching and learning styles of Australian universities. This student's attitude invites a modification of a teaching style. Though teaching and learning in an international environment requires cultural adaptation from both educator and learner, Biggs maintains that it is a teacher's task to adapt to the new environment and to modify teaching styles to fit into the new cultural context. This adjustment is difficult to make as deep cultural understanding is required. However, students should also be prepared adequately for new learning experiences.

Cultural differences can affect the success of international education programs. One of the well-known researchers in the field of international and intercultural management, Hofstede, established empirical differences between 'Western' and 'Asian' cultures. According to Hofstede, Thailand ranks high on Power Distance, high as a Collectivist culture, high on Uncertainty Avoidance, and high on Femininity (Hofstede, 1991). Considering Thai culture in the cross-cultural academic setting, many foreign educators view it as having 'Western structures' but 'Eastern contents' (George, 1987). Social status is very important in Thai culture and it is commonly agreed that Westerners pay less attention to status than their Eastern counterparts do. However, George (1987) believes that it is important to recognize the hierarchical relationships in Thailand and Thai academic settings. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) also suggest that learning how to get along with others is a significant part of learning, and requires a strong sense of flexibility and tolerance.

These implications of learning behaviours, needs and expectations of Thai students directly affect the managing of international education. Western educators may have difficulties checking students' comprehension in class as they are not familiar with these behaviours and signals. For instance, 'laughing' and 'smiling' are often used to communicate 'no', 'I don't

know', 'I didn't prepare that' among Thai students. Improving quality teaching and learning across cultures may require continuous cross-cultural learning among educators and learners.

Being considerate (*krengcai*), showing deference and consideration to another's point of view, is a core value in Thai society (Komin 1990). However, in an academic context, cultural resistance to questioning and criticism have major implications for learning outcomes. For instance, Thai students are too considerate to seek help from lecturers and they may do the work totally wrong and likewise Thai lecturers are too considerate to ask students to re-do their work. Eventually nobody benefits from being '*krengcai*'. George (1987) found that Thai academics comply with this social custom. Another example of differences between Western and Thai academics 'attitude toward work' is 'the American tendency to compartmentalize work vs. play' and "seriousness of purpose" vs. "getting down to business (George, 1987, p.6). George (1987) also pointed out that "Thais work at play and play at work" (p. 6). If something is '*sanuk*', it is absorbing and interesting. In contrast, if something is not fun (*sanuk*), it is hardly worth doing. In addition, George observed that "the term '*len*'" (to play) is used to refer to serious activities such as academic research, political lobby and business investment (George, 1987, p.6).

Perceptions of knowledge need to be defined among students and teachers. According to Mulder (1978, p.168, 1996, p.139), in Thailand 'the quest for knowledge is not motivated by the desire to understand or by the curiosity to explore; on the contrary, knowledge is a thing to display and has primarily a social function'. Mulder revealed that memorization and rote learning of Thais have their origins in formal Buddhist training, as it requires neither in-depth explanations nor understanding of Buddhism. This view implies a 'rote learning' of current Thai students. Similarly, Biggs (1999, p.126) found that "Western countries teach and assess in a way that encourages rote learning more than do many East Asian countries". The cultural nature of Asian learning strategies involves repetitive activity and memorisation. However, Biggs (1999) also suggests that repetitive learning is used to increase understanding and improve acquiring meaning.

Komin (1990) observed that Thais are interested in acquiring knowledge in terms of its form and functional value in order to enhance personal career and status rather than acquiring knowledge for knowledge sake. Western educators have found that Thai students are not interested in vocational colleges though courses offered by vocational colleges are more job skill directed. Thais prefer to have a university degree' as it is more prestigious. It is evident

that achieving a symbol of social status and gaining prestige in Thai culture is very significant. Education is commonly used to indicate a status difference among Thais (Komin, 1990). For instance, international programs normally charge fees in excess of 100,000 Baht and families are still prepared to make a sacrifice for their children's education. Caiger, Davies, Leigh, Orton & Rice, (1996) stress that making a great effort to support children's education of Thai families is the way to improve social status in a Thai society and furthermore, student's educational success is considered as a re-payment made to the family's financial sacrifices.

### *2.7 Culture and Professional Practice*

There has been a growing question whether graduates from the popular English-medium business programs are, indeed, well-equipped to work in 'international environments'. Significantly, 'soft skills' such as critical thinking, international language communication, problem solving are important and can be beneficial in creating global professionals as "they strive to reposition themselves in a world where the 'creative destruction' of organisations and working lives is the norm" (Battersby, 2003, p.55). Globalisation "is frequently misunderstood as an inevitable process of 'McDonaldization' that renders down cultural difference in the unfolding teleology of the global village." Battersby (2003) also states that, in practice, there is a strong connection between culture and "global business professional" that,

Global business professionals cannot hope to one-day traverse a monochrome landscape of cultural sameness even though many standardised business and economics texts either diminish cultural issues or otherwise banish them altogether from view. Post-modern capitalism demands greater not less appreciation of the human element in capitalist production. (p.54)

The world of corporate business values knowledge resources as important factors in improving and increasing productivity. Accordingly, 'knowledge innovation' is currently at the centre of attention of business industries striving to maintain their competitive advantage in the global economy in association with information technology advancement. There is an overwhelming evidence that intellectual skills taught in humanities are widely and significantly applicable in professional practice. Therefore, culture does matter. It is logical and relevant rather than superfluous to practical business matters in the more thoughtful literature in the international business disciplines matters. The integration of humanities to

critical practice in business is discussed by a team of cross-cultural communication consultants from the Princeton-based Training Management Corporation that,

Culture is inextricably incorporated into business, managerial practice and behaviour, and economic development. As people from different cultures with different values and beliefs interact, management practice and process are critically affected and success in the attainment of performance objectives is critically influenced by the most subtle, often invisible, yet deeply ingrained elements of the human character. (Walker, Walker & Schmitz, 2003, 32)

However, there is an emerging assumption of those who render the idea that in the global village cultural differences are becoming less and less relevant, especially, in the 'borderless world' of transnational business and communication. Globalisation is perceived among globalists as the significant force weakening specialisations and functions of communities. Consequently, they believe in the emergence of universalised values and 'global' symbols. Kenichi Ohmae argues that cultural homogenisation is an unavoidable consequence of economic globalisation. As he explained,

For more than a decade, some of us have been talking about the progressive globalization of markets for consumer goods like Levi's jeans, Nike athletic shoes, and Hermes scarves – a process, driven by global exposure to the same information, the same cultural icons, and the same advertisements, that I have elsewhere referred to as the "California-ization" of taste. Today, however, the process of convergence goes faster and deeper. It reaches well beyond taste to much more fundamental dimensions of worldview, mind-set, and thought process. There are now for example tens of millions of teenagers around the world who, having been raised in a multimedia rich environment, have a lot more in common with each other than they do with members of older generations in their own cultures. For these budding consumers, technology- driven convergence does not take place at the sluggish rate dictated by yesterday's media. It is instantaneous- a nanosecond migration of ideas and innovations. (Ohmae, 1996, p.15).

Attitudes towards work and education in Asia and Western countries differ in subtle but important ways. Asian and Western attitudes towards work and educational practice are the two most debatable and contested words in both Eastern and Western societies. Significant differences have been highlighted among intercultural management experts and educational researchers. One of the pioneers of intercultural management research, Geert Hofstede (1994), refers to culture as the "software of the mind". His metaphor suggests that culture operates in the same way as computer programs do - by laying down the codes for information storage and retrieval. Therefore, it is shaping the availability of options to utilise, refine and add to directories of prior learning. Both Hofstede and Trompenaars construct "dimensions of culture" to represent empirical cultural differences between nation-states. Some well-known examples of this approach are: individualism-collectivism, achievement-ascription, and high

power distance and low power distance dimensions. Observations of high power distance and low power distance are particularly highlighted in regard to international workplace environments (including academe) in Thailand. Thailand, as a hierarchical society, is ranked high on power distance where “inequalities among people are both expected and desired” (Hofstede, 1991, p.37). In the same vein, “hierarchy in organizations reflects the existential inequality between higher-ups and lower-downs” and in school, “teachers are expected to take all initiatives in class” (Hofstede, 1991, p.37).

It is notable in Hofstede’s model that “culture shapes, but does not determine individual behaviour or individual choice”. Accordingly, developing respect for cultural differences is important in any circumstances for individuals who consider themselves as ‘different’. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) suggest that “respect is most effectively developed once we realise that most cultural differences are in ourselves, even if we have not yet recognised them” (p.198). Significantly, shared meanings and agreed behaviours are necessary to avoid miscommunication and chaos. Practically, language and culture are inseparable elements of human development. It must be acknowledged that Hofstede’s work reflects data collected before countries, such as Thailand, were exposed to the cultural influences of Western consumer capitalism in the 1980s and 1990s. However, while attitudes and behavioural expectations can be altered, Hofstede’s dimensions of culture provide insights into cultural backdrop of contemporary education and business practice in Thailand.

An existing body of literature reviews claims to distinguish differences between ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ cultures. Richard E. Nisbett’s *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners think differently and why* (2003) is one of the more recent contributions in this field. By employing the binary opposites of ‘East’ and ‘West’, the classical distinction between the Westerners as ‘us’ and the Orientals as ‘them’ is perpetuated (Said, 1979). Hofstede (1991) and Trompenaars (1997) highlight the popular wisdom held in Asian societies where the uniformly collectivist ‘we’ is contrasted with the ‘me’ of the individualistically-centred Western societies. To some extent, cultural generalisations are useful referents for intercultural managers and teachers to plan their program strategies around. It is important to mention that, in many societies, there is a tendency towards collectivism which does not inhibit individual entrepreneurship, creativity, political dissent, selfishness, independence or other qualities commonly associated with individualism. The shortcomings of cultural generalisations have to be acknowledged as they only offer a frame

for cultural references but are blind to more subtle cultural meanings. This view is highlighted in Harry Irwin's *Communicating with Asia* that,

The danger for communication occurs when broad cultural stereotypes become the basis for interactions between individuals regardless of their unique attributes, backgrounds and motives. The problem lies in believing it not to be necessary to know the individual with whom one is attempting to communicate (Irwin, 1996, p. 17).

## ***2.8 Conclusion***

This chapter reviews contemporary opinions about how globalisation is impacting on all domains of human wellbeing; from economics and politics to society and culture. The opinions amongst leading Thai and Western scholars are varied depending on whether they view globalisation as a positive or destructive force of change. Many Thai political economists, critical social thinkers, educationalists and Buddhist commentators argue that economic liberalisation threatens to irreversibly change Thai society. By bringing economic imperatives to the fore in public policy and educational practice, the processes of globalisation will threaten the traditional values and to the detriment of more sustainable economic and social development. These deeper cultural impacts of globalisation bring into question the role of universities as “preservers” of cultural knowledge and cultural identities in a world of change. Education relates to economic and cultural dimensions of society and, as this thesis will argue, marketisation has encouraged policy makers and institutional professionals to attempt to disconnect the two or otherwise ignore the latter.

Internationalisation is an aspect of the globalisation of education which highlights many global-local tensions, between dominant Western modes of knowing and doing and ‘Eastern’ cultural traditions. Global impacts are further exemplified by the high priority given to English language learning in Thailand by government and educational institutions at all academic levels. Calls for Thai universities to produce ‘international professionals’ equipped with international academic skills including proficiency in English, and a heightened degree of cultural adaptability, are met with highly specialised and inaccessible full-fee graduate business programs. This response can be criticised as too incremental to address the competitive pressure of the modern global economy. Furthermore, in moving away from the ideals of ‘sufficiency’ and ‘balanced growth,’ economy-centred internationalisation in education could ironically limit the growth of Thailand’s pool of new global professionals to the detriment of longer-term economic competitiveness. The policy dimensions of these practical dilemmas are explored in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3: Government Policy**

### ***3.1 Introduction***

This chapter reviews the Thai government's policy concerning the internationalisation of higher education in Thailand. This includes a discussion on the development of an international dimension in Thai higher education policy primarily since 1990 emphasizing the international role of higher education institutions. The country's severe economic crisis that coincided with the government's policy focus on human development led the country to critical changes in public policies especially, education reform. Most importantly, the government has adopted His Majesty the King's philosophy of a 'Self-Sufficient Economy' as the guiding principle in national development and management efforts to ease the 1997/1998 economic crisis and to achieve sustainable development. The government believes 'human development' and building a skilled and well-educated workforce is the key to making Thailand more internationally competitive. Education is seen as a key instrument to professionalize the workforce and includes English communication skills. Powerful International organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) offered financial and social support during the July economic crisis and have influenced Thai policy makers to alter higher education administration based on loan conditions. Accordingly, this theme is linked to market forces and expanding of English-medium education/international education market in the country. While higher education institutions are being encouraged to be more responsive to the challenges of the economics of globalisation and the demands of society, the government is also trying to encourage public universities to become autonomous in terms of finance and administration. The government's efforts have become a big concern among public institutions as this can lead to a practice of *laissez-faire*/market forces, treating education as a commodity.

Thai owned institutions are offering international degree programs using English language as the main medium of instruction and in collaboration with international higher education institutions (mainly Western ones). These are mostly located in the capital, Bangkok, as the most attractive location. These are a major component of the internationalisation policy and practice of Thai higher education institutions. Producing quality graduates and raising Thai students' English proficiency are integral parts of the policy. Currently, there are over 727

international degree programs as part of its strategy aim to attract both Thai students and non-Thai students mainly from neighbouring countries in the Asia-Pacific region. International degree programs in Thailand do not only serve as an international education alternative to increase job opportunities for their graduates. They are also an effective marketing vehicle for both local and international higher education providers.

The goal or purpose of higher education has been the national and international economic advancement of Thailand since the reforms during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) (1868-1910). However, the focus has shifted from the advancement of the bureaucratic system to the development of private industry. The internationalisation strategies at both national and institutional levels have also shifted from cooperation to competition. Professor Dr. Prawase Wasi, Thailand's most profound social critic (according to Phongpaichit (2005)) raised extensive social critiques about the country's past developments. Professor Wasi claims it has given emphasis to "developing wealth rather than humanity" and "business profits rather than society" (as cited in Phongpaichit, 2005, p. 175). Competition has intensely become the main theme of these developments. Internationalising higher education in line with global economic consequences increasingly raised the concern of policy makers on how to appropriately balance 'international context' and 'local context'. Cultural issues and local wisdom in relation to the international education market in Thailand are increasingly debated within society and both are raising a concern on how the country can appropriately maintain Thai cultural values in general instead of focusing on for-profit internationalisation.

The current circumstance of Thailand's internationalisation policy and practice are being seen as 'a piecemeal approach' rather than a holistic one. Unstable conditions of Thailand's political/governmental system have affected higher education reform and it has been discussed and debated across the country. One obvious example is the lack of administrative continuity of the Ministry of Education (MOE) during implementing education reform, as there have been already six appointed Ministers of Education since 2001. It is said that Thailand changes its Minister of Education more often than any country in the world.



### *3.2 Early Modernisation (Education for an elite society)*

Historically, a recognition of human resource development that led to an educational reform for a nation's economic success and prosperity can be traced back in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) (1868-1910). The reform-minded Chulalongkorn was greatly influenced by his father, Thailand's first modernising monarch, King Mongkut (King Rama IV) (1851-1868). Chulalongkorn's policies transformed the country (Thailand was known as 'Siam' prior to 1939 and from 1945-1949) from a traditional into a modernizing society. Wyatt (1994) stated that some 'modern' changes in Thai society began in 1868 were however 'extremely limited in scope' as the country relied on its own capital and land and resources (p. 229). Contact with Western countries was limited to the royal elite and members of the Chinese or Sino-Thai business community some of whom were admitted to the ranks of the nobility. Opportunities for a 'modern' education, incorporating Western sciences and foreign languages such as English and French were also limited to the royal family, nobility and commercial elite. Education reforms were incremental and also limited in scope and access. Chulalongkorn established a 'Palace System' in 1871 in which princes were given a Western-type education. He then later extended this modern-type of education in principle if not in practice to the whole country in 1885 (Kee, 1973).

In reality Siam lacked the educational infrastructure to generalise such a system of education and hence for the rural masses, education continued to be the responsibility of village monasteries. Even in 1960, Thailand had "no effective nationwide system of primary education" (Anderson, 1998). Reflecting the shift to functionally defined units of administration, a Ministry of Education was established in 1889 and Prince Damrong was the first director. Consequently, a primary education was considered compulsory throughout the country just before King Chulalongkorn died in 1910 (this idea had accordingly led into law in the Primary Education Act of 1921). These reforms were driven by the King's belief in the economic value of education and the pressing need to train staff to work in the various new functional ministries in the country's reformed system of administration.

Chulalongkorn University (Thailand's first university was established in 1917) had already been influenced by foreign system as classes were mainly taught by foreign teachers. The curriculum was patterned after English models and the standard teaching method was based on lectures (Sinlarat, 1973, 2004). The original concept of the university was perceived as a 'specialised institution' to produce graduates as 'specialised personnel' for state agencies to

work in the civil service. Later, this intention resulted in further establishments of four other universities to serve different purposes of profession; Thammasat University (1934), the University of Medicine (1943), Kasetsart University (1943), and Silpakorn University (1943). The curriculum and teaching were oriented towards producing professionals rather than contributing to scholarly inquiry. In addition, academic research was not emphasized (Sinlarat, 2004). Although designed to meet the needs of Thailand's expanding bureaucracy, Chulalongkorn University was also created to cultivate interest in Thai art and culture. As, 'Siam' was a central location in Asia and Southeast Asia in terms of trade and commerce over hundreds years ago, so 'there was the need to have individuals with skills in both commerce and English' (Fry, 2002, p.4).

The importance of the English language was also recognized during this early phase of the modernization of Thai education, with some important innovations and policies related to bilingual education. 'Suankularb', founded in 1881, was one of the first schools strongly influenced by the West and Western-type schools in Bangkok. It provided a secondary education in Thai and English (half a day in Thai and a half a day in English) (Fry (2002) and Wyatt (1994)). The policy was eventually changed so 'English could only be taught after a student had completed their primary education in Thailand' (Fry, 2002). Sivaraksa (2005) observed of globalisation in relation to education, that Buddhist values had been gradually weakened as the kingdom invested more in education but less in Buddhism. Civic edifices such as schools, universities, hospitals, theatres, libraries, museums and nursing homes, were built ignoring the fact that the temples were once used as centres of social activities and of Buddhist education. Children of elites were also sent to study abroad rather than to local temples.

### ***3.3 Expansion of Higher Education During Development Plan (1960s onwards)***

A consistent and tremendous expansion of the higher education system in Thailand can be witnessed after the Second World War. In 1962 Thailand launched her first National Economic and Social Development Plan which included changes to higher education into an overall development plan. During this time, the United States expanded its influence by giving military assistance, economic aid and educational programs to Southeast Asian countries. Thailand also received some assistance, most significantly, scholarships for Thai government officials to further their studies overseas. Consequently, the Thai education system and educational management were formed and influenced by the American model and

specialists sent from the U.S. (Altbach, 1985 cited in Sinlarat, 2004, p.207). Sinlarat (2004) viewed the changes in university systems during this period as a transformation into a 'comprehensive university' system, as he explains,

in practice institutions continued to stress producing professionals rather than academics. Research constitutes only part of student theses. Faculty does not produce new knowledge. What is taught and learned still is derived to a great extent from foreign academic knowledge (p. 209)

In addition, Sinlarat (2004) also observed that since the introduction of the American approach, the traditional Thai values in university education were declining,

The traditional Thai way of thinking that stressed the professions, government supervision, and the teaching of ethics and values began to decline in influence. (p. 209)

Bureaucratic expansion during the 1960s and the 1970s created a demand for graduates to serve the National Economic and Social Development Plan. In response, more universities, as well as vocational, agricultural and teacher training colleges, were created in the provinces. It was also evident that during the first three national development plans (1961-1976) more than 30 percent of all government funds went each year to education (Samudavanija, 2002). University student numbers grew substantially from 15,000 in 1961 to 50,000 in 1972, and have since increased (Darling 1974, 6-7 cited in Samudavanija, 2002, p.117). Also, since 1965 private and foreigners provisions to higher education were encouraged (Suwanwela, 2005). Due to the steadily growing demand on higher education, the government launched the Private College Act in 1969 allowing the private sector to operate institutions of higher learning and to confer degrees.

It was also noticed that private universities and colleges (as well as public universities in Bangkok), began to offer international education programs and contribute to internationalisation of Thai higher education (Commission on Higher Education (CHE), 2006). For example, the Assumption University (ABAC), founded in 1969, offered business degrees in English while, in the late 80s, Mahidol University established an English-language International College. Many prestigious public higher education institutions such as Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, Kasetsart and Chiang Mai have also developed international programs for Thai and foreign students from the region. In addition, the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) was established to specialize in technology and science and was well known in Thailand for its high quality, it is frequently referred to as the 'MIT of Asia'.

The government also launched two open state universities in 1971 (Ramkhamhaeng University) and in 1979 (Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University) to give access to higher education for all Thai citizens. There were almost 800,000 students enrolled in higher education in 1984. However, there was “a disproportionate number of students enrolled in the social science an area which lent itself more easily to rapid expansion than did the natural sciences” (Suwanwela, 2005). This trend resulted in the unemployment and under-employment of university graduates during the early 1980s and the economic collapse of 1996. At that time, higher education programs served to divert unemployed university graduates to further their education. However, there were also periods of remarkable economic growth in Thailand in the second half of the 1980s and during the early 1990s.

With the steady flow of foreign investment and the continuing industrialization of the country, Thailand’s higher education faced many difficulties. The shortages of trained work force, particularly engineers, scientists and business administrators, were significant. In addition, many faculty members moved to private industries and businesses. However, during Thailand’s economic success, it was evident that Thailand was a new “donor country”, capable of providing educational assistance to neighbouring countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar. This new initiative was a part of an international expansion supported by Thailand’s corporate sector, such as The Thai Farmers Bank, which helped establish the Commission on Thailand’s Education in the Era of Globalization (Thai Farmers Bank, 1996)).

### ***3.4 Globalisation and Internationalisation Challenges (1990s onwards)***

The main source of funding for tertiary education in Thailand is the Thai government. Indeed, students’ tuition fees are still only a small contribution to the overall costs in higher education. According to Atagi (1998), Thailand’s education budget was cut by 1.4 per cent in 1998, however it was still the largest share of the total public expenditure in 1998 (Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC), 1998). In contrast, Thailand’s public universities are now forced by economic crisis and educational budget cuts to become autonomous, semi-independent, semi-privatized. This means that public universities, defined as ‘government-owned’ or ‘state-owned’, were made more independent in terms of financial and administrative arrangements (Atagi, 1998). The public funds are redirected to pay for the extension of compulsory schooling from nine to twelve years.

Since the World Conference on Education for All in March 1990 in Thailand, Thai policy and framework have been formulated to implement this action as stated in the 1992 National Education Scheme. According to the information from the Ministry of Education 1999, the action on education for all has been steadily progressed, particularly the extension of compulsory basic education from six to nine years as the rate of the transition to both lower and upper secondary levels was approximately 90 percent in 1998. Universities and colleges will be corporatised and forced to find external sources of funds. Although Thai policy on education for all has been developing for many decades, there is still a great disparity in learning opportunities between rural and urban students. It is evident that the internationalised curriculum is likely to benefit only those who are able to afford the fees for the country's new brand of the English-medium graduate programs. The full-fee education goes hand in hand with university efforts to become more autonomous. This trend places added responsibilities upon educators and policy professionals to find ways to generalise the advantages of genuinely international programs to a wider cross-section of students in Thailand.

Thai higher education institutions, government and private industry, have been encouraged to work closely in order to effectively respond to the economic realities of globalisation. During the early and mid-90s, Thailand recognized the challenges of globalisation and attempted to reform the education system in order to be internationally competitive. The international factors such as, economic globalisation, unprecedented technological advancement, the importance of proficiency in English language and liberalisation of trade and investment, stimulated Thailand's higher education system to be more interactive and interconnected regionally and internationally. The government's policy on regionalisation and internationalisation received high priority.

International cooperation in education, in particular, is seen as an effective means to enhance the quality of higher education through the sharing of knowledge and experiences within the region and beyond (Kanjaniyot, 2003, p.36). Consequently, the established policy recognized the need to internationalize the country's education system to adapt to those challenges. It aimed to prepare a professionally trained work force which, in turn, would contribute to the national economy in the increasingly intercultural global era (Fry, 2002). The Ministry of University Affairs (MUA)'s agenda for reforms promoted the movement toward a learning society, reform of higher education, decentralization, quality assurance, reform of learning, enhanced skills and knowledge of the labour force to strengthen international

competitiveness, increased diversity of educational options and an enhanced role of private sector in education.

Internationalisation was intended in Thailand's First Long-range Plan for Higher Education Development (1990-2004) to facilitate international and regional cooperation with Thailand's ASEAN neighbours. This first 15-year Plan was formulated to direct desirable development of higher education in order to respond to the needs of the country and to determine appropriate economic and social positioning amid competition and dynamic international cooperation. These strategies contribute to the growth of cultural and economic interdependence between Thailand and the international community. Significantly, it creates international movements as proved by increasing numbers of students, especially from Thailand's neighbouring countries as well as increases internationally focused curriculum opportunities for Thai students.

In addition, Thailand's intention to provide international education services in the region was clearly indicated in its first Long-range Plan and through building connections with international organisations and bodies (Kanjaniyot, 2002). The Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) has actively worked with regional and international organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), ASEAN University Network (AUN) as well as education-related agencies in countries worldwide. These international bodies have influenced Thai education policies especially through the idea of 'human capital' led by the OECD. In addition, the Delors's Report presented to UNESCO in 1996 has been vital to all educators and policy makers.

In 1991, the first National Seminar on "Internationalization of Thai Higher Education" was held in Thailand. According to Professor Wichit Srisa-an, the former Permanent Secretary for University Affairs, Thailand's policy on internationalisation aimed to 'mix and blend knowledge from external sources with the local wisdom in order to nurture people's favourable qualities as Thai and world citizens' (MUA's report, 1991, p.2). Similarly, according to Jay Henderson, Director for Southeast Asia in the Council on International Educational Exchange, the internationalisation of higher education was a part of a 'transition into the family of developed nations' (MUA's report, 1991, p. 56).

During the term of the Seventh Plan (1992-1996), the Thai government realized the importance of quality of the workforce and of English language, particularly in the industrial sector. The policy included raising educational levels as well as English language proficiency of the workforce, vocational training and raising skill requirements. In addition, the government also promoted and encouraged 'foreign higher institutions to establish according to the laws of their respective countries and have their public accreditation organisations or agencies concerned provide international programs in Thailand. However, these efforts must adhere to the Private Higher Education Institution Act to ensure quality for consumer protection' (Kanjaniyot, 2003, p. 36). As a result, international programs have been developed and increased from about 100 in 1992 to 465 in 2003 (Kanjaniyot, 2003). By 2006 there were over 727 international programs teaching in English under international cooperation and local establishments (Commission on Higher Education website, 2006).

### ***3.5 Consequences of Country's Economic Crisis (July 1997 onwards)***

After the Thai government was forced to float the currency on 2 July 1997, the baht dropped to around 40 per cent of its former value against the US dollar (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2004). Thailand received financial assistance and social advice from three international organisations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Each organisation was responsible for different programs,

IMF was responsible for macroeconomic policy and bank restructuring, the World Bank for preparing the resolution framework for finance companies and corporate debt restructuring, and ADB for the capital market reform and the social sector (ADB Special Evaluation, December, 1999, p. 1)

On 20 August 1997, Thailand adopted a US\$17.2 billion IMF-led assistance package, just seven weeks after the devaluation, (UNESCO, 2001). The ADB had lent Thailand US\$500 million which the World Bank described as "the largest social program loan ever provided" by the ADB (World Bank Thailand 1999, p.17 cited in Phongpaichit and Baker, 2000, p.76). However, the assistance came with conditions. The ADB in particular, pushed for an autonomous-university policy. The economic crisis resulted in government budget cuts for all ministries, an overhauled financial sector, and increased value-added taxes from 7 per cent to 10 per cent. Accordingly, the budget allocated for higher education was decreased year by year, from 17.2 per cent of total government expenditure in the early 1990's to 16.4 per cent in the late 1990's and to 14.4 per cent in 2002 (Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

The economic crisis led to the closure of 56 of Thailand's top 58 financial institutions (Friedman, 2000). In addition, a large number of businesses also collapsed which directly affected employment levels, causing 300,000 workers to be laid off by 4,000 enterprises in 1998 (Siltragul, 2003). While Thai employees were struggling with the local employment crisis, foreign investors took over many businesses in Thailand, especially banking and financial industries. The Singaporean bank, DBS found gaps in 'international capabilities' when they took over Thai Danu bank and did not recruit Thai employees to manage units outside Thailand due to the lack of extensive overseas experience and communication skills. DBS claimed that there was 'only a handful of staff with extensive overseas experience' (De Meyer, Mar, Richter & Williamson, 2005, p.11).

The impact of globalisation on national economic development had forced the Thai government to restructure itself for a better global economic position. To some extent, the crisis revealed the country's weakness of labour and professional skills. Producing knowledgeable and skilled workers, including English language skills, was the country's focus since the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001). The emphasis on the importance of the quality of educational standards and human resources stated clearly the country's needs for internationalising the higher education system. However, it was not only the economy, but also the 1997 constitution, Thailand's first great constitutional reform and the National Education Act 1999, that drove educational reform at all levels.

During the country's economic crisis of 1997-1998, the policy on 'internationalisation of higher education' developed dramatically. Overseas fees and living expenses were more than doubled in price due to the dramatic devaluation of the baht in 1997. The crisis created an 'international education boom' in Thailand as more Thai students chose the less expensive option to access an international education at home (Fry, 2002). In the meantime, Western offshore degree programs expanded through cooperation and collaborations with Thailand's international degree programs. Both circumstances have created pressures in the international education market in Thailand. International degree programs, both those managed by Thais in collaboration with Western institutions and others managed by Western institutions with minimal Thai participation, were encouraged by the Thai government's internationalisation strategy designed to achieve internationally recognised standard in higher education.



Traditionally, Thailand sent students abroad, particularly to developed countries, to obtain knowledge and skills in subject areas such as science, technology and engineering so as to advance the country's development and to significantly build a relationship with developed nations. Now, Thailand is also becoming an exporter/provider of an international education while still maintaining international cooperation. Many higher education institutions (both colleges and universities) are offering international degree programs (mainly in business and technology) to both local Thai students and non-Thai students.

After the financial crisis of July 1997, Thailand identified a skilled labour shortage as well as the need to develop English language programs as two priorities for national development. Friedman (2000) believes that the 'quality' of the state did have a major role in the Asian economic crisis and was important for the survival of the nation in the era of globalisation. In 1998, Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai told Friedman that,

One of the lessons this crisis has taught us is that many of our structures and institutions were not ready for this new era. Now we have to adapt ourselves to meet international standards. The whole of society expects it. They are looking for better government and transparent government. (p. 158)

The economic downturn forced the Thai government to rethink the country's past strategies, especially in terms of 'international competitiveness' (Fry, 2002). Although Thailand invested a high percentage of annual government budget in education, it still 'lags behind internationally on many major indicators of educational quality and human resource development' (Atagi, 2002 cited in Fry, 2002). A powerful message from Krugman (1994 cited in Fry, 2002) influenced Thai policy makers to realize Thailand could not depend on its cheap labour the way that countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam and China could. Apart from producing an educated and skilled workforce, the government needed to rework new strategies to face globalisation.

Significantly, the crisis also highlighted the importance of 'quality' of human resources in a new environment of workforces managed by foreign investors who had taken over businesses during the aftermath of the crisis. Consequently, the Thai government became ever more conscious of education as a key for resolving the country's skills shortages in private industry. The National Education Act 1999 and the Constitution of the Kingdom 1997 (known as the People Participation version) called for educational reforms and made significant changes to all levels of the education system of the country. In particular, it required a formal establishment of educational standards and a quality assurance system for the whole sector.

Thailand's national policy emphasized the human capacity and human resource development to cope with rapid changes associated with globalisation in order to strengthen national competitiveness in a global economy. Internationalisation of higher education was used as a key competitive strategy to modernize and to achieve internationally recognized standards for education.

Since the crisis, Thailand has focussed on the development of its human potential and creativity and enhancing the capability of communities, societies and the nation as a whole. Accordingly, the Eighth Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001) focused on 'human development' instead of 'economic development' (Siltragool, 2003). The logic behind this shift is the belief that 'the knowledge and skills possessed by workers contribute to economic growth' and that quality knowledge workers can largely be built through formal education and on-the-job training (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997, p.10). Accordingly, education is increasingly becoming more instrumental in relation to human development in line with the economic development of the nation. The shift towards 'human development' since the 8<sup>th</sup> Plan is quite evident and it has been carried through the current 10<sup>th</sup> Plan which is being implemented at the moment. It reflects and gives an emphasis to 'human capability'.

### ***3.6 Higher Education Reform***

#### ***3.6.1 New Administrative Structure***

Thai education system is being reformed to prepare human resource to be English-proficient as early as primary level due to recommendations of experts in English language teaching from the UK and the US. As a result, the Ministry of Education decided to introduce English education to the national curriculum from the first grade (rather than fifth) in 1995 (Ministry of Education, 2003). Normally, Thai students learn English for 12 years before entering higher education (university). However, there has been a continuous debate on the low level of English of Thai university students. According to the recent TOEFL league tables, Thailand was ranked as the second bottom country in South-East Asia (Bangkok Post, August 10, 2005). To a certain extent, this trend has stimulated an expansion of the English-medium education market in Thailand at all levels has also, created employment and business opportunities for native English speakers regardless of quality.

Higher education's structural reform resulted from the National Education Act 1999, which was promulgated in agreement with the Constitution of the Kingdom 1997. It has led to a

new administrative structure in the Ministry of Education (MOE) as the National Education Act stipulated that there will be a shift from the centralisation to the decentralisation system. As a result, three former Thai educational agencies, the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA), the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC) were consolidated on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003. The new structure is now called 'Ministry of Education' (MOE). The former Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) is now called the Commission on Higher Education (CHE). Currently, Thai university system is centrally administered by the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) under the Ministry of Education (MOE), which is responsible for formulating policy and plans, overseeing, monitoring and evaluating the provision of education and allocating financial resources to educational institutes. Importantly, the Act allows higher education institutions to seek for an appropriate system of administration to enhance their autonomy and to improve the quality of learning and research in their institutions (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Currently, the CHE is overseeing 158 higher education institutions (78 public, 62 private and 18 community colleges) which includes new recently upgraded members upgraded to be 'university' from the current Ministry of Education 40 Rajabhat Institutes, 9 Rajamangala Institute of Technology with its 35 campuses nationwide, two Buddhist universities and Pathumwan Institute of Technology (Ministry of Education, 2006).

### ***3.6.2 Autonomous Universities***

Public universities have been encouraged to become autonomous since 1964. In March 1992, the government's attempt to pass laws for the deregulation of 16 public universities into autonomous universities failed. Again, in 1997-1998, the government encouraged public higher education institutions to become 'autonomous universities' in terms of finance and administration. Suranaree University of Technology, founded in 1990, was the first autonomous university to follow the government's ambition. This policy has been influenced by ADB's social sector support program due to the loan conditions, which stated that every public university should be transformed into autonomous status for administrative flexibilities (ADB, 2000, 2005). In 1999, the ADB provided US\$59.3 millions loan for the Higher Education Development Project for Thailand (ADB, 2000). As a result, public higher education institutions have turned into juristic persons, they are given rights to commercially exploit property and financial resources and recruit their own staff in order to earn

commercial income and pay higher salaries to academic staff depending on their quality and competitiveness (Varghese, 2001).

The underlying principle of the autonomous university is to support each university to have heightened flexibility and administrative independence in its internal affairs, giving authority and responsibility to each university council who will be held accountable. The councils have to be responsible for the formulating rules and regulations to administer respective universities on academic affairs, personnel administration, and budget and asset management. While maintaining the autonomy and academic freedom, each institution will have to comply with the governing policy of the MUA on curriculum standards and quality assurance. External audits will be enforced to assure quality of university education. Administration of personnel is another element that is taken care of by university councils that have the authority to regulate human resources. For university autonomy in budgeting and asset management, university councils are able to make decisions on their own financial and accounting systems, and manage their own properties and assets. Universities are also able to mobilize, handle, maintain, generate and utilize incomes generated from various sources and devise their own financial audit system. Annual financial audit reports are required to be submitted to the government.

As a result of the Thai government's efforts to encourage public universities to become autonomous, Thai public universities have more freedom to manage and utilize their own properties and assets including financial and accounting systems. Significantly, autonomous universities are able to mobilize, handle, maintain, generate and utilize incomes generated from various sources and devise their own financial audit systems. They are also required to provide annual financial audit reports to the government (Kanjaniyot, 2002). The autonomy is stimulating a profit-making competition between universities (both public and private) as it allows universities to flexibly offer programs and charge tuition fees according to the student market demand and the industry demand. Thai administrative reform has forced many Thai higher education institutions to be more commercialised and adopt market strategies to attract student enrolments. The privatization policy is a user-pays model as Savatsomboon (2006) explains,

is based on the philosophy that higher education increases the earning power of individuals who possess it, and thus individuals must pay for the cost of higher education. This philosophy also underpins the full-fee programs offered by public universities. (p.9)

Significantly, since the government granted the autonomy of decision making to both public and private institutions in 2004, “all decisions now rest with university boards” (Savatsomboon, 2006). In addition, Savatsomboon also points out that deregulation of private institutions is giving flexibilities to private institution establishments, which have now increased to 54 institutions (compared to just 1 in 1969). Both public and private institutions are now actively offering international degree programs taught in English to affluent Thai and international students. .

### ***3.6.3 Impact of Human Capital Theory on Higher Education Policy***

As in other industrialised and industrialising countries, education system of Thailand is being redirected away from nation-building objectives towards ‘human capital’ creation; education is seen as a form of economic investment. The idea of ‘human capital’ has been developed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank and it is defined as ‘the knowledge that individuals acquire during their life and use to produce goods, services or ideas in market or non-market situations’ (Spring, 1998. p.169). In many cases, there is a shared concern whether universities provide their students with educational experiences that enable them to make a positive and effective contribution to the world outside the university. A critical question arises as to ‘how’ to empower students to ‘put the knowledge into action via the development of generic competencies or personal transferable skills’ (Tate, 1993, p.289). Since the relationship between higher education institutions and industries has become closer, Tate (1993) suggests that the students’ ‘enterprise competencies’ should be developed to serve the demand of the industry. It is a real need to create a context which is “relevant and meaningful not only to the competence, but also to the aims and objectives of the academic programme or course of study that the student is engaged in” (Tate, 1993, p. 289). Thai higher education institutions take on a more active role in matching demands and supplying skilled knowledge-workers and English-speaking workers for the industry. As Marginson & Considine (2000) suggest “universities must mirror markets in order to serve markets” (p.5).

The increasing demands on international education in the areas of business, science and information technology management degrees stimulate Thai universities to increase their revenues by offering international degree programs at a competitive rate comparing with the similar international programs which are being offered in the popular English-speaking countries: the United States, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. In the meantime,

Thai higher education institutions are also expanding and benchmarking international cooperation with foreign universities around the world in order to upgrade their educational standards.

As the demands on international qualifications and professional upgrading have increased, some dubious international education providers take opportunities to illegally offer degree programs in Thailand's provinces. There was a scandal caused by a Thai academic from a Rajabhat Institute in Bangkok who completed a doctoral degree from a university in the Philippines even though this particular program was not approved by the ministry (MUA). The same university had conferred degrees to 29 Thai students in Songkhla, Chiang Mai and Udonthani provinces since 1999 (Weekly Matichon, 24-30 June, 2002). Apparently, there are many university lecturers who want to receive doctorate qualifications from recognized institutions but, are unable to go abroad due to family or other commitments. Acquiring doctoral qualifications in order to be called a 'doctor' regardless of the quality of the degree is a reason for upgrading 'personal status' rather than professional qualifications. In many cases, lecturers have an already high salary as they have been teaching for long times and the doctoral qualification will not affect their salaries in this regard.

Thai higher education institutions are now facing both internal and external challenges in responding to academic, professional and ethical needs of both local and international stakeholders. Internationalising higher education is seen as a key element and an important investment to foster development and exchange in the knowledge-based society and global economy. Key stakeholders such as governments, universities, faculties, students, industries, communities and general public should be included in this process in order to achieve their mission and to maintain social responsibilities. In addition, Thailand's neighbouring countries, international partners and agencies should also be involved. While each institution is trying to implement its own policy, it also has to cope with an 'international culture' within a local context.

Internationalisation of higher education is becoming a significant element of Thai higher institutions in terms of financial survival and international quality recognition. As the higher education sector becomes increasingly market-driven, academics will be asked to become more entrepreneurial. The current international master's degree programs offered by Thai universities exemplify the government's policy on corporatisation. Accordingly, the role and activities of higher education institutions have a more entrepreneurial approach. There is also

a rising perception that the discerning university students are both the consumers of educational services and individuals looking to broaden their horizons through learning. Students perceive the international degree programs as an investment for job training and view these institutions as places to help them gain professional and material advancement (Prangpatanpon, 1996).

As the function of universities has shifted into ‘business-like behaviour’ in terms of administration and management, so the role of private higher education has become stronger and stronger. Potential competitors are not only local but also international. Many marketing strategies, such as lower fees, shorter periods of study, the advantage of international branding and trips overseas, have been used to attract students by both public and private institutions. Due to a high emphasis on proficiency in English, some institutions advertise that all of their international degree programs are taught by international professors from English-speaking countries.

However, international degree programs which are being offered in Thailand are quite narrow in terms of a variety of disciplines. Business-related management, Information Technology and Engineering are among popular ones at the moment. Building ‘international professionals’ capable of working in a global environment requires versatile personal skills. They include the so-called ‘soft skills’ such as clear communication, teamwork and problem-solving in the cross-cultural context. Many international employers require “aesthetic labour”, workers who “look right and sound right”. It can be challenging, however, to teach and assess qualities such as being “passionate, stylish, confident and successful” (Ewart Keep quoted in Cook, 2005). Preparation of graduates to work in international economic environments involves not only the development of an effective strategy for teaching, learning and assessment but also a reevaluation of the whole process of learning as well (Tate, 1993).

### ***3.7 Public Policy Infrastructure and Quality Assurance***

The refashioning of higher education through the introduction of quality assurance processes reflects the impact of global trends and global demands. Thailand’s MOE recognises the potential value of English-medium university programs and actively encourages Thai institutions to make connections with foreign universities to both access expertise and build their international reputations. This approach to ‘joint-venture’ development is also reflected in other ‘industry’ sectors and can be interpreted as representing Thailand’s preferred model

of increasing knowledge and technology transfer from West to East. Double-degrees and articulation arrangements are the educational equivalents of business joint ventures that have proven very successful for Thai companies such as the agribusiness conglomerate, the Charoen Pokphand Group, which built its technology and expertise through strategic partnerships with US biotechnology companies in the 1970s and 80s.

Government policy tends to be regulation-driven. The government and MOE have no clearly defined policy on internationalisation of curriculum in Thailand in the sense that there is no published internationalisation policy statement. Rather the government's approach to internationalisation is embedded in a host of related practices ranging from encouraging international links to encouraging the recruitment of international students. Adopting the benchmarking practices of leading international providers of education is also a key element of Thailand's internationalisation of education including the adopting of quality measures and rankings.

The emergence of an "audit culture" in Thailand's education represents an attempt to localise what is now a standard practice in Western education systems. The quality assurance issues in higher education have been thoroughly debated at international education conferences. For instance, at the World Conference on Higher Education (1998), four main critical issues were identified: (i) relevance, (ii) improvement of quality, (iii) management and financing, and finally, (iv) international co-operation. A government tends to use 'audit' as an instrument to maintain and control educational quality performances of institutions (Shore and Wright, 2000). To become globalised, higher education must fulfil its mission within national, regional and international contexts, and policies are needed to be associated with their frameworks and reflected in their missions. To the concern of educational quality at all levels, universities are required to prepare for audit. All educational operations and frameworks such as finance, teaching and learning, curriculum and qualifications, have to be auditable for quality assurance by a responsible committee. However, Shore and Wright (2000, p.73) view 'audit' as a pressure to change a university's actual mission statement. For instance, the curriculum's merits are now restructured and measured depending on whether it can create 'marketable skills' or not. Furthermore, the formulas for the measurement of quality place a great emphasis upon 'service delivery' leading to a sterile set of 'generic' quality indicators. Such reductivism dilutes the importance of the content of curriculum.



Total quality management tends to be everyone's responsibility and it is also difficult to measure and define. However, ensuring educational standard and, especially, meeting international standard, is a priority for Thai government. The policy for 'academic excellence' proposed by the MUA, implies that the Thai government's aim is to produce graduates who satisfy the need of employers. This can be viewed as an emphasis on a 'reaction' to a global market need instead of focusing on a 'process' of internationalization of education and the broader purpose of education to create informed and articulate people. Furthermore, 'excellence' as a quality is surely influenced by many different factors and again is difficult to quantify beyond high pass rates, high grades and significant graduate employment outcomes.

According to the information of the Bureau of Higher Education Standards, MUA (1998), the concept of Quality Assurance (QA) is defined into two parts namely, internal quality assurance and external quality assurance. Internal QA covers the quality control for institutional activities, its process consists of quality control, quality audit and quality assessment. External QA refers to a mechanism used to monitor the institutional quality system and it is established by the professional outsider. Its process consists of auditing, assessment and recognition. When these QA processes were first introduced, a sub-committee for Quality Assurance Mechanism Development was appointed by the Board of the Ministry of University Affairs to audit the institutions on their quality systems. Auditing and recognition were based on the MUA's nine aspects of higher education criteria, namely

- Mission/Objective/Planning
- Teaching and Learning
- (Student Recreation Activities
- Research
- Social Academic Service
- Preservation of Arts and Culture
- Administration
- Budgeting and
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Within the restructured Ministry of Education, incorporating the former MUA, the Office for National Education Standards as an autonomous body has been established within the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC) (ONEC, 1998). There is a sub-committee on

Quality Assurance Mechanism Development, appointed by the Board of the MUA, also audit institutions on the adequacy and effectiveness of their quality assurance mechanism. Regarding higher education, a national Higher Education Quality Improvement Committee (HEQIC) will be set up to examine the plans of universities, observation visits to each university and publish an annual report. However, the question remains as to the effectiveness of these administrative units.

### ***3.8 Thai Higher Education Institutions and Quality Assurance***

Government policies are usually embedded in and articulated through legislation. The National Education Act, 1999, Part 6, which covers the standards and quality assurance of the Education Act, requires both internal and external quality assurance systems to be implemented in order to maintain and improve the academic and educational quality and standards at all levels (Rachakitjanubeksa, 1999). English-medium degree programs are subject to the same quality assurance processes as Thai-language programs. According to the National Education Act, every five years, all universities will be externally assessed by an independently appointed auditor. Audit teams are required to run regular sessions for public and private university representatives in order to promote and to share QA knowledge and experience. External auditing is meant to be complemented by internal quality assurance assessment supported by the Commission on Higher Education (formerly MUA). External QA auditing occurs regularly and is widely regarded as rigorous and transparent.

#### ***3.8.1 Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Framework***

The Quality Assurance (QA) system was introduced as a national mechanism of Thai higher education in July 1996 (MUA, 2002). The policy suggests that each institution establish the internal quality assurance (IQA) which should be based on three (3) basic steps which are Quality Control, Quality Audit and Quality Assessment (Kanjaniyot, 2003). Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) is the responsibility of each academic institute and its governing organization to assess and monitor quality and standards as well as to oversee internal mechanisms which put in place and remain a part of the continuing management system. This framework was based on the guidelines for the development of Thai universities. The guidelines include a larger autonomy and academic freedom. There are nine (9) aspects of quality factors outlined as a broad framework comprising of philosophy, commitments, objectives and implementation plan, teaching & learning, student development activities,

research, academic services to the community, preservation of art and culture, administration and management, finance and budgeting, and IQA system and mechanisms.

There is a substantial degree of self-management involved in the QA audit process. Each institution needs to provide a Self Study Report (SSR) for the quality audit for external assessment. Guided by the MOE (MUA), each institution appoints a QA manager and committee at the faculty level charged with responsibility for gathering relevant QA data and for preparing the SSR. The process assumes that each institution and each faculty QA manager are committed to the integrity of the internal QA process. Institutions can choose any quality system, mechanism or indicators to control their quality. However, they need to develop their quality assurance and operations for monitoring the overall implementation. The manuals are internal documents of each faculty but can also be used as a useful reference for the SSR. The SSR should be about 25-30 pages (A4 size) comprising four important sections which are the introduction, main content, conclusion and annex. The institution must provide supporting documents of each of nine aspects to be used as evidences for both internal and external audits and assessments. Evidently, this approach is designed to build a foundation for quality assurance by initiating and then helping to sustain a cultural change within each academic organisation. Clearly this QA process challenges entrenched cultural assumptions about the status and role of teachers in relation to their students and to the fundamental principle of 'saving face'. As such, the introduction of audit cultures into Thai academic institutions represents a major 'global' intervention into established educational practice and can cause resistance.

### ***3.8.2 External Quality Assurance (EQA) Framework***

The Office of the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) was established in 2000 in accordance with the Education Act 1999 as a national public independent agency responsible for external quality assurance assessment of all educational institutions at all levels. According to the ONESQA (2001), the standards set for higher education comprises of eight (8) aspects which are Graduate quality, Learning processes, Learning facilities, Management, Research and services, Academic service to the community, Preservation of art and culture and Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

The ONESQA requires each institute to present results against 28 indicators and to review the institutional performance in 8 categories as follows:

1. Quality of graduates (4 indicators)
2. Learning process (4 indicators)
3. Learning support resources (5 indicators)
4. Research and innovation (4 indicators)
5. Academic services (2 indicators)
6. Preservation of art and culture (2 indicators)
7. Administration and management (5 indicators)
8. Internal quality assurance system (2 indicators)

### ***3.9 Significance and Discussion of Quality Assurance***

Globalisation/internationalisation of higher education implies a greater integration of educational institutions and organisations of each nation in a global economy and society. Higher education is increasingly global as it is being delivered across the nations in many forms, sometimes through partnerships between institutions and increasingly through electronic technologies. Assuring educational quality in this regard is difficult but, it is crucial to all higher education stakeholders: government, institution, teaching staff, student, employer and even society which might benefit from desirable skills from graduates. Practically each nation has established its own quality assurance system to serve its own local context but, to what extent is higher education in Thailand designed according to the local needs and expectations of stakeholders? Also, to what extent is its quality assured from a consumer perspective when degree programs are being delivered across national boundaries or programs are being internationalised at home? Although consumers (customers) are sometimes difficult to define, students seem to be the obvious consumer as they require assurance that programmes of study are effective and awarded qualifications will enable them to be employed when they graduate. Randall (2002) suggests that students and employers, being the main users of the higher education system, require confidence regarding qualifications that represent achievement and ability.

Although the government has the aim of establishing the quality assurance system as a broad guideline for institutions, the existing quality assurance system in Thai higher education as outlined above can be considered to be too narrowly constructed in the policy documents.

This results in a lack of evidence with regards to international context and international dimension to contribute to internationalisation of higher education in general. An absence of international policy (with Thai values) to enforce the operation of existing popular international degree programs can cause many irrelevances in terms of quality and standards in the concept/process of internationalisation. As reputation implies quality, many consumers of Thailand's international degree programs rely heavily on institutions' reputation/status. Randall (2002) argues that 'reputation alone is fragile' as in the longer term, the value of recognition that employers place upon the 'particular qualifications' 'will depend upon the actual performance of graduates in employment' (p. 190).

This is problematic when considering international activities and practices in regard to an expected quality assurance provided by Thai international programs, such as limitations of a compulsory English communication, cross-cultural skills, international curriculum/subject disciplines, independent studies, qualified and well-equipped international lecturers/instructors. Professor Dr. Wichit Srisa-an, former Permanent Secretary for Ministry of University Affairs (MUA, 1991) suggested that 'international education' should emphasize the key areas of international curriculum, international faculty, international student and language of instruction. Thailand's international degree programs are still lacking an 'international policy' in the context of international quality dimension. Van Damme (2000) observed that 'current quality assurance models are very domestic, confined to educational activities within national boundaries' (p.18). The lack of an 'international quality assurance system in relation to 'internationalisation of higher education' is shared by many countries including Western ones. By looking at the national impact of education policies on society, these important elements can be considered in terms of the international quality dimension of international degree programs.

### ***3.9.1 Benchmarking for Internationalisation***

A 'quality international degree program', as it is understood by the Thai government and other stakeholders, is very much a duplication of international degree programs from Western countries. Subject disciplines are also narrow as they are only focused on the sell-well programs among international Asian students such as business, engineering and information technology (IT). As branding implies quality, an international brand from English-speaking countries is likely to be considered more attractive. Although there is no established independent international agency to assure 'international quality' of offered international

degree programs in Thailand and elsewhere, many students rely on well-known reputation of both local and international providers. They have been influenced by the university rankings organized and advertised by international magazines such as TIME and Asia Week. Western curriculum is generally perceived as a powerful indicator of ‘international standard’ for the popular MBA and business management programs.

Learning reform is one of the key initiatives of the current educational reform which gives high priority to learners. The current graduate-level learners treat their education instrumentally. Education is considered as a means to achieve social status through their financial investments. Traditionally, learning is about becoming a person, about transforming the experiences of living into knowledge and skills while teaching assists these endeavours (Jarvis, 1992, p.237). The current over-emphasis upon instrumental learning can limit opportunities for students to engage in the acquisition of cultural knowledge and skills. Some higher education institutions in the west, such as Melbourne Business School in Australia, increasingly recognize the importance of developing ‘people skills’ in their business management programs such as the MBA. According to Professor Tony Grant, coaching students in terms of development of personal skills is more important in global organisations than management models and a technical view of management as a notion of ‘self’ as a subject for improvement (Executive Education, The Age, October 19, 2005, p. 44).

### ***3.10 English-medium Degree Program and Quality Assurance System***

Thai higher education, from an elite education in the past to the current mass production, increasingly requires explicit quality assurance for programs of study and awarded qualifications to serve the needs and expectations of stakeholders. International degree programs offered by local Thai institutions and those in collaboration with international institutions, attract new stakeholders among local and international students and employers. Many multinational companies in Thailand expect their employees to be capable of solving cross-cultural problems.

During the past decade, the international recognition of educational quality has been a focus of the Thai government’s efforts. In addition, the government is also trying to upgrade the quality of Thai graduates and their English proficiency to supply qualified employees for the international employment market. A number of factors contribute to the establishment of international degree programs in Thailand. The two most apparent factors are the financial

restrains of the state and the drive of local educational institutions to achieve 'international standard' in education. The growing involvement in international education and training of international agencies such as the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, WTO, etc., is another significant factor influencing a quality of established international degree programs. Also, free trade agreements, such as NAFTA or ASEAN, are found to be stimulating in terms of international mobility of professional services (Van Damme, 2000). The Asian Development Bank (ADB), in particular, gave funding and suggested relevant policies to sectors of Thai educational reform (Fry, 2002). However, these international agencies tend to encourage cooperation among different countries in terms of educational expansion and provision in the global education market. There is still a problem with quality monitoring processes to regulate the international degree program provision at the 'international level'.

By and large, Thai institutions have adopted a market-oriented and entrepreneurial approach to recruit students in Thailand and its neighbouring countries for international degree programs. These students have become more and more discerning about the 'program quality' and 'money they have spent' on obtaining international education at home and near home at a competitive tuition fee. Due to a high emphasis on status, top ranking institutions are likely to be more successful in promoting international degree programs to attract both Thai and non-Thai students. Due to the highly bureaucratic structure of Thai society and the academic community, many Western academic institutions are likely to cooperate with local public universities. It is not only their high status that enhances marketability but also they can avoid any traditional and cultural conflicts in relation to legal requirements as well.

The current international degree program providers in Thailand focus on a branding strategy to attract students and many institutions also focus on programs and subjects that 'sell well' in the market. In addition, English language is still a popular medium in international programs and it attracts not only Thais but also many Asian students from neighbouring countries. While traditional Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs might have lost their appeal in the West specialised MBA programs, such as human resource management or marketing, are still in demand by Thai and other Asian students in the region, such as Malaysia and India (ASIAINC, 2005). Apart from international cooperation with well-known institutions in the west, many business schools and institutions in Thailand are focusing on benchmarking with best practices and business curricula from the top global business schools by regularly updating courses in pedagogy and approaching international specialists to teach and train students in their institutions. However, it is important to ask on what 'international

standard' is the Thai international program based? Benchmarking and cooperating with leading institutions from English-speaking countries in the West such as US, UK, Australia and Canada is evident for international degree programs in Thailand. It is for this purpose that the Office of the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) has been set up. Its primary function is to encourage higher education institutions to have a regular self-evaluation prior to receiving the external evaluation by the authorized evaluators. However, it is also notable that the existing quality assurance system frameworks are based on a Thai national context to fit into institutions' traditions. Accordingly, it is unlikely to be applicable or flexible for international environments and contexts.

### ***3.11 An International Perspective on Quality Assurance and Internationalisation***

The internationalisation policy also implies international cooperation and benchmarking with higher education providers from other experienced English speaking countries. International networking, benchmarking and cooperating about the quality assurance of Thai institutions with higher education providers, organisations and agencies are parts of Thai government policy. Thailand is likely to establish and promote collaboration with partner institutions in providing higher education programs and sharing an international quality assurance framework at the regional level. Some supports given to neighbouring countries include exchange grants and scholarships and collaborative development of quality assurance systems through regional frameworks such as the ASEAN University Network (AUN). According to the Ministry of Education document, Thailand is host to the Secretariat of the ASEAN University Network established since 1977 which comprises of seventeen (17) universities from the ten (10) ASEAN member countries and each country member has agreed to develop international standard and mechanism for quality assurance in higher education. Each member university has appointed Chief Quality Officers (CQOs) to carry out activities (Sujatanond, 2002).

Thailand has also been involved in two main activities relating to the mutual recognition of qualifications in Asia and the Pacific - University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Thailand started promoting staff and student exchanges in 1995 under UMAP and it has also been one of the very first to cooperate with Australia in conducting a pilot project on UTCS (UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme) administered by the European Commission. APEC activity has supported Thailand in regard to the mobility of engineers and architects (Sujatanond, 2002). This regional cooperation



broadens Thailand's international perspectives and encourages a mutual development of frameworks for quality assurance systems among partners in the region.

It is believed that the social, political, and economic future of nations is directly related to their educational success at home. Thai higher education system has undergone a reform over the past decade in order to keep up with the challenges of globalisation and internationalisation. In an economic sense, Thailand's economy was becoming increasingly internationalised by the early '90s and resulted in the growth of the 'internal' international higher education market (Fry, 2002). However, there were fundamental inherent weaknesses in relation to high variability in academic standards across the university sector and effective quality assurance establishment to benchmark Thai universities against foreign competition. The established quality assurance systems of individual countries are likely to serve their own contextual settings. It is not an easy task to establish an 'international quality assurance framework' that each country can comply with as each has to rely on each other at the international level and formulating policy and plan in this regard can cause difficulties when making an independent decision.

There is a growing concern about the growth of regional activities that make an impact on most parts of the world due to an expansion of higher education in many countries. According to Mr Lewis, INQAAHE President, there were no regional arrangements till the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) was set up in 1991 (QA Issue23, October 2003, p.03). However, this arrangement was based on a voluntary system and was not enforced in terms of operation.

International cooperation in education is a part of the Thai government's policy on regionalisation and internationalisation. It is considered 'as an effective means to enhance the quality of higher education through the sharing of knowledge and experiences within the region and beyond' (Kanjananiyot, 2003, p.36). Ongoing collaboration with international universities in seminars, conferences and workshops around the world and in the region is a further step for Thailand in terms of improving international quality assurance of international degree programs. For this purpose, a number of partnerships were established with organizations such as UNESCO, the Association of South East Asian Institutes of Higher Learning (ASAIHL), the International Association of Universities (IAU), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) as well as the Centres of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Higher Education Association (SEAMEO), the

International Association of University Presidents (IAUP) and other national university associations.

While both internal and external quality assurance systems have been developed in Thai universities, the assessment is still based on a national context. The absence of international quality assurance in the existing international degree programs needs to be addressed. But the issue of quality assurance in relation to internationalisation of higher education is currently problematic (see Woodhouse, 1996, Van Damme, 2000, de Wit, 2002 and Van der Wende, 1999). Though many basic standards and criteria can be commonly shared, internationalisation of each country implies its own context and the ongoing improvement of quality is apparently the most challenging task to reflect in the whole education system.

Debate about quality issues in relation to ‘internationalisation of higher education’ has intensified in recent years as the pace of ‘internationalisation’ has increased alongside the demands on national policy makers to provide quality assurance data to a global market. The debate on regulation and control has become as difficult in Thailand as it in Australia. Australian universities are self-accrediting institutions, using both internal and external mechanisms to assess teaching and learning, research, and governance and administration. The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), established in March 2000, is monitoring and conducting audits in Australian higher education institutions in general (Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), 2005).

### ***3.12 Conclusion***

Internationalisation has been integrated into Thai government policy since 1990 in an effort to improve educational standards and the English competency of Thai students. It also addresses the need to strengthen the nation’s competitiveness in the face of the economic challenges of globalisation. Thailand is also responding and adapting to the new requirements of the global job market to achieve international recognition for its English-medium programs and to ensure that students are internationally oriented in English as well as acquire knowledge of foreign cultures and develop intercultural sensitivity. Changes in a global economy have brought significant changes to Thai higher education system. A severe economic crisis in July 1997 forced Thailand’s national policy makers to redirect and reform the higher education system. Higher education institutions are also changing the ways in which they operate as they are facing changes in administrative re-structuring, autonomy, student access, curricula,

etc. These and other adjustments affect students' fees, as well as social and cultural values of the country normally reflected in the higher education system. Internationalisation of higher education is one of the Thai government's commitments to upgrade the quality of higher education with emphasis on global education and human resource development. The new policies aim at preparing graduates through international degree program provision, with the focus on English language communication skills and other knowledge and skills required by international employers in the global workplace.

As Thailand has been struggling, the pace of higher education reform has been rather slow. Nevertheless, globalisation and internationalisation of higher education have influenced Thai policy makers to upgrade the quality of the many higher education sectors (especially employment skills and English language skills). English as the lingua franca of higher education is a central component of the process of internationalisation in Thailand. However, international programs of Thai institutions are considered inadequate as agents of improving students' English language skills.

According to the Thai government's policy on internationalisation and regionalisation in higher education, international cooperation with recognized international institutions has been used as an international benchmark in terms of quality and standards. The established international degree programs taught in English by Thai institutions (or Thai institutions in collaboration with international institutions) are still struggling to assure the 'international quality' of programs being offered to both Thai and non-Thai students. International program providers are confronted by international students and employers who want to be assured of the quality of offered qualifications in terms of employability in global work markets.

Although the Thai government has developed networks with international institutions and agencies to build a quality assurance framework, a proper international policy in this regard is still absent in the current policy documents. In addition, the established quality assurance framework, including both internal and external (IQA and EQA), is likely to serve its own national context at a local level. In dealing with overseas partners, many international education providers have to adapt their systems to comply with legal requirements and cultural traditions of their Thai partners in terms of policy. In fact, some multinational organizations like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have directly influenced policy makers to shape the education system of each country. An independent

international body to monitor and regulate the current international degree programs between countries in terms of international quality assurance is needed. According to Van Damme (2001) 'globalisation in higher education does not necessarily imply international standardisation and uniformity, but asks for policies balancing the global and the local' (p. 4). Consequently, there is a need for policy makers to formulate an international regulatory framework that integrates more with the global context of the higher education systems.

## **Chapter 4: Research Methodology**

### ***4.1 Introduction***

To pursue the analysis of internationalisation further and at a deeper level of engagement it is necessary to consider the impacts of global–local processes at the institutional level. This chapter explains the research methodology and the research process from design to data collection and clarifies the rationale for employing a case study approach to the study of internationalisation in Thai higher education. In the early stages of this research project, it was realised that a document-based approach would not satisfactorily capture the complex interrelationships between patterns of globalisation and the internationalisation of Thai higher education at the national and institutional levels. This led to an expansion of my research to cover issues relating to curriculum, student experiences and income-generation. In particular, it became necessary to include views held by different groups of higher education stakeholders. The research project therefore explored both the processes and personal experiences of internationalisation across a wide range of stakeholder groups. Questions were asked about how internationalisation was experienced and interpreted by policy makers, senior university executives, teaching staff, and students. This project also offered scope for me to reflect upon the research process and in particular the significance of cultural values in conducting cross-cultural research. While I am Thai and many of my research subjects were also Thai, I still encountered cultural obstacles arising from my being a student at a foreign ‘outsider’ institution asking sensitive questions about pedagogy and strategic management with ‘insiders’ of Thai higher education institutions.

### ***4.2 Research Design***

A combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques were selected, but with the emphasis on the qualitative approach. Initially, it was my intention to loosely design the research study without trying to set hypotheses and answer specific research questions as Bogdan and Biklen (1998) compared it as a ‘loosely scheduled traveller’ which is the nature of a qualitative educational researcher. Maxwell (1996) argued that there is no one right model for research design, but the “components” of design and “logical connections between the design components” are crucial to achieve the goal (p.8). In addition, the research design did not have a fixed starting point from the beginning, but the design task was based on the ‘logic’ and ‘coherence’ of my research project (Maxwell, 1996). Quantitative data was collected

from surveys but only as a supplement to data collected from interviews, focus groups, literature searches and observation. It is argued that the use of multiple data gathering techniques at each research site enhances the trustworthiness of the case study and facilitates closer analysis of the research question. While the study of internationalising processes at a distance through documentary sources was relatively straightforward, investigation of human experiences, attitudes and responses proved more difficult. Cultural barriers proved significant obstacles even though I am a Thai national and native Thai speaker who has lived in Australia for only a few years. The decision to employ a case study methodology reflected the focus of my research question, the constraints of the research environment encountered in Thailand and the perceived shortcomings of other research methodologies in the Thai cultural milieu. Case study methodology was implemented to widen the range of available information and research data and to lend greater weight to conclusions about the processes of internationalisation in Thailand's higher education system.

According to Bouma (2000), "A researchable question is usually a small fragment of a larger question. One of the hardest things for a researcher to do is to confront a larger, burning issue by tackling only one small, manageable part of it" (p.13). He also further suggested, "It is better to answer a small question than to leave a large one unanswered" (Bouma, 2000, p. 13). This project began with many questions none of which immediately captured my sense of what I was trying to find out. Literature searches and preliminary discussions with academic researchers in Melbourne permitted some refinements and after starting out with the intention of developing a project with an emphasis upon quantitative research, I shifted my perspective and approach towards a more qualitative analysis of the internationalisation of higher education in Thailand.

As stated in the introduction, this project was driven by one double-barrelled key research question: specifically, what role do English-medium business graduate programs play in the internationalisation of Thailand higher education and are they appropriate to the professional needs of postgraduate students in Thailand?

As this project was to implement a case study approach, these central concerns were examined by breaking the key question down into several minor related questions. Significantly, it was intended to study cases of two Thai institutions in Bangkok offering English-medium business masters degree programs. There were many variables to consider and to be investigated such as which institutions were going to allow me to conduct case

studies, where were they located, what were my sources of data, and how was I going to gain this data effectively. In framing a holistic research framework, particular attention was given to government policy on internationalisation of higher education and its implementation, autonomous universities, social and cultural values and practices as evident in higher education settings in the nature of English-medium instruction, international teaching and learning and Thailand's evolving higher education market. My research design became structured into what Burns (1997) described as 'a funnel' in which questioning proceeds from the general to specific and where ideas are initially cast in very broad terms and then narrowed as more research data is collected. The research study and especially the data collecting process were guided by the following research questions:

1. What global pressures are driving forward curriculum internationalisation in Thailand?
2. What internationalisation strategies do Thai university managers pursue?
3. What does 'quality' mean in the context of an English-medium postgraduate education in Thailand?
4. What quality assurance measures is the Thai government implementing in tertiary education?
5. How do Thai and international academics, students and policy makers perceive globalisation and internationalisation?
6. How does the experience of 'internationalisation' differ between academics, students and policy makers in Thailand?
7. How 'international' are Thai postgraduate international programs?

#### ***4.3 Theoretical Perspective (Rationale for methodology and methods)***

It was necessary not only to research the concept of globalisation as understood across many academics disciplines, but also to gain a sense of how global processes are perceived at the local level – in this case within two academic institutions. Although respondents could not be expected to know precise definitions of globalisation and internationalisation, it was possible to infer recognition of globalising trends from experiences of education reform related through the research interview process. As discussed in chapter three of this thesis, the consequences of globalisation are evident in Thailand's higher education system where institutions are moving quickly to expand their English-medium business graduate programs. Students are opting for full fee postgraduate degree programs introduced by universities in

response to employer demands for better and more appropriately skilled graduates and to meet growing local demand for 'onshore' English-medium education in Thailand.

These observable transformations in the context of Thai higher education influenced how I framed research questions. Choosing a research methodology is the first major task confronting the researcher after research questions are identified. In addition, all research techniques have their strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages. Reviewing both quantitative and qualitative methods as discussed by Merriam (1998) and Scott & Usher (1999) helps researchers to distinguish basic characteristics of both types when thinking how to answer research questions. According to the literature on research methodologies, a quantitative approach involves answering research questions such as 'How much?', 'How many?' and 'How often?' and 'What data?' are usually presented as statistics (Bouma, 2000, p.19). On the other hand, Bouma (2000) explained qualitative research is more likely to answer questions such as: "What is it like to be a member of that group? What is going on in this situation? What is it like to experience this or that phenomenon?" (p. 20). Consequently, qualitative data are likely to take the form of the language of images, feelings and impression; as respondents describe the qualities of the events under study (Bouma, 2000, p. 20). As a researcher, I was much more interested in accessing the thoughts and feelings of respondents than in composing more impersonal and standardised data sets. Thus, by using quantitative techniques, my work was guided by my wish to grasp the subjective undercurrents of internationalisation. Hence, qualitative research techniques and questions took precedence as I believed that they were the most appropriate means by which data of this nature could be collected and interpreted.

One of the most recognized strengths of qualitative research is that it can gain insights into the worldview, beliefs and values of a respondent and this can help the researcher gain the perspective of the respondent. I wanted to gather research data that informed my research questions and which provided insights as much as information. Naturally, I tended towards a qualitative and constructivist view of my research. In this, I was guided by Crotty (1998), who argued,

all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (p. 42).

It has long been argued that there is no one right way to conduct social research. Both quantitative and qualitative paradigms have their origins in 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophical



thinking (Creswell, 1994). Hannabuss (1996) suggests that using a qualitative strategy can permit greater focus on complex and sensitive issues, but its critical limitation is that it is very time consuming. Qualitative research generally involves interviews and observations and it is more likely to deal with a mass of information. Merriam (1998, p. 6) suggests that ‘qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world’. There is a growing recognition among researchers that types of data and styles of research of both approaches overlap (Neuman, 1997). However, Neuman agrees with King, Keohane, and Verba (1994:5) who stated that the best research “often combines the features of each” (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994:5 cited in Neuman, 1997, p. 14). Research questions of this study require mainly qualitative-type data, but some quantitative-type data will also be collected using questionnaires in order to help me clarify their meanings logically. As well, observational data will be collected. According to Neuman, 1997

the key features common to all qualitative methods can be seen when they are contrasted with quantitative methods. Most quantitative data techniques are data condensers. They condense data in order to see the big picture.... Qualitative methods, by contrast, are best understood as data enhancers. When data are enhanced, it is possible to see key aspects of cases more clearly. (p. 14)

A case study, the principal qualitative research strategy employed in this project, allows the researcher to gather data on the same subject from a variety of sources to better reflect the social context in which the research takes place (Merriam, 1998). In addition, Crossley and Vulliamy (1984) cited in Crossley and Watson (2003, p.48) say, a case study is one of helpful qualitative research strategies to improve educational policy and practice in the field of international education in developing countries. One of the most recognized definitions among researchers by Yin (1989)

an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. (p. 32)

A case study according to Miles and Huberman (1994) is a method that permits the study of ‘a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context’ (p.25). As a researcher, I intended to learn about the phenomenon of internationalisation, in theory and practice, in two Thai universities. The ‘case study’ is recognized as the preferred strategy to serve research questions of ‘how’ and ‘why’ and when the investigator has little control over events, or when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context (Burns 1997, p.365, Yin

1994, p.9 cited in Merriam, 1998 and Yin 1989, p.13). Many researchers have different perspectives to define a case study, for instance, Yin (1994) focuses on the ‘research process,’ Stake (1994,1995) focuses on the ‘unit’ or the ‘choice’ of study’ while, both Merriam (1998) and Wolcott (1992), define it as an ‘end product’. Merriam considers ‘the case’ as a methodology and her definition is “a qualitative case study as ‘an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1998, p.21) but Wolcott (1992, p.36) defines it as “an end-product of field-oriented research” rather than a strategy or method (Merriam, 1998, p.27). Lastly, Creswell (1998, p.61) considers a case study is an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context”.

Though a case study approach generally causes difficulties in making generalizations, Stake (1995) maintains that it is the most effective method to study the particularity and complexity of a single case, especially when investigating the details of interactions with a given social context. It helps a researcher to gain a deep understanding of activities that are related to particular circumstance as every single case is special in itself. Bell (1999) explains that the case-study approach is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale. Bell also suggests that the great strength of the case-study method is that it allows researchers to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify, or attempt to identify, the various interactive processes at work. These processes may remain hidden in a large-scale survey but may be crucial to the success or failure of systems or organizations or programs. Bogdan and Bikle (2003, p.32) maintained that most qualitative researchers are more interested in gaining ‘universal statements of general social processes than statements of commonality between similar settings’. However, generalization tends to be the most critical weakness of a case study that a researcher should be aware of as some certain activities or problems or responses will come up again and again (Stake, 1995).

#### ***4.4 Research Plan***

Yin (1989) defined a research design as, “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions” (p. 28). Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explained that “design” is used in research to refer to the researcher’s plan of how to proceed (p.49). This research project was not designed to be rigid

and driven by a single research technique. In this regard, Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggested that designing a qualitative approach requires “flexibilities in the overall research design so that site and sample selection can respond to increasingly refined research questions” (p. 26). In addition, qualitative researchers tend to avoid using ‘hypotheses to test or specific questions to answer. They believe that shaping the questions should be one of the products of data collection rather than assume a priori (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p. 49). This was true as I found that I had to change research questions during my fieldwork in Thailand. As Creswell (1998) explained that it is a part of the research process “to ‘reflect an increased understanding of the problem” (p. 19).

#### ***4.4.1 Data Sources (Institutional level)***

The core strategy of this research was multiple case studies. As the general purpose of this research is to study ‘what’s going on?’ in regard to the internationalisation of higher education within Thailand, two Thai institutions which are offering international programs and have joint degree programs with Western universities at a master degree level were selected and were used as case studies. These two institutions were based in Bangkok and used the English language as the medium of instruction in their full-fee international programs in business and management and also provided special English language training programs for students. Both employed Thai and non-Thai (international) academic staff and accepted Thai and non-Thai (international) students.

The two institutions participating as case studies in this research study will be referred to as ‘Institution A’ and ‘Institution B’ in this study. Institution A is a private institution and Institution B is a self-funding independent college within a public university. Both institutions were well-known to both Thai and international students. They both offered business-related postgraduate programs where English was the sole medium of instruction either on a full-time or part-time basis. These degrees were run either on their own or in the cooperation with international partnerships from the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia and neighbouring countries in the Asian region.

Maximizing what a researcher can learn from selected cases is the first priority (Stake, 1995). Hence, documentary evidence for each of participating institutions included international program brochures, leaflets, marketing material, website material, policy documents, course guides and handbooks, administrative reports, Faculty handbooks and related materials.

I was able to obtain required data from a targeted group of the designed study population and I was allowed to be in a classroom whilst questionnaires were being completed. Participants were able to ask for clarification on questions and I could use face-to-face interpersonal skills to encourage participants to complete them. At the end of the session, I personally collected all the questionnaires. However, some unclear questions led to inferior data. Where negative or critical responses were recorded, it proved difficult to arrange follow-up interviews as these respondents were reluctant to identify themselves. Language barriers were evident for both Thai and non-Thai students even though questionnaires were pre-tested. However, none of the students came from English speaking backgrounds.

Ethnographic data included interviews with various stakeholders: an assistant to the dean, the heads of the programs, the Graduate School Office for international programs, a course co-ordinator, Thai and non-Thai teaching staff in the program, program administrative staff and librarians. The researcher developed interview schedules with open-ended questions for various interviewees but students were the main focus of the study.

The interview schedule for Thai and non-Thai students explored areas such as general details of programs, an interviewee's perception of international programs and quality assurance, institutional environment, interactions between classmates and the teaching staff. Questions and prompts were established based on findings discussed in the literature review chapter and were implemented in semi-structured interviews conducted in both Thai and English

I was actively involved in real-life situations and able to obtain the data of a 'reality' in real time. I also used interpersonal skills to encourage interviewees to talk freely especially when an informal environment was set. Some students made very interesting comments in the previous questionnaire session; however, I could not choose student participants for the interview sessions as they all were volunteers. It was also a time-consuming process and I was distracted from what I wanted to ask and observe. It was impossible to adequately anticipate issues and problems, which occurred during the interview sessions or predict which participant would be the best source of data. As Stake (1995) suggested 'Selection of data sources can be left too much to chance. The people who happen to be there when we happen to be there are not likely to be the best sources of data' (p. 56). The interviewees exhibited different personalities with respect to willingness to talk. In particular, some interviewees were reluctant to elaborate critical opinions.

Survey data was both Thai and non-Thai student questionnaires. Questionnaire surveys were used with sixty students who were taking an international program before in-depth interviewing so as to allow the researcher to gain general data of students' perception about programs, attitudes, expectations, satisfaction and general perspectives.

#### ***4.4.2 Data Sources (National and international levels)***

During the fieldwork, I also observed both institutions, inside and outside, without interrupting their normal operation. I sat down quietly at the back of the classroom observing the teaching and learning atmosphere of the class and interactions and behaviours of teaching staff and students and between students. However, as Stake (1995) suggested, 'most educational case data gathering involves at least a small invasion of personal privacy' (p. 57). The general environment of the institution and the international program section, classroom, staff room, staff-staff interaction, staff-student interaction and student-student interaction.

Collection of documentary evidences prior to the conduct of fieldwork allowed me to refine research questions and develop survey instruments. Documents sometimes give data that the researcher cannot observe directly such as records of activity. However, institutions were reluctant to pass on confidential documents related to their programs especially about quality assurance issues. Some published documents current at the commencement of my project have since become dated but nonetheless useful in framing education policy issues.

Documentary evidence from the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) included published Thai government policy on the internationalization of higher education and quality assurance statements, National Economic and Social Development Plans from 1992 onwards, Higher Education Development Plans, policy on quality assurance for higher education and various reports on higher education in general such as university profiles, performance, activities, etc.

### ***4.5 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis***

#### ***4.5.1 Questionnaires***

Questionnaire design was based on the established '2000 Survey of International Students Starting Study in Australia' and the '1999 Survey of International Students Finishing a Course of Study in Australia' used by Australian Education International (AEI). Questionnaire surveys were used as the first data collection instrument with students who were doing international master programs in business during the year 2002. There was one

open question among 22 questions that I designed to gather data regarding the “complex motivational influences” (Foddy, 1993, p.133) to choose to study in an English language program rather than Thai program. This question is optional to respond in Thai for Thai students, but none of Thai students answered in Thai. There were 60 (sixty) students from four classes all together, two classes from the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program and two classes from the Master of Management (General Management Program–single degree and Marketing Management – double degree program in conjunction with Australian university). Students were both full-time (day program) and part-time (evening program) and they varied in terms of level of year of study, first year (during second semester) and last year (during last semester).

I was given permission to enter the classroom five minutes before the lecture started to introduce myself and explain the questionnaire in order to give students an opportunity to ask questions. Students were requested to return completed questionnaires at the end of the lecture as I was waiting outside the classroom and went inside to collect them at the end of the lecture. I found that this was the most effective way to gain completed questionnaires and to earn the confidence of participants. I expected all of the 60 students to participate in interview sessions at a later stage. However, there were only 25 students signed to participate in interview sessions.

#### ***4.5.2 Interviews***

Interviewing is considered to be “a product of social interaction taking place under severe time constraints, unequal status, and decidedly mixed motives” (Wildavsky, 1993, p.58). Furthermore, interviews are considered to be “one of the most important sources of information” to obtain data of people and activities in most case studies (Yin, 1989, p.88 and Burns, 1997, p.372).

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used in this form of data collection in order to make respondents feel that they are informants rather than respondents (Burn, 1997). Questions were given to interviewees to study beforehand. Due to a traditional seniority system or top-down management in Thai culture, interviews were begun with higher status individuals of universities, the dean, international program director and course coordinator as an initial approach, then moved down to others lower in the management structure, administrators. One Thai and one non-Thai teaching staff of a master program were

interviewed individually in a private place within the university. One Thai and one non-Thai international program administrator and a librarian were also interviewed individually.

Individual in-depth interviews took the form of open-ended questions that were intended to gain specific data about how well respondents appreciated the content and context of their program. Particular attention was given to 'follow-up questions' during the interviews to not only achieve richer responses but also to search for and explore new issues and ideas which would help with testing and modifying emerging research themes (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In addition, I found the interview method had created opportunities for student respondents to discuss and express their concerns, needs and feelings about their program experiences even on sensitive issues such as racism. As Baker, Yoels and Clair (1996) cited in de Laine (2000) as...

Researchers need to be particularly sensitive to the emotional expressions of respondents during an in-depth interview; uneasiness might be an indicator of stress from probing, which could result in withdrawal from future encounters. (p. 117)

Finally, interviews were conducted with two focus groups comprising of seven students from each institution. Thai and non-Thai students were included to gain the most specific data based on the individual interviews. This approach also allowed 'flexibility and the discovery of meaning, rather than standardization, or a concern to compare through constraining replies to a set interview schedule' in keeping with the qualitative emphasis of this research project (May, 1997, p.113). All respondents shared their experiences of routine activities, but conversations became more tense and intense when participants complained about the management and administration of their programs although I was not permitted to record or report upon specifics.

Wildavsky (1993) argued that the open-ended, semi structured interview cannot be done perfectly due to its nature and because of varied and numerous circumstances such as personalities of the interviewer and the respondent, timing and the involved organizations and subject's sensitivity. However, these circumstances require courage, resilience, and self-management to overcome difficulties (Wildavsky, 1993, p.58). According to Scott and Usher (1999) timing and duration of interviews are considered to be the most important control mechanism in an interview method which a researcher should be aware of. For this reason, timing of this research was set one hour as a maximum for a specific topic for each interviewee and half an hour for general topic.

### ***4.5.3 Non-participant Observation***

Observation began at the beginning of a semester so I could obtain data about the general environment of the university and of its international program section. I also observed each classroom setting of the selected master program, in a smaller context, to obtain data of ‘the process’ of teaching and learning within the delivery of the international program. Behaviours and interactions between Thai and non-Thai lecturers and Thai and non-Thai students, both individuals and whole classes with classroom activities, were investigated and I was included as one of the classroom participants. All observation data were recorded by note taking, during class time and after the classes ended. The length of a classroom observation was 15-20 minutes each time. Other accessible facilities such as the staff room, library, canteen and cafeteria were also observed, together with appropriate and relevant events.

### ***4.5.4 Analysis***

An initial data analysis of this study was done in conjunction with data collection in Thailand. Cross reference of evidences, interview transcripts and completed questionnaires were read interpretively so as to strengthen the use of the multiple method of data collection. However, most data analysis was later conducted in Melbourne, Australia, as this allowed me to read and interpret the data more effectively. Analysing case study data is difficult as Yin (1989) writes,

evidence is especially difficult because the strategies and techniques have not been well defined in the past. Nevertheless, every investigation should start with a general analytic strategy – yielding priorities for what to analyse and why. (p. 105)

The data collected were grouped under similar headings before carrying out the interpretation. The entire first transcript from all sources during data collection such as interview transcripts, jot down notes, comments, observations and documents were read thoroughly and grouped together into different themes or categories to build a theory. Merriam (1998) maintains that category construction is data analysis as categories are conceptual elements that cover or span many individual examples. Yin (1989) also suggests that relying on theoretical propositions and developing a case description are two strategies used for conducting case study data analysis. Then, each set of data was compared to reduce unnecessary repetition and to check for possible personal biases. Finally, the data was grouped in accordance to the research questions.



Data was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. When I came back to Melbourne, all completed sixty questionnaires were categorized and coded before using SPSS program to help extract the significant quantitative data to be used for further qualitative data analysis. Then, those questionnaires were analysed by using a statistical package of SPSS/PC for MS-Windows Version 11.0 to analyse the quantitative data collected from student questionnaire surveys and the findings were presented in both text and tabular forms in 5.2 and appendix 2. The focus was on interpreting the data rather than presenting the data.

After conducting each interview, the qualitative data was initially analysed manually while conducting the fieldwork and tape recorded interviews were transcribed after each interview was done at various places. Later, interview data was grouped according to key themes/concepts, words or phrases that were under the same category based on the theories and issues discussed in the literature review in chapter 2. I wanted to find out what concerns and issues the interviewees brought up for further analysis. Then, transcripts of each interview were coded in order to maintain interviewee confidentiality and they were all stored in safe place with the signed ethics forms.

Although quantitative data was collected, the main purpose of this research project was to study general perceptions of students about international programs. The quantitative data were used to support the findings of qualitative data from student interviews and observations as analysed in 5.3. The data obtained from students helped me to understand their perspective on studying and learning in international program environments in Thailand. In addition, interview data obtained from staff helped me to further understand perspectives of different levels of staff within the institution in terms of policy, administration and teaching and learning environments.

As discussed in the earlier section, each data collection method had different strengths and weaknesses. Triangulation was used to compare research findings from each of the techniques employed and to help with the analysis of this data. Burns (1997) suggests that only qualitative methods allow a researcher to access individual meaning in the context of ongoing daily life within institutional circumstances. According to Merriam (1998) triangulation can be employed by 'using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings' (p. 204) (also see Denzin, 1997). Data gathering methods of these multiple case studies included preliminary inquiry, semi-structured interviewing of

individuals and focus-groups, questionnaire surveys, document analysis and non-participant observation.

Each research question was answered by combining more than one method of data collection as mentioned above. Answers derived from more than one source of data can strengthen the project hence I used the multi-source method as a technique to guide data collection and data analysis.

#### ***4.6 Four Phases of Research Project***

There were four phases to this research project. The first three phases were conducted in Melbourne, Australia in July 2001 and the fourth (final) phase was conducted in Bangkok, Thailand in July 2002. The *first* stage of the study involved a review of relevant literature to gain background understanding of issues related to the research questions and to examine theoretical perspectives that could aid the direction of my investigations. The *second* stage involved a preliminary inquiry with informal interviews and observations with various stakeholders who had prior experiences involved in international education in Thailand, Joint-venture partners, international program course coordinator, Australian Visiting Professor, Thai and non-Thai students to gain personal insights and to help clarify the research problems and formulate research questions. The *third* stage of the study led into a case study methodology/approach. It involved the development of instrumentation, encompassing questionnaire design and interview design including a pilot study in Melbourne with 10 Thai and 3 international students (1 Canadian and 2 Australian students) who had prior experience of international degree programs in Thailand. Pre- tested questionnaires and interview schedules were re-designed according to ideas or areas of study discussed in the literature review and previous preliminary inquiry data. These re-designed instruments were later used at my research sites in Thailand. *Finally*, the last stage concerned the application of a case study approach combining research instruments and data from interviews, focus groups with documentary source material. Case studies of both Thai institutions represented Thai government policy on the internationalisation of higher education.

##### ***4.6.1 First Phase***

The first or scoping phase of the project was a collection of information and documentation published on the Internet and in literature reviews and it was conducted in Melbourne, Australia. Apart from generating a project literature, this phase served to map out the scope of

internationalisation in order to establish a 'domain' of related issues. I set out to explore the status of internationalisation as a priority for Thai higher education institutions and the processes by which internationalisation strategies are implemented. Consequently, what quality assurance mechanism was the Thai government is using to regulate/monitor those institutions and to what degree Thai decision makers assumed that Western benchmarks should be used to reshape Thailand's tertiary/postgraduate education agenda.

The Internet was used to provide relevant general background and primary data. Information was located about Thai government internationalisation strategies, private education in Thailand,, quality assurance statements from the Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) and information on higher education reform in Western countries. Electronic and hard copy journals, text books, and literature reviews provided general background studies of cross-cultural management in the classroom environment and teaching and learning in the international context. All data about international postgraduate programs of Thai universities was sourced from the Ministry of University Affairs website.

Basically, I was preoccupied with developing a focus of study area and concentrated on 'finding a problem' including key related issues. In addition, apart from reviewing literatures, the anticipation of problems and issues such as possibilities to access the universities, discovering what expected and unexpected difficulties in fieldworks might occur, were considered at this initial stage.

#### ***4.6.2 Second Phase***

The second phase of the project was also conducted in Melbourne as a continued part of phase one. It was a preparation of instrumentation for the third phase of the project. It concerned a preliminary inquiry with informal interviews and observations with various stakeholders who had prior experiences in international education in Thailand. Stakeholders were ranking from directors of international project; international masters degree program coordinators, international teaching staff, Thai and non-Thai students and employers. The aim of this phase was to gain general views and different perspectives and perceptions of both educators and students related to the research topic. I went to visit offices and interviewed informally with various stakeholders, Australian educators, Australian joint-venture partners with Thai institutions, international postgraduate program coordinator, Australian visiting professors and there were no tape record during the interview. Later, a multiple case study methodology

and methods of data collection had been selected and designed for this research study and two Thai universities were selected.

#### ***4.6.3 Third Phase***

The third phase of the study involved the instrumentation development, encompassing questionnaire design and interview design including a pilot study in Melbourne with 10 Thai students, 2 Australians and 1 Canadian student who had prior experience of international degree programs in Thailand. Questionnaires and interview schedules were tested before the main use with Thai and non-Thai students in Thailand. The aim of this phase was to see if there was any difficulty in understanding questions including English language or meanings in questionnaires as whole questionnaires to be used in research sites in Thailand used English language. Later, pre- tested questionnaires and interview schedules were re-designed to be used in research sites in Thailand. An awareness of a cross-cultural factor such as Thai and international contexts was also considered during re-designing instrumentations. Significantly, techniques such as building rapport and trust between the researcher and respondents while conducting the fieldwork were considered at this stage.

#### ***4.6.4 Fourth Phase (Final phase)***

##### ***4.6.4.1 Case Study Fieldwork***

This last phase involved gathering case study data. Accordingly, it required a fieldwork study in Bangkok, Thailand, using a qualitative case study method to collect the data. The two institutions selected as case studies were the main data sources. The case study data were collected from questionnaires, observations, interviews and documentation during the fieldwork and the researcher was the primary and main instrument of data collection.

Unlike quantitative research, the nature of fieldwork presents ambiguities and dilemmas that can only be addressed through face-to-face encounters with research subjects through interviews and focus groups (de Laine, 2000). It is a personal approach rather than an impersonal approach. In addition, as Stake (1995) writes,

Qualitative case study is highly personal research. Persons studied are studied in depth. Researchers are encouraged to include their own personal perspectives in the interpretation. The way the case and the researcher interact is presumed unique and not necessarily reproducible for other cases and researchers. The quality and utility of the research is not based on its reproducibility but on whether or not the meanings generated,

by the researcher or the reader, are valued. Thus, a personal valuing of the work is expected. (p. 135)

Generalization is also problematic in the case study method as its focus is particularization, a researcher chooses a particular case in order to know it better, not because it is different from others, but for what it is and what it does (Stake, 2005).

#### ***4.7 Cultural Perspectives of Conducting International Educational Research***

Like every researcher, I began my research study with many basic ideas about the extent to which culture and cultural differences were factors influencing the course of internationalisation in Thailand's higher education system. This inevitably led me to consider the cultural dimension of my research questions and to reflect upon whether or not my questions were researchable. In deciding how I was going to collect data and from whom, cultural considerations were paramount, not least because quality-related issues in education are extremely sensitive. This is so in Western countries but doubly so in Thailand for reasons already stated. Literature searches helped me clarify areas and issues I wanted to find out about but it was evident from my preliminary interviews that cultural differences tended to be played down by the majority of professionals involved in international education as teachers and managers. While many of them agreed that every culture is different but they did not seem to appreciate that cultural difference was a factor in the success or failure of international education ventures. Two basic questions were being asked during this stage, 'what do I really want to know?' and 'how am I going to answer my research questions?' My two intended participating institutions are well known in Bangkok for offering international masters programs in business studies. They both were very concerned about the findings of my research project.

Cultural factors affected instrumentation building from the beginning as there were different boundaries to be considered such as Thai and non-Thai stakeholders, social status, seniority and bureaucracy at national and international levels. Being Thai and with extensive experiences as an international postgraduate student in Australia and using myself as a main instrument for data collection in Thailand did not help much to ease difficulties in conducting fieldwork. As Komin writes, a well-known Thai characteristic such as *krengjai* or 'consideration' in English (discussed in chapter 2) was one of main barriers I found in myself and student participants during my data collection. However, there were other significant cultural factors and issues I revealed below.

Conducting research on internationalisation, whether 'at home' (local) or 'abroad', requires sensitivity to cross-cultural issues. Understanding the essential features of characteristics of the local cultural context is significant particularly in conducting qualitative research. Conducting intercultural research involves issues and challenges such as access, political sensitivities, communication language, research subject bias, accuracy of data, and confidentiality. Crossley and Watson (2003) state that "we are all conditioned by our upbringing, culture, education, environment, our status in society and our perceptions of how others view us, as well as by our political, social and religious values and attitudes" (p.36). These issues can lead to risks along the research journey of any researcher. Crossley and Watson (2003) also maintain that 'bias' is one of the most frequently acknowledged problems recognized in international research and it can be both 'personal' and 'official' (p.36).

Being aware of and learning what local people believe is useful for balancing theory and practice in context. Hierarchical nature has always been highlighted in conducting research in academic settings in Asian culture. Mulder (2000) highlighted the significant picture of Thai hierarchical society, which also exemplified Thai academic settings. He wrote,

In the hierarchy of power, protection, patronage and prestige, favours given also oblige, and those debts of gratitude tie people to each other, often in rather predictable ways; it functions as the cement that keeps the known, the personal world together (p. 206).

Hierarchical structure in academic environments in Thailand is a significant characteristic which implies an unequal position which is needed to be respected in the society. In this regard, maintaining personal relationships with an insider is sometimes more important than being an insider. Issues such as 'skipping appointments' or 'missed appointment' with subordinates in Western bureaucratic systems are often overlooked, or at least treated as minor issues, but in a status-conscious society these can be interpreted as a reflection upon the subordinates lower status in the social hierarchy (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Trying to obtain accuracy of data is a complex endeavour in Thailand as there are several ministries involved in providing education and none of them is likely to provide their own data to update individual and aggregated education statistics. As the following extract explains,

Some years ago there were as many as 17 government and para-government agencies involved in providing education and development initiatives in the rural areas. At central ministry level different divisions operated as if they ran their own private fiefdoms with little regard for the other divisions. While doing doctoral research in Thailand, one of the present authors thus found significantly different statistical data provided by government

ministries, UNESCO and other agencies while all purporting to refer to the same thing (Watson, 1973 cited in Crossley & Watson, 2003, p.38)

#### ***4.7.1 Getting Students to Trust Me Enough to Openly Express Their Opinions***

A Plain Language Statement and RMIT's Ethics as a prescribed consent form were formally given to all participants to sign before circulating questionnaires and conducting interview sessions in order to gain their trust and cooperation throughout the project. The outcome was absolutely fine regarding 'trust' through my observation but the main barrier was a lack of criticism during the interview session (interviewed in Thai) among Thai students. Every time I was trying to gain a definite answer about 'good' or 'bad' and 'yes' or 'no', they answered 'may be' or 'not sure'. As Mulder (1997, p.25) highlighted "the tendency to shy away from the critical analysis of things" is a Thais' weakness and it is commonly noticed by many Western scholars. There was also a minor problem among Chinese students due to their lack of competence in English (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991) when they were trying to explain and elaborate answers. It caused a mutual embarrassment, as I often felt uncomfortable to ask them to repeat their answers.

Thai and Chinese students are stereotyped by many Western academics as 'passive learners.' This perception stems from observations of 'Asian' classroom practice by Western educators who complain that Chinese students are not trained to criticize and are likely to keep quiet in class. Bearing out Biggs' observations in relation to Confucian heritage, I found that my student interview respondents were very 'active' during their individual interview sessions and ready to advance criticism of teaching styles or discuss their preferences in relation to teaching styles of individual teaching staff. As already discussed, Thai and also Chinese students are trained not to interrupt or ask questions in class and to respect their teachers. But the outward appearance of deference should not be taken as evidence of passivity. Clearly, the Thai and international students interviewed for this research project were critical consumers of education services. The lack of classroom participation in fact reflects entrenched authority structures and attitudes to discipline which are a consequence of culture. Notably, two Chinese students asked me not to tape record their comments, even though I assured them about the ethics issues and the consent form they previously signed. They told me they felt better and safer if I did not tape record them regarding sensitive issues such as lacking of transparency of subject grading, low quality of university's staff recruitment and English competency including accents of non-native English speakers of teaching staff particularly from Asia. At the same time, they allowed me to disclose the data in my thesis. Non-Thai

participants, in particular, tended to be active when discussing issues related to the standards of subject assessment and the quality of teaching. For example, both Chinese participants said that they enrolled in some particular subjects because they expected high marks (grades) and not because they wanted to study the subjects. They were also surprised that they achieved a perfect grade despite that they did not do well on the exam (they urged me to believe when explained). This idea came from previous students who used to enrol in the same subject.

#### ***4.7.2 Trying to Research the Experiences and Perception of Senior Thai and non-Thai Academics (Bureaucratic problem)***

To get a permission to access both participating institutions, I made formal site visits in November 2001 and later established and maintained a good relationship via email. When I was about to begin my fieldwork in July 2002, an English Research Director at Institution B organised an informal lunch to introduce me to his American Executive Director and his Thai colleagues but did not mention much about my research project. I also assumed that everything was in order as all related documents about my research project, research proposal, research agenda, work schedule, research instruments (questionnaires and interview schedule), the Ethics application from RMIT, were sent and previously approved by the Director of the Institution A and all executive directors.

When I began to start my data collection soon after, the Research Director had already decided who I had to approach and he asked me to make a regular work schedule for my visits in the institution. Although I mentioned to the Research Director that I would not disturb their normal operation, he seemed to be worried about ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘where about’ I was going to find out about the institution. I also understood that I would be monitored as an outsider by the institution’s executives and could be ask to withdraw at any time. I had to make sure that I was not manipulated.

Education, as observed by Komin (1990), is one of the important factors used to judge people on their social status in Thai society and Thai academic institutions are very hierarchical in structure. Thai academics are recognized for their high social status and they are meant to be respected in society. Accordingly, it is important for an institution to have a recognized brand name for the same reason. This particular institution (B) is recognized as one of a few prestigious universities in Thailand. In this regard, I understood that the director was trying to maintain the institution’s image and wanted to ensure that I was aware of it. I realized how



my research project's finding would affect the institution's image and they were trying to maintain their brand name in the market. To overcome this problem I used the '*orn nork khaeng nai*' technique, literally 'soft outward, firm or hard inside'. It is a successful strategy in the Thai cultural context and is even more important in the government sector than in the private sector, as suggested by Komin (1990, p.178). I eventually managed to conduct interviews with staff and students.

I encountered another problem when I tried to gain an Indian lecturer's opinion about the Thai government's concern with quality assurance in higher education. The lecturer's reaction suggested reluctance to give his opinion as he kept answering 'I am a foreigner, I don't like to comment on the government'. In addition, both Thai and non-Thai teaching staff tried to downplay cultural conflicts by repeating that 'every culture is different'. It was difficult to get them to elaborate their answers, as quality assurance is a sensitive issue in Thai higher education.

#### ***4.8 Conclusion***

The preceding discussion set out the rationale and approach taken in the fieldwork of the research project. A case study method was chosen as it offered the opportunity to gather data on personal experiences of globalisation and internationalisation. While respondents were usually unable or unwilling to elaborate upon the cultural dimensions of their experiences, it was possible to interpret this dimension from their responses to interview questions. The intention was to develop a thorough methodology that would facilitate a rigorous analysis of the processes of internationalisation at each research site. The next chapter presents both result and analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data gathered during this fieldwork phase.

## **Chapter 5: Data Results and Analysis**

### ***5.1 Introduction***

The purpose of this chapter is to present the main research findings obtained from questionnaires, interviews and the researcher's non-participant observations at both research sites selected for this thesis. Both the literature review and research methodology chapters established the rationale for investigating the topic of internationalisation in the context of Thai higher education. This chapter addresses internationalisation from two different perspectives: from that of students, both Thai and international, enrolled in English-medium business masters degree programs and from the perspective of Thai and international staff, both teachers and managers, including administrative and library staff engaged in international program design and 'delivery.' The following discussion offers insights into the complexities and challenges of curriculum internationalisation and maps out the scope and meaning of internationalisation from a Thai perspective. The chapter establishes why students value English-medium business and management graduate degree programs and how well Thai universities are able to meet these student expectations. The discussion also extends to questions of English competency and staff recruitment; both key strategic considerations for universities seeking to establish or enhance their international reputations.

As discussed in the previous chapter, data was collected and analysed using a variety of qualitative and quantitative techniques and the data presented and discussed in this chapter will reflect this interdisciplinary approach. As discussed in chapter four, quantitative data was collected to support qualitative research findings derived from individual interviews and focus groups. There were three sections in each questionnaire which covered key issues on international program experience of students. They were student background, general decision-making process, quality education, experience of the program and English language (see appendix 3). Initially, a statistical package of SPSS/PC for MS-Windows Version 11.0 was used to analyse the quantitative data collected from student questionnaire surveys and the findings were presented in both text in 5.2 (question 1-10) and tabular forms in appendix 2 (question 11-22). Later, interview data was grouped according to key themes/concepts, words or phrases that related to key themes addressed in the literature review: globalisation, internationalisation, teaching and learning experiences, cultural challenges, communication and strategy. Key comments came also from student interviews highlighting the importance of

these themes. Additional comments from interviews of senior academic managers, academics, administrative and library staff were selected to highlight teaching practices, quality assurance dilemmas and strategic issues. The main purpose of this approach was to access and interpret the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers as they plot diverse paths through a rapidly changing higher education landscape.

### ***5.2 Background Details of Participants***

The student survey sample for this project consisted of 60 students from two English-medium business graduate programs of two institutions in Thailand. The researcher was granted access to four approved student groups drawn from two business masters classes in each institution. At Institution A, there were 30 students from two classes (11 students and 19 students) enrolled in an English-medium business masters degree studying either by coursework only or by coursework and minor thesis. All participants were “Day Program” students studying full time. Institution B granted access to another 30 students from two classes who were doing a variety of coursework masters programs including 18 from one graduate double degree.

Across both institutions, three quarters of the students surveyed were female with more than half (55 per cent) aged under 25. The oldest person was in the age range of 36-45, so it was a comparatively young group. The age range of students was under 25 – 45. Even though they were studying at Thai universities, not all were Thai. Eighty per cent were, in fact, Thai but 12 students came from other countries, namely China (10), Finland (1)) and Japan (1). The Finnish student was the only exchange student. All Chinese students were in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program at one of the universities. The majority of students (68.3 per cent) started their programs in 2001 and nearly a quarter (21.7 per cent) of students started the program in 2002. Only five students (8.3 per cent) started the program in 2000. It can be said that over three-quarters of students have been experiencing their English-medium business graduate programs for more than one year at the time of surveys were conducted in 2002. Of these, 25 students volunteered and were interviewed individually and in two focus groups for their experience of studying English-medium business graduate programs in business studies.

As might be expected, given that these programs are open to full fee-paying students only, all student participants were from relatively affluent backgrounds. The majority were from Thai-Chinese families, which, for historical reasons, have tended to excel in Thailand’s business

sector and placed high value in modern education. For those not working full time, financial support for postgraduate study came mainly from family sources. Three-quarters of the students reported that their families were their sole source of support, while ten students (16.7 per cent) supported themselves. Another three relied on a combination of self and family support. Only one student received a scholarship from his employer. Close to two-thirds of students (65 per cent) had professional work experience in business organizations before starting this program. Twenty students (33.3 per cent) had no professional work experience before starting the program. At the time that this survey was conducted in 2002, over half of students (55 per cent) reported they were not working.

The majority of students had a monthly income of Baht 14,000 (USD390) and below (41.7 per cent) while 21.7 per cent had an income of Baht 15,000-19,000 and another 23.3 per cent had a monthly income of Baht 30,000 and above. Another four students had Baht 25,000-29,000 (6.7 per cent) and only three students earned Baht 20,000-24,000 (5 per cent) per month. By way of comparison, current labourers in Thailand earn between Baht 143-191 (USD3.86-5.16) as a minimum wage rate per day (Baht 4,290-5,730 per month) depending upon industry and location. Average earnings for government employees with postgraduate qualifications range from Baht 7,000-10,500 per month. Clearly, this was an elite sample of students reliant upon family wealth and private sector income to fund their studies. As such, their experiences more than any other section of Thai society reflect the impact of economic globalisation.

### *5.3 Valuing English*

The opportunity to study an English medium curriculum is one of the principal attractions of the programs studied in this thesis. However, the attachment of value to English-medium instruction by Thai and international students has several significant dimensions. This section will describe how students both recognize and articulate the worth of their graduate studies and also how they reflect upon their learning experiences in a Thai institutional context. Results from student questionnaire survey reflect general issues on international program experience of students as listed in appendix 2 and these concerns became more specific as students further commented on their experiences during individual and focus group interview sessions. The main part of research findings came from interview transcripts of students and was supported by data from student questionnaires.

According to quantitative data analysis as shown in appendix 2, the three most important factors in student decision to choose their programs were: recognition of qualification (mean = 4.42), standard of program (mean = 4.35) and university status (mean =4.17). This result revealed the importance of social recognition by a majority of students. They believed this recognition would be valuable in terms of future employment and social approval within the Thai community and in international students' home country. It was also interesting that students did not consider 'fee' or 'price' as an important factor (the fee issue was not even ranked in the top five issues of concern), but they rather focused on 'status'. Convenience issues including access to car parking facilities and short distance of the institution's location to their workplace and home, were of minor importance in program selection.

### *5.3.1 Status*

It is widely accepted that a higher education qualification is a marker of status difference in a Thai society. As in developed countries, higher education qualifications lead to higher earnings. Although higher income does not always necessarily indicate a higher education, education and income are related and they are important factors in determining social status in Thailand. It is obvious in Thailand that a majority of Thai-Chinese are wealthy, usually merchants who own businesses at home and abroad, and who place high value on education of their children. It is evident that the majority of Thai students from both target institutions come from Thai-Chinese family backgrounds.

Students have an instrumental approach towards their education for both current and future career development according to results. When asked to write their answers for the open question no.10 (see appendix 3) 'Why did you choose to study in an English language program rather than a Thai program?' (Option to respond in Thai for Thai students) and one of the interview questions asked was 'Do you think your international degree will help you to find a job more easily? Why?', they overwhelmingly considered the advantages of English-medium education and the status of the institution as significant factors for their vocational and social benefits. A female Thai student at Institution B confidently answered...

If you consider the issue of ... "Which university did you graduate from?" something like that, I believe it will help me to find a job easier. This is not based on my personal point of view, but I view it as other people do. I think people perceive it that way in Thai society...where did you graduate from?...is something that you will initially be asked (D26) (my translation)

A similar comment was made by another female Thai student from the same institution who acknowledged that there were many international degree programs offered by many universities, however she believed that her university's profile and the profile of her graduate program would be decisive factors in gaining future employment.(S25) A female Thai student at Institution B explained her reasons,

I did not make a decision to study here (Institution B) by myself, but my sister recommended it to me. I graduated in English major and I was recommended to further study in international program. Another reason is that...it is the image of this university,... (Institution B)'s name. At first, I did not know that this university has a campus here (business management campus). I thought it was the... (Institution B's name) university as I used to know it before. That time, I was confident that I won't be disappointed by... (Institution B's name) reputation. (D26) (my translation)

The above answers exemplified similar comments received from the majority of Thai students interviewed for this research. They believe that social recognition in terms of an institution's brand name and the fact of their having studied in an English language program will bring social and economic benefits to them in the form of career advancement. In other words, status is closely connected to the brand marker of 'international degree', which in the Thai context is synonymous with English-medium university education. Most Thais have a positive view of the word 'international' as it is associated with words such as 'modern,' 'advanced,' and 'elite.' In this regard, English-medium degree programs offered by Thai institutions are often advertised as 'international program', 'international degree' or 'international qualification,' particularly those offered in conjunction with foreign partners, to appeal to the aspirations of prospective postgraduate students.

The majority of Thai students enrolled in English-medium graduate programs at Institution A and B were from affluent Thai-Chinese family backgrounds and their families were in a position to pay for their high status qualifications. These families often invest in the future 'international education' for their children from a young age and consequently their children have traditionally completed undergraduate degrees overseas. There is however a gradual shift in attitudes towards overseas graduate studies. Typical was the comment of one Thai student at Institution B who stated,

Actually, the first thing is...this university (Institution B) is located near my house and another reason is that I had a bachelor degree in International Business from America. I wanted to continue using English language in the masters degree. The university reputation was also considered (P1) (my translation)

There is evidence of larger numbers of Thai students looking for English-medium education closer to home at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Marking a change in the pattern of consumption of international education services, Thais are looking for continuity in English-medium instruction within Thailand. Addressing reasons for their program choices, students from Institutions A and B explained,

Actually, it continued from my bachelor degree...I have already done English-medium BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) here (Institution A). It suited me, I am used to the environment... same groups of friends since my undergraduate degree. (W7) (my translation)

Because I have been studying here (Institution A) since my undergraduate degree and it is an English-medium program. So, I think I should continue studying the English-medium program. In the present, English language is so important in the working environment. If I can improve my English language, I will then have a more competitive advantage than the others when applying for a job and...(Institution A) has its reputation. (C17) (my translation)

Because I used to study the undergraduate degree here (Institution A), so I just continued my study here. ...(Institution A) is the first international school and if comparing the tuition fee with other English-medium university, ...(Institution A) is cheaper. (J23) (my translation)

Institutional or brand loyalty is another factor attracting enrolments and an issue of which foreign institutions seeking to break into the Thai education market must be cognizant. Students simply continue from undergraduate to postgraduate level in the same institution once their loyalty is secured. As a university manager at Institution A observed,

high numbers of student enrolment does not mean a good quality. The reason why there are many students enrolled in the program could be because they know the quality is ok...is good. But, the thing is...the past bachelor of business students came back to us because a lot of them used to be...(Institution A) students. They are loyal to their institution and other students (graduates from other universities) came here because of institution's quality...we are not making money here...not making money. (T15) (my translation)

Western degree qualifications (*pa-rin-ya-muang-nok*) have long been recognized in Thai society in terms of their modernity and higher quality. Western degree qualifications in particular disciplines such as science and technology are perceived as superior quality and are highly regarded among Thai students. However, English-masters graduate programs offer a useful alternative to students with basic degrees in other disciplines. A male Thai student at Institution B who previously had a bachelor degree in Computer Science but changed career direction to do an English-medium masters program in business management explained,

Because I graduated in Com Science (Computer Science) so I did not have any management knowledge at all...and another reason was...I think Thai businesses like...programming...I think it is not as good as overseas (Western countries). So, I changed to do management studies instead...(W2) (my translation)

The vocational importance of English-medium business education in Thailand cannot be overstated. Students surveyed and interviewed for this project believed that possessing such a credential at the postgraduate level gave them ‘*something*’ that most employers need and expect from university graduates. According to my observations on the current job market advertisements in Thailand, most employers asked for either a bachelor’s *or* master’s degree to be eligible to apply for the same position and offered nearly the same amount of salary regardless of qualification. The implication is that applicants with a masters qualifications and proven competence in English would enjoy a significant advantage over bachelor degree graduates in gaining employment although the advertisement might also reflect the variability in quality across the university sector. Employer requirements are however generating greater competition among students to secure the right education level and brand. A female Thai student at Institution B explained:

In my personal opinion, it seems like I am forced by social pressure. I mean, in a Thai society at the moment if you do not hold a master degree, you will not grow, you will not be promoted and eventually you will be pressured by your organization to leave. Currently, there are a lot of young Thai master degree holders who have no work experiences (S25) (my translation)

A female Thai student at Institution A made a similar comment in terms of the social and economic pressures to study purely for career advancement:

I think currently English language is very important for employment. So, I think if I can improve my English, I will have more competitive advantage than others when applying for jobs and...(Institution A) has already had a good reputation in the employment market (C17) (my translation)

A male Thai student at Institution B told of similar reasons for choosing the program:

First, it is about the program it (Institution B) is teaching...I mean...providing an English-medium business masters program. Another reason is about the reputation...the reputation of...(Institution B) (W2) (my translation)

From this Thai students’ point of view, graduating from a recognized brand name institution in the market will not only enhance a social status but also serve as an entry to exclusive social and professional networks based upon the Thai seniority principle of ‘*roon-pee, roon-nong*’. As one of male Thai student at Institution B stated,



One of reasons of doing this English-medium business masters program here (Institution B) is that...it is a kind of a reflection likes...it will reflect well on a professional aspect in Thailand. I think...it likes a seniority system...a sort of alumni. ok, if you are from this university, then you will be belonged to the (alumni) group in the same workplace. (W2) (my translation)

Overwhelmingly, non-working (full-time) students believed that the institution's status will enhance their employment prospects, but surprisingly students tended to be unsure of their vocational direction. When asked about benefits of subjects they were studying, 'do you think subjects are being taught to suit your needs and to benefit your future career?', a non-working male Thai student at Institution A answered,

I think if considering subject themselves...it should be useful somehow...actually, I'm not sure what sort of job I will be working in the future. But, I think subjects that will be practical and useful for my future career are foundation subjects such as marketing management or financial management. (W7) (my translation)

Another non-working Thai student gave a similar view...

Actually, I have not really looked at a program's brochures or found out about subject details, but I just followed and chose what other people were doing about MBA. I was not interested in what subjects they are teaching in the program.

My sister influenced me to do the same program (MBA) at...(Institution A) and she said it was good. She has had a good job so my family supported me to do the same thing. (C17) (my translation)

These responses suggest that even within highly instrumental or vocationally focussed degree programs, many students do not make choices based upon specific career objectives. Rather they are 'in the system' to obtain a credential that will help them find a career and secure professional advancement. Both working students and non-working students interviewed gave very little thought about a program orientation in their choice making stage. Most Thai students interviewed employed as professionals said that they had no idea about how to search for good international master programs but they knew programs through friends and family members who had previously done the same programs. In addition, they did not study institutions' program information such as institution's leaflets, brochures or online advertisements. They generally chose the programs because they had a 'well-known name' in the English-medium graduate program market as they trusted institutions with good reputations would give better quality education. In particular, employers have already known them in the market.

Students expressed their intention to work for an international firm after graduation and they had strong expectations that their international degrees will be recognized in the current job market. These aspirations and expectations were similar for Thai and international students. According to Chinese students, companies in China prefer to employ graduates with overseas study experience who can communicate in English. Employer recognition thus appears to be a major factor in shaping student decisions about which graduate degree program they should choose. As expected, since many current employers in Thailand increasingly require a masters degree from a recognized institution, an institution's brand name has an influence over student program selections. Institutions are seeking to brand themselves as high status or elite in a society where status is a 'tradeable commodity'. Accessing a recognized brand name institution with high status in the education market place is becoming easier than ever. Many of Thailand's specialised universities established since the 1930s as training institutions for professions in particular areas have recently started to offer English-medium business and management postgraduate programs. With the intensified competition, programs offered by Thai institutions are not as unique as they used to be in the past because every institution is now offering postgraduate programs in English. Indeed, graduate business programs are proliferating but at the same time the graduate education market is dominated by roughly similar degrees promising international careers.

Most students did not have critical views regarding the chosen programs when asked to explain in detail 'how?' They naively expected to gain more international knowledge, English communication skills and international environment benefits within the institution. In addition, they expected to make connections in terms of employment benefits with both student colleagues and teaching staff for their current and/or future career development. Brand image, status and opportunities to make useful connections exercise significant influence for postgraduate program selection. Similar factors undoubtedly influence student choices outside Thailand. It is evident that for masters programs seeking elite status, the use of English as the medium of instruction is essential. Indeed, English-medium education and 'international' are synonymous. However, elite status does not appear to be dependent upon entry standards based upon levels of academic achievement.

### **5.3.2 Access**

The quantitative data results regarding factor of the 'ease of entry to university' did not seem to be an issue in terms of program choice of students (mean = 3.37) as shown in the survey

result (see appendix 2). However, qualitative data indicated that access was a significant factor influencing student choice. Institutions are lowering the entry standards for applicants in terms of English language requirements and academic records. Many students viewed lowering English language requirements of institutions as an attractive condition to enter the ‘international degree program’ in Thailand. A male Thai student at Institution B admitted that he chose to do the English-medium business masters program at Institution B because of this lower English score as he explained,

The first thing is the requirement of TOEFL score here (Institution B) is not that high comparing to a similar program at other institutions such as Sasin of Chulalongkorn University. (W2) (my translation)

Thai universities who are offering international masters programs try to lower standards of English language requirements such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or TOEFL (Testing of English as a Foreign Language). Majority of them accept a minimum score of IELTS (as low as 5.00, which is the minimum score for entering to a Vocational Education and Training level in Australia) for entering into international master programs. The IELTS requires a student to be tested on four parts of English skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing while a Thai university’s test requires only writing and speaking skills. Hence, Thai university entrance English testing is much less rigorous than the established international benchmarks. However, they offer programs designed to improve students’ English proficiency including Intensive English Program. Also, there is now much greater opportunity to study English for university entry in Thailand. The ‘ease of entry’ (or lower standards for acceptance) depends also on market factors such as demand and cost.

Entry standards are set to ensure enough students can enrol to make a program viable. A university also made its own judgment on a standard of English language requirement. Both Thai and non-Thai students who were accepted into the English-medium business and management masters programs told of different experiences regarding the institution’s criteria on English language requirements. A female Thai student at Institution B explained her experience,

I only had a written exam. The procedure of English language testing as a part of entry requirements here (Institution B) was that a student will have to pass both written and oral exam. I only passed the written exam, but I was told that I had an exemption for the oral exam. I actually didn’t understand why they (Institution B) made the exemption without testing me. (S25) (my translation)

She further made comments on the standards of English language requirements of international programs in Thailand that,

I can say that every international school in Thailand...I mean universities...doesn't really have the...what do they say?...a world established English standards. It is a sort of umm...just come in and you can learn (English) later like those intensive English course of other universities.

I am not sure how do these universities recruit students...how do they screen? What sort of criteria they have? It is quite different standard at each university. (my translation)

Another female Thai student from Institution B complained about the entry standards, based on her experience and what she heard from other friends,

I think what happened when they (Institution B) screened the applicant from the beginning. Though it was true, there were written exams, listening and writing an essay, but...any one could do it...This was not only my opinion, but other students' opinions too. (D26) (my translation)

International students are likely to consider the ease of entry into international masters programs in Thailand in terms of English language requirements as a better option than choosing a Western university. A male Chinese student explained that:

At first, I think it easy to come to Thailand because we don't now need TOEFL score, IELTS score or GMAT or something else...we had an oral exam with the Dean but when we passed that one we can come to study in ... (Institution A)...(L6)

Intuitively, we would think that elite or high demand programs would be much harder to get into and that institutions in a status-conscious society would value exclusiveness. Students are well aware of attaining a higher level of academic achievement is required if they want to study in elite institutions in Thailand but with regard to English proficiency, standards appear to be weakening. In addition, Western academic partner institutions are increasingly willing to compromise on fees and entry requirements. In the same way, they choose to cooperate with well-known Thai institutions in the market to save their advertising costs. Thus, Thai institutions use the same marketing strategy to approach their Western academic partner institutions to build/maintain their status in the market too.

### ***5.3.3 Use of English***

There are questions however to do with the type of English language environment cultivated in Thai institutions. If we understand curriculum in the broadest sense to mean the whole environment for learning and not just what occurs in the classroom then English-medium degrees in Thailand can never hope to duplicate, in terms of language engagement, the

curriculum environment available in native English-speaking countries. However, even in-class usage varies from institution to institution and from class to class. As advertising indicates that English will be used as a sole medium of instruction in international masters programs, most students expected staff to make extensive use of English and assumed that this would help them to enhance their English skills to improve their career prospects. One Thai student at Institution A told of his experiences in trying to use English at his institution stating that,

Using English? Right...using English only within the institution is about umm...30 per cent...or even less. It was mainly used to communicate with teaching staff, international friends and in the exams. (W7) (my translation)

The above comment implies that the level of English-medium instruction varies. Also, university environments do not seem to encourage the development of English language skills outside the classroom as the majority of students speak Thai to each other and international students use their own languages. Thai students are a majority group in a university and Thai language is the main language spoken outside the classroom. In this aspect, Chinese students did not think that they could improve their English skills much apart from an opportunity to use English to communicate with lecturers, international friends and exam papers. They agreed that an institution's environment did not encourage them enough to use English. A female Chinese student described her experiences,

About English, just I go home...may be I talk with my friends, but in here (Institution A), most of times I think I speak Chinese more much. Sometimes I speak Chinese, but for English may be use in the class but after class...just speak Mandarin. (W8)

Interactions between Thai and international students from Europe or Asia can present opportunities to communicate in English. However, Chinese students reported that Thai students prefer not to mix with them and that Chinese students were discouraged by negative experiences in trying to make a social connection outside the classroom. Chinese and Thai students normally have their own groups for academic discussion and social discussion. The above Chinese student and her Chinese friends perceived this situation as a culture of the Institution A. As she explained:

I think it's...(Institution A) culture. If you are Chinese, have to be with Chinese group. If you are Thai, have to be with Thai group. You cannot see the...most of groups just Chinese group or Thai group may be Cambodian group. If you are different nationality, you should be separate. You cannot...(trails off). (W8)

By and large, the medium of instruction in international programs is English, however university strategic plans acknowledge the growing importance of other world languages. The awareness of the importance of other world languages is new in Thailand as a Chinese senior academic manager at the Institution A suggests,

I have an idea to have a French, Business French or Business Chinese as one of the courses like this...because we have some French teachers who like to teach French and French is also very interesting. (T4)

While the institution has a plan to promote other languages, the senior academic manager also admitted that his current MBA program is having difficulties regarding English competence between teaching staff and students. He explains:

Yes, we sometimes...we do have complaints from my students saying that... English is not so good of certain staff. I am not sure we have got this confidence back from our students but, when I read the...the Evaluation Form, yeah there are certain but not many, a few, a few...the comments were concentrated on few teachers. Actually, they complained about Thai staff. Sometimes, they complained about Indian staff. They said their English are very strong accent. (T4)

The standard of English proficiency among students varies across Thai universities. As one native English speaker who lectures at Institution B stated,

I think that one of the real problems in Thailand is that people are still often allowed to enter or enrol in English language programs without sufficient English language skills. And I think that not enough programs offer continuing English language support, particularly postgraduate programs. (B3)

There were ongoing perceptions of variable standards between single and double degree program in terms of different entry criteria of students at Institution B. I was told by administrative staff and students themselves that there were different standards between single program operating by local Institution and a double degree program operating in conjunction with Australian institution. Students who were studying the double degree program had a higher standard of English and a higher level of academic achievement than students who were doing single programs. One double degree program coordinator explained:

I think standard between our local English-medium graduate programs should be different from double degree programs because Australian institution will have its own standard. If we join with them...for example, the double degree program I am looking after at the moment... the program has quality leaning towards... (Australian institution) as the Australian institution think their standards are higher than us. This could be because of English language competency but our double degree program has quality leaning towards theirs partially. (K19) (my translation)

Low English entry requirements have implications for student learning at the graduate level, discipline specific language is much more sophisticated. Graduate entrants with IELTS below 6 are generally found to be struggling as the same program coordinator explained:

Students have had problems when teaching staff is trying to convey ideas but students are not able to take 100 percents out of that due to English language barrier. But English language is not always the issue because sometimes the problems come from ineffective communications of teaching staff such as lacking of clear explanations in class teaching (K19) (my translation)

In addition, Thai students sometimes have good knowledge and good understanding of what subjects they are learning but when the medium of teaching is another language such as English, this sometimes can be a main barrier of their learning in a class where it needs to be interactive communication. The same program coordinator also accepted that Thai students do not understand the subject matter covered in English as well as they do in their own language. As she commented,

Thai students cannot understand 100 per cent of the English when teaching staff communicate with them in a class...so this is a barrier in a class participation. They might have good ideas but they cannot transform their ideas by using English to express... (K19) (my translation)

#### **5.3.4 Price**

The decision of Thai students to study at a home institution as opposed to a prestigious institution overseas is not as straightforward as was originally thought at the inception of this research project. Cost is an important factor in shaping Thai student selection of a graduate program, although this is a much more significant consideration for international students at Thai universities as international students are generally pay higher fees. International students were found to have more thoroughly considered the 'price' issue compared to Thai students even though graduate tuition fees are low by international standards. As one European student explained,

I take (program information) from Kasetsart, Bangkok university and from here (Institution A) and Sasin, but Sasin was too expensive for me and Kasetsart was about 100,000 (Baht) more expensive than this... (Institution A).

He told how much he will have to pay for an MBA program at institution A,

I think totally cost something like 300,000 (Baht)

A similar comment was made by a male Chinese student at the same institution,

compared with the other countries such as America, New Zealand, the student's fee here (Institution A) is cheaper than...(Western English-speaking countries)...staying in Bangkok is cheaper than the other countries (L6)

The Thai and non-Thai students commented that it is understandable that the quality of international master programs in Thailand is uneven. When questioned, they were able to discriminate between quality and price of the program among different institutions. Although their institutions' reputation was not ranked highly by students, they agreed that both institutions had the 'prestigious' image and offered masters degrees based on Western curricula that most students desired to have on their transcripts. These perceptions were considered as sufficient differentiation to provide a worthwhile international education experience and identifiable credential to attract students to invest.

Fees had a significant influence on students' choices of where to study, especially in the case of international students. Non-Thai students were not only concerned with the fees but also with the cost of living overseas. They were aware that they could obtain a better quality education in Western countries but due to the high cost of living in the West, they chose to obtain the international degree from a neighbouring country. A Chinese student gave his reason for his choice that,

I'm satisfied with the program fee but not the program quality. This tuition fee is low compared to other countries. I don't have enough money to study in America. (N 10)

Another Chinese student also further commented that:

compared with the other countries such as America, New Zealand, the student's fee is cheaper ...staying in Bangkok is cheaper than the other countries. (L6)

According to the above comment, the student was looking for another option to obtain the international degree with low cost. This is indicative of an international trend towards lower cost higher education offered in major student markets.

Results showed that Thai students did not consider 'fee' as an important factor for their program choice as they ranked the factor on 'comparatively cheap fee to study' (mean = 3.4) in the middle among other deciding factors for the program (see appendix 2). Survey respondents were comparatively young, more than half (55 per cent) are under 25 years old, and three quarters of them reported that their families were their sole financial support. This revealed that Thai families invest in their children's education. However, Thai and non-Thai



students gave different views in interview sessions. Students are becoming much more concerned about value for money and program quality when they decide where and which institution to invest in a Masters qualification. They want to be assured about the high quality of the program they have paid for.

Price sensitivity is increasingly shaping Thai student choices and this might well be a consequence of the 1997 financial crisis and the generally lower value of the Thai baht. Many Thai students chose to do English-medium business masters degree program in Thailand as a substitution for masters qualification from native English-speaking countries, due to the difference in fees. One Thai female student who originally wanted to do a masters degree in international marketing in the UK changed her mind and chose the cheaper program available in Bangkok. She explained:

I have been thinking to go overseas...yes, England. Then, when I was considering the exchange rate in the long term, I changed my mind. I'd better play safe...better to study here (Thailand). (S25) (my translation)

In addition to the lower fees, Thai students decided that it was much cheaper to stay in Thailand than pay for high cost of living in Australia. Also, in Thailand they could continue working while studying.

Access to English-medium graduate programs is partly determined by ability to pay and as might be expected it has become a niche market. Both Institution A and B are the most popular ones in the current Thai market for business studies such as business management, marketing and business administration at a masters degree level and they charge relatively high fees. However, all students were quite clear about the amount of money they have paid for their fees compared to a quality level they will obtain from the program. Students commented generally that Institution B is lower standard than Institution A (most students at Institution B had prior experiences studying at Institution A at undergraduate level). All students understand that both Institution A and B are ranking in the middle while Sasin (Chulalongkorn University) & Thammasat University are at the top. Those top ranks require higher standard of entry requirements, such as English score, greater work experience, GMAT and higher profile of student applicants. However, they were satisfied with the program quality in general although they suggested possible improvements.

### ***5.3.5 International Student Mobility***

International students in international master programs in Thailand mainly come from Thailand's own neighbouring countries, such as China, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Burma, Cambodia and Laos, but there are also a few of students from Western countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and Scandinavian countries. Though the proportion of international students in international master programs in Thailand is still small, this trend of student mobility between Asian countries is increasing and it is likely to be a new trend in internationalisation of higher education in Thailand.

As discussed in chapter two, Asian students have been very mobile, as they still like to travel away from home to advance their qualification in Western countries particularly, where English is the medium of instruction. In addition, students are also looking for overseas work and life experiences which are increasingly recognized for their career advancement. Having cross-cultural knowledge is particularly important and advantageous when working for multinational companies and this type of organisation was expected to be the destination of students in these English-medium business masters programs. However, the current trend shows that Asian students now tend not to choose to travel because there are new forms of international higher education being offered in their home countries and their neighbouring countries in the region, with more affordable fees, compared to studying in those English-speaking countries. Consequently, the principal destinations, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, are not their first choices. Undoubtedly, higher education institutions in Thailand have these new forms of internationalisation of higher education to offer either to their Thai students or to international students.

Both, Institution A and Institution B, have long-established national reputations. Institution A, in particular, has enjoyed high status in business education for decades and has a long standing reputation of using English as the sole medium of instruction. Its brand name is also recognized among international students from Thailand's neighbouring countries too such as China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma and India. A female Chinese student who completed an international bachelor degree in business from one of Thai universities in Bangkok stressed the importance of 'brand name' when choosing her degree program. She explained,

...why I chose...(Institution A)?. I think...(Institution A) is ok. Just compare with another university, ...(Institution A) brand name is ok..Yes, even expensive for me, but I also tried in here (Institution A). I think...(Institution A) not best one in Thailand... but I think...(Institution A) best for me. (W8)

This student also had family-business working experiences in China before commencing this MBA program. When she was asked about the usefulness of subjects, she has learned in relation to her future career she said:

But, for this question, I think in...(Institution A) some courses I just studied, but not...but I think not really useful for me. Just for study...just collection credits for me (laughed). I want to finish masters degree. But, so... actually if you really want to do the business, I think not too much...not too much useful. (W8)

This emphasis upon brand was reiterated by one European student at Institution A who had prior experience as an exchange student in an international bachelor degree from one of well-known Bangkok private universities. This student who was studying an English-medium business masters degree to gain employment in Thailand also made an explicit connection between brand and employability.

I think... (Institution A) has a good reputation in Thailand. So, in here (Institution A), may be easy to find a job, if you are from...(Institution A). (R2) (my translation)

However, it was observed that there was a different attitude between European and Asian students towards the value of a masters qualification and also the importance of institutional status. Asian students place higher value on a masters degree than European students. In addition, institutional prestige also was not an issue among European students compared to Asian students. The above student gave his view in this regard.

But, you know, if I work in my Scandinavian country, my bachelor is already enough. I don't necessary need a masters degree. Most of Asian universities are not known in Europe. (R2) (my translation)

It is interesting that Thailand is an attractive country among Chinese students wishing to study international business management. Institution A is obviously popular among Chinese and Indian students with the reasons of an ease of entry requirement and 'good name' and obviously Thailand is close to their home countries. A male Chinese student at Institution A explained why he chose Thailand to do the English-medium MBA program...

...first is money, it's very cheap and another one is...it's very near China because I need to go back to China to meet my family...my parents. (N10)

In addition to the expected international master degree they will obtain from a Thai university, some common issues caused these Asian students to choose Thailand as their preference because of the country's friendliness, the ease of entering into the country and proximity to their home country as well. They expected to learn more about Thai culture and people and

even Thai language. However, in reality, Chinese students found that it was difficult for them to mix with Thai students as they did not feel welcomed enough to join them, especially for Thai students' social activities such as shopping, seeing movies, dining in a restaurants.

International students' country of origin in both case studies was mainly Southeast Asian countries. The country of origin of students who participated in the interview session at Institution B was in all cases Thailand. At the time of conducting interviews, there was only one international student (Japanese) enrolled in the double degree program class, but he did not volunteer to participate in the interview session after completing the student questionnaire. There were only nine international students in total at Institution B at that time. International student participants at Institution A were from Asia and Scandinavia.

Asian students have been increasingly looking for an alternative in obtaining an international degree at low cost and close to their home countries. Apart from the cost, the other barrier for obtaining a degree from a Western university is their proficiency in English. One student further described:

At first, I wanted to go to Australia or some Western countries...but, I have to pass IELTS and a friend of my mum ah...her son studied at... (Institution A), she said it's a good university and that's why I came here...I got IELTS score at 5.0. Actually, we must get 6 if we want to go to Australia...I want to try one more time but, time is limited and money as well. (L6)

Apart from factors mentioned above, Chinese students who gave interviews at Institution A added that it is much easier and cheaper to study a Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Thailand where English language is used as the sole medium of instruction than at universities in China. Universities in China, they believed, offer much tougher entrance exams and the fees are higher too. In addition, Thailand is close to their home country and offers lower cost of living when compared to studying in Western countries.

## ***5.4 Cultural Barriers***

### ***5.4.1 Teaching Styles***

English medium education raises a number of important teaching and learning issues ranging from the use of English as the medium of instruction to teaching and learning styles. There is a common assumption that students can learn a lot from books but then they learned how to learn. The nature of subject contents is also an issue. For example, students are expected to memorize the formulas and found them difficult to remember. However if they were taught

properly they should be able to remember formula in the right way. There is a common assumption that if students did not learn anything then they were not taught properly. There was an evidence regarding student's perception of good teaching from Institution A as a male student explained:

I think I learn a lot of things. Since before I don't know accounting and after that I know what it is and the...know some a lot of knowledge from the teacher. The teacher is good. The subject content is same, but teacher is good. Yes, we can learn something. Teacher is strict. (L6)

The above comment from a Chinese student implied a culturally specific perception. Strictness is not however associated with good teaching in some English-speaking countries such as Australia.

Many students complained about the way the teaching staff presented subjects. Teaching styles of both Thai and non-Thai lecturers failed to present or deliver the usefulness of subjects. Students believed that they could not learn much from the subject due to the teaching styles of some lecturers. This complaint was frequently raised by more Chinese students. Complaints focused on the style of teaching of the teaching staff rather than the subject content. A male Chinese student at Institution A commented:

...some knowledge from books may be later I will forget. But, I learn some study skills from that such as we have a lot of presentation and the project...we can learn how to communicate with others and the ...how to do a project, how to find information and something....and if I do a job in the future, I think that will benefit from that.

Yes, yes some knowledge...some formula, a lot of formula may be I cannot remember, yes....some teachers may be they're busy and their teaching styles we cannot...(trails off)... (L6)

The same student then went on:

...because one subject sometimes they have two teachers and the students said which one is better and the other one may be not better...(L6)

When he was asked if he would prefer to study with Thai or non-Thai students, he answered:

I will choose non-Thai may be...(L6)

The right teaching styles can make the subject interesting and change the attitude of students towards subjects, such as accounting and finance. A European student explained his experiences in Managerial Accounting and Introduction to Accounting subjects,

...before I hate accounting, I didn't want to know anything about it, but now I feel that...(showing his positive feeling) I learn a lot.

I think teacher gets me interested and I get interested about Finance...(R9)

When he was asked to clarify did he like particularly the *content of the subject* or *teaching style of the lecturer?*, he answered:

I think it's more about teaching style...I like umm...yeah about person and I like native speaker of English. It's easy for me to understand. Sometimes, I've got troubles with some...Thai teacher because...strong Thai accent. (R9)

A similar comment was made by another Chinese student who originally wanted to specialise in Marketing, but the teaching style made him decide to alter his career direction. As he explained,

...before I came here, I was a salesman and I have a great interest in marketing field. So, I came here and study MBA. The very funny thing is...after I study accounting in MBA program, I want to change my mind... because of the teaching style of the teacher, I feel accounting...accounting is very interesting. May be when I go back China, I will try to find a job about accounting. (N10)

As far as most students were concerned, they were well aware of the amount of knowledge each teaching staff had in their field of specialisation, but their teaching style was a separate issue that they were trying to explain to me. It was however observed that students tended to judge those teaching style according to who they liked and who they disliked rather than the subject contents. In particular, students were likely to criticise more a subject taught by more than one teaching staff, especially, when the issue of preferred nationalities was involved. When students were asked about the knowledge gained from the program, they gave different points of views. One Thai student, who has been studying at Institution A since the undergraduate level of Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), compared her studying experiences between the BBA and the current MBA in the following way:

I can tell you that the course from MBA and Bachelor degree (BBA) are all the same. So, I just review my Bachelor degree knowledge. Just like...the only thing I got from this (MBA), it just like I have ability to analyse...I mean to see the weakness the strength from the case we study and discuss in the classroom. I mean in bachelor degree we just only learn theory and MBA we use theory to apply. (R18) (my translation)

A female Chinese student made a similar issue concerning the knowledge gained from the program that:

...if we go outside, we are looking for the job...we cannot do the job. I think in...(Institution A), masters programs have one big problem, now lecture cannot use in the real life business world. You know...I have some friends already graduated

from...(Institution A) and they looking for the job and I ask...how much you learning from...(Institution A)?...how much you use in your real world?...something learning you know umm...how to say just you learning with concept in the class, but you never use in the real world.

Sometimes may be...I cannot say clear, but may be my friend just told me may be you study in...(Institution A), you study 20per cent, ok you study 100per cent, but when you go outside working if you use 20 per cent, you really lucky (laughed) (W8)

#### ***5.4.2 Staff-Student Classroom Interactions***

Students' responses from both institutions, Institution A and Institution B, revealed two potential problems: the English language barrier and learning behaviours which caused low classroom interactions. It was observed that the teaching staff regardless of nationalities made an effort to gain students' views and encourage discussions and to make the class more interactive and enjoyable. Thai students at Institution B were more comfortable when they interacted and communicated with Thai teaching staff. It was also Thai students' preferred choice to approach Thai staff in cases where both Thai and non-Thai staff taught the same subject, especially when students needed further help with the subject outside the teaching period. One of male Thai students at Institutions B explained the difference between Thai and non-Thai teaching staff:

It was very different. Thai teaching staff helped explaining to students more. I mean the style...when students had some questions, students could directly ask, but we could not ask this non-Thai teaching staff (native English speaker) because he spoke very very quick and I could not really understand him. When I wanted to ask, I did not know how...because I could not understand what he explained before. (W2) (my translation)

The above comment is evidence of weak English language skills of some Thai students. Thai students with weak English language skills preferred to approach Thai teaching staff both inside and outside classrooms.

Classroom interactions between Thai and foreign students also were limited by language barriers. Students' lack of sufficient ability to communicate in English was also a barrier to the interaction between students and teaching staff. Students mixed together with their own nationalities at Institution A as they found it was easier to communicate in their own language. One male Chinese student explained...

Sometimes when we communicate with the Thai students, we have to repeat something. It's because actually our English is not very good and something we have to repeat and they (Thai students) can't understand at all.

The same student further explained how the problem was usually solved,

Because I'm Chinese, in Chinese...it's easy to communicate (laughed). Actually, umm...when we discuss something, if the group has Thai students, Chinese students discuss first and Thai students discuss then...at last we use English to communicate with each other. (L6)

At Institution B, in situations where most classes were comprised of all Thai students taught by Thai staff, it was a common event for Thai lecturers to translate English to Thai to help the students understand the content. Thai students at Institution B told that they generally talked in Thai at all times with each other both inside and outside classrooms, except in few cases when Thai language was banned inside the classroom. A female Thai student explained:

We all are talking in Thai, but speaking English only when we answer the teacher. Except some subjects teachers did not allow us to talk in Thai in a class, but we did not really listen to them...it's the nature...

Though a Thai teaching staff is teaching in English inside a classroom, but some times when students asked some questions and they (Thai teaching staff) could not really make us (students) understand after many tries then, they changed their mind to explain to students in Thai instead of English. Also, Thai teaching staff will speak Thai with us outside the class.

The teacher had to trade off whether they want to focus on making students to understand what they have taught *or* trying to be strict about speaking English (laughed)... (P11) (my translation)

A well experienced Thai lecturer at Institution A gave his views in regard to cross-cultural teaching and learning styles,

Let's put it this way...each culture is different. If you see how students in Philippines study, they have been trained to be naturally responsive. When the teacher asks...they respond and it is interactive. In America...students are taught to be naturally responsive. Their children have been oriented that way...to be responsive and independent.

In Thailand in the past, we have not been trained this way so...students have to respect seniority. (T15) (my translation)

Asian students, Chinese and Thai, stereotyped themselves in terms of their learning behaviours explaining that a lack of or low classroom interactions were a normal behaviour of their cultures and they did not view it as a problem. A male Chinese student at Institution A gave his comments on classroom interactions,

Yes, they (teaching staff) try to ask some questions to students, but the reaction is not...not good. Students (Asian) they don't like to answer the questions (laughed)..., but some people they like to answer the questions such as America, French...they like to answer the questions. Sit down and listen.



It's ok because I think the characteristic of the Eastern people they don't like to...It's not like Western people they always want to...try to talk or something (L6)

The same student was asked, whether the teaching staff normally encourages students to speak. His answer was...

No! That's it. If there's not reaction, teachers just go ahead. (L6)

A similar comment was made by a female Thai student at the same institution.

Yes, even though Thai people are shy, but I think most of us (Thai students) would like to participate, but they feel shy to share their opinions. I think the reason is...come from our culture.

Thai students you know...(laughed) would like to sit and listen. Some teachers didn't do anything to encourage students to participate. They just teach, teach, teach. That's their duty or their job, that's it. (R18) (my translation)

Thai student would often nod their heads or kept quiet when they were asked questions, whether they understood the content or not. This reaction happened even when they did not understand any thing in the class. A Thai female student at Institution B told that,

The lecturer will always ask at all times...both Thai and non-Thai. It seemed like they were trying to ask "Do you understand what I mean?" something like that or "You get it?"

She further explained Thai students' reactions that,

We (Thai students) were sort of...understand or don't understand...we then quickly nodded to mean yes, yes, yes...and then, smiled (laughed)

Because I'm Thai so, I totally understood this reaction. Some native English-speaking teaching staff used to tease us that '*...teaching in Thailand makes my life so easy*' because he felt that he was not being challenged enough by students. (S25) (my translation)

Thai students preferred not to talk in English in the classroom except when they needed to communicate with the teaching staff. This behaviour also happened while the teaching staff was conducting the lecture. Interestingly, international students tend to ignore this behaviour as a European student who had experiences studying in an English-medium business degree program since his undergraduate studies at another Thai university commented,

I think...the first thing when I come to Thailand I was shocked that everybody speak bla...bla...bla...in the class. Students speak Thai in the class when teacher is teaching...I get used to it. (R9)

A lack of interaction between Thai and international students was also observed in group work. Students were grouping with their own nationality unless they were specifically asked

to mix nationalities in a group discussion. One of the Chinese male students explained the atmosphere when asked about the teaching and learning environment in the classroom that,

It's just o.k. because the students just...with Thai students...(laughed)...it likes Chinese with Chinese, Thai students with Thai students...

Yeah in the class, they don't speak English at all! Just when the teacher may ask some questions, they answer the question in English.

It's a big problem, I think. Yeah, you can see...everyone just speak Thai. It's also a big problem for us (Chinese students) to join the Thai group. (N10)

The same student confessed that this situation indirectly forced him to communicate with his Chinese friends in Chinese language as he further explained,

Yeah, I have to...I have to. I don't have choice, you know. Because if I speak English, they will feel not comfortable.

Some teachers like...you know...Dr...(a Thai teaching staff), she teaches foundation of English. She asked us to separate into groups. There should be one Chinese, one Thai or one Thai with other nationalities students, it doesn't matter, it's very good, but other teacher they don't ask. (N10)

A Thai male student who has been studying business administration at Institution A since his undergraduate degree viewed Thai students' lack of class participation as a traditional education style of Thai students, including himself. He told his views,

I think there is not much of a class participation of students. I think it's a traditional learning style of Thai student since primary, secondary...sitting down in a class quietly and giving no comments. (W7) (my translation)

A similar comment on a generalisation of Thai student learning behaviours was made by a Thai female student at Institution B. She explained,

Every teaching staff here (Institution B) always tells...O.K., participation is open! Something like that. It means everyone allows to friendly participate, but...you know...Thai people don't participate. It happened in some classes that a teaching staff had to point and called the name of some students to ask the question. There was no need to volunteer... (S25) (my translation)

Combining working and non-working students in the same class were observed to be less effective in terms of student learning outcomes during a class discussion and it was not also a student preference. A Thai female student at Institution B gave her view regarding class participation when mixing non-working students with working students in the same class. Non-working students were generally full-time students and recent graduates from

undergraduate programs without professional work experiences, and hence there was a gulf between them and more mature and experienced students. She explained,

I don't like when the class had majority of newly graduate students (from undergraduate degrees) mixed with us (herself and other working students) because we were mostly ending up being major contributors during a brain storming in the class rather than achieving some knowledge from the class. (C12) (my translation)

### **5.4.3 Social Networking**

Students recognized the importance of interpersonal skills and social networks and they view their international program as an opportunity to expand their social capital. Students' expectations about building intercultural and social networks with other students were quite high before entering in a program. They planned to improve their cross-cultural understanding and made social networks with other students. This was one of the main factors which influenced them to choose their program. The majority of students in international masters programs are Thai with a very small portion of international students mainly from Asian countries. The environment of institutions, basically, was dominated by Asian cultures, of which Thai was the dominant one and the rest were Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, Burmese, Cambodian, European and American.

However, it was also evident that Thai students were not made aware of, or were unable to recognise, the learning opportunities presented by their proximity to international students both inside the classroom and in the wider university community. According to the questionnaire survey, Thai students did not consider 'Having social cultural activities' (mean = 3.10) as an important aspect of international business education. Furthermore, they ranked it quite low as the second last (see appendix 2). It ranked even lower than 'Good car parking facilities' (mean = 3.35).

Social and cultural skills should be practised along the way through their academic practice especially when students were engaging in the international program environment. These skills will enhance students' social networks and English communication apart from their academic achievement. However, the institutional environment did not seem to encourage students appropriately to participate in this kind of activities. In the interview sessions, students stated that they were not well aware of information related to international and social activities and they considered the Graduate Office or student administrative office

uninformative. Some students directly expressed their lack of interest in social activities, as a male Scandinavian student at Institution A stated,

No, I don't know. I am not so interested in activities. I just want to come here (Institution A) and study and go back home and do whatever I do. (R9)

A male Chinese student at the same institution was asked whether cross-cultural activities should be included as part of international programs. His comment was...

Umm...it's not important I think. (L6)

Student respondents did not value social activities and networking. Obviously, students did not see how social activities could contribute to the achievement of their vocational goals. This result was contrary to students' expectation of the program as students were generally aware that building networks is essential for their current and future career development. Students expected to have opportunities to meet international students and their Thai colleagues who might have different backgrounds and expected to learn different cultures and to improve English communication as a supplementary benefit from the international program.

Students recognized the importance of interpersonal skills and social networks in theory and viewed their international program as an opportunity to expand their social capital. Student expectation on building intercultural and social networks with other students was quite positive before entering the graduate program. Because the majority of students in these programs are Thai with still a very small portion of international students mainly from Asian countries, 'international' masters programs however replicate an Asian and largely local cultural environment.

#### ***5.4.4 Student Work Presentation and Assessment***

All students were quite interested in guides for exam papers and their marks tended to be the most important topic of discussion. However, it was obvious that all non-Thai student interviewees were surprised at how easy it was to achieve a good grade in some subjects at Institution A. To be specific, they thought it was suspicious. A female student told of her experience when she made a group report. That,

Sometimes, I just feel I do this assignment was wasting my time (laughed). In...(subject name) we did report, big report, but actually we just copy from a book. We don't need to

do any research...just about our group choose one topic and we go to library and find one book and just copy...copy from the book.

Yes, and go to internet and download some articles and make our report, not really useful...just finish this report. The report is not useful for me.

Umm...may be I think teacher know our report just copy from...any book from the library...I think he doesn't care, just listen...listen is ok. I think our teacher just pay more attention on reports is beautiful or not. (W8)

A similar comment was made by a male Chinese student,

Some exam is extremely easy umm...allow people got A-plus like that. Like 50 per cent of students almost get A-plus like that. May be just one student got C. (N10)

Another male Chinese student gave his views about the exam,

Yes, if you know nothing, you can still do the exam (laughed) (L6)

A male Scandinavian made his comments about a report presentation style and how the teaching staff judged it,

I think some reports in here (Institution A) is more important to make it look good instead of what really inside of it. Yes, it has to look nice, it has to look big. Just put big font or something (laughed)...teachers don't really look at it. In here (Institution A), I feel it's more important if it looks good on the outside.

I get used to what it like in Europe...in my university, really difficult to get A. In here (Institution A) is more easier to get good grade. I feel that easier. (R9)

Interestingly, even though library facilities are rated as quality indicators in many international quality rankings, students did not attach much importance to libraries as sources of information. One would expect students of postgraduate levels to engage in independent learning outside the classrooms in their own time and the library is an important facility for students' independent learning. However, students at both institutions said they were not interested in accessing texts from a library and they hardly used libraries as most of the students relied on accessing information and materials for their assignments from the Internet.

A male Scandinavian student at Institution A told...

Well, I don't use a library to search anything for the class. I usually go for something...something extra knowledge that I don't need for the course. (R9)

A similar comment came from a male Thai student who has been continuing his studies of Business Administration at Institution A,

If I compare my use of library resources now to the undergraduate level, I would say that I accessed the library more often during my undergraduate studies than MBA. (W7)

A female Thai student who has continued her studies since the undergraduate program at the same institution agreed:

Same as him because Bachelor Degree has more report to do, but now MBA...I can find any information from the internet so it no need to go to library. (J17) (my translation)

### ***5.5 The Challenges of Internationalisation***

As the preceding discussion of student experiences and opinions indicates, planning and delivery for international programs is a complex process with an array of interrelated factors that educators must address if programs are to be effectively managed. This section aims to reflect an understanding of how different levels of staff within the institution view their operations within the institutions. There were 10 staff in total from both institutions who were interviewed. It is an insight from strategic level to operation level in terms of plan, policy, teaching and learning and administration in conducting and engaging in international degree program within a Thai context. Interview transcripts of the course-coordinator, senior academic manager, Thai and non-Thai teaching staff, administrator and librarian were analysed and categorized in key thematic headings and discussed in this section.

#### ***5.5.1 International Strategies***

Internationalisation in practice also involves the development of strategic plans and the conscious pursuit of strategic objectives. It is apparent that economic factors, both domestic and international, are the main driving force to internationalise postgraduate programs in Thailand and business studies as reviewed in chapter two. English-medium postgraduate programs in business-related disciplines have been increasingly competitive in the international education market in Thailand. Both institutions have already had worldwide connections with both Western and eastern institution partners as joint-programs. The Chinese senior academic manager from Institution A immediately appeared to be very reluctant when asked about the market expansion plan and immediately reminded the researcher about confidentiality and that the researcher should be aware of that. Institution A planned to expand its postgraduate programs both in Thailand and abroad. The Chinese senior academic manager at Institution A later described his plans,

We have some joint-programs, which means we have our home degree ah...for example, India so, students who are studying in India then they come to study in Thailand then get our degrees. (T4)

He further explained his plans with respect to Western institutions,

And also we've approached joint programs with America, with Europe countries, European countries in this case ah...students will study here and...half time...and half time abroad, America, Europe to get degree. (T4)

The development of joint international postgraduate programs in Thailand can be seen as an aspect of internationalisation and globalisation at a program level. Unsurprisingly, business management-related studies are among the most popular programs domestically and internationally as the Chinese senior academic manager further explained,

Basically, management... yes, management and also some specifically like Financial Management, Marketing Management all these things...(T4)

Significantly, he supports all forms of foreign educational provision in Thailand and he believes in a competitive market and education as a commercial service...

Of course, I believe in competition because competition will increase efficiency ah...actually, information should be shared and the...the market should be competitive. (T4)

The business of English-medium education in the Thai market at the postgraduate level has become increasingly competitive and aggressive among institutions. Constant demands on English-skilled Thai graduates by local and international employers since the July 1997 country's financial crisis is stimulating the provision.

As discussed in chapter three, institutional partnering is a significant international education trend that both increases the range of study options for students and opportunities for faculty exchange. Double degree programs with Western partner universities can add to an institution's prestige, and therefore the marketability of its business education product. While the students in this study were doing single international degree program, international double degree programs are becoming popular. Students increasingly perceive this double degree option as one that gives higher prestige than the existing single English-medium business masters program. In addition, a double degree program with universities from native English-speaking countries is perceived as of a higher standard due to its Western standards and higher levels of English requirements. A female program coordinator at Institution B gave her comments,

I think it is different standards because international universities (from Western countries) have their own standards. I think if we join with them...like the double degree program I am looking after, its standards lean towards...(the Anglophone partner institution). They

(the Anglophone partner institution) think their standards are higher than ours. It could be because of English language...(K19) (my translation)

The same coordinator also observed that there were different working styles among foreign staff she is dealing with in the joint-program establishments.

It is quite obvious while I was looking after joint programs from... (the Anglophone partner institution). American senior academic staff ...senior academic staff from Australia are easy going, relaxed, but my American senior academic staff are more demanding. They were having some conflicts...I could notice (K19) (my translation)

Thai institutions as host institutions welcome institutions from Western countries, because they see joint-operations as a way to increase their university's status. This is something that Australian universities are aware of as the competition in education services intensifies internationally and as Australia's competitive advantages are eroded.

Institution A has not only already had connections with universities and institutions from English speaking countries in the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand and Australia, but also with universities and institutions from Asian countries for the purpose of offering joint degree programs. The newer Institution B already had established connections with universities and institutions from Australia and Europe. Students can transfer their credits in partner institution degree programs or they can physically remain in Thailand while pursuing the Western degree. The example here is Institution B which offers a double degree program in Business Studies in partnership with a well-recognized Australian institution. The Australian partner institution sends teaching staff to teach at Institution B's campus in Bangkok for about a two-week period then the staff will fly back to their country. In a case that students have further questions or other queries they can approach the Australian teaching staff through email or speak with the Thai 'subject consultants' in person. However, students raised an issue about a conflict arising from different teaching styles between lecturers.

This scheme requires not only an additional six months of study but also higher fees as students will have to pay Baht 550,000.00 (A\$19,000) for 2 degrees. Students will graduate with two masters degrees, Masters Degree in Management from Institution B and Masters Degree in Marketing from a partnering institution from an English-speaking country. The speed of completion within two years of the double degree program was found to be attractive to students. Students accept this option as an opportunity to add value to their professional profiles. By investing extra money and time in their education, they can graduate with two degrees.



A female Thai student from a double degree class gave her reasons that:

This program has the same two-year program duration as other traditional business masters program, but this double degree program will allow me to achieve two degrees within the two-year program duration. And you know...a Western degree is likely to gain better status and social recognition within job markets in Thailand.

If I study abroad, I will have to pay for other expenses such as accommodation, living costs and something else...and I guess I can only study. I can save money if I study for the same degree in Thailand as I am earning money, while studying. (P22) (my translation)

Obviously, education is viewed as a commercial service and it is increasingly competitive elsewhere. Regulations are perceived as significant in the global higher education competition where competition must be managed in order to maintain educational quality. Apart from international cooperation with leading institutions from native English-speaking countries, Thai institutions are also keen to establish similar cooperation within the region. The Chinese senior academic manager at Institution A explained:

Yes,...of course we need regulations also and to maintain certain standard because you see...education is kind of...what you call that...it's an experience group...that means that you do not have a view on that before you actually *consume* it so...that's why you need some regulations to ensure quality. (T4)

Interestingly, this Chinese senior academic manager did not view Singapore and Malaysia as potential competitors (though they are being considered as the most effective targets for transnational higher education for Australia and other leading English speaking countries), but viewed China as the most potential competitor and target as he explained:

I don't think Singapore, Malaysia are more competitive. If you say China then that's the reason, but I don't think Singapore and Malaysia now are more interesting than Thailand. This was true may be ten or five years ago.

If I am a transnational educational provider, definitely I should go to China, I should set up some operation there, there's a big market there. But, Thailand has many advantages, for example...it is the very cheap...lower living expenses and other things...

Yes, people and culture...actually, the fact is, you see, we have so many foreigners come to ...(Institution A) asking us to set a joint program with them. (T4)

While curriculum development tended to be the main responsibility of each teaching staff of the program, there was evidence that curriculum internationalisation was defined and interpreted in different ways by teaching staff. It was interesting that many members of the teaching staff, both Thai and non-Thai, often travelled to teach the same or similar subjects at different universities that offered English-medium business masters degree programs, due to a

shortage of teaching staff who are qualified to teach in the English-medium programs. They were generally known to each other and students. One Australian lecturer, who was teaching at Institution B for five years, has also taught in international programs at many universities in Thailand. He defined the internationalisation of curriculum in the following way,

Well, my interpretation means that the curriculum meets international standards. I don't know that's a general definition used in Thailand. In Thailand, most people talk...when they talk about the international program, just really talking about programs that are taught in English language. That's to me...it's not internationalisation...internationalisation is having a curriculum that meets international standards. (B3)

When he was asked about the international content, he explained,

Well, in terms of content...in terms of assessment, in all respects...I think a lot of programs in Thailand that called international programs are not really international programs. They are simply programs taught in English.

The art of answering this question is a mixed one. I don't think that it is umm...as I say I think a lot of programs umm...really umm...don't really teach what I considered to be an international curriculum or in accordance with requirements of an international curriculum. Umm...as far as ...(Institution B) is concerned, this concern...I say my answer would again be a mixed answer. I don't think umm...I think that a lot of people teaching at ...(Institution B) don't teach to an international curriculum. Some do but not everyone. (B3)

Many of the teaching staff understood the importance of international knowledge that needs to be integrated into the curriculum but they had a vague idea what kind of international knowledge is needed. A female Thai lecturer at an Institution B explained,

I feel that now we cannot only focus on the local but we have to focus on the international. We cannot avoid it. Though we live locally, we have to act globally because international competitors are approaching us all around. It is something that we must compete against. Learning about international business is not new anymore, it is basic even though we have never been overseas. (M5) (my translation)

Similarly, an Asian teaching staff member at Institution A gave an opinion on curriculum internationalisation that,

Because you know...we are all involved in globalisation through education, we prepare new professional students. Therefore, in my opinion, the internationalisation of curriculum should prepare younger people to take the interests in global economy. (N14)

There appears to be a tension between wanting to give the staff a creative license to develop their own curricula and the need for stricter regulation of the course content to ensure it matches the needs and expectations of students. Both institutions have developed a business curriculum for two similar target categories: the first is the middle level managers and small

business owners who want to improve their business skills, and the second is the new graduates from BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) who want to continue their studies before having professional work experience. Both institutions are coming to terms with the demands of a commercial environment for education where evaluations and other quality measures are seen as important markers of effective business management. A Chinese senior academic manager at Institution A explained when asked about newly developed curriculum,

We have some courses which are new...various teachers in the programs also developed their own curriculum's but, I think in future we should ah...monitor more about their curriculum's to see...But actually they have these kinds of pressures, the pressure from the Student Evaluation, the pressure from the peer groups, so I believe...for more for most teachers they do upgrade their curriculum's although we do not have ah...a mechanism now to look at all. (T4)

This manager exhibited a high degree of interest in similar issues and approaches at other universities indicating a low level of information exchange or comparative monitoring between institutions. While the senior staff at Institution A and B were working to differentiate their 'product' from other English-medium masters programs, in terms of quality assurance processes, there was a concern to ensure that QA standards were equivalent if not better than those of their competitors. It is fair to say that there is a lot of confusion within the higher education industry as to what these QA standards should be. As the senior academic manager from Institution A asked me,

Do you...have you ever heard other universities do things like these? Asked the teachers to provide the curriculum, to have a review by some committees or what they are talking about?

Our teaching contents have three criteria, three standards. One is the theoretical in-depth...you see...you should have a theoretical in-depth. This is of course to see how this course compares to the standard text books and also ah...yes what is offering in the text book standard? Second one actually the...updatedness, should be updated and the third one is relevance to business. (T4)

Textbooks and materials used in the program are a part of maintaining international standards and recognition. These are however observed by teaching staff as relevant to local cultural context. One of the English-speaking teaching staff at Institution B explained,

The problem is not so much standard, but...probably about 95 per cent of all the texts or materials used in teaching business and management programs are American ok. And...very often that create difficulties particularly teaching in the Asian context. One would like to have Professor umm...who had a good deal of local experiences and were able to...if you like...translate the American texts into umm...the sort of Thai business

and management framework umm...perhaps by using at least some Thai or Asian case study material or stuff like that.

As I say, the text that is used for international standard, but they not really always particularly appropriate to...in the Asian context. (B3)

Interestingly, he distinguished between undergraduate and postgraduate teaching indicating that the latter had to be more student focussed and responsive to student demands. as he explained,

This is actually very different from BBA and other undergrad programs. You see...undergrad...you can teach whatever you want to teach as teachers, but in my course and any other many courses they always ask a question why should we study that? Why? You should be able justify that there are business relevance in that...so three categories for the contents. (B3)

The teaching staff had some difficulties with full-time students who did not have professional work experiences. One of the experienced native English-speaking teaching staff at Institution B commented,

Generally speaking, I found when I taught in part-time programs here, that students with work experience had much higher understanding from the students. And I generally...as a generalisation, I say... with working students, the program umm...does reasonably prepares them for umm...internationalisation...working in international organisations. I think the full-time students whether they're Thai or other...I think there are a lot of problems taking someone who completed an undergraduate degree to do a masters degree in business or higher degree in business or management without any direct management experiences. (B3)

He then expressed an opinion that the standards for selection of students are shaped entirely by commercial pressures,

In my view, this phenomenon is all over the world now because it's filled by university's requirements to make money,...ok. Universities all over the world now allow people to come into masters degree programs in business or management without any prior experiences. But, in a pure academic world, I would not have students studying business and management at a postgraduate level unless they have had a minimum of two or three years relevant working experiences. (B3)

The lack of cultural awareness among international teaching staff also poses significant operational problems. This is particularly so for those visiting professors from overseas and assigned to teach in Thailand for short periods, usually less than a month. According to a native English-speaking teacher at Institution B,

The problem is I think even though many respected overseas academics might come in to teach on these programs; very often they have no real knowledge of local environments, local businesses or management environment at all. And also, to some extent, I think this is a bit of question mark as to the value of the experiences. I personally would prefer to

use foreign teachers that are resident in Thailand or been associated with Thailand for a long time and have some understanding of the Thai management and business environment and something about Thai culture. (B3)

Different levels of student rights and student demands for better services or immediate services are easily observed and likely to be addressed when educational institutions advertise themselves. It is likely to happen with most Western students from English-speaking countries such as Australia, USA and the UK. One of Thai teaching staff at Institution A explained his uncomfortable experiences...

Let's say...when *farang* (Westerner) wants something, they (Westerner) think they are democratic...so, sometimes when the examination results are released, they think they have rights to know it. If the teaching staff did not allow them to know, then they will keep demanding it.

It happened once when the student (from an English-speaking country) desperately wanted to know his marks though I explained to him that I would have to send his results to his university ...and he could find out from his university later. He was very demanding. Being a Thai lecturer like myself...I did not like this, but eventually...I let him know...

When he demanded, he thought he was right. For me...it should not be like that...considering the approach between a teacher and a student, when the teacher said it was not like that, he should not asked for it.

Thai students would not ask for this if the teacher did not allow them to know, they would accept it. (T15) (my translation)

In terms of a cultural awareness, it was observed that some members of the teaching staff were trying to downplay cultural conflicts when asked whether they encountered any difficulties. One member of the Asian teaching staff at Institution A answered,

No problems with the students, may be sometimes with the instructors. Because many people who come from America or may be European countries, want to develop all students according to their culture...and that's culture difference sometimes...sometimes... (N14)

An experienced Thai lecturer at Institution A believed that there should be a common standardised curriculum in the same discipline everywhere in the world, as he explained,

I think the internationalised curriculum is a curriculum that corresponds with curriculum standards of other countries in the same disciplines and contain international content. It should have the same theory or principle. For example, I am teaching economics so no matter where are you studying, the curriculum should be the same everywhere. (T15) (my translation)

He seemed quite convinced of the merits of using case studies as a strategy for international content. When asked to explain about student learning skills in relation to international content he said that:

We have to add the local knowledge to the international contents. The actual standardised curriculum has already had its own theory but we have to add existing local case studies or local examples to help improve students' understanding. (T15) (my translation)

As with entry standard problems in partnering arrangements with foreign universities, Thai institutions confront obstacles in curriculum development caused by inequalities in the teaching staff's qualifications. According to one native English speaker working as a senior lecturer at Institution B, Thai universities face a staffing crisis not through staff shortages but because staff employed do not possess the necessary skill levels or motivation to work to an international standard. He stated,

... in many international programs in Thailand there are not enough foreign staff, not enough English speaking first language staff. Now a lot of Thai staff are excellent but I think if you're running an international program, you should have a reasonably high proportion of international staff. I think that a lot of Thai staff are unfortunately not rigorous enough in their assessments of students and in their approach to teaching. Obviously, one of the reasons that there are a lot of Thai staff employed is that they're cheaper generally than ...foreign lecturing staff. (B3)

If this is the case, then the capacity of Thai universities, in particular the two studied here, must bring to question the implementation of internationalisation strategies. One strategy to circumvent the shortage of skilled English-medium lecturers is to recruit staff from countries with a tradition of English-medium elite education, in particular the Philippines, India and Bangladesh. Asian English speaking staff are cheaper than Western native English speaking staff but there are concerns about the standard of their English language instruction. This problem arises from the tendency to treat English as a universal language and, for budgetary reasons, to assume that English speaking lecturers from anywhere in the world will communicate with students in the same way. Research has shown however that there are many varieties of English with many subtle differences in pronunciation and grammar. One of the Thai students at Institution B who was a former Institution A graduate expressed her feeling in regard to nationalities of teaching staff,

What I like most about the program is that this institution (Institution B) has Caucasian...European and American teaching staff. I prefer to learn with these Western staff.

When I was studying at...(Institution A), I was not sure what the exact reasons...but most teaching staff there (Institution A) were from Burma, India and Bangladesh something like that. It's...Oh my god! Their pronunciations were...(trails off) (S25) (my translation)

While British, Australian and American accents are generally compatible it is likely that students exposed to both Western native English speakers and Asian second language English speakers, irrespective of their proficiency, will detect differences and compare the latter unfavourably with the former. In addition, students buy into English medium programs in the expectation that they will be taught by Western native English speakers. Any recruitment strategy for Asian second language English speakers must discern between those who have native and near native competence and those who have completed a program of English medium instruction in their home country but whose English is of a lower standard. This of course does not get around issues related to student perceptions of status. British, American and Australian Englishes are accorded a higher status than Asian Englishes and consequently students would like to learn English with a British or American accent. This implication reflected students' concerns, both Asian students and Western students. A male Scandinavian student at Institution A stated in relation to teaching staff,

I think...(Institution A) could try to get more Professors like from Europe, from USA, from Australia. There are some good ones. Also,...but you know...I think put more money for the...you know...keep more salary for the Professor to try to get good one in here (Institution A) and not put so much for those buildings. I think you know that's what the most important to the university...Professor. (R9)

### ***5.5.2 Student Services***

Accessing student services were observed to be more serious for non-Thai students' concerns due to both ineffective operations and English language barriers. A male Scandinavian student expressed his disappointment about Institution A's ineffective operation in regard to religion practice for students. He complained that:

I disappointed about...you know they don't have any Christian holidays in here (Institution A). We have got class on Sunday which totally out in Europe. It's so weird, I got class...exam on 23<sup>rd</sup> of this month (December) and I think they receive exam on 24<sup>th</sup>. They (Institution A) don't give Buddhist holidays and they don't have to give Christian (laughed)...so they can teach more (R9)

The same student continued telling his disappointments...

What I dislike more is ...when I came to see the office staff in Graduate School, I had some difficulties with getting some papers. I could not get any money from my government for half year because I could not get the papers out from the school. They are

so inflexible. So, I had to use my own money. I got difficulties in English sometimes with them. They don't ...not all of them speak good English. (R9)

Something I disliked the most...yeah...the Graduate Office because every time I go to there, I can't get the satisfy answers at all. Just same question, I ask different people in the office, I can get different answer. Like...when I can start to register my thesis. Some people tell me you need to finish all the subjects then to register the thesis. Other people tell me you just need like umm...30 credits or...like that, may be 8 subjects, you can register your thesis. I ask them this question...I get totally different answer.

I've got the answer from my friend, not the office. Because I can't make sure that different people tell me different answer and their English is not very good. (N10)

The above statements highlighted and exemplified complaints from other non-Thai students in particular, Chinese students. However, administrative staff highlighted the lack of English language competency of Chinese students as well. One of female Thai administrators at Institution A commented,

If they are Thai students, it would be good because we could speak Thai together...it would be more understandable, but Thai students are more spoiled than foreign students. This could be because they (Thai students) are...(Institution A's name) students something like that...they are spoiled children and very self-centered. Foreign students are more mature than Thais.

Most foreign students are Chinese. Problems occurred were...a kind of English language usage...it was difficult to listen to. Most Chinese students have poor English. (S27) (my translation)

## ***5.6 Conclusion***

It is evident from the data collected for this research project that students enrolled in English-medium business graduate programs in Thailand are motivated by a desire for the social status and career opportunities opened to graduates proficient in English. However, students who continued directly from undergraduate to graduate studies without any experience of professional work had only a loose appreciation of their vocational direction. The English-medium business masters programs being investigated in this research study were instrumentally viewed by students as a unique product which is in increasing demanded in an employment market in Thailand. These key themes reflect students' belief and attitude towards the programs based on their traditions of social, cultural and educational values which have been bound to local and global economic and social pressures. The results also reflected institutions' strategic management and operation in the international settings. Some common learning behaviours of the majority of Thai students and other Asian students reflected characteristics of collectivist societies and high power distance societies as proposed by Hofstede. Although some non-Thai teaching staff members were aware of these



behaviours, their level of motivation to encourage student learning differed. A unique value concerning education highlighted and shared in Asian culture was that education was being used to gain a prestige and to access a higher status. As a consequence, each university is in intense competition for this niche in the market.

There was however a slight concern from student interviewees about acquiring competence. Non-Thai students tended to provide more critical and practical ideas of how they should be taught and how institutions could help them to achieve proper learning than Thai students. Students tended to be self-focused as they judged good learning achievements based on what they liked and what they disliked and how well they could be entertained by institutions and teaching staff rather than acquiring knowledge.

## **Chapter 6: Interpretation**

### ***6.1 Introduction***

The previous chapter detailed the experience of internationalisation from student and academic management perspectives. It is evident that globalisation as it understood in this thesis, is making an impact on the Thai higher education system and Thai education in general. This chapter examines these localised encounters with global processes in the broad context of economic and social change in Thailand. As discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis, the higher education system of Thailand is currently confronting critical problems stemming from both domestic and international trends and pressures. Economic globalisation is influencing the direction of government education policy and university management but it is also influencing the choices of local and international students. The extent to which shifts in educational priorities reflect or shape social and cultural change cannot be quantified. However, the data presented in the previous chapter indicates that significant changes are taking place in Thai higher education at all levels, from policy to curriculum practice and that these changes are indicative of wider changes in Thai society especially at the elite level.

While internationalisation has yet to spread deep into Thailand's education system, at the elite level a shift in values and practices is apparent. Importantly, this shift mirrors broader transformations in Thailand's political economy over the last 25 years. Elite education is no longer simply a pathway to employment in the bureaucracy. While internationalisation in the early years of the twentieth century equipped Thailand with technically trained government officials able to administer a radically new state apparatus introduced during the Chakri Reformation (1868-1910), internationalisation today services the need of industry for business-savvy graduates fluent in English. Student aspirations for a career in business reflect the influence of their family backgrounds but also the elevation of 'market values' above traditional values of service to the King. This shift in emphasis towards private sector graduate employment mirrors earlier transformations in Western higher education systems. Further, elite Thai universities are adopting similar international strategies to Western counterparts in recruiting more international students and in seeking strategic partnerships with universities in the developing world. The interview data with institution's executives from previous chapter showed that it is a strong intention of institutions to promote and extend their international postgraduate programs both locally and internationally, within the

Asian region as an initial purpose and a profit motivation/orientation is an implicit focus among providers. National ranking and branding of academic institutions have increasingly become influential in the global higher education marketplace. Competition in providing English-medium business management-related degree programs is intensifying in Thailand and throughout the Asian region. Consequently, major international education providers from English-speaking countries such as Australia, Britain and America are more or less losing market shares and their monopoly over English-medium university education.

### ***6.2 Global Higher Education Trends***

Globally, there is a distinct shift in emphasis in the provision of international education services by Northern universities to students in the developing world. From the 1950s until the late 1980s international education services were provided by developed countries to developing countries in the form of educational aid and training assistance. Western countries such as the US and Australia attempted to engage themselves with Asia through educational assistance programs in a form of international scholarships such as the US's Fulbright Program established since 1946 and Australia's Colombo Plan established in 1951. It is interesting to note that privately funded Asian students outnumbered Colombo Plan funded students in Australia by five to one (Oakman, 2003) indicating a substantial demand for international education in Asia. This observation is confirmed by data from the US Institute of International Education (IIE) that indicates a doubling of foreign students in the US during the 1950s. A network of IIE offices was established in Asia during the 1960s. In addition to its inclusion in the Colombo Plan, which Thailand joined in 1954, Thailand was included in the IIE network and received financial and educational assistance from the US. This move significantly influenced the direction of higher education and the framing of education policies beginning with the first Economic and Social Development Plan (1961-1966). Thai higher education system growth reflected the impact of particularly US and Australian foreign policy measures in combating the spread of communist ideology through development assistance.

For Western countries, international education as a development priority began to give way to education as an economic priority in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Western universities from English-speaking nations began to take a serious interest in international education as an export market at the end of 1980s. By this time, there was already a substantial international student presence on university and college campuses in OECD

countries. OECD data states that there were 1.01 million such students in 1990 (OECD, 2004 a, p. 211) and the number of students continued to grow as it increased from 1.01 million to 1.58 million between 1990 and 2001 (OECD, 2004a, p.314-316). According to the UNESCO (2006), there were 2,455,250 students studying outside their home countries in 2004 and Australia alone had the highest percentage at 17% of international student enrolments while over 50% of international student's enrolments worldwide belonged to the US, the UK, Germany and France. It is also estimated that the total annual fee income generated by international students was \$US30 billion (A\$38 billion).

Since 2000, the international students' demand for higher education in the OECD area and worldwide increased by 49 and 50% respectively. The most recent OECD data, *Education at a Glance 2007*, reported that in 2005 there were more than 2.7 million tertiary students studying outside their country of citizenship, a rise of nearly 61% since 1999. The US, the UK and Australia are currently regarded as the key players in the international student market attracting approximately 45% of the total amount of all international students worldwide (roughly 1.2 million of the 2.7 million students) ranked these three countries as the first three countries among the most popular destination countries for overseas studies. The approximate numbers of international student enrolments in 2006 were 565,000 students in the US, 330,000 students in the UK and 280,000 students in Australia (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2007).

English-speaking countries remained as major destinations for international students. Obviously, Australia has become a competitive provider of international education particularly in the Asia-pacific region. To some extent, the Australian government's policy on skilled-migration attracted student enrolments from Asian countries because foreign students were eligible to apply for permanent residency after graduation. Post- September 11th visa applications to enter the United States from international students, Chinese and Indian in particular declined. The *Economist* of September 25th, 2004 referred to an *International Herald Tribune* article by Robert Gates, a former director of the CIA who is now president of Texas A&M University, that applications from China to all American universities had fallen by 76 per cent and those from India had fallen by 58 per cent in 2003 (p.65).

The growth in international education is paralleled by a slow-down in the growth of state funding for universities in Western countries. These 'market' shifts are justified at the policy level through emphasis upon the individual economic value of education as opposed to its

social benefits. Professional advancement is explicitly put forward as the defining purpose of university study. According to the interview given by Bill Rammell, Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education in England, 'getting a degree is associated with extra earning power in later life' (OECD Observer, July 2006). The doctrines of privatisation and deregulation became the foundations of public policy in Britain, the United States, New Zealand and Australia in the 1980s.

In Australia, HECS (Higher Education Contribution Schemes) introduced in 1989 for local students increased in 2005 by 25-30 per cent. These changes were financially challenging for local students and caused a decline in university enrolment throughout the country. The most recent, HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) replaced HECS has indirectly forced some domestic students to be full-fee paying (non-Commonwealth supported). They are eligible, however, to obtain subsidised loans from the government up to lifetime limit of A\$100,000 for high fees degrees such as medicine and dentistry. In addition, there has been a strong reaction against the Ministry of Education coming from universities and students across the country. The latest OECD figures showed how much the US and Europe spend on their higher education; the United States spends 2.7 per cent of GDP on its universities, in France and Britain the figure is 1.1 per cent, in Germany only 1 per cent.

Inadequate state funding caused universities to look for alternative sources of 'income' to survive financially. International student recruitment is proving the most significant source of private income for European and American universities with Asian institutions catching up quickly. Another step in the introduction of market values is the increasing number of countries offering full fee places to local students who do not quite meet the criteria for their preferred courses but gain access through their ability to pay. Until 1998, there were no tuition fees for UK students, but the UK decided to introduce fees for higher education since September 2006 which allows British universities to charge each student a tuition fee up to pound stg. 3,000 per year (university will be free to set fees between pound stg. 0-3,000 per year).

The competition for the international student dollar is intensifying between institutions in native English-speaking countries. While international applications are again rising for US universities following a lull after "September 11" 2001, the lull created opportunities for Western countries such as Australia, but also regional competitors, to capture a share of the market. The US remains the first preference of study destination for Indian students, but

Australia is now their second preference ahead of the United Kingdom and Europe (The Australian, 12 February 2007). The top-ten markets were students from Asian countries. China and India were the two largest sources of international enrolments in Australia in 2005 as enrolments showed that one-in-four (24%) were from China and 23% were from India and Malaysia combined and Thailand was in the top eight. It was found that numbers of student enrolments declined between 2004-2005 (Australian Education International, 2006). There were 383,818 full-fee paying international student enrolments and commencements in all Australian education sectors in 2006 and the higher education sector (172,297) had the highest proportion (49.4%) of international student enrolments and commencements in 2006 (Australian Education International, 2007).

In comparison to other English-speaking countries, Australia is becoming an increasingly attractive destination for Asian students, in particular for students from China and India due to lower fees and the possibility of obtaining work permits allowing students to work for twenty hours per week. Thailand has been one of Australia's traditional international student markets and it has recently showed a strong growth in Australia as it was ranked the sixth (17,889 Thai students) out of top ten markets for international student enrolments in 2006 (Australian Education International, 2007). Significantly, many international students have applied for permanent residency in Australia as skilled-migrants as the recent migration policy in Australia allows for that. Accordingly, international students' tuition fees are a major source of income for the institutions of higher education in Australia.

Australia and Britain's higher education have had to downsize the less popular programs and shift their focus to full-fee paying local and international students in profitable programs such as business, science and information technology. For example, the University of Sydney, the oldest economics faculty in Australia, has recently announced the launch of its MBA program which is currently one of the most competitive and marketable programs. According to Roy Green, the dean of the Macquarie Graduate School of Management who gave comments about this initiative, 'no internationally reputable business school should be without one' (The Australian, 21 February 2007). Accordingly, financial problems of Western institutions also encourage the aggressive marketing of international education in Asia.

Traditionally, institutions and universities in the US, the UK and more recently, Australia, are popular destinations among other English-speaking countries for Thai students and students from other developing countries in Asia seeking an English-language education. This is true

especially in the fields of science, technology and business-related management including intensive English courses. Student interview data from the previous chapter revealed these three destinations as their first preferences for their international masters degree qualifications. Australian higher education institutions, as leading providers of transnational higher education, are currently dominating Southeast Asian countries in English-medium business education.

While a country's characteristics are important in attracting international students, few Australian institutions are ranked in the top 100 universities worldwide. Prestigious American institutions such as Harvard University and Britain's elite universities, Oxford and Cambridge, continue to be highly attractive among international students worldwide because of their reputations and the standing of their qualifications. In addition, these three universities were ranked top ten (Harvard University was ranked number one in the world and Britain's Cambridge and Oxford were ranked second and tenth in the world) in the academic ranking of the top 500 world universities (1-100) by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University in 2005. The only university from a non-English speaking country in Asia Pacific that was on the top 20 was Tokyo University which was ranked at 20 in the world. These well-known institutions maintain their global status through research performance and their status has created a powerful incentive to attract not only students, but also staff (Marginson, 2007).

Although there is wide variability between the quality rankings of universities, such rankings are more and more influential as global competition becomes ever more intense. They may affect student mobility across institutions and nations. However, university reputation and image are not always the only factors for students' university choice making (Stensaker, 2007). Student interview data gathered for this research project suggested that students have become more and more discerning about choosing their programs and institutions. Thai students appreciate that entry into the most highly rated institutions for English-medium business education in Thailand is limited by their ability to pay the high fees. Slightly lower prestige institutions, while usually their second-choices, are still seen by students as providers of credible graduate business degrees that would enable them to secure their 'private advantage' in the professional employment market. (Marginson, 2004). Students surveyed for this thesis demonstrated the ability to balance institutional prestige with price and the perceived vocational dividend of graduate programs.

Due to their unambiguous vocational emphasis, business or management studies are among the most marketable vocational degree programs internationally. More than half of the enrolment fields of study in the higher education sector in 2006 in Australia were 'Business Administration, Management and Computer Science, Information Systems' and these fields are likely to continue their popularity (Australian Education International, 2006). Such degrees are already at the forefront of the globalisation of education. Promising 'world class' education foreign universities offer a similar array of technical business-oriented vocational courses where the only perceptible difference between institutions appears in the band name and the marketing strategies employed to attract students. Stensaker (2007) suggested that there is both benefit and danger in institutions employing branding strategy. While creating 'emotional ties' between stakeholders can be beneficial, misleading brands can be costly in terms of reputation and revenue as students arrive only to find that their expectations are not met by the institution. Brand building is costly in terms of investment in educational infrastructure, rooms, lecture theatres, ICT facilities, student services and so forth, which can give an institution a modern appearance. Without sufficient investment in teaching and learning, especially in the quality of teaching staff, customer satisfaction will likely be merely transitory. Equally challenging, according to Altbach (2003), is the question of a universally agreed definition of what constitutes a 'world class' university or university degree.

Branding is an important factor in this global competition of higher education and importantly, as Marginson points out, national rather than institutional branding is of greater significance (Marginson, 2006b, p.22). This means that for Thai universities to become internationally competitive both they and the Thai government must pay serious attention to how 'Thai Education' as a product brand is seen overseas and how their competitive standing in the global higher education market place can be enhanced. The Ministry of Education's Commission on Higher Education (2005), revealed some significant indicators that suggest low international competitiveness among Thai universities. Indicators included a low percentage of PhD staff (22%), declining numbers of highly qualified senior staff through retirement, and low research and development output (<0.1 paper/ researcher/ year), with research outcomes mismatched to national priorities.

Obviously, these potential indicators are raising questions of how a 'Thai Education' brand can be built. Internationalisation associated with English-language competency of Thai students and graduates is one of the core strategies in Thai higher education and it has currently been promoted in the region. Though the Ministry of Education has begun the



quality assurance and auditing process throughout the sector, there has been a criticism in regard to the 'quality' of international program provision throughout the country. Many international programs have been criticized for being 'international' only in name and not in content (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE), 12<sup>th</sup> March 2004).

Competition between universities in East and South East Asia for international and local students and international prestige further complicates the challenges facing Thai higher education institutions. International student enrolments are increasing among Thailand's neighbours where English-medium degree programs at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels are well established. In particular, universities in Singapore and Malaysia are also internationalising their universities and providing courses in English specifically for international students. Importantly, as former British colonies, Singapore and Malaysia have a pool of local academic staff educated at English-medium schools and who have a much stronger grounding in the English language. Further, universities such as the National University of Singapore have well-established international reputations and comparable standing to leading Western institutions. It is instructive that British and Australian universities have found it much easier to pursue articulation and double degree arrangements with universities in countries in the British Commonwealth where English-proficiency has for centuries been a marker of social rank.

There are new forms of international education especially at the undergraduate and postgraduate level in Malaysia and Singapore, which encourage domestic students to stay at home for at least a part or all of their university studies. According to Molly Lee (2004), transnational education programmes are the most popular among students and attract significant interest among higher education stakeholders. Twinning arrangements between post-secondary colleges and Western universities offering 2+1 or 3+1 degree programs in business, ICT and engineering reflect the growing global decentralisation of university education. West European nations, and Malaysia and Singapore are developing English-medium education programs to secure a market share for revenue flows in the international education market. Western institutions must now compete with Singapore which sees itself as the 'Boston of the East', with institutions mirroring MIT and Harvard, attracting world-class academics and the top creative minds. Some Thai universities are looking to copy this path to global brand status in partnership with well-known foreign universities from the US and Australia. The partnering pattern with foreign institutions, the leading ones in particular, are

observed to be a preferred pattern among Thai institutions in developing their international status.

A significant trend in recent years has been the development of offshore campuses in Asia by Western universities. Apart from Swinburne University of Technology which chose Thailand as its first overseas campus since 1998 and a few US private universities of questionable standing, universities from English-speaking countries have tended to avoid the Thai market. Yet even Swinburne is downgrading its presence by ceasing provision of full degree programs in automotive engineering and concentrating upon corporate training courses for the vehicle industry (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE), 12th March 2004). Partnering arrangements have fared somewhat better. Australian institutions are providing programs offshore in Thailand, some of them being delivered through twinning, distance or through partnering arrangements. Australia is a prime example of a more market-oriented policy towards overseas students; where universities engage student recruitment and employ aggressive marketing strategies.

Education is seen by the Australian state as the fastest growing export industry and according to Altbach (1999), Australia has been among the major exporters of academic programs to Asia and has recently been ranked the third largest exporter of higher education services internationally after the United States and the United Kingdom (Harman, 2004). Accordingly, Australia is regarded as the most aggressive competitor in the international education market in Thailand. Victoria University of Technology has an academic cooperation agreement with Kasetsart University and currently offers four-year English-medium double degree program at undergraduate level, in Tropical Agriculture and International Trade; the majority of which is provided in the region.

The international education sector is growing in Thailand raising questions about the need for greater government oversight. Thai academic institutions are striving to be global players in the international education market but without a sound foundation in English-medium instruction, extending to the English competence of teaching staff and students, this cannot be accomplished. Hence Thailand is at risk of falling behind of its major regional competitors. Thai students were ranked eighth which was the second worst in the nine Southeast Asian countries on the previous TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language) results with the average score of only 201 (on the cumulative 300 scale) (Bunnag, 2005). More or less, this poor result gave a negative indicator in terms of international competitiveness in the global

economy. The aspiration to become a regional hub not only in international education but in also other industries such as automotive, medical, cuisine, fashion and travel seem to be uncompromising. The increasing number of international high schools in Thailand is one indicator that in the future Thai students from families who can afford high fees will be given a much better preparation for higher level study in the English language both in Thailand and overseas. However, these opportunities and benefits need to be made available for a much larger group of school-age students if Thailand is to become internationally competitive in the global knowledge economy of the twenty-first century.

These trends demonstrate the importance of an integrated internationalisation strategy for Thailand that encompasses all levels of education. While educational policy makers interpret and respond to globalisation differently according to different national policy and education contexts, there is a general recognition that global economic, political and socio-cultural processes require a more coordinated policy response. The increased value placed upon 'knowledge' as a factor of economic growth by many industrialized and industrializing countries has resulted in the harnessing of higher education to national economic development goals. In addition, the emergence of new forms of knowledge production system, including culture, media and communication technologies, are among the most powerful forces that shape and rebuild higher education systems in both Western and Asian countries. Thai policy makers thus need a much more comprehensive framework or a broader field of vision through which to identify and respond to global challenges.

### ***6.3 Internationalisation of Higher Education in Thailand***

Global and local economic changes stimulate commercialisation of higher education around the world. The role of English as a global language as explained in chapter two (2) is vital in this context because, as previously argued, it is the principal communicative medium through which Thailand can pursue international cooperation and compete in the global education marketplace. Significantly, the necessity of academic English has become widely spread in the higher education system of nearly every developing country as well as Europe during the last two decades (Marginson, 2004). The dominance of English in academic research literature is obvious. English is the most powerful foreign language used in both public and private sectors in Thailand and it is being used as the key to internationalise Thai higher education. Its influence has accelerated the provision of English-medium business education in Thailand at the moment.

Student data from the previous chapter overwhelmingly revealed students' aspiration to become fluent in English communication (see 5.3). Student mobility and institutional cooperation agreements and networks are the two most obvious forms of internationalisation promoted by both the government and institutions of higher education in Thailand. Both public and private universities in Thailand have adopted a market-oriented approach to educational services. Educational institutions are taking advantage of market opportunities by supplying educational services to fee-paying clients, students and (international) employers. However, these institutions are struggling to survive financially and maintain their status locally and internationally. Being autonomous of Thai public universities is a significant internal factor which affects commercialisation and the competition of Thai higher education. In order to survive financially, Thai universities, treat students' fees as the most feasible financial resource.

Directed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and, in the Asian region, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the same doctrines adopted in Western countries in the 1980s are now seeping into policy rhetoric and practice in the developing world. While not directly related to American trends in international students enrolments, the number of international students, who are studying English-medium international programs in Thailand, increased in the early part of this decade as did the income of the institutions providing this type of education. The estimates of total international student numbers in Thailand fluctuate wildly from source to source suggesting that Thai policy makers do not have the full facts at their disposal when planning their response to rising foreign student numbers.

Current estimates place the number of foreign students at all education levels in Thailand at 63,754 in 2005 contributing an estimated 10 billion baht to the national economy (Department of Export Promotion (DEP), Press Release, 2007). According to the information from the Thai Ministry of Commerce (2004) published in the respected *Matichon* Weekly (5-11 March 2004, p.47); Thailand earned A\$ 337,241,379.31 (Baht 9.7 trillion) from 19,560 international students at all education levels in 2003. There were 5,860 international students in Thai higher education sector in 2003. This new phenomenon not only generates a financial return for Thai institutions it also introduces greater cultural diversity into Thailand's student population. As discussed in chapter 5, there are questions as to whether Thai institutions are able to respond positively and effectively to the new educational challenges posed by this attendant social trend.

The apparent triumph of market values is of concern, even to moderate voices calling for a more holistic and culturally relevant school and university curriculum (Samudavanija, 2002). The tendency for commodification or marketisation, as observed by a Thai academic economist - Rangsun Thanapornpun (2001), has changed the relationship of people to society, and accordingly, to education. In addition, global educational relationships are structured by cooperation and competition at different levels; between institutions and countries, which encourages sharing and borrowing of ideas. This leads to policy “convergence” in areas of curriculum design and market-orientation (Marginson, 2006b). The higher education system in Thai society cannot be isolated or separated from these global influences in terms of delivery of educational services. Marketisation creates new opportunities but it challenges fundamental assumptions about the relationship between teacher and student in Thai society. In a heavily status-conscious society the transformation of the role of a teacher from a source of wisdom to an entrepreneurial provider as well as the change of the role of a student from a dutiful understudy to a critical consumer undermines the traditional authority structures. Hence, the government is attempting to control the cultural impacts of globalization on Thai education while at the same time trying to maximize economic returns from education sector.

Thailand’s Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001) stated that globalization effects have introduced the undesirable values of materialism and consumerism to Thai society. Significantly, the plan (which was written before Thailand’s economic crisis in July 1997) shifted the emphasis from the primarily economic perspective to the emerging perspective of people-centred development (Laird, 2000, p.12). Policy makers in Thailand are striving to balance both local and global considerations and pressures in seeking to define a policy on higher education which balances the influences of ‘marketisation’ and public versus private institutional competition. Significantly, this tendency has become strong since the Thai government encouraged all public institutions to become more autonomous in terms of finance and administration in year 2002 (the idea of autonomy of the MUA was already present since 1960s) as explained in chapter two (2). The question here is whether education policy makers are aware of how the curriculum is designed or, more to the point, whether curriculum importation strategies employed by leading providers of international graduate programs work contrary to the stated aim of minimising globalisation’s cultural impacts.

As Marginson points out, competition and the maintenance of cultural identity are not incompatible policy objectives. As this thesis highlights, dangers arise when one concern becomes prioritised over the other. The current purpose of higher education provision in

Thailand has been changed as Thai higher education system is being redirected away from nation-building objectives towards 'human capital' creation. Education is seen as a form of economic investment. This idea of 'human capital' has been developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank as reviewed in chapter 2 (two). As mentioned earlier, 'human development' has become a profound theme and has been implemented since the Eight Development Plan. Accordingly, it aimed at reforming the education system and curriculum. The National Education Act of 1999 was promulgated in agreement with the Constitution of the Kingdom 1997. Significantly, the 1999 Act is the first Education Act of the country that is expected to bring the appropriation of educational reform in Thailand, especially with respect to the issues of quality and academic excellence. The pursuit of 'quality' or 'excellence', according to one or more global benchmarks, can draw attention away from less readily quantified priorities relating to culture and identity.

As shown in the literature review chapter, it is evident that Thailand has adopted higher education philosophy and system from Western nations. Moreover, King Bhumibol had a clear intention to encourage his young manpower to create Thai identity in terms of art and culture along with modern knowledge. The evidence of that can be seen today in Thai style university buildings, academic gown and some courses in Thai arts, literature, language, history and Buddhism offered by Thai universities along with the subjects adopted from Western countries. King Vajiravut, recognised as the progenitor of official Thai nationalism, strove to create both a Thai nation and a Thai national identity. Thai identity, like Australian identity, has been created as much by political leaders, artists and writers as it is formed by people through social practice.

Internationalising higher education is seen as a key element and investment to foster Thailand as a knowledge-based global economy. According to Thailand's policy on internationalisation of higher education as explained in chapter three (3), Thai cultural values, local wisdom and local needs are required to be included in national educational and institutional agendas. There are questions about whether they can be enforced in practice. While such issues might at first appear trivial in the context of commercially-orientated policy reform, Australian higher education expert Simon Marginson from Monash University asserts that internationalisation, or more precisely the introduction of a 'global dimension' into university business-related education, must go beyond recycling of American business textbooks and teaching methods. He states '...if it is to be effective... it must combine the global, national

and local dimensions. It must be adapted to local industry, and serve national and individual needs in terms of national traditions, and modern aspiration. Thai business education is Thai business education.’ (Marginson, 2006a).

The predominance of American-style English-medium postgraduate programs reflects both the historical cultural power of the United States but also the economic power of leading US research institutions. But, as Marginson adds, ‘...simply imitating American models does not lead to American outcomes.’ To put it another way, Thailand should not aim to become the ‘Boston of the East’ but rather establish its own identity as an English-medium education provider and develop curricula that enhance existing cultural and economic strengths. Internationalisation does not mean Westernisation or Americanisation and there can be no guarantee that the adoption of US business education or US business practices will automatically lead to US-style business success in a country like Thailand.

Thai higher education institutions’ international programs claim to produce graduates for ‘international professions’, a qualified and skilled graduate who can work and communicate (English is particularly important) effectively in an international environment. Consequently, the data results and analysis from previous chapter 5 suggest that the demand for international degrees is driven primarily by the current job market, multinational employers in particular and the desire of wealthy students to be well educated. Education is highly valued in Thailand, as in any other Asian culture, and university degrees raise social and economic status (George 1987, Komin 1990, Mulder 1997, 2000, Klausner 2000). Research has revealed heavy investments in international education (English-medium education) by middle-class families in Asian countries. For these formulas, the reputation of the educational institution enhances the status of its students. Educational qualifications are used for both vocational and social purposes. It is an increasing trend that students place more emphasis on qualifications than knowledge gained. The danger here is that as status is attached to English-medium education programs, which are heavily influenced by US models and textbooks, shifting student attention towards a more locally relevant and culturally appropriate ‘product’ could prove costly in terms of marketing and brand-building.

In Thailand, government policies encourage foreign institutions to provide education services in Thailand (MUA, 1999). After July 1997, the economic crisis in Asia has brought some changes into international education sectors in Thailand in terms of student mobility in the West as numbers of Thai students were coming back home to continue international higher

education. International (English) masters programs in Thailand are creating a market niche among elite groups in a society. Currently, over 727 international programs at higher education level exemplify the new alternative for the more affluent Thai students to access international degrees in their home country. Recently, the expansion of General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS) and Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the Asia Pacific Region has been encouraged by the Thai government and to some extent has fostered commercialisation and internationalisation of Thai higher education. Evidently, the government supports the provision of off-shore degree programs as a way to precipitate internationalisation. International degree programs, managed by Thais in collaboration with Western institutions but with minimal Thai participation, are part of the Thai government's internationalisation strategy designed to achieve internationally recognised standards in higher education. With these changes, education will increasingly be used as a tool for social and economic development and to support economic rather than social policies.

The internationalisation of Thai higher education opens opportunities to recognise the cultural dimensions of educational practice from teaching and learning, to strategic collaboration. The value of cross-cultural learning opportunities, as designed by institutions, is not really appreciated by students. There is a lack of cross-cultural training by the institution to guide students to engage and interact in a cross-cultural academic setting. Cross-cultural values are a profound aspect in international education and affect teaching and learning of Asian students (Ballard and Clanchy 1991, 1997, Biggs 1999, 2003 and George 1987). Many scholars also agree that Asian culture is not homogeneous. As a result, the lack of the appreciation of cross-cultural teaching and learning in a Thai context often leaves a gap for practices within internationalisation 'process', one of four approaches identified by Jane Knight (1997). The distinct lack of appreciation of the 'culture factor' and the ways in which it affects academic practice has been confirmed by this research project.

#### ***6.4 Globalisation and Thai Cultural Values***

As explained in the literature review in chapter two, after the Second World War the Thai education system was influenced by Western societies, British, French and American. Consequently, Thailand's higher education system has 'Western structures' but 'Eastern contents' as cultural issues are likely to manifest themselves in the Thai academic settings (George, 1987, p.4). For example, important Thai cultural traditions and values (such as morality, customs and religion) are not well understood in the West. Perhaps, in relation to the



programs discussed in this thesis, it would be more accurate to say that Western educational ideas and subject contents are communicated through 'Eastern' or Thai structures because while business curricula are modelled on American text books, teaching contexts remain shaped by the values and practices of Thai society. Broader elements associated with Thai cultural values are manifest explicitly in university management and teaching practice.

As George (1987) argued, hierarchical relationships are the framework of Thai society. Klausner (2000) observed that a Thai academic community is traditionally a duty-based, hierarchical social system. He also noted that there is a premium on knowing one's place in, not questioning, the system (p. 59). In hierarchical society, status is not meant to be exchangeable. The relationship between parents and children, teachers and students and company executives and subordinates are clearly delineated. In addition, 'status has its own social obligations' which often requires 'the showing of benevolence and generosity' (Mulder, 2000, p.47). The importance of 'status' and 'hierarchy' is recognized among Thai academics but not so much by international staff who, upon arrival, must adjust to new cultural surroundings if they are to achieve cultural fit.

As this thesis argues, culture is a major but frequently overlooked-dimension of educational practice and its importance for international academics working in Thai institutions should not be underestimated. Applying Hofstede's dimensions of national culture approach to the Thai context, Thailand ranks high on power distance. It is a collectivist culture in which students have been taught to respect the rules of a senior-junior relationship by their families and the same attitude has been continued in schools (Hofstede, 1986). The student-teacher relationship in Thailand is unique. The teacher's role is perceived as that of an educator and a parent and, accordingly, the teacher is expected to be treated with respect. For instance, a common behaviour of Thai students is to bow their heads and shoulders slightly when they walk by a seated teacher. It is also significantly notable that juniors will never challenge seniors due to their 'unequal position' which is meant to be respected as discussed in chapter two (see 2.5). Hierarchical relationships within Thai academic settings in particular are extremely important. There is a very rigid hierarchy in the teacher-student relationship in Thai society and this big gap of power between teacher and student is clearly recognized and accepted by the Thais.

Implicit and explicit recognitions of issues such as age, birth, title, rank, status, position or achievement are clearly defined in superior-inferior relationships in Thai culture. To some

extent, power relations are implicitly constructed at all levels of organisations and all levels of Thai society. However, it is significant to note that seniority does not mean inequality as Komin (1990, p. 216) points out, “Thais...play down inequalities as much as possible”. Academic community is ranked high in terms of social status in Thai society, being a teacher is not just a job, but a position in society. Accordingly, ‘teachers are expected to take all initiatives in classes as students wait to be told and students see teachers as ‘gurus who transfer personal wisdom’ (Hofstede, 1991, p.37). As a consequence, learning environment in the traditional Thai classroom is very teacher-centred and it can (still) be observed at all educational levels. However, it is crucial to consider how effectively can the international education, set in an intercultural environment, contribute to a Thai local context.

If globalisation is largely driven by the economic power and cultural influence of the West then it is logical to presume that, as non-Western countries become integrated into the global system, cultural tensions will become more pronounced. The writings of Hutanuwatr and Sivaraksa are indicative of a traditionalist or conservative reaction to globalising values in Thailand. Amongst the university postgraduate students interviewed for this thesis there is a general willingness to embrace global values and global symbols as emblems of modernity and social status.

An English-medium ‘international’ masters degree is a symbol of modernity as well as a credential for social advancement. This attitude reflected in one of student interviewees quoted in 5.3.1, “it seems like I am forced by social pressure. I mean, in a Thai society at the moment if you do not hold a master degree, you will not grow, you will not be promoted and eventually you will be pressured by your organization to leave. Currently, there are a lot of young Thai masters degree holders who have no work experiences” (a female Thai student at Institution B). However, the question remains as to whether such degree programs can help to create a new ‘global’ professional class in Thailand equipped with the knowledge, skills and qualities of a modern global manager. Essentially, implicit or explicit cultural knowledge and cultural learning are of ‘core management capabilities’ in building a modern global manager (Battersby, 2003, p.55). Knowledge in this cultural sense can be valued and appreciated more through engaging in the ‘real world’ rather than through imagination. Further, in relation to Marginson’s arguments, there are questions as to the appropriateness of curricula in English-medium business programs in Thailand. Could it be that by copying or mimicking American thought and practice, Thai universities are ignoring opportunities to enhance their and by implication Thailand’s competitive advantage?

The cultural requirements of modern Western teaching techniques challenge the established authority structures in the Thai classroom – which, in turn, reflect wider authority structures in Thai society. Core concepts of Thai cultural values, perspectives and behaviours affect international teaching and learning practices in the set international scenario within the (Thai) local context. One of the most difficult Thai concepts for Westerners to understand is the behavioural pattern defined as *krengjai*. *Krengjai* attitude, one of Thai core values, plays a significant role in a community, especially in the context of the teacher-student relationship. The students' relationship to the teacher is also expressed in the word '*bun khun*' which means '*gratitude*', the correct and natural response of the student to the teacher's *kreng jai* (Caiger, Davies, Leigh, Orton & Rice, 1994, p.18). Many Western teachers have been asked to translate this term but there is no agreed definition. In a study by Klausner (2000), one academic responded 'There is no English word because the *farang* (Caucasian foreigners) don't *krengjai*'. Many experienced Westerners admit that 'there is no one English word which adequately describes this attitude' (Klausner, 2000). However, it is notable that *krengjai* is a displayed attitude towards one higher in the rank, social status and age. Klausner explained it as 'diffidence, deference and consideration merged with respect' (p. 258).

*Sanuk* (fun, enjoyable) is another important part of Thai character that is often observed among others who engage in Thai society. *Sanuk* interaction in a classroom setting is another unique Thai attitude towards both work and play as observed by an experienced American Fulbright Professor highlighted in chapter two (2). Unfortunately, it is not always appreciated and it is also often mis-interpreted by foreigners. A thorough observation by John Embree (1950) indicated that the word *sanuk* does not only simply means "fun-loving" or "pleasure-loving" as its simplest meaning aspect, the word also means a "deep interest in something, momentarily, to the exclusion of all else". "The people they like are those who can make them laugh" (p.190). In this regards, it is important to note that Thais carry the idea of *sanuk* to any situation either in work, play and even religion. In an educational setting, a teaching staff who can provide a *sanuk* atmosphere is to be more likely popular among Thai students regardless of classroom productivity. This characteristic was observed during my non-participation observation in the classrooms at both Institution A and Institution B as Thai students appeared to enjoy some teachers more than others did. Accordingly, many non-Thai lecturers, especially Westerners found that it was important to conduct their teaching styles in an enjoyable or a fun way in order to encourage students' learning and make an interesting classroom atmosphere.

The avoidance of social confrontation is one of pervasive influences of Buddhist teaching as it 'places a positive religious value on the avoidance of emotional extremes, commitment and confrontation' (Klausner, 2000, p.253). It is very likely that Thais are expected not to show their negative feelings and disruptive emotions such as hate, anger, dislike, distrust, disagreement and annoyance. Accordingly, most Thais place great emphasis on maintaining a 'jai yen' (*chai yen*), literally meaning a 'cool heart', as to avoid losing temper (Mulder, 2000 & Klausner, 2000). As observed by Klausner (2000), this Thai behaviour is not regarded as highly valued by Westerners as for them it is not an offence to speak frankly, criticize and confront in an overt and public context; in fact these behaviours are a norm in a Western context. Accordingly, students from a collectivist culture tend to avoid confrontation with their teachers. Students also try not to cause teachers to lose face at any circumstance at school. Thai students' behaviour of *choei* (impassive or uninvolved) and seldom ask questions in a classroom is very likely to be observed by teaching staff. Different perceptions of lecture-based class between Western professors and Thai students significantly appear in the behaviour expected of student towards their teachers and learning. According to a report by Western professors, students have 'the expectation that university classes will be taught in a lecture format and their expected "response set" is to sit quietly and listen. Students expect that professors' notes will be written on handouts or overhead projections, but they expect also to take cursory notes during class' (George, 1987, p.11). As one Fulbright professor stated in relation to their teaching practice,

Thai emotional expression is rarely extreme. The Thais speak approvingly of the capacity for *jai yen* (cool heart). In contrast to our more assertive way of expressing ourselves, they are more moderate, less involved. Perhaps rooted in the Buddhist belief that the attainment of ultimate happiness is possible only with total detachment of the self from feelings and desires, the Thai keeps his emotional cool.

Body motions are restrained as well. Professors stand almost still as they lecture from the front of the class. They use overheads and tiny pointers on the projector rather than pointing motions or highlighting gestures. They rarely move to different quarters of the room. They quietly emphasize their points with firm restatement.

By contrast, I must appear like Phil Donahue brandishing his probing mike. They must think I prance around and wave my arms with exaggerating gesticulation. I motion to my main points on the screen or board, and my voice punctuates them. I'm sure the students feel I intrude into their space as I circulate observing their notes and that I violate their privacy as I call on them for response. (p. 11)

The problem here is that this level of cultural awareness is learned through trial and error rather than formal professional preparation for international teaching. To enhance English language curriculum, institutions often recruit native English speaking academics into their

international programs. However, this strategy is not without a risk. Cross-cultural teaching and learning require a mutual recognition between lecturers and students as ‘an individual within a different cultural setting’ as suggested by Ballard and Clanchy (1991, p.6). It was found that both lecturers and students had dismissive generalization about other cultures of both lecturers and students which were different from their own regarding their behaviour. According to Biggs (2003), some wrong but still widespread generalizations of international students by Western educators such as ‘rote learning and lacking critical thinking skills’ and ‘passive learner’ were traditionally demanded by students’ own culture especially, students who are from Confucian heritage cultures (CHCS) such as China, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore (p.125).

There was also likely to be a continuing debate among scholars as differences in those cultural values, norms and perspectives due to different traditional education systems are not easily understood. It is however significant to develop a respect for cultural differences and, as suggested by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, professors of international management studies, ‘respect is most effectively developed once we realize that most cultural differences are in ourselves, even if we have not yet recognized them’ (p. 198) Accordingly, those behaviours were classified and become rigid and they could disregard the significant reality of problems (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991, p.6). In this regard, a cross-cultural sensitivity will ease potential frustration, misunderstanding and disappointment within the context.

Formal education/schooling is highly valued in Thailand. Learning in Thailand is perceived as acquiring and retaining a body of knowledge. Thai students are traditionally trained to behave well depending on their role and status in society as ‘how well they behave is as important as the acquisition of academic qualifications and work. And the learning of ‘good behaviour’ is of special importance in Thailand’ (Caiger et. al, 1994, p.18-19). Traditionally, Thai education system places the responsibility for learning on the students and teachers are not accounted for their students’ failures and ‘poor teaching’ is likely to be dismissive in the case. Indirectly, teachers are not likely to be blamed for poor lessons. Teachers’ status indirectly protects them from students’ criticism. However, starting at opposite ends of this issue, Biggs and Mulder are working towards a similar conclusion that firstly, Thai students can and should be challenged and engaged in the classroom by teaching staff rather than forced to follow a traditional practices in the interests of ‘national cohesion’ or national identity building, which, as said, is the traditional objective of education in Thailand. In order to build

a robust university sector the educational experiences of primary and high school students must be enriched by a thorough coping reorientation of the teaching profession, teaching materials, and pedagogical practices. However, this presents a direct challenge to one of the pillars of the modern Thai nation state and to the ideals of loyalty and devotion to the king, nation and religion that were and are merely forced unquestioningly upon Thai schoolchildren.

However, maintaining social harmony is significant in every social setting in Thai society. The above three positive responses, *sanuk* interaction, *jaiyen* (*jaiyen*) and *choei* attitudes of Thais are commonly found in most behaviour as in the for 'relaxation in pleasurable' and 'they are probably also the very expressions of behaviour that give Thailand the reputation of being The Land of Smile, peopled by a kind of mythological individualists' (Mulder, 2000, p.67). These cultural factors are impacting upon the learning experience of students in both case studies particularly, the learning outcome/productivity of each situation.

Thus, we find a tension between 'Thai' practices and expectations and Western methods and educational aims. Traditional 'Thai' education practices were designed to educate and to preserve social order whereas today the country needs to educate a new generation of creative, independent and dynamic professionals who can compete in a global economy. In globally successful companies, hierarchical decision making structures were replaced by much flatter structures in the late twentieth century. Japan's adoption of 'Toyotism' to drive innovation in manufacturing mirrored the shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism in the West. Both transformations involved the modification of top-down decision making in relation to product design and workplace processes. Post-Fordism appreciates a more diversified culture in the organisation and suggests a 'flattened hierarchy' of authority to promote 'horizontal relationships' of team work. This requires workers who are flexible, negotiable, independent, creative and cross-cultural competent (Cope and Kalantzis, 1997, p.244). Information, theoretically at least could flow either upwards or downwards in an organisation allowing for better quality decisions. Importantly, for this to occur, staff lower down the management chain had to feel confident in approaching and if need to be criticising their superiors. This flexible information flow is also a lynchpin of modern quality assurance process and is reflected in quality assurance processes in Australian, British and American universities. Progressive pedagogical approaches in Western education systems, where they are applied, encourage students to feel confident in airing their ideas and in making criticisms. This, it is argued, forms part of a necessary foundation for a modern democratic society and liberal

economy. Such 'liberal' values find expression in some private and state educational institutions in Thailand but as the data collected for this research project indicates, the influence of traditional attitudes and practices remains strong, even amongst those students and academics most exposed to cultural and economic globalisation. As stated by an experienced Western academic in the *Bangkok Post's Mid-year Economic Review* (2004),

... the vast majority of Thai students continue to graduate from post-secondary studies without having been taught how to question, analyse and develop a structured response to a problem. This deficiency reduces their effectiveness in business and, more broadly as contributors to society as a whole.

### ***6.5 Global Aspirations***

There are two different types of interest/motivation between educational policy makers and educational institutions to achieve 'a benefit' of shifting into/being international education provider. It is creating a contradiction between 'aspiration' and 'reality' within Thai academic society/community. Student data lends weight to the argument that discerning students perceived enrolling in English-medium business graduate programs as a means to achieve personal economic-gained benefits for career advancement and to improve personal status in the society.

Thai international programs which use English as the sole medium of instruction do not present the 'answer' to the challenges of globalisation. Those concerns include having variation in English language proficiency of entry standard, weak sense of cross-cultural teaching and learning, emphasizing on only marketable subjects, weak integration of international program contents and lack of supportive environment within the institutions. These ambiguities cause student and institutional operation adjustment difficulties, teaching and learning in particular and often leave a potential gap in an international education sector especially lead into narrow attitudes towards real life working environment of students and graduates from international programs in Thailand. Surprisingly, non-Thai students, Chinese, who were obviously from Asian cultural background felt they were under stress adjusting themselves academically and socially in Thailand. Though new cultural adjustment of students is likely a responsibility of students, to some extent it is also an institution's obligation to provide international students with support structures in terms of 'social-cultural adjustment' to attract those full-fee payers (Biggs, 2003, p.121).

Considering the students role as a consumer or beneficiary who buys 'education as a product' (Silver and Silver, 1997, p.168), data lends weight to the argument that students were paying less attention to buying 'education as a process' in which they were engaging or participating in knowledge creation. At a practical level, the narrow focus of these programs leads into narrow attitudes towards real life working environment of students/graduates of the programs. The standard and justifiable criticism of traditional academic training is that graduating students, while masters of a body of academic knowledge, lacked the skills to put their knowledge into practice (Samudavanija, 2000, 40-42). Hence, the proliferation of vocational degree programs can be interpreted as a necessary response to the failings of traditional university education. But this does not justify the total abandonment of non-vocational values. The American university curriculum still emphasises the importance of the liberal arts and American university students are required to take electives from either the arts or sciences. Private liberal arts colleges prosper despite an intensely competitive environment for the 'student dollar'.

The student data suggested that student's attitude towards education has been changed as they considered educational qualification as an instrument for future career advancement and upgrading their personal status in society. In this regards, evidences were shown clearly in both student surveys (Question 10) and student interview data transcripts and some were quoted in the previous chapter. Instrumental approach on education as a means to gain higher income and status is quite clear according to the data obtained from students. Students perceived that higher qualification is better in terms of chances to gain not only higher income in the job market but also status (social recognition) in the society. Masters degree is apparently a formal standard among Thais' middle class. As observed by Komin (1990, p.64) "while higher income does not always necessarily indicate a higher education", it is likely for higher educated candidate to gain higher salary in the current job market in Thailand.

Employers are also acting as agents of education reform. Required skilled workers in today's Thailand employment market are different from the past. Higher degree qualifications and English competency of job candidates likely to be two most tangible quality for both employer and prospective employees. This statement was supported by the survey data addressed in the previous chapter and the literature reviewed in chapter two. International profession requires 'knowledge' and 'English language' to be able to work in an international climate. Accordingly, an international 'degree' is viewed by employers as a formal confirmation of 'knowledge'. It is recognized as a certificate of proficiency that can be



obtained formally from educational institutions with an added guarantee that the holder can communicate in English. Understandably in this regard, having a higher degree, masters degree in particular is increasingly attractive to current employers.

Considering data from literature review, chapter 2 (two) and student data result and analysis in chapter five (5), it is evident that student's attitude and perceptions towards a quality cross-cultural learning in the international programs were very limited/narrow due to the absences of a critical consciousness. The evidence in 5.4.2 points out the generalisations about classroom learning behaviours of Thai and Chinese students such as being passive, shy or *choei* (uninvolved) were perceived as 'normal' in students' Asian cultures and importantly students did not view these behaviours as a problem and there was no need to alter these behaviours. In addition, student evidence in 5.4.3 implied a lack of interest in social engagement which can be beneficial in terms of gaining intercultural understanding and English skills from other international students and teaching staff while pursuing their programs. Significantly, their perspectives regarding job prospects on how to become employable international professionals were also limited as students had only superficial view emphasizing on their expected benefits of English as the medium and institution's status in the market during the time of their studies (see 5.3.1).

In addition, a part of increasing demands of international higher education can be predicted from some completing Thai and non-Thai students from international schools which are obviously increasing in Thailand who choose to continue their international education at higher level in Thailand instead of going overseas. Fredrickson (2002) reported that there were already over 60 international schools in Bangkok in 2002 and some were being under the approval process from the government (*Bangkok Post*, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2002). Currently, higher degrees in business management-related qualifications (preferably Master degree) and English language skills are increasingly demanded in the job market in Thailand and these demands/requirements can be witnessed from most job advertisements in both well-known English and Thai newspapers of Thailand such as the *Bangkok Post*, *The Nation*, *Krungthepthurakij*, *Manager* and *Matichon*, etc. In addition, 'overseas qualification' or 'international degree' is advertised as 'an advantage' of a candidate.

In theory, globalisation tends to encourage integration of a community especially in a cross-cultural context. However, as discovered in both case studies, non-Thai students as a minority group such as Chinese students tended to prefer associating with other Chinese-speaking

students both inside and outside a classroom. Although it is natural for students with the same mother-tongue to group together academically and socially, as observed in other cross-cultural academic settings, this circumstance can discourage an integration among Thai and non-Thai students. This social aspect of internationalisation is in danger of being overlooked as universities pursue 'economic internationalisation' in education.

Commercialisation strongly stimulates competition in international education markets worldwide. Thai English degree programs respond to market demands by emphasizing business curriculum. Accordingly, universities are free to set their curricula and open new courses without seeking ministry approval, but would have to comply with ministry standards. Less marketable subjects such as arts, humanities and social science are not considered to be of commercial benefit because of the new commercial pressures. Business emphasis could contribute to loss of interest in local Thai traditional culture as learners and society used to perceive as valuable. There is a growing tendency for Thai traditional universities to set up separate sections/bodies as 'Business College' or 'School of Business' operating as 'private trading arms' to deal with business education services. These new establishments of business program providers tend to use old and well-known traditional universities to strengthen their market positions in the field.

### ***6.6 What then Constitutes an 'International' Program?***

The absence of any clear guidelines as to what constitutes an international program leads to wide variations in educational practice. Ashley Goldsworthy (2002) highlighted the 'demographic changes' of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which, increasingly, require a greater level of understanding changes driven by globalisation and technology in the knowledge economy. The modern world of global markets and instantaneous communication is not eliminating cultural difference. Cultures are not discreetly bounded systems, they are blurred at the edges and, frequently, the dominant beliefs, values, attitudes and norms within cultures are disputed and subject to strong external influences and challenges. Cultures are dynamic and changing rather than static systems, thus the acculturation of Western ideas and tastes should not be taken as an indication of nascent cultural homogeneity. Given this scenario, intercultural skills should be acknowledged as enduring and transferable intellectual assets in an otherwise 'liquid' world.

An effective curriculum for modern managers in international companies must incorporate a significant cultural dimension. Professionals must be prepared to face employment in a global world increasingly defined by the competing needs and demands of national and supranational agencies, transnational businesses, transnational civil society organisations, immigrant communities and multi-ethnic societies and by the social, economic and environmental consequences of poverty, political unrest and war. Educationalists must prepare graduates to meet these challenges, but also, according to Fazal Rizvi and Lucas Walsh, 'a framework of values and practices' 'awareness and appreciation of the politics of difference as the basis for developing the necessary skills and literacies for a changing world.' (Rizvi and Walsh, 1998, p.11). According to John Holm and Frank Vaughn, cited in an American Council on Education (ACE) report on the internationalisation of American tertiary education,

international business regards knowledge about other cultures, language skills, and knowledge of economic and political systems abroad to be the most important requirements ... even more important than knowledge of business practices, marketing skills, and international finance. (Hayward, 2000, p. 26.)

Yet, Thai universities persist in offering business programs that pay lip service at best to such significant elements of international business practice. Observations from one of experienced native English-speaking teaching staff in 5.5.1 highlighted not only the importance of local cultural context in the internationalised business curriculum but also the 'real' knowledge of local business environments and local management environment. The complete reliance of the teaching staff upon Western textbooks and materials is often counterproductive in the Asian context.

Thai students expected a higher standard of teaching from lecturers who came from English-speaking countries who were perceived as more knowledgeable and better English language role models. Students themselves had no clear views on the curriculum content or emphasis in their English-medium business graduate programs that their courses were relevant to the Thai or Asian business context was less important than the expectation they were improving the quality of their English communication and that they would acquire a recognised credential that would assist their careers. Students were focussed on attending lectures and accomplishing the assigned tasks in order to complete their degree. Although the benefits of 'cross-cultural' learning and interacting with other international students and teaching staff were students' desire and expectation before commencing the programs, students' attitudes

towards these benefits were weakening during their studies as they chose to mix with their own nationalities and speak their native languages. Maintaining in the comfort zone of students' own cultural groups, both inside and outside the classrooms, implies an institution's ineffective international perspective towards the process of internationalisation. Students should be encouraged to engage and relate themselves more in the provided international environment. Research data collected for this thesis strongly suggests that graduate business programs in Thailand are simply giving students what the university thinks students want. Yet internationalisation should be about changing attitudes towards cultural difference and promoting awareness of the risks of cultural ignorance. According to the conceptual and practical connections between cultural diversity and productivity proposed by Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis (1997), internationalisation in curriculum design should encompass three core elements:

- A university curriculum that educates students about cultural differences and which encourages students to enter different life-worlds through language, social interaction with a diverse student population, or study abroad.
- Increased access for disadvantaged students from third and fourth worlds, from within developed countries as well as less developed countries.
- A university-wide approach to teaching and learning that accommodates individual differences in learning styles and needs.

Modern or progressive management theorists assert that international managers or managers who confront cultural diversity at home must learn a new set of management skills. Flexibility, cultural empathy, patience, respect, linguistic ability, a strong sense of self, achieved by reflecting upon one's value-orientations are increasingly regarded as essential attributes of the competent global professional. Hence, the need to design curricula that imparts such skills – so often disparaged as 'soft' skills. This thesis argues that such skills are really 'hard edge' of knowledge-intensive business enterprise. Questions must be asked as to whether graduates from an 'international' program actually possess an international 'skill set' beyond the capacity to speak English. As Battersby (2003) states in relation to the work of Cope and Kalantzis (1997), intercultural capabilities can be defined and hence the teaching of these capabilities is amenable to monitoring. In the light of these considerations, a program might be deemed 'international' in content and focus when core curriculum imparts the following generic knowledge and skills;

- The ability to identify and interpret cultural differences
- The ability to learn independently about culture and cultural differences
- The ability to work with and lead a culturally diverse teams
- The ability to identify and harness cultural knowledge resources
- The ability to adjust quickly to working life in different cultural contexts
- The ability to network across cultural boundaries and build transnational ‘communities of practice’
- The ability to undertake research in different cultural contexts – decode culturally embedded verbal and behavioural signals (Battersby, 2003, P.59)

Attention must also be paid to the capabilities of students who complete ‘international’ programs. Lack of a formal cross-cultural training of teaching staff and student orientation creates difficulties in teaching and learning and general institutional environments of an international program. The skilled intercultural communicator is someone who intuitively knows the cultural orientation of the person with whom they are communicating. Such intuition can only be achieved by prolonged in-country experience or through the careful study of different cultures. For the modern manager, emphasis upon vocational university study and the pressing time demands of the workplace prohibit the acquisition of such knowledge. Hence the attractiveness of intercultural communication programs that purport to reveal the essential elements of world cultures in a few days or even hours. Frameworks for approaching cultural difference can be imparted in a relatively short period of time, but the danger with ‘fast-food’ culture study is that cultural generalisations can be misleading and ethnocentric. As Battersby writes,

The capacity to identify and harness tacit and explicit knowledge for example, is considered a major determinant of individual and organisational survival in the globalised world of fast capitalism. As knowledge networks replace the knowledge hierarchies of the industrial era, so students must learn to position themselves within multiple networks of knowledge generation and distribution extending beyond, and more frequently bypassing, the Anglo-American sphere. Students can learn to do this through a combination of experiential learning and explicit instruction in the arts of reflective practice (2003).

Jarvis (1992) regarded “learning is wider than education” (p.10) and it is a foundation of all human being. Learning begins with experiences for which they have no “preset responses” (p.15).

### ***6.7 Conclusion***

There have been ongoing discussions and much conceptual confusion in Thailand about international programs and English language programs in terms of their policies, rules, regulations and standards. The Ministry of Education’s policy on international programs is

still vague. For instance, apart from English language, an international program has the same rules, regulations and standards as a Thai language program. Higher education institutions that offer international degree/education prefer their programs to be called as 'international program' rather than 'English language program'. By and large, Thais perceive the term 'international' as modern and high status (Battersby). Significantly, Thais understand that anyone who involves in 'something international' is capable of using English, which is increasingly demanded by all industries in Thailand at the moment. Accordingly, the term 'international' confers better image/status among Thais.

Thai higher education institutions cannot deny two significant trends, internationalisation and competition stem from globalised economy. Higher education will not only be supplied on a national basis in a traditional way to local Thai students but it has shifted its supply towards greater scales, regional and international scales by offering English language degree programs to both Thai and non-Thai students. Thai institutions have joined an international education market as a result of market-driven dominance and since Thai government's support role is shrinking financially. Consequently, institutions are now internationalising themselves rigorously as they realize in the long- time success of higher institutions in Western countries and want to share the success by providing international programs at a cheaper rate.

The current international education market of business education in Thailand is very fierce and it is very difficult to distinguish one from the others as the majority of programs and services have been duplicated from those mentioned English-speaking countries. This is how the role of status/image/branding becomes significant when students are trying to differentiate those business programs in the market. Every institution is trying to build and differentiate its own brand in the market and as Temporal (2000) suggested "the only way to break out of the mould (commodity status) is by incorporating value into consumers' perceptions of the product or service" (p. 11). However, he also maintains that "brands still fulfil the basic function of differentiation today" (Temporal, 2000, p.21).

Global and local changes create international education market in Thailand. Thai higher education institutions have been responding to both local and global demands for international education and the current Thai international programs which use English degree programs exemplify international education products and services. It is evident that there are significant driving factors such as funding, status, recognition and cultural influence that stimulate Thai higher education systems to enter international education markets. English language master

degree programs of both local and international arrangements are set to be of mutual benefits of all participants in the process. Students in this aspect are expected to be the most important beneficiaries of the process. (Eventually, enabling a student to receive a recognized degree tends to be a powerful resolution).

At a practical level, the narrow focus of these programs leads into narrow attitudes towards real life working environment of students/graduates of the programs. There are two different types of interest/motivation between educational policy makers and educational institutions to achieve 'a benefit' of shifting into/being international education provider. It is creating a contradiction between 'aspiration' and 'reality' within Thai academic society/community. Student data lends weight to the argument that discerning students perceived enrolling in English-medium graduate programs as a means to achieve personal economic-gained benefits for career advancement and to improve personal status in the society. Education should/must correspond to local values of Thai people and their lifestyles, society and identity. Lacking of a continuation of quality monitoring mechanism of the nation, education can then be only accepted as a commodity/product to be bought and sold in the international market elsewhere between institutions and students/fee-payers.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

### ***7.1 Introduction***

The impacts of globalisation, defined as the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas across national borders, vary according to a country's history, traditions, cultures and priorities. There is a close and dynamic relationship between globalisation and internationalising practices associated with higher education in Thailand. This thesis has mapped out the scope of internationalisation in Thailand's higher education system drawing upon evidence from two popular English-medium business graduate programs. The impacts of economic globalisation on higher education in Thailand and upon Thai society were much more widespread and intense following the country's economic boom of the 1980s and 90s. Policies were changed to make education more compatible with the demands of a free market economy. Internationalisation of education and globalisation interweave in powerful and dynamic ways. English-medium business graduate programs, as a part of internationalisation of higher education practices, are booming. Many Thai higher education institutions have adopted an enterprise culture and have made profits from their activities.

The catalyst for Thailand's new wave of reforms in higher education was the financial crisis of July 1997. Since then, social and economic development policies have focussed on the development of human potential, sustainable communities, and a balanced holistic approach to economic growth. Human development, as a concept and as a policy objective, must encompass the economic, social and cultural dimensions of human life. However, the economic downturn forced the Thai government to rethink the country's past development strategy, especially in terms of 'international competitiveness' (Fry 2002, p.18). The government realized the importance of the quality of workforce and identified skilled labour shortage (knowledge worker) and English language as two priorities for national development towards international competitiveness. Internationalisation with a heavy emphasis upon economic values, thus became a key objective of higher education in Thailand with English language learning as a key element. Currently the Thai Ministry of Education (MoE) is adopting a 'piecemeal' approach to internationalisation allowing market forces to drive structural change. However, such an approach seems at odds with the holistic aims of balanced growth and the full development of human potential as advocated in the philosophy of self-sufficiency. Further, the importation of curricula based upon US models of business



education threatens to stunt the development of a more appropriate localised ‘Thai’ response to the challenges of globalisation.

### ***7.2 Market-Driven Internationalisation***

Research findings indicate the popularity of English-medium business graduate programs in Thailand comes from the pressures of current job market and the social value of status. Students are mainly interested in vocational aspects of their studies, and are less motivated to pursue knowledge for its own sake. The majority of Thai students did not take advantage of English communication and cross-cultural benefits that academic and social engagements with international teaching staff and student colleagues offered them. It is a disappointing outcome as the opportunity to express themselves in English and network internationally were the two main desired expectations of students *before* they entered the programs selected for this thesis. Research findings indicate that students’ primary interest was in graduating with a “brand name international degree”. Consequently, there is a close link between institutional status and personal status among students.

Obtaining an ‘international degree’ for vocational or occupational reasons was perceived as a mark of personal prestige in Thai society and a better vehicle for advancement in the employment market. In addition, access to an ‘international degree’ is limited to wealthy students who choose to study in Thailand rather than at Western universities. As a result, the English-medium business graduate programs in Thailand are likely to be a niche for wealthy students. The idea of considering ‘education as a product’, ‘university as seller or provider’ and ‘student as buyer’ was common among students. They admitted that they were buying a brand name product of high quality at a price they could afford. In return, they expected an ‘international’ masters degree from a well-known institution so as to confirm their social status as elite.

Image is a very important aspect of Thai society, a collectivist culture as it means ‘face’ and ‘quality’. The English-medium business graduate program providers are well aware of this fact. Consequently, it seems that the Thai higher education is more concerned with the repositioning and branding international education market rather than seeking a more balanced growth of professional development of higher education sector in the context of Thai society. The English degree programs in Thailand have become a niche market for wealthy students seeking ‘international qualifications’.

Temporal (2000) suggests that ‘niche-markets’ are good ‘because they can be profitable. People are often prepared to pay more for a special branded product or service that meets their particular needs, aspirations, or lifestyles’ (p. 185). The emergence of English-medium business degree programs in Thailand can be seen as a positive step towards educating a more globally literate managerial class in Thailand. English language degree programs or as so-called international programs in Thailand have however been developed within a Thai-speaking environment. Institutions’ social environments have made it difficult for Thai students and especially for those students who come from China and Vietnam to express themselves in a regular English-speaking environment, particularly outside the classroom. It appears that educational institutions have neither ongoing English language support for learners nor a compulsory program as a part of their curriculum. This lack of English language support programs discourages students from using English. This similar situation has also happened in one of popular English-speaking countries for international degree like Australia. Many international students come to Australian universities not just only for the degrees they provide but also for English language immersion (Marginson & McBurnie, 2004). However, it should be noted that Australian universities also lack satisfactory English-language support services for international students, many of whom struggle as a consequence.

Though English language was used as the sole medium of instruction of the international program and students were supposed to use English at all times within the institutions, it was only used during the class time to communicate with non-Thai staff and non-Thai students. The data from the previous chapter lends weight to the argument that students were not adequately encouraged to communicate in English as primarily/practically required by both students and institutions. Institutions did not encourage staff and students enough to communicate in English. According to the data reported by one of the Thai students, the proportion of using English to communicate within the institution was as small as 30 per cent. In addition, English language-related activities and learning supports were not adequately provided by the studied institutions.

While global forces are affecting Thai higher education, there are also many pressures for changes coming from within Thailand. Thai public universities are dealing with budget constraints, (indirectly) forcing them to become ‘autonomous/semi-private universities’ while Western off-shore degree programs have expanded. Though the Thai government’s educational policy and planning are still undeveloped and are not adequately enforced, it

would seem that some international programs both in collaboration with foreign universities and offering by Thai own institutions are running smoothly.

Graduates who are fluent in English have a critical advantage when applying for jobs in international companies. According to the research data presented in chapter five, student respondents overwhelmingly perceived that graduating from English language degree programs will enhance their career prospects and strengthen their professional curriculum vitas (CVs). With the increasing demand to prepare graduates who can work comfortably in the global marketplace (English-speaking environment), higher education institutions in Thailand have been offering international degree programs taught in English. This trend is also driven by the desire to compete for international students with academic institutions in Australia, USA, Canada and the UK.

It appears that the majority of students enrolled in the English language program are Thais and Chinese. This circumstance has made it more difficult for them to compete with students from Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia or India who have good English skills. Students who have English as a foreign language require a stronger institutional support for developing English language skills. During this research, I observed that the institutional environment was not inviting or encouraging enough for students to communicate in English due to the dominant cultural group of Thai students as the majority. Undoubtedly, Thai students were more comfortable to communicate in Thai, as they tended to group themselves according to their own mother-tongue language and culture even for academic work and social functions.

However, the rapidly changing context of Thai policies on higher education raises urgent concerns about educational quality, appropriate international quality assurance processes, teacher status and internationalised curriculum design. International degree programs, both managed by Thais in collaboration with Western institutions and others managed by Western institutions with minimal Thai participation, are part of the Thai government's internationalisation strategy designed to achieve internationally recognised standard in higher education. Both types of international programs raise questions about who is or should be responsible for program quality.

There is an explicit Thai government policy to encourage foreign institutions to provide education services in Thailand (Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) document, 1999). Evidently, the government supports the provision of off-shore degree programs from the

English-speaking countries offering double degree or dual degree as a way to precipitate internationalisation. There are serious risks associated with reliance upon Western institutions to self-monitor quality of programs run in cooperation with Thai universities. The production of “new knowledge” is not, as yet, observed as a priority for the country (Sinlarat, 2004). However, it needs to be recognized that because of a profit motivation, there is the danger that some Western universities might be tempted to offer programs with low prestige and of poor quality leading to ‘worthless’ qualifications (Altbach, 1999). It is the responsibility of the Thai government to reform education and redefine higher education priorities with regard to the needs and interests of Thai students. This cannot be achieved by simply abandoning the sector to global market forces.

However, many issues, from strategic to operational levels, occur during the marketing and delivery arrangements and day-to-day classroom circumstances, that still remain ambiguous such as entry requirements, language competency, levels of institutional support and program content to suit to Thai context. Western educators tend to offer the best practice for internationalisation, which works well in their countries. So far, there is no clear evidence that the same practice can work well in the Thai context. Many of these factors have created a dilemma for Thai institutions and put them in a difficult position as they are not certain whether to challenge or to follow the domination of the existing notion of being ‘competitive’ in the global education market.

### ***7.3 Culturally Informed Internationalisation***

It is clear that the Ministry of Education’s policy in its current state struggles to state clearly the Thai government’s understanding of internationalisation. Lacking in the Ministry’s approach is a thorough investigation of the ideas that frame internationalisation in the Thai context. Firstly, internationalisation tends, in practice, to be conflated with marketisation, when clearly the two are distinct but related concerns. Secondly, from a curriculum perspective, in practice internationalisation involves the introduction of international case studies into generic business courses. Thirdly, culture and cultural knowledge are reduced to peripheral issues to be addressed at the level of social events rather than overt classroom instruction in teaching method.

International programs, to be genuinely international should not be divorced from their local socio-cultural contexts. Internationalisation does not mean simply adopting ideas, practices

and styles from Western institutions but instead requires careful thought and planning by policy makers and educators to establish pedagogical bridges between the global and local. In Asian perspective, formal education in relation to cultural value plays a significant role in a society, as it is a “connections for success” (Caiger et. al, 1994, p.18). Data from the previous chapter suggested that the level of Thai cultural value to contribute through this demand and supply process were very low and disregarded. In addition, through a literature search and a researcher’s field works, a Thai cultural value issue is not truly supported in both national and institution’s policy and practice. Data from program coordinators and executives of two participating institutions also suggests clearly that their strategic plans were to expand their English-medium business graduate programs by any possible forms of cooperation overseas, targeting mobile students from Thailand’s neighbouring countries, India, China, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, etc. Naturally, Asian students from these countries are already a majority of non-Thai students at Thai institutions. Recruitment of fee-payer (regardless of nationality, both Thai and non-Thai) can be implicitly understood as the most obvious activity within the internationalisation frame as stated in the literature review chapter. While many disagree with the statement that “education is a commodity” and a product/service that can be bought and sold, this does not seem to be true in Thailand.

This thesis argues that Thai academic leaders and education policy makers have to expand their thinking about how Thai education can be internationalised in a fashion most appropriate for Thailand. As Marginson observes, the mere adoption of Western business education models, texts and practices does not guarantee the achievement of Western standards of living or prosperity. Having ‘Western structures’ but ‘Eastern contents’ in this cross-cultural academic setting of Thai higher education as observed by George (1987) does not necessarily mean that Thai institutions have to borrow Western curricula in order to compete internationally and educate global professionals. However, a more engaging method of teaching is essential to deal with a cross-cultural resistance in the classroom. It is important for both teaching staff and students to explore and open themselves into the differences in cultural concepts, values, perspectives and behaviours and create their own (Thai) solution to deal with those challenges.

Rather than rejecting Thai culture as an obstacle to learning, educators must be able to accommodate cultural differences within their teaching practice. Significant Thai culture-specific values and practices such as status, *krengjai* (consideration), *choei* or *jai yen*, (avoidance of face-to-face confrontation avoidance of straightforward negative

feedback/strong criticisms), *sanuk* or 'fun' attitude towards work, still play their roles and functions in both the bureaucratic and academic community (Klausner, 2000). These are important culturally defined behaviours of Thai students based on their status, seniority, power and rank which are moulded by these social relationships. In many ways, they are also reflections of Buddhist teachings as highlighted and explained in chapter two (2), especially; *Karma*, 'Middle-Path/Self-Sufficiency' and *Bunghun*. Thais have inherited them from generations to generations. These ideas and values have relevance to international education management in Thailand because they influence behaviours at all levels of the process of internationalisation. For instance, George (1987, p.15), argued that 'status' is a form of cultural preservation that sets out socially sanctioned steps for searching promotion in society at large and within organisations. Education should correspond to local values, lifestyles, society and identity. At the same time, there is a pressing need to accommodate the demands of a global economy where hierarchical decision making is becoming outmoded and where organisations are developing 'flatter' more inclusive decision-making structures.

Quality in education is a vexed topic. Difficulties arise in establishing international quality benchmarks when quality in education is influenced by local cultural and institutional factors. The issue of educational standards and quality assurance is always stated as a top priority by the Ministry of Education and it is clearly stated in Thailand's National Education Act of 1999. Quality assurance processes have to be implemented at all educational levels covering, academic programs, research and scholarship, staffing, students, infrastructure and academic environment. Research findings reveal a slow pace of the government's quality monitoring process to regulate growing English-medium business graduate program provision. The quality of many of English-medium business graduate programs is currently being judged by employers in the market and by students' own perception. The absence of a quality mechanism that measures educational standards in terms of the international content of 'international' programs leaves markets pressures alone to determine what should be taught.

Internationalisation, as an aspect of higher education policy, should be all-encompassing. However, for any policy on internationalisation to be effective, it must establish guidelines that address all of the issues listed above. Importantly, the question of access must also be addressed. Historically, elitism and education in Thailand have had a close connection. Today, elitism is still reflected in the context of English-medium business graduate programs which are open only to those with the ability to pay. While this thesis argues that such

program represent a major step forward in adapting Thai higher education to a globalising world, the benefits delivered are open only to a small section of society.

Internationalisation of higher education in Thailand is based on cooperation and competition locally and internationally. It seems that the internationalisation strategies in which the Thai government is currently operating are: international cooperation and international competition. There has not yet been defined a rigid pattern of the practice, but apparently what works in the market place is what is a preferred pattern among stakeholders, institutions in particular. This can be considered as a risky strategy, in the long term, for the Thai government especially if the marketisation has not been managed systematically.

How can Thai higher education map out its own future under the process of internationalisation? This requires an internationalised curriculum of the education system that is developing not only for Thai students, but also for the benefits of Thailand as a country. Universities should encourage students to learn how to learn to be creative, innovative and independent in thinking. The real valuable educational payoff in the context of English-medium business graduate programs should also come from students' own efforts that develop towards their intellectual growth and creativity in line with understanding of global changes. This requires 'attitudes' rather than 'methods' developed towards cross-cultural teaching and learning of institutions particularly the teaching staff. Building the 'international professional' from collectivist society like Thailand requires a 'new attitude' of educators to challenge and create an 'individualistic learner' who is prepared to think critically in relation to global, political, economic and social issues and trends. Importantly, such 'individualistic learners' in the Thai context would have a sense of their cultural origins and the cultural foundations of their society and be able to conceive the educational and career aspiration from a uniquely Thai cultural perspective. Such a model of internationalisation would help Thailand to develop an education system with Thai and Asian characteristics, relevant to the local context and not slavishly devoted to imported ideas and curricula.

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# APPENDICES

## *Appendix 1: Plain Language Statement*

### PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

Dear Participant,

My name is Supaporn Chalapati. I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Language and International Studies within the Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services at RMIT University. I would like to invite you to participate in my Ph.D. research project, **'Seeking Assurances: Program Quality and the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Thailand – Case Studies of two Thai universities.**

This project will investigate Thai government policy on the internationalisation of Higher Education as this affects international degree programs in Thailand. Two universities in Bangkok have been chosen for this study. The scope of my work encompasses institutional policy on international degree programs, cultural difference in teaching and learning, internationalised curricula, and quality assurance.

The project will collect documentary data on international degree programs, non-participant observational data from classrooms and the institutional environment, individual and group interviews with students, teaching staff and administrators. I would also like to circulate questionnaires to students. Each participant will be expected to participate as following details:

- 25-30 students at each university will be asked to complete questionnaires (22 questions by 15 minutes)
- 25-30 students at each university will be interviewed individually, open-ended questions, 45 minutes each and follow by 2 focus group interviews (6 students in each)
- 4 lecturers (2 Thais and 2 non-Thais) at each university will be interviewed individually, 1 hour each.
- 1-2 program leaders/ the dean, 2 administrators and 2 librarians at each university will also be interviewed individually, 1 hour each.

All participants will be given proposed questions in advance and interviews will be tape-recorded.

All data thus collected will remain the property of the researcher and will not be used for any purpose except for completion of this Ph.D. thesis. Participants' names will not be mentioned in the thesis or any subsequent publication.

I assure you of the following:

- You will remain anonymous to everyone except the research team;
- Any information provided by you will be used solely within this project;
- Only myself and my supervisors, Dr. Paul Battersby and Dr. Christopher Ziguras will have access to the raw data.

- You are free to withdraw from the project at any time and to request that unprocessed data be returned to you and not used as source material.

I look forward to your participation in this research project and thank you for your assistance. Should you have any questions please contact either Dr. Paul Battersby, Dr. Christopher Ziguras or myself at the address below.

Dr. Paul Battersby &/or Dr. Christopher Ziguras, Department of Language and International Studies, Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services, RMIT University, City campus, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne 3001, Victoria, Australia. Tel. +61 3 99254403 Fax. +61 3 99254404. Email: [paul.battersby@rmit.edu.au](mailto:paul.battersby@rmit.edu.au) &/or [christopher.ziguras@rmit.edu.au](mailto:christopher.ziguras@rmit.edu.au).

Supaporn Chalapati, Unit 9/99 Ballantyne St., Thornbury, Vic.3071, Australia. Tel. 61-03-94167175. Email: [schalapati@hotmail.com](mailto:schalapati@hotmail.com).

Supaporn Chalapati

Any queries or complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, RMIT, GPO Box 2476v, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 99251745.

## *Appendix 2: Quantitative Data Research Findings*

Table 1: Work experience of students surveyed

<b>work experience in years</b>	<b># of students</b>	<b>Percent</b>
2	10	16.7
1	7	11.7
3	4	6.7
6	3	5.0
2.5	3	5.0
8	2	3.3
4	2	3.3
20	1	1.7
12	1	1.7
10	1	1.7
9	1	1.7
7	1	1.7
5	1	1.7
0.6	1	1.7
0.5	1	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>65.0</b>

Q. 11 Which of the following aspects of education are most important to you?

Table2: Important Aspects of International Business Education: Student Assessment

<b>Aspects/Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>
The importance of...			
Good teaching	4.58	5.00	5
Program content	4.60	5.00	5
Fairness of grading	3.86	4.00	5
Having a variety of courses	4.02	4.00	4
Having access to lecturers	3.60	4.00	4
Having small class sizes	3.97	4.00	4
Good class timetables	4.03	4.00	5
Good library facilities	4.00	4.00	4
Having good computer laboratories	3.98	4.00	5
Good car parking facilities	3.35	4.00	4
Good natural and physical environment (garden, etc.)	3.27	3.00	3
Having health services	2.82	3.00	3
Having social cultural activities	3.10	3.00	4
Career guidance	3.70	4.00	4
Pre-enrolment advice	3.63	4.00	4
International Student Office (non-Thai students only)	4.42	5.00	5
Recognition of the university by my government	3.92	4.00	4
Recognition of the university by a potential employer	3.98	4.00	4

Q.12 How important were these factors in your decision to choose this international postgraduate program in Thailand?

Table 3: Deciding Factors for University Choice

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>
Status of university	4.17	4.00	4
Standard of program	4.35	5.00	5
Comparatively cheap fee	3.40	3.00	3
Safe place to study	3.67	4.00	4
Availability of information	3.75	4.00	4
Recognition of qualification	4.42	5.00	5
Ease of obtaining student visa (for non-Thai student)	4.08	4.00	5
Ability to work legally	3.46	4.00	5
Ease of entry to university	3.37	3.00	3
Climate	3.05	3.00	4
Ease of gaining exemption credit	3.15	3.00	3
Lifestyle	3.20	3.00	4
Low level of racism	3.08	3.00	3
Availability of scholarship	3.00	3.00	3
Time to complete program	3.97	4.00	4

#### **Experience of the Program of Participants:**

Q.13 How satisfied are you with these aspects of your current international program?

Table 4: Aspects of International Program

<b>Program Aspects</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>
International(ised) curriculum	3.61	4.00	4
Subject content	3.73	4.00	4
International lecturers	3.69	4.00	4
Thai lecturers	3.61	4.00	4
Teaching style	3.54	4.00	4
University reputation	3.92	4.00	4

Q.14 How satisfied are you with your university's facilities?

Table 5: University's Facilities

<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>
Library	3.14	3.00	4
Parking	2.76	3.00	3



Canteen	2.66	3.00	3
Computer lab	3.27	4.00	4
Classroom equipment	3.63	4.00	4
Health services	2.72	3.00	3

Q.15 Please comment on the following statements about your program.

Table 6: Student Views on Key Aspects of a Program

Statements	Mean	Median	Mode
I really like this program as it is exciting and relevant.	3.78	4.00	4
Lecturers/seminars are relevant to my professional needs.	3.77	4.00	4
The text and readings are relevant and easy to understand.	3.65	4.00	4
International program lecturers are knowledgeable.	3.85	4.00	4
Thai lecturers are well equipped to teach in this program.	3.78	4.00	4
International lecturers are well equipped to teach.	3.82	4.00	4
English spoken by Thai staff is easy to understand.	3.66	4.00	4
English spoken by non-Thai staff is easy to understand.	3.87	4.00	4
Assessment in this program is too much and too difficult.	3.07	3.00	3
The other students in this program are very friendly.	3.87	4.00	4
This program contains sufficient international content.	3.80	4.00	4
This international program will advance my career.	4.10	4.00	4

### About English Language:

Q.16 Did you complete a special preparatory English course at the start of this program?

Over half of students (56.7%) had a special preparatory English course at the start of this program and with less than half (43.3%) did not do it. For those 34 students (56.7%) who did the English course, over half (30%) of students reported that the English course was 'good', 11 students (18.3%) reported as 'so-so', 4 students (6.7%) reported as 'bad' and only one student (1.7%) reported as 'fair'.

Q.17 What was your English score when applying for this postgraduate program?

- IELTS = 2 students (score: 5.5, 6)
- TOEFL = 9 students (score: 630, 585, 560, 550(2), 543, 525, 223, 206)

- TOEIC = 2 students (score: 940, 560)
- Institution own test = 10 students
- 37 students did not answer this question.

Q.18 Do you take supplementary English tuition outside your normal university studies?

Majority of students (88.3%) did not take supplementary English tuition outside their normal university studies. There were only 7 students (11.7%) did take it from both international program college and locally-owned and managed language school.

Q.19 How much English do you use in speaking with the following people at university?

Table 7: Use of English

People/%	0-19 1	20-39 2	40-59 3	60-79 4	80-99 5	100 6	Mean	Median	Mode
Friends	32	13	5	5	3	2	2.00	1.00	1
Lecturers	2	9	8	12	15	14	4.18	4.00	5
Tutors	24	7	5	8	4	7	2.67	2.00	1
Librarians	43	6	2	1		8	1.88	1.00	1
Administrators	38	8	4	2		8	2.03	1.00	1

Q.20 What proportion of your assessment was completed in English?

Table 8: Proportion of assessments completed in English

Proportion	All 6	90% 5	75% 4	50% 3	25% 2	None 1	Mean	Median	Mode
Frequency	21	8	16	13	2		4.55	4.00	6

Q.21 Would you recommend this program to other students?

Table 9: Recommendation of Program

Definitely Yes 5	Probably Yes 4	Definitely No 3	Probably No 2	Not Sure 1	Mean	Median	Mode
15	40	1	1	3	4.05	4.00	4

Q.22 Overall, how satisfied are you with this international program?

Table 10: Overall Program Satisfaction

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very satisfied	4	6.7
Satisfied	47	78.3
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7	11.7
Dissatisfied	1	1.7
Very dissatisfied	1	1.7
Total:	60	100.0

Note: Mean = 3.87

Median = 4.00

Mode = 4

*Appendix 3: Student Questionnaire*

**RMIT University**  
**Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services**  
**Department of Language and International Studies**

**International Program Experience Questionnaire**

**Section 1.**  
**About Your Background**

1. Gender
  - Male
  - Female
  
2. How old are you?
  - Under 25
  - 26-35
  - 36-45
  - Over 46
  
3. Who provides most financial support to you? Please tick one.
  - Self
  - Family
  - Combination
  - Scholarship
  
4. What is your monthly income?
  - Baht 30,000 and above
  - Baht 25,000-29,000
  - Baht 20,000-24,000
  - Baht 15,000-19,000
  - Baht 14,000 and below
  
5. What is your nationality?
  - Thai
  - Other (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)
  
6. What international postgraduate program are you enrolled in?
  - Master degree of Business Administration (MBA)  
By course work only

- Master degree of Business Administration (MBA)  
By course work + thesis
- Master degree of Management,  
Major \_\_\_\_\_  
By course work only
- Master degree of Management,  
Major \_\_\_\_\_  
By course work + thesis

7. What year did you start this program?

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8. Before starting this program, did you have any professional work experience in any organizations?

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes', for how many years? \_\_\_\_\_ years

9. Are you currently working?

- Yes
- No

**Section 2.**  
**About Your General Decision-making Process**

10. Why did you choose to study in an English language program rather than Thai program? (Option to respond in Thai)

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## About Quality Education

11. Which of the following aspects of education are most important to you?

The scale is from 1 to 5 where *1* indicates the item is *not at all important* and *5* indicating it is *very important* to you. Please circle a number for each statement. *If you have not circled a number, put a 'tick' in Never thought about it.*

	<i>Not at all</i> important			<i>Very</i> important		<i>Never thought</i> about it
The importance of...						
• good teaching	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• program content	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• fairness of grading	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• having a variety of courses	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• having access to lecturers	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• having small class sizes	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• good class timetables	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• good library facilities	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• having good computer laboratories	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• good car parking facilities	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• good natural and physical environment (such as gardens, space, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• having health services	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• having social cultural activities	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• career guidance	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• pre-enrolment advice	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• International Student Office	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
(answer this question only if you are an international student)						
• having recognition of the university by my government	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]
• having recognition of the university by my potential employer	1	2	3	4	5	[ ]

12. How important were these factors in your decision to choose this international postgraduate program in Thailand? Please tick one box for each statement.

	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Slightly important</b>	<b>Moderately important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very important</b>
Status of university	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Standard of program	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Comparatively cheap fee to study	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Safe place to study	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Availability of information	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Recognition of qualification	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Ease of obtaining a student visa (for non-Thai student)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Ability to work legally	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Ease of entry to university	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Climate	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Ease of gaining exemption/credit	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Lifestyle	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Low level of racism	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Availability of scholarship	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Time to complete Program	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

### Section 3. About Your Experience of the Program

13. How satisfied are you with these aspects of your current international program?

Please tick one box for each.

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
International curriculum	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Subject content	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
International lecturers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Thai lecturers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Teaching style	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
University reputation	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

14. How satisfied are you with your university's facilities?

Please tick one box for each.

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Library	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Parking	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Canteen	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Computer lab	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Classroom equipment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Health services	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]



15. Please comment on the following statements about your program.  
Please tick one box for each statement.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I really like this program which is exciting and relevant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lectures/seminars are relevant to my professional needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The text and readings are relevant and easy to understand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lecturers in this international program are knowledgeable and up-to-date.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thai lecturers are well equipped to teach in this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International lecturers are well equipped to teach in this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The English spoken by the Thai staff is easy to understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The English spoken by the non-Thai staff is easy to understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The assessment in this program is too much and too difficult.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The other students in this program are very friendly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This program contains sufficient international content.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This international program will advance my career.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## About English Language

16. Did you do a special preparatory English course at the start of this program?

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes', how good was this English course?

- Very good
- Good
- So-so
- Fair
- Bad

17. What was your English score when applying for this international postgraduate program?

- IELTS, score\_\_\_\_\_
  - TOEFL, score\_\_\_\_\_
  - Others (please specify)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Score/level\_\_\_\_\_

18. Do you take supplementary English tuition outside your normal university studies?

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes', where and in what kind of English program do you study?

- International program college (ie. British Council)
- Special university program
- Locally-owned and managed language school
- Other:\_\_\_\_\_

19. How much English do you use in speaking with the following people at university?

	0–19%	20–39%	40–59%	60–79%	80–99%	100%
Friends	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Lecturers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Tutors	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Librarians	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Administrators	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

20. What proportion of your assessment was completed in English?

- All
- 90%
- 75%
- 50%
- 25%
- None

21. Would you recommend this program to other students?

- Definitely Yes
- Probably Yes
- Definitely No
- Probably No
- Not Sure

22. Overall, how satisfied are you with this international program?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

***Thank you for your help!***

#### *Appendix 4: Interview Schedule*

**RMIT University**  
**Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services**  
**Department of Language and International Studies**

#### **Interview Schedule: Student Perceptions of International Masters Program**

*These questions are a guide. The interview may explore these areas in more depth or other areas, depending on the relevance to the project.*

1. Why did you choose to study this international degree program?
2. Do you think subjects are being taught to suit your needs and to benefit your future career? Please explain your answer.
3. How do you find the teaching and learning environment in the classroom?
4. What do you think about the course assessment? (fair, unfair, difficult, easy, good combination of tasks e.g. 50% written exam + 50% assignment)
5. Do you think your international degree will help you to find a job more easily? Why?
6. What do you like and dislike most about this program?
7. Do you have any difficulties communicating in English inside and outside the class?
8. How would you rate your school? And please give reason(s)?  
Very good, Good, Fair, Poor
9. How well has your class been functioning in the teaching and the learning of a program?
10. What do you expect before taking this program? And what do think about it now?
11. Does an international program in Thailand mean any program taught in English? (It does not mean that the curriculum, faculty or students are international in content, quality or design, only that the 'language' of instruction is in theory, English)
12. How often do you approach your lecturers/supervisors ? And what do you do when they are not available?
13. Are you satisfied with library services (book reserves, database, computers, etc.) Yes/  
No, could you tell me reasons...
14. Please tell me one of the subjects you are not satisfied with, why?

15. Do you have any suggestions that you would like to give relating to your studies at this university?
16. Please tell me one of the subjects you are very satisfied with. What are your reasons?
17. Please tell me one of the subjects you are NOT satisfied with. What are your reasons?
18. Are there other matters you would like to raise?

**RMIT University**  
**Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services**  
**Department of Language and International Studies**

**Interview Schedule: Dean/Course Co-ordinator/Program Leader's Perspective on International Masters Program**

*These questions are a guide. The interview may explore these areas in more depth or other areas, depending on the relevance to the project.*

1. Do you have any plans to expand your postgraduate international programs domestically or internationally? (Where? And when?)
2. What programs are they? Why?
3. Where are your potential target markets? Why?
4. Currently, English is being used as the sole medium of instruction in international programs. Have you ever experienced any difficulties regarding English competence between teaching staff and students?
5. And do you have any plans to promote other languages?
6. Do all degree programs which are currently being offered in your institution (both with and without foreign links) have newly developed curriculums? And how is the standard criteria set?
7. Who do you think is the most potent competitor for Thai universities at the moment?
8. According to some observations by Western educational provider in transnational education, Thailand is not attractive to invest in when comparing to Singapore or Malaysia. What do you think it should be the main reasons?
9. So far, do you think your policy on international program has been implemented? Please explain.
10. Do you think all forms of foreign educational provision in Thailand should be encouraged? Why? Why not?
11. What are positive points/negative points of this cooperation?
12. Have you ever encountered any difficulties with the negotiation and/or management of your university's international programs?
13. Are there other matters you would like to raise?

14. Have you ever encountered any difficulties with the negotiation and/or management of your university's international programs?
15. Are there other matters you would like to raise?

**RMIT University**  
**Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services**  
**Department of Language and International Studies**

**Interview Schedule: Lecturer's Perspective on International Masters Program**

*These questions are a guide. The interview may explore these areas in more depth or other areas, depending on the relevance to the project.*

1. What do you understand by the term 'curriculum internationalisation'?
2. Do you think that curriculum internationalisation is a priority at your university?  
Please explain.
3. Do you think cross-cultural differences affect relations between Thai & foreign staff/  
foreign staff & Thai students? Please explain.
4. Do you find your students' English capabilities  
\_\_\_excellent            \_\_\_very good  
\_\_\_good                \_\_\_fair, or \_\_\_poor?  
Briefly explain your rating.
5. To what extent do you think that this international program has prepared students for  
professional employment in a globalised workplace?
6. To what extent do you consider the present textbooks and materials used in this  
program to be adequate to reach international standard?  
\_\_\_Adequate            \_\_\_Inadequate  
Please briefly explain.
7. To what extent do you consider this international cooperation can bring benefits to the  
university? And please specify who will benefit most?
8. How would you define 'quality' in an international education context?
9. Do you think that the Thai government's concern with quality assurance in higher  
education is justified?
10. Can educational quality be measured statistically?
11. Should Thai universities employ quality assurance measures developed in Australia,  
the UK or US or should they devise their own?
12. To what extent do you think international cooperation between universities



can affect Thai national identity? Please explain.

13. Do you think Thai and non-Thai students treat you with the same level of respect?

How? What do you mean by 'respect'?

14. Are there other matters you would like to raise?

**RMIT University**  
**Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services**  
**Department of Language and International Studies**

**Interview Schedule: Administrator's Perspective on International Masters Program**

*These questions are a guide. The interview may explore these areas in more depth or other areas, depending on the relevance to the project.*

1. Could you please tell me your scope of responsibilities in this office?
2. To what extent do you think cross-cultural differences affect your day-to-day operation?
3. What do you do to solve those difficulties?
4. Have you ever been trained regarding cross-cultural difference?
5. Do you find that Thai & non-Thai students have the same approach when they do enquiries? How same? How different?
6. What is the most difficult circumstance you have ever dealt with?
7. Are there other matters you would like to raise?

**RMIT University**  
**Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services**  
**Department of Language and International Studies**

**Interview Schedule: Librarian's Perspective on International Masters Program**

*These questions are a guide. The interview may explore these areas in more depth or other areas, depending on the relevance to the project.*

1. Have you ever experienced any difficulties in communicating with non-Thai staff and students? How often?
2. What do you do to overcome those language barriers?
3. Do Thai and non-Thai students have the same habit when accessing to the library? (manner, gesture)
4. Is there any major concern that delay your operation?
5. What kind of material resources are highly demanded among students? (books, journals, electronic journals)
6. Do you think this library is adequately equipped for students as the main users?
7. What are student's main purposes of accessing the library? (reading? watching VDO?, borrowing items?, talking?, discussions?, etc.)
8. Are there other matters you would like to raise?