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Efforts for Internationalizing Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna (Rmutl) in Thailand in the Asean Era: a Qualitative Case Study

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Abstract The internationalization processes of numerous schools in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region have grown exponentially over the past few years. This study is designed to explore fundamental approaches and enhance efforts needed to internationalize a large public university in Northern Thailand, Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna. Additionally, a qualitative approach and purposive sampling were applied in this study to gain rich perspectives from the in-depth qualitative interviews with 20 executives, 17 of whom are in top management at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna. One participant is the former director of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, and two participants are executives in Thai higher education institutions. Hence, we engaged in a qualitative case study in Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna to illustrate and extend current theory and research concerning internationalization of universities, both in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region and elsewhere. Furthermore, we present a proposed model with 10 essential elements to internationalize educational institutions in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations community era. Lastly, we provide recommendations for further studies and for administrators in Thai and Association of Southeast Asian Nation universities along with suggested activities and their purposes for administrators.

Keywords: ASEAN, education, internationalization, RMUTL, university, study

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1. Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna (RMUTL) Background

RMUTL was founded in 1957 under a royal charter granted by His Majesty, King Bhumibol Adulyadaj, under the name of the Vocational Institute. In 1975, it was altered to one of the campuses of the Institute of Technology and Vocational Education. In 1988, it was named Rajamangala Institute of Technology (RIT) northern campus by His Majesty the King. To serve the needs of people all over Thailand and other countries and to meet international standards, RIT developed its administration structure and educational management and became Rajamangala University of Technology (RMUT) in 2003. RMUT consists of nine universities and RMUTL itself consists of six campuses located in the North of Thailand, namely: Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Tak, Phitsanuloke, and Nan. In short, RMUTL is a university with history, innovative research, and vision, in

a country proud of its multicultural background and environment.

Moreover, RMUTL is a leading university in Thailand that offers effective education based on sciences and technological concepts. RMUTL is a large public university with a total of 2,260 employees, 1,288 of whom are instructors, 972, administrative employees, and 22,671 students across six campuses (Human Resource Department of RMUTL, 2012). Its vision is systematically to develop highly qualified graduates in a sustainable way and to become professional executives and reach international standards, serving in competitive and developing economies (President's Office, 2012). It also concentrates on the preservation of national cultural values and the environment. Additionally, RMUTL actively pursue international contacts with overseas universities and institutes for cooperative activities, including student and faculty exchange, joint training programs, organizing academic conferences and seminars, as well as other types of academic cooperation (see Table 1).

Table 1. RMUTL Cooperative Agreements with Universities and Institutions Overseas

Country	Name of University & Institute	Activities
1. Germany	1. Bochum University of Applied Sciences 2. Leibniz University Hannover 3. SUPMECA (France)	1.1 Curriculum Development Hands-On 1.2 Human Resource Development in Engineering 2.1 Human Resource Development 3.1 Research in the Engineering Field
2. New Zealand	1. Lincoln University 2. Massey University	1.1 Curriculum Development Hands-On 1.2 Human Resource Development in Agriculture 2.1 Curriculum Development Hands-On 2.2 Human Resource Development in Agriculture
3. Korea	1. Chunju Polytechnic College 2. Korea Multimedia Society(KMMS) 3. Seoul Institute for Vocational Training in Advanced Technology	1.1 Human Resource Development in Engineering 2.1 Human Resource Development & Information Technology Research 3.1 Human Resource Development in Engineering
4. USA.	1. Oklahoma State University Okmulgee 2. Oklahoma State University Stillwater 3. North Eastern State University, Oklahoma 4. Florida Atlantic University (FAU) 5. Florida International University (FIU)	1.1 Human Resource Development in Engineering 2.1 Human Resource Development in Agriculture Human Resource Development in Agriculture
5. India	1. Indian Institute of Technology Madras	Human Resource Development & Information Technology Research
6. Taiwan	1. Southern Taiwan University of Technology (STUT) 2. Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI) 3. Southern Taiwan Science Park Administration	1.1 Human Resource Development & Engineering Research 2.1 Human Resource Development & Engineering Research 3.1 Human Resource Development & Engineering Research
7. Japan	1. Tama Art University 2. Nippon Institute of Technology (NIT) 3. Institute of Technologists (IOT)	Human Resource Development & Art and Architecture Research 2.1 Curriculum Development Hands- On 3.1 Curriculum Development Hands- On
8. Australia	1. University of South Australia 2. Curtin University	1.1 English Staff Development & Education Development Human Resource Development & Civil Engineering Research
9. China	1. Guilin University of Technology 2. Kunming University of Science and Technology 3. Yunnan Normal University 4. Bowen College of Management, Guilin University of Technology 5. Guangxi Normal University 6. Chongqing Technology and Business University (CTBU) 7. Chongqing Normal University (CNU) 8. Chongqing Institute of Technology (CQIT) 9. Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology	1.1 Exchange Students & Staff & Liberal Arts Research 2.1 Exchange Students & Staff & Tourism Research 3.1 Exchange Students & Staff & Liberal Arts Research Human Resource Development & Administrative Research 5.1 Exchange Students & Staff & Liberal Arts Research 6.1 Exchange Students & Staff & Liberal Arts Research 7.1 Exchange Students & Staff & Liberal Arts Research 8.1 Exchange Students & Staff & Liberal Arts Research Exchange Students & Staff & Liberal Arts Research

Source: President's Office in RMUTL (2008)

2. Research Methodology

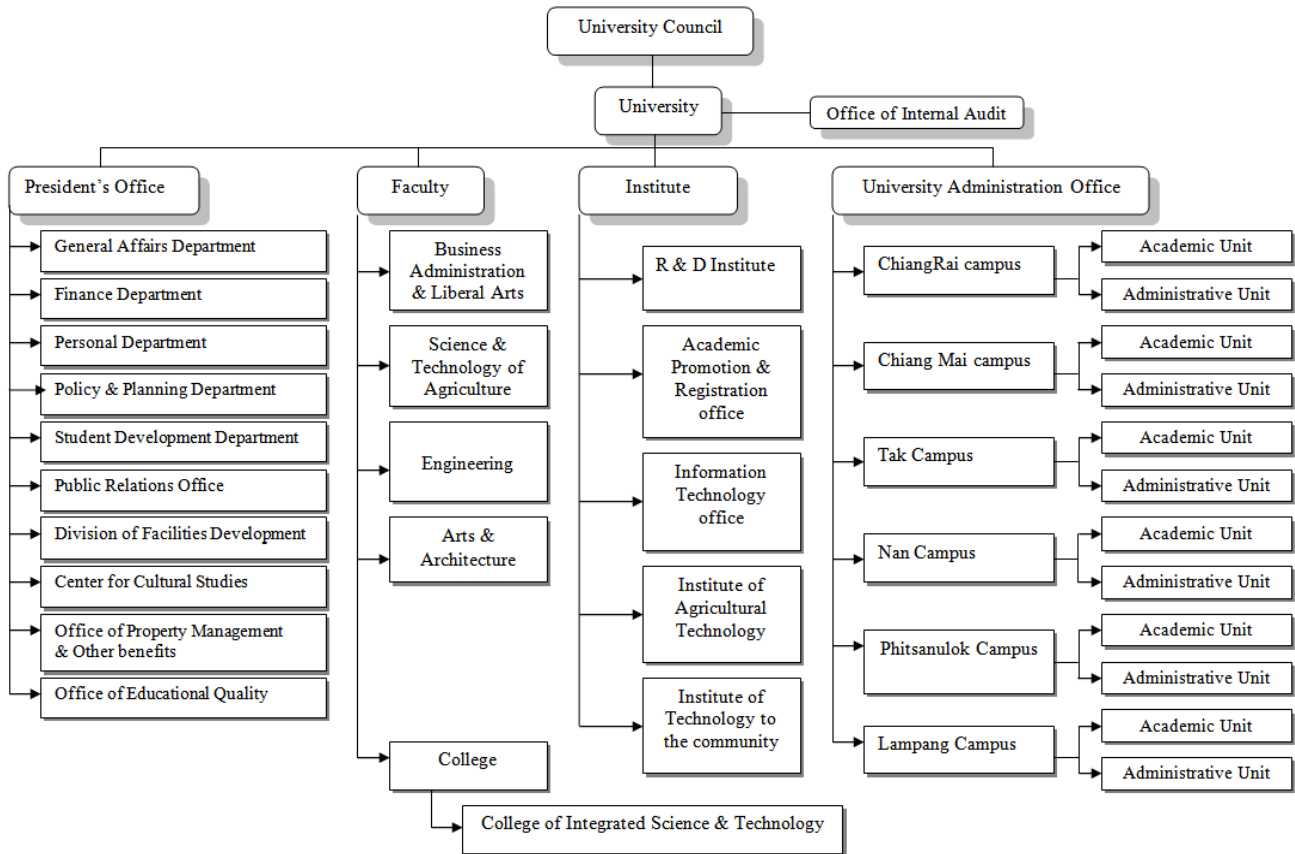
We employed a 'pragmatism paradigm' for this study, as we were hoping that the comprehension provided would be of assistance to value the diverse approaches to the internationalization of RMUTL. According to Creswell (2007), the pragmatism paradigm focuses on the research outcomes rather than the methods, actions, situations, and consequences of inquiry. Nonetheless, we gathered data through in-depth qualitative interviews. In this study, we used purposive sampling, and conducted interviews with 20 executives, 17 of whom are in the upper-level of management in RMUTL. One participant is the former director of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), and two participants are executives in Thai Higher Education Institution. Crabtree and Miller (1992) noticed that researchers in qualitative studies should select a small number of informants, who can provide the information for the study. However, one common criticism for small samples is that it will not allow generalizability. Furthermore, triangulation of data helped in providing the dependability of this study.

Triangulation is the development of different forms of data analysis (e.g., direct interpretation, pattern

identification, and naturalistic generalization). Stake (1995) deduced that researchers could investigate a single case and analyze it without the need for multiple cases. By patterns, Stake clarified that researchers produce categories, charts, or tables to compare and contrast the data. Lastly, Stake found that researchers might develop naturalistic generalizations through scrutinizing the data, to allow readers to learn, and apply the case elsewhere. Additionally, we used documentation and multiple strategies with interviews as supplementary tools to triangulate the findings, such as reflexive journals, field notes, and e-mail interaction with participants, resulting from the formative and rich information garnered from the participants of this study. For the analysis task, transcribed taped interviews, we arranged data according to the subjects raised, displayed participants' answers in line numbers constructing codes, categories, and finally, defined themes. Gaining participant trust through honesty and sincerity was fundamental to obtain crucial information. Lastly, we took into account ethical considerations to ensure privacy and confidentiality of all participants throughout this study.

2.1. RMUTL Organization Structure (see Table 2)

Table 2. RMUTL Organization Structure



Source: Public Relations Office in RMUTL (2008)

2.1.1. Theoretical Framework

In writing this literature review, we undertook numerous searches to increase the likelihood of understanding and accommodating the internationalization of RMUTL in the context of the ASEAN community. According to Srisa-an (1998), internationalization refers to the amalgamation of international dimensions and strategies in all university activities, for example, in curricula offerings, faculty and student exchanges, research with foreign universities, university-industry linkages, cultural exchange, the recruitment of foreign instructors, and bilingualism. According to Teichler, internationalization can be best defined as “the totality of substantial changes in the context and inner life of higher education relative to an increasing frequency of border-crossing activities amidst a persistence of national systems, even though some signs of ‘denationalization’ might be observed”. (2004, pp. 22-23) Further, Knight and De Wit (1999) concisely concluded that mounting a comprehensive image of the ontology and scope of internationalization activities could be both instructive and devastating responsibility. As Hayek (1996) advocated, there is no single accepted definition of internationalization. One suggestion was that a committee from different departments should be set up to define the term. In short, contributions from several scholars showed that internationalization could be defined in many different ways. The definition of internationalization may be broad or it may be specific. Arguably, Deem, Mok, and Lucas noted:

We should not simply understand internationalization in Asia as merely as following the American or Anglo-Saxon

standards and practices. Although the academic communities in Europe and the United States have been regarded as more advanced than the Asian counterparts, higher education institutions in general and academics in particular must critically reflect on to what extent and in what way the so-called ‘good practices’ identified from the West can really integrate well with non-Western education systems. (2008, p. 93).

For example, one study showed that university curricula are under considerable restructuring in East Asia by changing from the common teacher-oriented approach to a student-oriented approach (Mok, 2007). Believing that creativity and innovation are important modules in evaluating student competencies, Mok identified that universities in East Asia have attempted to educate students to become independent and self-directed. Furthermore, it is evident that Thailand has adopted the higher education philosophy and system from Western nations. Nevertheless, His Majesty, King Bhumibol, had a clear intention to encourage his young labor force 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, the styles of academic gowns, and courses in Thai arts, literature, language, history, and Buddhism offered by Thai universities along with subjects adopted from Western countries (Chalapati, 2007).

2.2. Internationalization of Thai Higher Education in ASEAN

According to Kirtikara (2001), there are over 600 higher education institutions and 130 degree granting

institutions in Thailand. Hence, Kirtikara interpreted that networking these institutions can deliver quality programs, diversified education services, transfer of credits among institutes, recognition, accreditation of work experience, collaborative research, and services among institutions. Similarly, in the study of Fogelberg (1999), it is advised that global networks be considered an important method of maintaining an advanced education level and research, and of safeguarding an international presence. The Thai Ministry of Education has generated a report from a meeting to strengthen cooperation in the field of education in five dimensions (Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, 2011). One of these dimensions related to the potential development of students and the public to have the right skills to prepare them to become members of the ASEAN community, such as knowledge of IT skills, and expertise in line with the need for industry to adapt and change. Nevertheless, Vongchavalitkul (2012) identified challenges for Thai leadership in higher education (i.e., removing barriers; restructuring and personalizing student support; emphasizing connected and lifelong learning; and investing in technologically competent faculty). Zolfaghari, Sabran, and Zolfaghari (2009) presented major aspects of internationalizing higher education institutes in two dimensions. One of the dimensions is concerned with the objectives of the internationalization that should be clearly defined, measured, and accomplished within a specific amount of time.

Ley clarified various issues associated with human development in ASEAN, as presented: (a) education: prioritizing, awareness of ASEAN among all individuals, university network, ASEAN languages (e.g., English language); (b) HRD: qualified, competent, and well-prepared for the ASEAN workforce, a center of excellence to address the needs of high value-added industries that enhance ASEAN global competitiveness, ASEAN standard competitiveness, and ASEAN skill competitiveness; (c) decent work: an ASEAN skills recognition framework and an ASEAN network of experts; (d) civil service capability: a high quality of public services, public HR competencies, and an ASEAN resource center; and (e) ICT: the ASEAN IT initiatives, positive use of ICT, and IT expertise (2012). Knight, Adams, and Peace Lenn (1999) noted that the rapid growth of IT is directly influencing higher education systems. Moussa (2013) recommended the alignment of IT and organization strategies: one reason behind this proposition is that organizations can accomplish their goal from their IT investments only if management functions and activities are coordinated effectively, rather than being isolated. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF; 2001), the ICT has made the world smaller. In addition, the IMF stated that one aspect of globalization is the movement of people, where workers move from one country to another to find better employment opportunities. Therefore, Sandar (2012) informed that one of the six outlines strategic actions in the AEC blueprint is to facilitate the issue of visa and employment opportunities.

A blueprint for the ASEAN socio-cultural community (2009) reported the need for (a) advancing and prioritizing education through the integration of education priorities into ASEAN's development agenda, creating a knowledge-based society, and enhancing awareness of ASEAN through education and activities to develop an

ASEAN identity based on friendship and cooperation; (b) investing in HRD through the enhancement and the improvement of the capacity of ASEAN HR; (c) ensuring environmental sustainability through promoting a clean and green environment; (d) promoting sustainable development through environmental education and public participation, and willingness to ensure the sustainable development of the region through environmental education and public participation efforts; and (e) promoting ASEAN awareness and a sense of community, consolidating unity in diversity and enhancing deeper mutual understanding among ASEAN member countries about their culture, history, religion, and civilization. The ASEAN sociocultural community also discussed the significance of promoting CSR, and ensures that it is incorporated into the corporate agenda and contributes toward sustainable socioeconomic development in ASEAN member nations. Speaking of public service or CSR, Henson et al. (1990) noted that it could enhance a university's reputation in an interdependent community. Based on the ASEAN Concord II (2003), ASEAN shall continue current efforts to promote regional mobility and reciprocal recognition of professional credentials, talents, and skills progress. The objectives of ASEAN are to promote mutual understanding between countries in the region, to maintain peace, stability and political stability, create economic growth, social and cultural development, and the well-being of the people based on equality and mutual benefits of member countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012).

Suttipun (2012) disclosed that all Thai universities are structured to produce graduates using the following themes: (a) *ethical issues*: including moral, discipline, honesty, and sacrifice; (b) *knowledge issues*: including theoretical, practical, and specific knowledge in order to solve problems; (c) *capability issues*: including analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and decision making; (d) *relationship and responsibility issues*: including leadership, teamwork, self-development, and knowledge responsibility; and (e) *analysis, communication, and technology skills*: including selection, adaptation, and evaluation. Overall, Santipitaks (2013) compiled the twenty-first century competencies required for youth in the ASEAN community, as follows: linguistic skills, knowledge about ASEAN and ASEAN member countries, vocational skills based on ASEAN and international standards, negotiation skills for the international arena, thinking beyond national interests, a positive attitude toward the ASEAN community/member states, teamwork with other countries/cross-cultural competencies in the working environment, expertise in one's own profession, output, and results-oriented outlook, promoting better service based on international standards, the ability to work according to international standards, knowledge about the different rules and regulations within ASEAN member countries, emphasis on the development of skilled labor according to international standards, networking among educational institutions within ASEAN, establishing ASEAN studies centers in universities, activities to promote ASEAN connectivity, and applying an integrated approach to raise ASEAN awareness in the civil service through the organization of activities and use of the media. Concerning the media, Chong and Elies (2011) advised not to underestimate its role in the ASEAN

era. Through Satellite transmission, the prolonged international system of the media, television in particular, resulted in rapid cultural exchanges (Bartell, 2003). The following are efforts made to internationalize three famous public universities in Thailand.

At Chulalongkorn University (CU), the Office of International Affairs was set up to implement international relations by emphasizing cooperative activities, academic exchanges with international institutions, and academic services to international communities (Office of International Affairs CU, 2012). In addition, the office was set up to develop and prepare academic readiness among personnel and students, to enable them to keep abreast of academic developments, to communicate effectively on an international level, and to restructure work in international relations in order to accommodate activities for teaching staff and international students attending courses. Briefly, this office provides several duties and services through: (a) international liaison and special affairs service; (b) overseas students, and exchange programs; and (c) international cooperation service.

At King Mongkut University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), the Office of International Affairs was set up to implement international relations by emphasizing the cooperation between KMUTT and other institutions, both in the country and overseas, through academic cooperation, staff and students exchanges, scholarships, and grants for studying and training (Office of International Affairs, KMUTT, 2012). Moreover, the Office of International Affairs provides their roles and responsibilities through the following three categories: (a) international students and exchange programs; (b) protocol and information; and (c) funding support and international links.

At Mahidol University (MU), several activities for the promotion of internationalization of education are encouraged and supported. For example, MU actively collaborates with over 130 overseas academic institutions and international agencies in research, curriculum development, staff and student exchange; hosts 8 World Health Organizations (WHO) and collaborating centers, and cooperative research station (CRS) in Southeast Asia; offers 148 international degree and diploma programs, excluding short training courses; has international students from over 50 countries enrolled; hosts regular international academic conferences in many disciplines; and had over 1,450 research papers published in international academic journals in 2008 (International College, Mahidol University, 2012).

2.3. International Studies Programs Delivered by Thai Universities

Public and private universities in Thailand offer 520 international programs using English as a medium of instruction both at undergraduate and graduate levels (see Table 3; Chang, 2011)

Table 3. International Studies Programs Delivered by Thai Universities

Programs	No.	Subject area	No.	Universities	No.
Undergraduate	176		107		31
Master's degree	217		174		29
Doctoral degree	127		108		18

Source: Adapted from Chang (2011) from <http://www.spu.ac.th/intl/files/2011/02/Article-3.pdf>

2.4. Related Studies on Internationalization in the Developed and Developing Nations

At the University of Botswana, they have attempted to expand international research cooperation, through the following processes: engage in more collaborative and comparative international research; recruit visiting research scholars to mentor and/or lead departmental and faculty research projects; establish mechanisms for cooperative supervision of graduate students enrolled at UB and partner institutions by UB scholars, and partner colleagues; encourage students with research skills from outside of Botswana to participate in UB research projects; present more scholarly papers at international conferences; provide venues for UB staff to inform colleagues of papers and discussions at international meetings; and develop partnerships, which will expand international research cooperation (Policy on Internationalization, 2006). As Bartell (2003) perceived, the required changes for universities involve the following: a curriculum review to guarantee the prominence of the international dimensions of issues; a large proportion of students recruited from abroad including both developed and developing countries; more development of the number and types of exchange programs, study abroad programs, and internships to enable students to encounter and experience other cultures; and enhance the use of diversity and international experience from faculty members, students, and ultimately the whole community. Speaking of academic joint-ventures, Hawawini clarified:

A path to internationalize that has been chosen by main higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is the international joint-venture (JV) model. These international JVs often start as student-exchange programs, offering students in undergraduate or graduate programs the possibility of spending some time in the foreign institution, and eventually evolve into academic or curricular joint ventures in which institutions located in different countries design and deliver joint programs, with graduates receiving either a single co-signed degree or two separate degrees, one from each of the institutions involved in the joint program (2011, p. 15).

Aside from this, Henard, Diamond, and Roseveare (2012) noted that institutional policies and strategies are closely linked to national policies on university autonomy. However, autonomous and responsive institutions can simultaneously promote student mobility, develop internationalization at home, and support internationalization of research. Salmi (2009) garnered and illustrated strategic features that help in developing a world-class university (e.g., effective leadership, a brilliant vision, an unambiguous strategic plan, confronting all weaknesses, modifying and improving the plan for better performance, an accurate series of plans and actions visualized to achieve the desired outcome, and scrupulous emphasis to be granted to the internationalization strategy of the university). Pama (2012) described policies and projects needed to respond to globalization as follows: mobility projects and policies, branch campuses overseas, and inter-institutional partnerships, English as the dominant language, benchmarks and standards required to evaluate unfamiliar foreign qualifications properly, teaching and learning curricula, quality financing, research, and ICT.

Unsurprisingly, Carroll-Boegh and Takagi (2006) stated that each country has its own paradigm; nevertheless, a large number of universities have discovered the necessity to internationalize their curricula to be able to compete globally. Carroll-Boegh and Takagi (2006) examined the driving forces behind the internationalization of the curricula in Japanese and Danish universities. They found that the internationalization of the Danish knowledge system was accomplished through the cooperation and the interaction between academic institutions and business communities. As such, Danish universities are capable of providing curricula that match the society's needs through different regulations. Following this line of thought, Carroll-Boegh and Takagi outlined that the Danish internationalized curricula are reflected through joint research projects, research exchange programs, and work/study abroad. In the case of Japanese universities, Carroll-Boegh and Takagi noted that the Japanese have a significant interest in being involved in the kingdom of world universities. Accordingly, Carroll-Boegh and Takagi recommended the following: use the English language as the medium of teaching to develop international programs for international students; restructure curricula; endorse student and staff mobility to boost their global competitiveness; a satisfactory learning environment; and the expertise of the instructors and their teaching methods and strategies that must suit students with different cultures, needs and experiences. At Kyoto University, many foreign faculty were invited with salaries that were notably higher than the national average, who were then replaced by Japanese faculty members who had been sent to study in developed countries with government scholarships (Akiyoshi, 2009). At Warsaw School of Economics in Poland, Geldner and Wachter (1999) reported that one of the major weaknesses is in the fields of IT and computerization, though there was evidence of regular improvements.

Erling and Hilgendorf noted: "English appears to function as a cure-all for the ills in the German education system. At the same time, the impact of the increasing use of English in German higher education is rarely considered". (2006, p. 287). While financial considerations remain a major obstacle to the successful reform and internationalization of German institutions of higher education, improved quality of European universities and the successful implementation of international programs require clear and honest recommendations in terms of language planning and pedagogy. Jiang-Bin (2009) indicated the following developments: (a) Yale University in the U.S. outlined that the historic mission of the university can be achieved if it develops relevant curricula, creates opportunities for students to work or study overseas, educates and provides American students with opportunities to develop networks with a variety of national cultures; (b) the second indicator was the Tokyo Institute of Technology in Japan, and the efforts made there to, advance the faculty and students' communication skills in English, gradually develop bilingual curricula, educate international aptitudes, invite professional scholars from different nations, contribute in academic management, boost cooperative agreements through international exchanges and ventures, and cultivate the internal management and services; and (c) Jiang-Bin also referred to the wisdom of Chinese research

universities to perform collaboration and international exchanges by bringing in policies to become a part of the international society, while preserving the Chinese culture. However, Pama (2012) predicted that in financial implications, research universities will see significant constraints on their budgets; student loan programs will diminish around the world; the system will face pressures to establish or increase fees to students; and cost-cutting practices may affect quality at universities.

At Thang Long University in Vietnam, Sloper and Can (1995) perceived that they accepted a large challenge in overcoming barriers through a strong commitment to sincerity, and in the meantime, preserving Vietnamese culture, and identity. At the School of Architecture and Allied Arts at the University of Oregon, it became evident through their committee's tasks that an incentive system and support infrastructure for faculty contribution in international activities still needed to be created (Dewey & Duff, 2009). They added that university administrators could not implement a comprehensive internationalization process without coordination with support of, and participation by, the faculty. Nonetheless, Qiang (2003) noted that any conflict or friction among administrators could bring negative results. Moreover, in Australian higher education, efforts have been made to restructure student visa arrangements, to protect international student rights, and to enhance quality of provision, including the quality of services offered through overseas partners (Harman, 2004).

2.5. Existing Theories of Internationalization in Educational Management Journals

The developing countries host a considerable number of international students, and make gigantic efforts to attract foreign students to their universities to improve the quality and cultural composition of the student body, gain prestige, and generate revenues (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In native English speaking countries, Mazzarol (1998) examined critical success factors of education institutions, seeking to market themselves internationally. These factors were quality of reputation and market level of recognition/profile; international strategic alliances; offshore teaching programs; staff quality and expertise; organizational culture; innovation; effective use of IT; financial resources; ability to offer a variety of courses/programs; advertising and promotion; and the use of private recruitment agents and government promotion agencies. Similarly, the dimensions that strengthen the competitive advantage of an educational institution within an international market were also described as follows: the institution's quality of image, and its market profile; coalition formation; the level of forward integration into the export channel; the institution's expertise and quality of staff; the possession of innovative culture; and the effective use of IT (Mazzarol & Soutar, 1999). Poole (2001) presented four strategic advantage elements as follows: (a) *strategically decentralized leadership*: this element involves the leadership level of delegation and empowerment to deans and the head of each department, as well as the creation of an international leadership position; (b) *leverage of organizational and strategic competencies*: universities often succeed when leveraging their current strengths and competencies; (c) *pursuit of*

executional advantages: universities should capitalize on the advantages that arose from the effective implementation of international activities, particularly through the effective management of the university's system; and (d) *development of international business competencies*: this study showed deficiencies in risk management, international finance, market knowledge and strategic alliance management competencies in the universities investigated, although international business management skills are emerging as international experience grows.

At the end of the twentieth century, Sharma and Roy (1996) concluded that new forms of globalization of management education have arisen. Some of these emergent patterns of internationalization are joint ventures between two business schools in two countries; educational networks; faculty and student diversity; multidisciplinary action projects; and international faculty exchanges. Elkin, Devjee, and Farnsworth (2005) summarized what constitutes an institution's internationalization, as follows: (a) international programs; (b) the international institution's network; (c) student, and staff exchange programs; (d) internationally recognized research activity; (e) international research collaboration; (f) staff interaction internationally; (g) international students support; (h) international conferences attendance; and (i) undergraduate and postgraduate international students. Importantly, they acknowledged, "To try harder at things that an institution is good at will often give a worse return than trying to correct shortcomings" (p. 324). However, Altbach and Knight (2007) thoroughly interpreted many uncertainties that may affect the pace of internationalization, as follows: political trends and national security; government policies and the cost of study; expanded domestic capacity; the English language; the internationalization of the curriculum; e-learning; the private sector; quality assurance and control; and European policies.

Another study showed that internationalization in universities involved three phases: (a) set up the design of internationalization; (b) select the utmost ways to activate the design with action plans; and (c) assess this process by comparing the design with the execution (Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007). They added that research into the internationalization process in universities could be classified into three major categories: (a) researchers who search for what the internationalization strategy should be; (b) researchers who tackle organizational steps of internationalization; and (c) researchers who examine pros and cons, challenges, and barriers of internationalization. One study proposed that future research on internationalization would be better if there was a separation between whole universities and business schools (Elkin, Farnsworth & Templer, 2008). The researchers also informed that in order to be effective in internationalization, institutions should develop a comprehensive strategic focus. The rationale behind this notion is that the development of a comprehensive strategic focus can lead to a superior level of internationalization. The major conclusion in this study indicated that strategic focus refers to the integration of mission statements, strategic objectives, and strategic planning for internationalization.

According to Kim (2009) "the major driving force behind the internationalization policy and practice in the UK is 'economic', neoliberal competition for global market share indirectly of the student and research markets, and directly for economic position within a world knowledge economy" (p. 402). The study also recommended that researchers explore the opportunities and barriers of ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, gender, and culture in the real-life experiences of transnational mobile academics and international students. Another indicator described internationalization in education in three waves: (a) students travelling to another country to study at one of the institutions; (b) institutions move forward into the export channel, through an alliance, and establish twinning programs; and (c) involve establishing a subsidiary in a foreign country or the development of instructional technology through ICT (Mazzarol, Soutar & Seng, 2003). This study also indicated a significant number of implications for administrators and policymakers, as follows: (a) it is necessary to recognize that educational institutions that do not establish a subsidiary overseas or deliver its courses online, may not fail, but they will need some differentiation strategies to attract students to their high quality education in their home country; (b) institutions need to invest largely in financial and HR issues before anticipating any return on that investment; (c) institutions should scrupulously determine their choices of location, alliance partners, and market positioning; and (d) ICT can be an outstanding facilitating medium to invest in, if institutions desire to remain competitive. Importantly, effective strategies can be developed after an effective market survey to determine customer wants and needs to offer the right goods and services effectively and efficiently (Conway, Mackay & Yorke, 1994).

Ayoubi and Al-Habaibeh (2006) developed a comparative study of the main goals of international institutional partnerships in four leading UK universities. The study showed that university (A) is seeking to develop and promote research collaboration, exchange students and staff, exchange academic resources, develop and promote curricula and course design, and sponsor cooperative meetings, seminars, and workshops. University (B) is aimed at a better learning and teaching environment, student and staff mobility, exchange of academic materials and resources, and collaborative research projects, along with cooperation between their offices. University (C) is aimed at the exchange of staff and students, and joint research, projects, conferences, and cultural programs. University (D) is aimed at the exchange of academic staff, researchers, students, information and materials, and joint research activities. According to the world system theory, the higher a nation's rank/position in the world system, the more its role is fundamental in the international student exchange programs (Chen & Barnett, 2000). In other words, they clarified: the economically powerful countries, which hold resources and expertise necessary for higher education, absorb international students in significant numbers and stay at the core over many years. In contrast, lesser-developed countries, lacking both economic and education capabilities, attract limited numbers of students and stay at the periphery. (p. 451).

In conclusion, Kehm and Teichler (2007) described the state of existing research of internationalization in many steps. Some of these steps were (a) noticeable quantitative growth in the number of analyses on internationalization of higher education; (b) research into internationalization in higher education often targets practitioners and policymakers in higher education institutions more than the higher education researchers; and (c) recent studies have addressed student mobility or only internationalization policies of higher education. Overall, Kehm and Teichler synthesized seven broad themes found in an array of publications of research on issues of internationalization in higher education, as follows: (a) student and academic staff mobility; (b) shared influences of higher education systems on each other; (c) internationalization of teaching, learning, and research methods; (d) organizational strategies of

internationalization; (e) knowledge transfer; (f) cooperation and competition; and (g) national policies regarding the international dimension of higher education.

3. Results and Discussions

After an in-depth investigation, the research offered systematic explanations according to the intended purposes. Thus, we compiled crucial factors that might lead to internationalize RMUTL effectively, as presented in the proposed model (see Figure 1). Moreover, the researchers are going to discuss the major findings, in accordance with the literature reviewed. Thus, the researchers are going to explore nine issues and their constituents according to what has been discussed in the interviews and found in the reviewed literature.

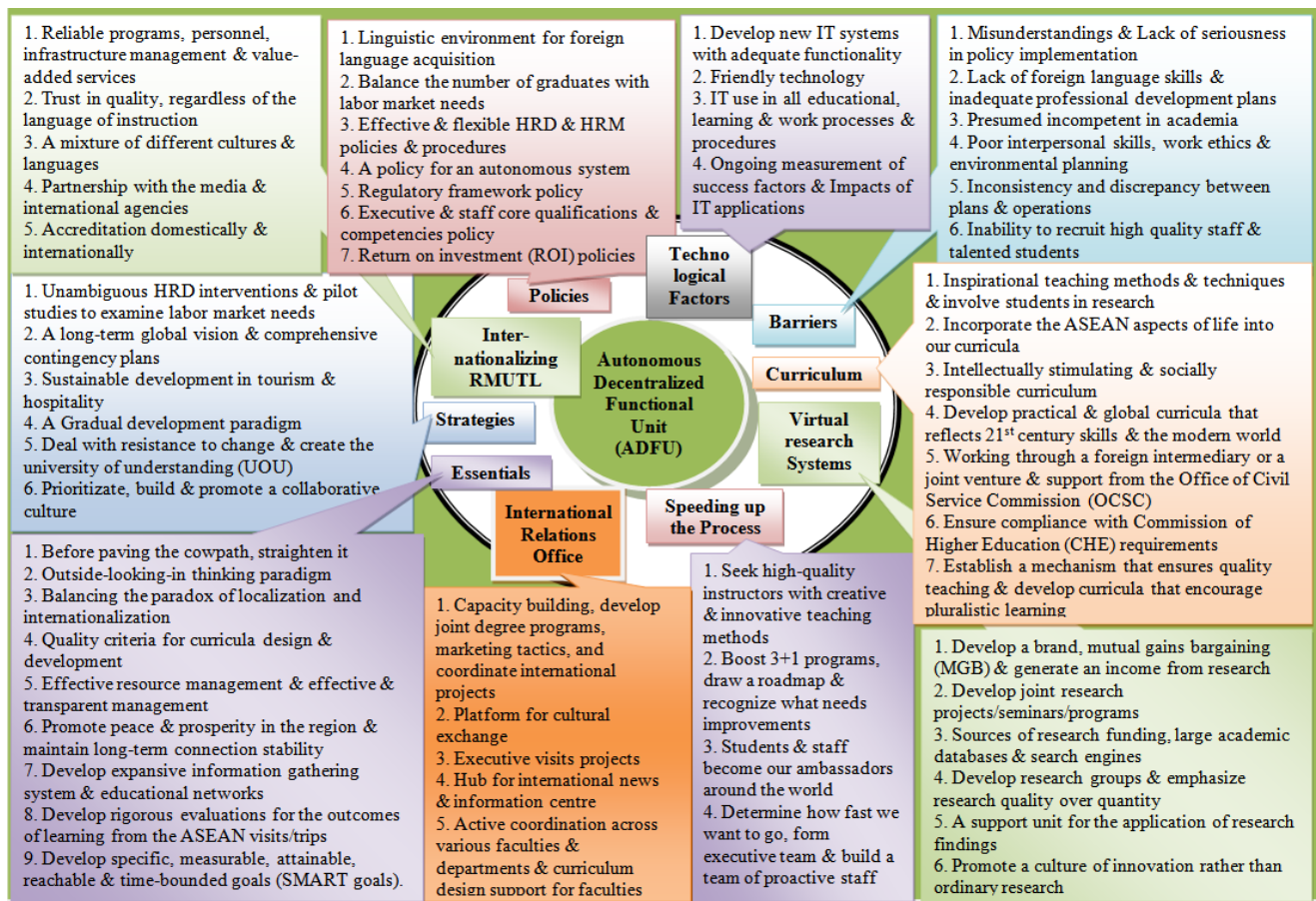


Figure 1. A Proposed Model for Internationalizing RMUTL in the Context of the ASEAN Community

3.1. Strategic Plan

We attempted to understand and to learn from the participants of this study, aspects that can make a powerful strategic plan to create a successful international RMUTL. Hence, the participants of this study corroborated that unambiguous HRD practices and interventions; dealing with resistance to change; prioritizing; developing our personnel career-path; applying a powerful analysis method; developing effective action plans; rigorously implementing strategies and plans; creating a university of understanding (UOU); developing competencies for both executives and staff; decentralizing the management approach; developing apposite, clear, and flexible plans; and developing comprehensive contingency

plans are all considered essentials for developing a strategic plan, which can lead to a successful international environment. Accordingly, one participant expressed the following:

I think we need to develop the structure of each department, and faculty. In addition, we do not have clear HRD practices. Our goals, direction, and individual development plans (IDPs) are not clear. In addition, our budget plan should be good enough, and unambiguous.

Another participant added, “clearly define our strategies and develop effective action plans to recognize factors that negatively impact our university”. However, one participant mentioned, “we must have an effective management for our action plans, rather than just having our plans, and strategies on the shelves without any gains”.

Moreover, a participant asserted, “we need to develop our human resources, from the executive level to the operational level. This can enhance our strategic plan in the internationalization era”. Another stated:

We should gradually build our individuals’ awareness, and involve them in all decisions. We should also promote the hardworking individuals, and the outstanding performance. Only this can motivate our people to be involved in the internationalization processes of RMUTL.

Salmi (2009) garnered and illustrated strategic features that help in developing a world-class university (e.g., effective leadership, a brilliant vision, an unambiguous strategic plan, confront all weaknesses, modify and improve the plan for better performance, an accurate series of plans and actions visualized to achieve the desired outcome, and scrupulous emphasis to be granted to the internationalization strategy of the university). Further, Knight and De Wit (1999) concisely concluded that mounting a comprehensive image of the ontology and scope of internationalization activities could be both an instructive and a devastating responsibility. Therefore, at the School of Architecture and Allied Arts at the University of Oregon, it became evident through their committee’s tasks that an incentive system and support infrastructure for faculty contribution in international activities is still required to be created (Dewey & Duff, 2009). Additionally, a participant noted, “we must have a contingency plan for any emergency. The plan should include both human and non-human resources, such as budget or equipment”. Furthermore, the participants explored other critical issues, as follows: develop and modify our teaching, and learning system; respond to skills required by labor markets; differentiate ourselves from other universities; create opportunities to exchange students, and staff; strengthen our curricula; build the RMUTL brand; have a sufficient budget for foreign staff recruitment; recruit an adequate number of foreign students; and develop a consultative expert working group concerning the ASEAN countries. One comment was, “we need to do something that can be attractive to attract foreign students to our education. We are planning to provide scholarships, and promote our university through the use of information technology (IT), and we have to have our website in many languages”. Perhaps, more important to consider is what another participant noted as follows:

We should have some committees who are able to study, and transfer information to all individuals in RMUTL about the infrastructure of the ASEAN countries to learn how to cooperate, and collaborate effectively. Each country has its own system. Some aspects are related to people’s beliefs, and some are related to their cultures, and traditions. So, we have to be aware of these issues before doing MOUs with other universities.

Another view was, advocating a gradual development paradigm and building and promoting a collaborative culture in RMUTL:

To become an international university, does not mean to announce this, and then we can immediately become international. We should develop things gradually. We have to provide intensive English courses to both staff, and students, then develop bilingual programs, and lastly, international programs.

Above all, “the executives of RMUTL must communicate clearly with everyone, and implement their strategies effectively, which requires collaboration from all individuals in the university”. In a similar vein, “if we want to be successful, and overcome problems in communication, and other issues, then people in RMUTL must unite, and cooperate with each other”. Ley (2012) clarified various issues associated with human development in ASEAN, as presented: (a) education: prioritizing, awareness of ASEAN among all individuals, a university network, ASEAN languages (e.g., English language); (b) HRD: qualified, competent, and well prepared for the ASEAN workforce, a center of excellence to address the needs of high value-added industries that enhance ASEAN global competitiveness, ASEAN standard competitiveness, and ASEAN skill competitiveness; (c) decent work: an ASEAN skills recognition framework and an ASEAN network of experts; and (d) civil service capability: a high quality of public services, public HR competencies, and an ASEAN resource center. Similarly, a blueprint for the ASEAN sociocultural community (2009) showed that need for (a) advancing and prioritizing education through the integration of education priorities into ASEAN’s development agenda and creating a knowledge based society, and enhancing awareness of ASEAN through education and activities to develop an ASEAN identity based on friendship and cooperation; (b) investing in HRD through the enhancement and the improvement of the capacity of ASEAN HR; (c) ensuring environmental sustainability through promoting a clean and green environment; (d) promoting sustainable development through environmental education and public participation, and being willing to ensure the sustainable development of the region through environmental education and public participation efforts; and (e) promoting ASEAN awareness and a sense of community, consolidating unity in diversity and enhancing deeper mutual understanding among ASEAN member countries about their culture, history, religion, and civilization.

3.2. Challenging Policies

In this study, we found the following: academic and professional qualifications; teaching and learning policies; creating a policy for linguistic environment for foreign language acquisition; and an English proficiency test for RMUTL personnel and students. One participant identified:

RMUTL should develop teaching and learning processes that support current, and new trends to help the students think critically, solve problems, and learn independently. The most important subjects and skills in the modern world are, Sciences, Technology, Math, foreign languages, and critical thinking skills.

In conjunction, “we should support our new curricula and learning processes in the modern world, including the academic evaluation system, which must be tied to the students’ achievements”. However, with these matters, we were also taken aback to hear from one of the participants who said: “all employees, both academics, and administrative must pass an English test, such as TOFEL, IELTS, or at least TOEIC. We have to set up some standards for this test, and let all employees have it”.

Accordingly, one participant informed, “another policy that can enhance the internationalization of RMUTL is the announcement of the use of the English language as a medium of instruction. All text books, PowerPoint and other resources must be in English language”. Pama (2012) described policies and projects required to respond to globalization as follows: English as the dominant language and standards required to assess unnecessary foreign qualifications, teaching, and learning curricula.

However, other participants indicated some necessary policies that need to be considered in the RMUTL management policies. These are, effective recruitment, and selection policies; effective HRD and HRM policies; policy for staff, and executive core competencies and qualifications; a policy development and implementation process; a policy for an autonomous system; a pilot project policy; a developing mindsets’ policy; a regulatory framework policy; a policy that makes RMUTL become an international university; a rules monitoring policy; and a return on investment (ROI) policy. One participant of this study mentioned:

we should have a policy that emphasizes HRD in RMUTL, to identify the right number of instructors needed, as well as the qualifications, and competencies required. Additionally, the university has to have an effective HR system to support the lecturers’ quality of life, to have an effective compensation system, and minimize ethical problems that negatively affect the teaching and the learning environment.

In addition, “we should have a strong policy about student selection in each program. Students must have a reasonable level of English skills. Also, our instructors must have a high level of English skills to be able to teach Thai and foreign students in English”. Another participant explicitly noted:

we have a policy about the internationalization of RMUTL, but we do not take it seriously. I think our executives should communicate this policy to all individuals in RMUTL, and discuss a variety of strategies that lead to accomplish the desired outcomes. We may need to invite some educational experts, who have the experience in international education policies, and strategies.

Knight and De Wit (1999) reported that organizational strategies: engage policies, procedures, systems, and supporting infrastructures, which smooth the progress of, and maintain, the international attributes of the educational institution. Another helpful policy discussed by the participants of this study was to “develop international pilot projects to be able to develop effective models and plans for each faculty, division, and department in RMUTL”. Moreover, “I think RMUTL has to find regulatory frameworks to provide clear and direct plans to all individuals”. Meanwhile, “we need to have some effective tools to track the results. At the end of the year, get the results, and have discussions about what has been accomplished and what remains the same”. It was also perceived, “the policy is just a tool, but the important thing is that the management of RMUTL knows how to use it effectively and efficiently”. In addition, “while managing things, we must be able to monitor everything to take some corrective actions, or solve problems if something wrong occurs”. Other trends need to be taken

into account as the participants of this study reflected on, were as follows:

we need an autonomous office that is not under any faculty, and can be directly responsible for different issues in the university. For example, to support in finance issues or the budget, to recruit high quality staff, to develop appropriate workloads for all individuals in RMUTL, etc. So, we should develop a policy for establishing an autonomous office.

Henard, Diamond, and Roseveare (2012) noted that autonomous and responsive institutions could simultaneously promote student mobility, develop internationalization at home, and support internationalization of research. Another participant proposed, “the university must invest in different aspects, and have an effective business plan, then we can generate an income in the future, or become a famous, and well-known organization”. Another participant articulated: “the number of graduates should match the number that the labor market needs. Also, the students should graduate with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that the market demands in the modern world”. One more important policy that was considered fundamental in the participants’ opinion was:

a policy that allows us to allocate enough budget for international exchange activities with universities, and other institutions in the ASEAN region. Also, we need this budget to develop our students, and instructors’ foreign language competencies to improve the quality of our education, and to increase the number of foreign students in RMUTL.

At Chulalongkorn University, one of their main responsibilities and roles is to promote and act within the university’s policies and agreements of academic exchanges to ensure a fruitful and mutually beneficial relationship with their partner universities (Office of International Affairs CU, 2012). One participant argued that it is insufficient to learn from textbooks and research about individuals from the ASEAN countries. Hence, one participant viewed:

it is absolutely essential to know, and to understand people from the ASEAN countries, face-to-face because reading history books or textbooks will not be enough. We need to support projects related to visits, and cooperation with the neighboring universities, and then create a system based on the outcomes of these projects.

In almost the same way, a considerable amount of research concluded that the policy is used as a guideline and direction to the organization in order to implement its vision; thus, the policy for the activation of academic exchange conformities and partnerships is strongly recommended; the policy for strengthening the current support system; and a competitive budget is fundamental. We also added two major policies to the literature. One of which is a policy to balance the number of graduates with labor market needs, and the other one is ROI policies.

3.3. RMUTL Strengths

Based on the participants’ opinions in this study, RMUTL has a considerable number of strengths, as described in the following comments. For example, “Rajamangala Lanna is in a strategic location, and the name of the province itself is very attractive to many

people because of the Lanna culture in Thailand". Another strength involves, "we have six campuses located in six provinces in Northern Thailand, and this is another strength that we can benefit from it a lot". RMUTL is a large public university in Northern Thailand with a total of 2,260 employees, 1,288 of whom are instructors, 972, administrative employees, and 22,671 students in all 6 campuses (Human Resource Department of RMUTL, 2012). In a similar way, "I think the uniqueness of RMUTL is the suffix Lanna, which refers to the greatness of Lanna Kingdom in the past or in Ancient Thailand. Lanna has its own language, culture, and traditions". One more strength that distinguishes RMUTL from other universities was expressed as follows, "the strengths of RMUTL, which can attract foreign students, in particular, are: arts, and culture, or the faculty of arts and architecture. We have Lanna architecture in RMUTL, and when people talk about Lanna arts and culture, it is a must to think of RMUTL only". His Majesty, King Bhumibol, had a clear purpose to stipulate the young generation to create a Thai identity, in terms of art and culture, along with contemporary knowledge (Chalapati, 2007). Hence, efforts should be directed toward preserving the Thai culture that foreigners in Thailand and overseas have both admired and respected. The participants of this study noted that Thai people are always reciprocal, help each other, care for others' feelings, are kind (Jai-dee), and are modest with elderly people. Sloper and Can (1995) perceived that at Thang Long University in Vietnam, they undertook a significant challenge in resolving any boundaries, by a strong commitment to sincerity, while preserving Vietnamese culture and identity.

Other strengths discussed with the participants of this study include "nowadays, we establish bilingual programs in accounting, and marketing at the faculty of business administration and liberal arts and prepare ourselves to enter the ASEAN community in the next few years". Moreover, "in our course syllabi, we encourage the students to practice what they learned in classes in a workplace, which make them acquire a variety of skills, and ready to work after they graduate". In other words,

RMUTL strength is that it is famous by producing graduates with practical skills, and responding to the labor market needs. Another strength of RMUTL is that we produce graduates with skills in various professions, as stated in the university's vision. This makes many employers in Thailand prefer to recruit our students in their organizations.

Overall, one participant expounded:

at present, the Faculty of Arts and Architecture is considered one of the strengths of RMUTL. We are a leading university in painting, sculpture, and arts. Many public and private organizations were built by the Lanna way, and most of which were constructed by our lecturers, and students. I think if we develop a new curriculum that emphasizes the Lanna arts and architecture, it will attract a lot of foreign students, who are interested in Lanna arts.

Other strengths informed were: academic mobility programs; worldwide networks, and connections; a vocational and hands-on university; the ability to publish research in international venues; a leading university in painting, sculpture, and arts; adequate staff and professional academics; and RMUTL is ranked first among the nine RMUT in Thailand. These were discussed

as follows: "we have exchange student and staff projects. We allow our students and lecturers to study and work in other workplaces to get more experience". Besides, "RMUTL has worldwide connections with universities, in native English speaking countries (e.g., America, Canada, and New Zealand). Also, in the ASEAN community, we have students and staff exchange programs". Similarly, "to enhance our weaknesses, we made some agreements with countries that are more effective than we are such as Korea, Japan, China, India, New Zealand, and Australia". In terms of worldwide networks, Henard, Diamond, and Roseveare (2012) concluded that institutions have the propensity to participate in networks that offer them the ability to focus on particular issues and gain different outlooks. They also mentioned that networks provide exposure and interaction opportunities, particularly with institutions that they might not otherwise come across. Kirtikara (2001) noted that there are over 600 higher education institutions and 130 degree-granting institutions in Thailand. Hence, Kirtikara interpreted that networking these institutions can deliver quality programs, diversified education services, transfer of credits among institutes, recognition, and accreditation of work experience, and collaborative research, and services among institutes. Carroll-Boegh and Takagi (2006) recommended the endorsement of student and staff mobility to boost their global competitiveness. Based on the ASEAN Concord II (2003), ASEAN shall continue current efforts to promote regional mobility and reciprocal recognition of professional credentials, talents, and skills progress. Other strengths involve, "a vocational, and hands-on university. So, our instructors and students are skilled in their fields". RMUTL is a vocational university; however, in 1957 under a royal charter granted by His Majesty, King Bhumibol Adulyadaj, RMUTL was under the name of the Vocational Institute (Human Resource Department of RMUTL, 2012). Other critical strengths were identified by the participants of this study, such as special courses; community service, strong commitment to CSR and society; and our capability to develop internationalization policies. Similarly, Henson et al. (1990) mentioned that public service functions of a university are essential to enhance its relevance in an interdependent community. In the reviewed literature, we found that the blueprint for the ASEAN sociocultural community (2009) discussed the significance of promoting CSR and ensured that it is incorporated in the corporate agenda and contributed toward sustainable socioeconomic development in ASEAN member nations. Additionally, many participants in this study believed as this participant articulated:

we can be a leader in the ASEAN community in many things, such as in Herbal Medicine, as an alternative medicine, and we can also be a hub in tourism. Moreover, Tourism, Food Sciences, Home Economics, Artificial flowers, and Cookery courses are also considered a competitive advantage for RMUTL; however, we still need to develop these courses in the ASEAN era.

One conjecture made by the participants of this study was, "in Nan campus, we can have aeronautical engineering curriculum, because the campus is next to the airport and the commercial port". One of the strengths of RMUTL is the clear policy of community service and the sense of responsibility toward our community, was another comment made clearly by another participant.

Above all, a reasonable cost of living in Northern Thailand; an effective and affordable healthcare system in Chiang Mai; and a service-minded attitude are the most critical strengths identified by many participants of this study. Briefly, in this section, we added the following strengths to previous studies: special courses; a reasonable cost of living; an affordable healthcare system; and a service-minded attitude.

3.4. Barriers

Yang (2002) succinctly mentioned that Chinese researchers perceive that the internationalization of higher education in the developing nations is beleaguered with a number of impediments, along with a number of benefits. Speaking of some barriers confronted by internationalizing RMUTL, the participants of this study explained their thoughts and feelings clearly as follows: an insufficient budget; ineffective, and inefficient management, and leadership competencies; lack of English skills among all individuals in RMUTL; inadequate research about the ASEAN community and international research publications; and presumed incompetent in academia. Speaking of ineffective and inefficient management and leadership competencies, Vongchavalitkul (2012) identified the following challenges for Thai leadership in higher education: prevent obstacles, student support, emphasize lifelong learning, invest in technology, develop strategic alliances with different industries, evaluate quality, and transform bureaucracy. Other barriers reported by the participants of this study were, an insufficient budget; lack of English skills among all individuals in RMUTL; inadequate research about the ASEAN community and international research publications; and presumed incompetence in academia. This was also the case in the Warsaw School of Economics in Poland, as Geldner and Wachter (1999) noted: the deficiencies in the administrative and technical infrastructure for international collaboration and exchanges; credits or courses taught in foreign languages, are insufficient; and the absence of an academic journal to publish the school's research findings. In previous studies, Garza (2008) noted that if the faculty has some shortages in offering international views in its sciences and research, the development of an international curriculum, perhaps, is a great challenge or an obstacle.

Other indicators include the higher education institutes in Bangladesh, which confront large challenges related to scarce resources, such as budget and facilities, whereas, the ineffectiveness to comply with international standards and the unavailability of modern textbooks are viewed as obstacles in the case of Bulgarian higher education (Zolfaghari, Sabran, & Zolfaghari, 2009). Sloper and Can (1995) observed that at Thang Long University in Vietnam, the students' competencies in foreign languages, particularly in English and French, may be one reason behind their inability to study in foreign countries. Another indicator in Singaporean higher education, Rondinelli and Heffron (2007) reported that there are few research studies or theories that are available to support, or to help in, skills development. While financial considerations remain problematic to the successful reform and internationalization of German institutions of higher education, improved quality of European

universities and the successful implementation of international programs require unambiguous recommendations in terms of language planning and pedagogy (Erling & Hilgendorf, 2006). However, they added that the most significant apprehension over instituting university courses that use English as a medium of instruction is that students and faculty members may lack the language competencies. One participant in this study explicitly noted that the Thais work like "Cho-Cham-Yen-Cham", which means that the Thais work slowly and not enthusiastic. In other words, the Thais' nature or work style is slow, smooth, and cautious.

Additionally, we found more barriers, such as mystery, ambiguity, and unfair measures; inability to recruit high-quality staff, and talented students; and inadequate professional development plans and programs. Becker (2006) showed that the task of academics in internationalizing higher education is helpful, only if strategic assessments are well thought out beforehand, and management and leadership are of significant support in a planned change process. Vongchavalitkul (2012) noted that mystery or ambiguity could be hurdles in coordinating activities and moving simultaneously in the same direction. Moreover, Vongchavalitkul clarified two important factors: (a) without professional academic staff for specific duties and responsibilities, a university may not be able to increase either funds or students; and (b) fair measures of effectiveness and efficiency are required to achieve the desired goals. Moreover, we demonstrated that, excessive workload for the academic staff; poor environmental planning; inability to reflect the Lanna culture in RMUTL constructions; a poor website; and poor interpersonal skills, and work ethics are significant barriers to internationalize RMUTL.

In previous studies, Vongchavalitkul (2012) referred to the issue of autonomy, or teams with a higher degree of flexibility, and maximum power to make decisions, and coordinate activities independently, without having to rely on approvals from decision-makers. Following this line of thought, the participants of this study interpreted that little autonomy to everyone, and maximum restrictions on operations are major barriers for internationalizing RMUTL in the future. Additionally, other studies had more criticisms directed to the civil society organizations (CSOs), for the following reasons: lack of governance, professionalism, fundraising, leadership transition, and organizational regeneration and succession (Chong & Elies, 2011). Hence, building capacity and professionalism of CSOs should not be neglected, and should be well thought out. In conclusion, Altbach and Knight (2007) referred to some uncertainties that may affect the speed of internationalization. For example:

1. *Government policies and the cost of study*: Policies regarding the cost of tuition and fees for visas and other requirements may impinge on international efforts.

2. *English*: the increasing use of English as a medium of research and instruction, particularly at the graduate level, may stimulate interest in international programs presented by universities in English.

3. *The internationalization of the curriculum*: Students may find international programs valuable as curricula move toward models emerged in the United States and other industrialized nations.

4. *Quality assurance and control*: observers criticize many international higher education programs for low standards but fail to identify measures of quality.

3.5. International Relations Office

When we asked the participants of this study about the significant role of the international relations office in the ASEAN era, rich information was provided. For example, actively inviting institutions in RMUTL; enhance cooperation, and serve as a liaison between RMUTL and the ASEAN universities; strive for excellence; network expansion plans; capacity building, develop joint degree programs and seminars, coordinate international projects, and strengthen international environmental treaties. Hence, one comment was, “the Office of International Affairs, is an academic support unit, and its mission is to support the creation of an international policy and development to reach specific quality and standards that can help us become an excellence university”. In addition, “Other issues involve, capacity building for students, and staff, and exchange students and staff; and support joint degree programs. This office can also coordinate international projects, joint research seminars, ceremonies, receptions, and welcome foreigners”. Moreover, the participants of this study confirmed that the international relations office should have the following responsibilities, for example:

effective public relations, and proactive promotion strategies to promote our university in foreign countries, and make it well-known. This office should have some strategies that can help RMUTL becomes one of the top universities in the world or at least in the ASEAN region.

Other major roles for the staff at the international relations office involve: counselors; ambassadors; dedicated and proactive staff; active coordination across various faculties and departments; student, staff, and academic mobility; platform for cultural exchange; and develop a scholarship program. Hence, one participant expressed the following view, “the international relations office can support the internationalization process of RMUTL in many aspects. First, they should be our representatives, develop networks, and cooperate with foreign institutions”. Importantly, one participant described, “the international relations office should have staff with high competencies, service-minded, and dedicated to their work”. Comprehensively, the participants noted:

this office is like a bridge for our university to connect, and cooperate with other institutions. However, this office cannot do everything we want without effective coordination with all faculties, and departments in RMUTL. This office should collect all international activities and projects from each faculty, and then support the implementation of all activities needed.

Accordingly, as stated in the mission statement of the Office of International Affairs of Chulalongkorn University (CU), the emphasis is on cooperative activities, academic exchanges with international institutions and academic services to international communities. In addition, the Office of International Affairs serves this role and its responsibilities are divided into three main categories: (a) an international liaison and special affairs service; (b) an overseas students and exchange program service; and (c) an international cooperation service

(Office of International Affairs CU, 2012). Another indicator is in the mission statement of the Office of International Affairs of King Mongkut University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT). The office was set up to implement international relations by emphasizing the cooperation between KMUTT, and other institutions, both in the country and overseas, through the academic cooperation, staff and students exchanges, scholarships, and grants for studying and training.

Moreover, the Office of International Affairs provides the role and responsibilities that are divided into three main categories: (a) international students, and exchange programs; (b) protocol and information; and (c) funding support and international links (Office of International Affairs, KMUTT, 2012). At Mahidol University (MU), many activities for the promotion of internationalization of education are supported. For example, collaboration with over 130 overseas academic institutions, and agencies, host regular international academic conferences in many disciplines; and student and staff exchange (International College, Mahidol University, 2012). Other roles mentioned by the participants include: curriculum design support for faculty members; executive visits projects; marketing tactics; and hub for international news, and information center, “this office can support in academic issues. For example, assists in the process of incorporating foreign ingredients into our curricula, and teaching processes”. Another perception was, “this office should have some tactics and strategies that attract foreign students to study in our university”. Moreover, “this office can be a hub for news, information, suggestions, and facilities in all foreign affairs issues”. Delegation of authority and responsibility; and become the central unit of RMUTL were also suggestions explicitly expressed by the participants, as follows:

The foreign affairs office is an important tool. It is unnecessary to be dependent on other offices. I mean, this office should be an executive power. I would like to stress that the foreign affairs office is just a tool, but if you do not use the tool effectively, some things may not happen as we planned for it.

However, the participants viewed that delegation and empowerment for the leader of this department are essential to manage things appropriately and assist RMUTL in internationalizing all of its processes. Nevertheless, “the international relations office in our university is very small, and the leader of this department does not have any power or authority to make decisions or make any order. Currently, we have the Deputy President accountable for the international relations office”. The international relations office should, “collect all international activities, and projects from each faculty, or department, and in my opinion, this work must be the work of the Vice President of International Affairs to have the power, and the authority to make orders, and decisions in RMUTL”. Additionally, this office can help RMUTL in, “developing action plans, coordinating different projects, cooperating with foreign universities, searching for scholarships, providing training courses, developing research, and exchanging programs for staff, students, and faculty members”.

Hence, we considered delegation of authority and responsibility for the international relations

office/department and becoming the central unit of the university major additions to previous studies.

3.6. Curricula

Moving to another interesting issue, which is about curriculum issues, several answers were repeatedly mentioned by the participants, such as the English language as a medium of instruction; incorporating the ASEAN aspects of life into our curricula; intellectual challenges of a curriculum for excellence; highlighting production practices in the curriculum; satisfying market needs; developing practical and global curricula; incorporating a mixture of the most required competencies in today's market into our curricula; developing a competitive curriculum; strengthening core values by offering Human Relations' subjects in the core courses; the curriculum: theory, and practice; defining clear goals with reflection to the skills required for our learners; consistency, and clear objectives; and a curriculum that reflects twenty-first century skills and the modern world. Hence, the participants of this study expressed their ideas as follows: "Now we are having our curricula in Thai language, which meets the Thai qualifications framework (TQF). Suppose that each curriculum contains 120 credits, one-fourth of the curriculum should be taught in English. This is in my opinion can enhance the internationalization". Erling and Hilgendorf (2006, p. 287) showed, "English appears to function as a cure-all for the ills in the German education system. At the same time, the impact of the increasing use of English in German higher education is rarely considered". In addition, "the course contents should cover all objectives in the curriculum. In the context of the ASEAN community, in my opinion, the course must offer knowledge about the ASEAN ways of life, including language, culture, traditions, and political issues". The participants revealed that at present, RMUTL is trying to develop all of its curricula, establish bilingual programs, and cooperate with industries, such as Central Group, and Michelin. Accordingly, the participants conjectured:

we need to develop bilingual programs, because we expect that students, who will come to study in RMUTL will be from Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and just a few from Indonesia, and Malaysia, but not much because the educational system in Malaysia, and Indonesia is better than in Thailand.

Accordingly, one indicator at Tokyo Institute of Technology in Japan, Jiang-Bin (2009) reported that the efforts made there (a) to advance the faculty and students' communication skills in English; (b) to gradually develop bilingual curricula; (c) to educate international aptitudes; and (d) to invite professional scholars from different nations to contribute in academic management, and to boost cooperative agreements through international exchanges and ventures. The participants of this study concluded that the curricula must consist of international contents and activities that any country can practice or apply it. However, this requires the following:

We must have specific goals, before developing international curricula. These goals should reflect the desired skills, and characteristics of our graduates. What we want them to be, and what standards that need development are important factors to be considered. So,

each faculty should brainstorm, and identify competencies required before they can develop their curricula.

Santipitaks (2013) compiled the twenty-first century competencies required for youth in the ASEAN community, as follows: linguistic skills, knowledge about ASEAN and ASEAN member countries, vocational skills based on ASEAN and international standards, negotiation skills for the international arena, thinking beyond national interest, a positive attitude towards the ASEAN community/member states, teamwork with other countries/cross-cultural competencies in the working environment, expertise in one's own profession, output and results-oriented outlook, promoting better service based on international standards, the ability to work according to international standards, knowledge about the different rules and regulations within ASEAN member countries, emphasis on the development of skilled labor according to international standards, networking among educational institutions within ASEAN, establishing ASEAN studies centers in universities, activities to promote ASEAN connectivity, and applying an integrated approach to raise ASEAN awareness in the civil service through the organization of activities and use of the media. Similarly, the participants acknowledged, "consistency, and clear objectives in our curricula are also very necessary. For example, the students should be able to acquire particular skills, such as presenting, arguing, and synthesizing information after the completion of each coursework". Moreover, other participants noted similar opinions of the importance of curriculum aspects. For example, 2+2 or 3+1 programs, and support from the Office of Civil Service Commission (OCSC); international accreditation; student and academic mobility; offer diversity activities; emphasize cross-cultural games, and activities for both Thai and foreign students; establish a mechanism that ensures quality teaching; involve students in research; create an environment that encourages pluralistic learning; and cultural preservation. Thus, the participants of this study communicated the following:

we are trying to establish international curricula by cooperating with foreign universities, such as 2+2 or 3+1 programs. However, sometimes we face some problems, and we need more support from the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC) for credit evaluation, and approval.

Accordingly, Bartell's (2003) changes required for universities involve: curriculum accreditation, student, and academic mobility, internships to allow students to meet and experience other cultures; and enhance diversity and international experiences among faculty members and students. Srisa-an (1998) mentioned that internationalization refers to the integration of international dimensions and principles in all the missions of the university; particularly, the internationalization of curricular, faculty, and students exchanges, collaborative research with foreign institutions, and other activities (e.g., cooperative education, university-industry linkages and cultural exchange, as well as hiring of foreign faculty members and bilingualism). Another critical issue highlighted by the participants in this study was the significance of having our courses accepted, and accredited internationally. One of the participants stressed, "the students should get involve in research to strengthen

their knowledge". As a caveat, one participant urged, "we must consider our culture before developing our curricula". Other participants added to the perspective: working through a foreign intermediary or a joint venture; ensure compliance with the Commission of Higher Education (CHE) requirements, and TQF; develop programs that motivate active learning, and teaching; and inspirational teaching methods, and techniques. Hence, the participants' comments are as followed: "we should have academic cooperation with foreign financial institutions to develop our courses, exchange students and staff, transfer credits among institutions, and cooperate in other forms, such as joint ventures". Hawawini (2011) noted that international joint ventures (JVs) can offer students and programs the possibility of spending some time in a foreign institution, and eventually develop academic or curricula joint ventures in different countries, and deliver joint programs. Most importantly, "our courses must comply with the Commission of Higher Education (CHE) requirements and TQF". Wisely, one participant assertively concluded:

I believe that foreign languages' competencies are very important. However, the most important things are the way we think, our teaching methods, and techniques. Even if we cannot speak good English, we can use non-verbal language to communicate with each other.

One study demonstrated that university curricula are in substantial structuring in East Asia by shifting from the common 'teacher-oriented' technique to a 'student-oriented' technique (Mok, 2007). Believing that creativity and innovation are important elements in assessing student competencies, Mok recognized that universities in East Asia have made efforts to educate students to become independent and self-directed. In short, the study added to previous studies: (a) strengthen core values by offering Human Relations' subjects in the core courses in our curricula; and (b) support from the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC) for credit evaluation, and approval.

3.7. Technology Applications

We found some different competencies, programs, and activities considered influential for internationalizing RMUTL, such as: computer software programs; executive information system (EIS); effective use of information systems (ISs) to carry out the planned tasks; the use of information communication technology (ICT) in all RMUTL activities; and success factors and effects of information technology (IT) applications. One participant formulated these competencies as:

we have to use IT, and manage the use of technology to enhance our teaching skills. For example, in teaching English, we use the English software program that is called "Tell Me More" (TMM), and QUARTET software program for officers.

Moreover, one participant mentioned:

executive information system (EIS) is necessary to support the management in key planning policies, and strategies. The EIS will be used to guide management decisions. Also, semi-structured EIS can be developed to meet the executives' special needs both in and out RMUTL.

It was perceived "IT can help internationalizing RMUTL, especially in E-Book system to search for a

variety of information in English; however, the barrier is that our students use this technology very little". Knight, Adams, and Peace Lenn (1999) acknowledged that the fast development of IT is directly affecting higher education systems. Other comments articulated were:

it is important to develop our ISs to support our instructors, students, strategic planners, and the management in a variety of issues. For example, ISs can provide some tools or information to measure the effectiveness of our staff, and our educational courses to become an international university. ICT helps the whole world connects and communicates with each other effectively. Hence, ICT should be applied to facilitate all administrative works, such as the registration system, timetables, meetings, and Videoconferencing, monitoring, and controlling through the use of the technological system.

Ley (2012) proposed a plethora of issues related to human development in ASEAN, and one issue was related to ICT, and the ASEAN IT initiatives, positive use of ICT, and IT expertise. The participants of this study were very specific about the use of IT in our work; and one stated: "IT can bring people together, disseminate, analyze, and interpret information across the university. Outsiders can easily access all activities, data, and information about our university, if our IT system is effective". According to the International Monetary Fund (2001), ICT have made the world smaller. Additionally, the participants explored the following: transforming HR practices through technology (eHR & HRIS); effective IT communication channels; and develop new IT systems with adequate functionality. "We need to develop our human resources (HR) through the use, and the application of advanced technologies to enhance all RMUTL processes, and activities in the ASEAN community era". The Thai Ministry of Education has generated a report from a meeting to strengthen cooperation in the field of education in five dimensions (Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, 2011). One of these dimensions explored the issue of developing our individuals' IT skills, and expertise in accordance to the industries' needs, and requirements to become active members of the ASEAN community. One participant of this study expansively informed the following comment:

we have an institution of IT in our university, but the IT system is really poor and hard to implement. We have good hard ware system, but we use it very little in our management decisions, activities, etc. For example, RMUTL website should be an effective communication channel to collect and process information in various locations in the system. Moreover, we have to clearly present information to outsiders about our academic issues, such as research, programs, and curricula in RMUTL.

Likewise, at Warsaw School of Economics in Poland, Geldner and Wachter (1999) manifestly noted that one of the major weaknesses is the dearth of some fields, such as IT and computerization; though, there was indication of constant and significant improvements. In the participants' opinions, it is also imperative to use friendly technology, and invest more in IT in RMUTL. Hence, one participant mentioned, "the system must be effective and easy to use to help all executives interact with this computer system". In a similar vein, Moussa (2013) advised the alignment of IT and organization strategies, and the rationale behind this proposition is that organizations can achieve the

desired outcome from their IT investments, only if management functions and activities are coordinated effectively, rather than being isolated. However, Vongchavalitkul (2012) identified several challenges for Thai leadership in higher education, and one of which is the investment in technologically competent faculty. Another added:

we cannot ignore the significance of a social network, and I think IT is very important in the ASEAN era. If we want to internationalize RMUTL, we have to invest more in IT. In the modern world, people know each other through IT. I cannot see any other communication channel that helps people approach each other. So, RMUTL must have a strong IT system to promote the university, and achieve our goals effectively, and efficiently.

3.8. Speed Up the Process

The participants of this study emphasized other factors to speed up the internationalization of RMUTL in the ASEAN community era, for instance, seeking high-quality instructors, both native, and non-native English speakers; strengthen foreign languages' competencies, strategies, and tools; boost 3+1 programs, MOUs, networks, PR projects, study abroad projects, and marketing plans. Based on that, the participants articulated their thoughts as followed: "I think we should start on matters, such as quality teachers. Do we have qualified teachers, who can be the same or better than teachers in other universities in the ASEAN countries? The answer is that there is no one can answer this question". In the participants' opinions, "English teachers must have appropriate teaching methods to let our students learn how to search for knowledge independently and how to present their ideas. This is more important than just teaching English tenses for a conversation". Nevertheless, it was argued:

if we hire ordinary instructors with low salaries, we will suffer from the low quality of education. The barrier is that we get limited budget from the government. Also, the government allows low income for foreign instructors. In order to overcome this problem, the university should give more salaries to foreign instructors from the university's own budget.

At Kyoto University, many foreign instructors were recruited with higher salaries than the national average, which were then replaced by Japanese instructors, who had received scholarships to study in other developed countries (Akiyoshi, 2009). Importantly, one participant believed, "we should provide a variety of programs in different languages, to give the students the opportunity to select the language, and the program which they want to study". According to Carroll-Boegh and Takagi (2006), the expertise and qualifications of instructors and their teaching methods and strategies must satisfy the needs of students from different cultures and with different experiences; the use of the English language or other foreign languages in the teaching courses to develop international programs for international students; and endorse student and staff mobility to boost their global presence and competitiveness are vital to speed, and support the internationalization processes of a higher education institution. With that being said, the participants recognized, "there is a very large Muslim population in the ASEAN community. Therefore, we will emphasize the

use of Ba-Ha-Sa language, which is the Indonesian language, because it is going to be very useful in this era". However, the participants advised, "if we want to speed up the internationalization process of RMUTL, then, we need to recruit a language specialist to be responsible for all languages' activities instead of pressuring our lecturers on this work, and consider it workload for them". Moreover, it was revealed:

RMUTL has already done Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with many universities, and corporations. For example, we have MOUs with Chongqing University in China, and Central Group Retail Company in Thailand, which support students in their tuition fees. The university will develop all courses provided to allow the students to go to the shops of Central Group some days, and study in the university some other days.

Fogelberg (1999) recommended that global networks be considered a prominent method of maintaining an advanced education level and research, and of conserving international presence. Another significant issue was, "RMUTL Websites should respond to all students' inquiries. Websites should present clear information, and invite those who are interested in studying at RMUTL". Similarly, the participants commented that, developing a powerful and reflective strategic plan; communicating the internationalization policy to all individuals in RMUTL; becoming a research university, and having national and international research publications; recognizing and drawing a roadmap of needs improvements; a sufficient budget, and support from all executives to invest in RMUTL; a careful selection process; and determining how quickly to proceed are all momentous to speed up the internationalization of RMUTL:

starting by setting clear goals to see where we stand now, where we want to position ourselves, what are our resources, and who are our competitors. So, we need to do a SWOT analysis, and set time frames for change. However, the most important thing is to know where you are, and where you want to go.

However, Dewey and Duff (2009) noted that university administrators could not execute an inclusive internationalization process without coordination with support of, and participation by, all individuals faculty members in all departments. Besides, "executives, and policymakers at all levels will have to discuss, and interpret their internationalization policy to all individuals in RMUTL". Nonetheless, Qiang (2003) ascertained that any conflict among executives could harmfully affect the internationalization endeavors. Undoubtedly, "we should become a research university, and be able to get our research published in international journals, and present our work in international conferences in Thailand, and overseas". Mok (2007) noted that competition might create a vicious cycle that teaching-oriented universities are going to be lower tiered, while research universities will become more privileged. Alternatively, Pama (2012) predicted that research universities would suffer from significant constraints on their budgets, student loan programs would be reduced around the world, the system would face pressures to establish or increase fees to students, and cost-cutting practices might affect quality at universities. Other tactics required to speed up the process mentioned by the participants were as follows:

clearly define how we are going to enter this community, and what should we do. We should also emphasize the significance of the English language in all courses, as well as other foreign languages. All signs or advertisements in the university must be in both Thai, and English. We should buy more textbooks in the libraries in all campuses for both students, and lecturers.

This requires, “the university provides a big budget for all activities, and considers it as an investment”.

Furthermore, the participants confirmed that enhancing student employment opportunities; developing our IT competencies; intrinsic motivation, and interpersonal skills; RMUTL accountability for educating personnel about the internationalization processes; producing skilled and competent graduates; the amalgamation of the ASEAN aspects of life into our courses; and developing diverse activities, and the university’s environment are not considered options, or alternatives for internationalizing RMUTL. “We must be responsible for our students’ standards, and when they graduate, we should be able to help them find a good job in Thailand, or abroad”. According to the IMF (2001) one aspect of globalization is the movement of people, where workers move from one country to another to find better employment opportunities. Therefore, Sandar (2012) informed that one of the six outlined strategic actions in the AEC blueprint is to facilitate the issue of visa and employment opportunities. In Australian higher education, efforts have also been made to restructure student visa arrangements, to protect international student rights and to enhance quality of provision, including the quality of services offered through overseas partners (Harman, 2004). One perception was delivered succinctly in these words, “I think strong motivation to work is very important. Everyone should have positive attitude, good morals, and self-reliance, rather than being dependent on the government budget”. Nonetheless, “the university should be responsible for raising everyone’s awareness and understanding of the internationalization of RMUTL”. In other words, “the development of our university’s environment, activities for students, and staff, are all necessary to speed up our process of internationalizing RMUTL”.

Likewise, Suttipun (2012) revealed that all Thai universities are structured to produce graduates with great ethics; knowledge; capabilities; relationships and responsibility; and analysis, communication, and IT skills. Succinctly, this study added that we should emphasize the use of Ba-Ha-Sa language, which is the Indonesian language because there is a large Muslim population in the ASEAN community.

3.9. Essentials

Moving to the last issue in the proposed model, we attempted to look at the essentials for internationalizing RMUTL in the ASEAN community era. As such, we were seeking more knowledge and information from the participants of this study on this issue. Based on that the participants explained the essentials in their view as follows: outside-looking-in paradigm; exceptional IT competencies, strong partnership with the media, and become a famous university; develop our academic capabilities and skills; strive to recruit high intellectuals, retain them, and develop an effective compensation

system; quality criteria for curriculum design and development; manage resistance to change; innovative strategies for developing English skills across the university; reward policy for outstanding students in the English language; develop RMUTL personnel competencies and mindsets; and consider the use of a foreign language. Thus, the participants addressed, “outside-looking-in to adapt and adopt many things for our organization is very essential”. Jiang-Bin (2009) referred to the astuteness of Chinese research universities to achieve collaboration and international exchanges by ‘going out’, and ‘bringing in’ policies to be connected with the international society, while maintaining their culture. Moreover, the participants of this study advised to, “develop strong partnership with the media, and become accepted and well-known by other organizations”. Chong and Elies (2011, p. 31) also had a great concern about the role of the media:

the media’s role in the process cannot be understated. ASEAN TV (hosted by Thailand’s Nation Multimedia Group) is one effort by the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) to communicate ASEAN’s purpose and message to the general public. Unfortunately, besides a small number of editors personally interested in the ASEAN process, not many journalists report on ASEAN. There some efforts to redress this lack of interest in ASEAN activities and educate journalists on

what ASEAN is and what it does for the region. The Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA), which is affiliated with Southeastern Advertising Publishers Association (SAPA), has been conducting annual workshops on ASEAN with journalists and editors from within the ASEAN region.

The prolonged international system of the media, television in particular, through satellite transmission results in cultural exchanges rapidly (Bartell, 2003). Another strong comment made by the participants, “Thai people try to conserve the use of the Thai language with no doubt, but actually it is necessary to consider the use of another language that may help in communicating with different people in the ASEAN community”. Other participants added: balancing the paradox of localization and internationalization; develop powerful strategic plans; a center for contemporary critical and cultural studies; create a positive attitude towards all kinds of work; create a competitive workforce and environment; strategies to promote the development of student competencies; meditation and mindfulness; educate students social work skills and competencies required in today’s global world; students’ cross-cultural competencies; promote peace and prosperity in the region and maintain long-term connection stability; develop an expansive information gathering system and educational networks; effective and transparent management; an autonomous center for all ASEAN works, projects and activities; and develop a comprehensive bilingual website.

Participants repeatedly mentioned things such as, “RMUTL should make a balance between local institutions’ needs, and the development of international aspects to satisfy or to meet the needs of the global workforce”. Deem, Mok, and Lucas (2008) reflected on the issue of making a balance between localization and internationalization, and argued that we should not

perceive internationalization in Asia the same as how it is perceived in the West. Meanwhile:

we must learn about the history of each country very well to avoid saying things that might make people feel uncomfortable. In general, we need to learn what we should say and do, and what we should not say or do. We must be equal, have mutual respect, and honor each other.

From a Buddhist perspective, the participants urged the need to, “cultivate mindfulness, and meditation to achieve good health condition, and to prevent any evil”. Speaking of student competencies, the participants stated, “we should teach our students important skills, such as critical thinking skills, analytical skills, communication skills, collaboration, problem-solving, and decision making skills”. In the meantime, “our students should have a positive attitude toward the ASEAN community members. Also, our administrators should get this opportunity to develop good connections with all the ASEAN countries, and promote peace, and prosperity in the whole region”. ASEAN aims are to promote and maintain peace, stability, economic growth, social and cultural development, and mutual benefits for all members in the region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012). Speaking of management issues, the participants endorsed, “we must have an effective and transparent committee that can regularly monitor and evaluate all aspects of the internationalization of RMUTL”.

Adequate grants for international pilot projects and the application of learning outcomes; develop rigorous evaluations for the outcomes of learning from the ASEAN visits/trips; efforts are needed to become an autonomous university; personnel career growth and development; effective policies and communication tools for understanding the internationalization processes of RMUTL; empower, develop, accept, respect and unify RMUTL personnel; develop specific, measurable, attainable, reachable and time-bounded goals (SMART goals); quality criteria for curricula design and development; effective use of ISs and technologies; and effective resource management were all mentioned by the participants of this study. “The university has to allocate enough budget for international pilot projects, and take it seriously, define responsibilities, and apply the outcomes of these projects to benefit RMUTL”. Meanwhile, one of the participants warned that we should:

consider what the university wants and needs, not who wants to go, and visit other countries. Those who will visit other countries must have to have the ability to report what has been observed, discussed, and accomplished during their visits. RMUTL has to have a strong evaluation system for these trips.

At the University of Botswana, several efforts were made, such as: supporting all units of the university on their internationalization activities; recruiting foreign students; managing international admissions in collaboration with academic and admissions staff; managing international student services; raising funds and administering the international linkages budget; managing partnerships in which numerous academic units have an interest; supporting the writing and the implementation of official agreements; assisting in the development of international research grant applications; providing necessary reporting protocols for international activities; monitoring progress relative to the benchmarks that took

place; and submitting an annual report to the Senate on progress relative to benchmarks (Policy on Internationalization, 2006).

Speaking of the development of (SMART) goals, Zolfaghari, Sabran, and Zolfaghari (2009) proposed key elements of internationalizing higher education institutes in two ways. One of which is associated with the objectives of the internationalization that should be clearly defined, measured, and accomplished within a specific amount of time. It would also be advantageous from a participant point of view if we could restructure our financial plans. However, one participant mentioned, “I understand that it is a public university, but if we can have an autonomous system, our staff will perform better, and with little barriers”. Concisely, and from Buddhist teachings, this study added to previous studies, the importance of cultivating mindfulness, and meditation to become healthy, and dealing with negative impulses or fears.

3.10. A Proposed Model for Internationalizing RMUTL in the ASEAN Era

After an in-depth investigation, we offered systematic explanations according to the intended purposes. Thus, we attempted to compile the most crucial and indispensable factors, and their constituents that might lead to internationalize RMUTL effectively, as presented in the proposed model (see Figure 1).

3.11. Major Contributions of this Study

This paper is the first of its kind in the higher education management literature in ASEAN countries for two reasons: (a) the inclusiveness and richness in coping with the three phases of the strategy of internationalization mentioned above in the study of Ayoubi and Massoud (2007) in the reviewed literature section 4.4 and (b) the examination of the critical aspects of internationalizing a complete university in ASEAN, rather than just internationalizing a faculty, division or a department. In addition, our proposed model in this study has several implications for university management, for ASEAN university administrators, and most importantly, it suggests the establishment of an autonomous decentralized functional unit (ADFU) to work on all tasks necessary for internationalizing the organization as a whole. We also believe that multinational corporations (MNCs) could apply this model to review and reassess their capacities and their international activities when operating simultaneously in different countries.

3.12. Recommendations for Future Studies

Higher education institutions vary considerably in their level of understanding of what constitutes an international university. Therefore, this offers great opportunities for researchers to investigate a plethora of critical issues related to the topic. There are relatively few investigations of the degree of internationalization of higher education institutions in the ASEAN era. One area of study could be related to drawbacks and new risks of internationalizing higher education institutions in the ASEAN era. Comparative case studies regarding the topic of

internationalization, what it means, and how it can be implemented in different socio-economic and cultural contexts would be another interesting research area. We also need to expand our level of understanding of the internationalization issue by including legal and economic factors involved in a system. It is also significant to study where the major gap is between strategy development and strategy implementation in higher education institutions in the ASEAN region. Another intriguing area of research could be related to the level and the capacity of individuals in facing crises in the ASEAN era.

One more obvious gap in the literature is why administrators in universities choose particular activities to internationalize operations, and the rationale behind the selection of particular universities in particular countries. Associated studies can be related to internal competencies and resources necessary to attempt the internationalization venture. At present, there is no literature available related to the risks involved in developing a joint venture or strategic alliance between universities, between universities and private agencies, or between universities and professional and accredited institutions in the home country and overseas. Future studies may explore the intricacy of the interactions between local students and international students, and between international students and local academics in particular universities. In addition, the fast changing environment in higher education institutions resulted in substantial changes in personnel/staff duties and responsibilities. Thus, continual research and development in global HR policies and practices to cope with/reflect these new trends would be paramount.

Further research may address the following questions: (a) how is cross-cultural competence being developed for students in the university's internationalization processes?; (b) how do university administrators apply their internationalization strategies' assessment results to maximize the benefits of the students, and the university?; (c) can we reach consensus on the criteria of an effective internationalized higher education institution?; (d) are there unique methods or evaluation tools to assess the effectiveness of the outcomes of internationalization strategies developed at higher education institutions?; (e) what are the necessary cognitive skills for acquiring experiences to internationalize a higher education institution?; (f) what are the reasons behind the propensity to grow in international higher education in Eastern and Western universities?; and finally (g) since the definition of the concept 'internationalization' continues to evolve, how will the findings of this study change and evolve in the future?

3.13. Recommendations for Administrators and Policymakers in Thai and ASEAN Universities

Unsurprisingly, a new era requires some warnings, and cautions to prevent social, economic, and political dilemmas that are likely to happen and demolish efforts intended to advance particular issues in societies. Hence, there are a number of caveats noticed throughout this study that need to be taken into account. One of the most common misconceptions is that 'Globalized' equals 'Americanized'; hence, Mok meticulously interpreted:

I hope with such critical reflections we may become more aware of the danger of new imperialism. Living in a post-colonial context, Asian scholars should be more critical about what they have learned from the West, guarding against the logic of becoming 'globalized' meaning Americanized. Following the global practices and ideologies without developing our own unique systems and honoring the rich traditions, cultures and scholarships of East Asia may easily lead us to entering the processes of re-colonization (2007, p. 271).

Another caveat is the remarkable increase in the provision of English medium courses in many universities across Asia. As such, Kirkpatrick verified:

to attract international students, universities feel they have to offer more and more courses through English. This, in turn, means they need more and more staff who can teach through English. The significance of this should not be underestimated, as the move towards internationalization is privileging English and scholarship disseminated through English at the expense of other languages and scholarship disseminated in languages other than English. There is a real threat that the internationalization of higher education is, in effect, providing opportunities for English-medium education and Anglo-Saxon paradigms to maintain and increase their control over higher education (2011, p. 13).

Moreover, decision-makers and policymakers in higher education institutions in ASEAN countries should investigate a variety of aspects to minimize risks involved in any process, activity, project, or plan to internationalize their education system.

For example, why should we strive to become an internationally competitive university? What is the goal? How will it make us a better institution? Do we have the financial, human, and intellectual resources to accomplish the goal? Should we consider being competitive only in certain disciplines or programs? How will international-level research promote the needs of our country? How do we manage a shift from government control to a more market-like contest among universities within the country? Can we balance the sometimes competing pressures of academic freedom and corporate funding? How can our government adopt the best features of third-party governance while still directing institutions in nationally desired directions? Can we avoid turning discussions of new policy paradigms into partisan political debates? How can we arrive at a definition and a shared committee to the public good? In less affluent parts of the world, could regional collaboration be more effective than attempts to create an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) in every country? What might be the unintended consequences of new policies and programs? How can highly controlled systems of higher education build a culture of academic freedom to nurture high-level scholarship? What forms of accountability and quality assurance are necessary as we move toward greater autonomy of individual universities? What mechanisms will best encourage private investment from many segments of society to fund the high cost of global knowledge production? In answering these questions and others like them, leaders must give attention to local needs and local contexts. There is no 'one size fits all' model of higher education development (Mohrman, Ma & Baker, 2008).

Another dangerous issue is the resulting demand for and shortage of labor in some ASEAN countries, and the persistent surplus of labor in others, will drive increasingly large flows of migrant workers from some ASEAN countries into others, with economic, social, political, and social security repercussions in both destination and source countries (Severino, 2007). Andrews and Siengthai revealed:

a solid country brand may have the fortitude to protect Thailand's assets when natural or political problems occur. As surrounding countries' brands gain more strength, the gap between them and Thailand will narrow. Sadly, neighbouring Myanmar and Cambodia have been going backwards in the last ten years. Laos, with its limited but focused ambitions, follows the strategy of promoting itself on the back of its natural resources as the 'battery of Asia', so there is hardly any potential conflict with big neighbour, Thailand (2009, p. 302).

Given the potential effects of culture on the understanding of internationalization, cultural norms, values, and beliefs should be of paramount importance. Additionally, contemporary universities in the ASEAN region need to address the following issues: What should universities offer for the future in the context of rapid technological and social change? What competencies should universities develop and equip their graduates for in the knowledge-based economy? How can we cope with the large number of enrolments, especially in the internationalization era of higher education? and What epistemologies should universities adopt? Most significantly, we comfortably recommend higher education institutions in the ASEAN community that endeavor the internationalization venture, the development of an autonomous decentralized functional unit, which can be very influential and supportive in all internationalization phases, particularly, in bureaucratic institutions. The rationale behind this proposition is that maximum autonomy to all individuals, and little restrictions on operations (e.g., student visa, pilot projects overseas, cooperative agreements with foreign universities, finance issues) can enhance the organization's effectiveness and efficiency.

According to Kehm and Teichler (2007), research concerning internationalization in higher education is significantly dependent upon external funding, and there are only a few researchers who engage regularly with the topic and have made it their field of expertise. Following this line of thought, we argue that perhaps the dearth of publications in this field in ASEAN countries is because of the limited research funds/budget allocated to ASEAN researchers. Some efforts are necessary to ease the access to research on this topic in well-reputable and leading journals around the world, particularly in the ASEAN countries to enable researchers in the internationalization field to make some contributions. Hence, administrators in ASEAN universities may need to ensure that they registered in leading academic journals and continually renew their membership to allow their academic staff to access high-quality and present research. Lastly, administrators and policymakers in universities in ASEAN may consider the appointment of former executives in the higher education institution or former leaders in international business corporations to the

position of international leadership of each faculty/department.

Suggested Activities and its Purposes for ASEAN Universities (see Table 4).

Table 4. Suggested Activities and its Purposes for ASEAN Universities

Activities	Purposes
1. Organize courses for various target groups (e.g., students, faculty members or village leaders)	To stimulate participants' awareness of the internationalization processes, and the significance of the ASEAN Community
2. Invite government officials and pose questions at the end of each session	To directly convey government messages to the targeted groups and free exchange of ideas on specific government policies/treaties
3. Develop a mechanism for dialogues with the media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and religious heads to discuss the ASEAN countries' problems, suggestions, and solutions to problems, and involve faculty members in these discussions	To obtain feedback from various quarters on community quandaries and solutions, wishes, and needs, and to enhance faculty members' knowledge about the ASEAN Community
4. Arrange for some visits to several government development projects in their location	To acquire field experience, and knowledge on government projects and programs
5. Arrange for luncheon/dinner with other universities' administrators	To foster peace, unity and integration among different groups, and strengthen ties among ASEAN universities
6. Design and implement small development projects and provide services for other universities	To confront particular issues/problems, and reach consensus on integrated solutions from all participants
7. Invite specialists/professionals/experts depending on the issue to be tackled	To obtain professional feedback, and practical solutions to specific topics
8. Develop some forums for knowledge/skills transfer on possible projects/activities/plans	To transfer valuable knowledge/skills to other groups
9. Invite human rights organizations	To ensure that individuals possess similar basic goals, and values regardless of their ethnic groupings or other differences
10. Promote the development of an effective Management Information System (MIS) for all ASEAN activities/projects/seminars/workshops, etc.	To constantly assess/update information gathered from such projects, and recognize what is missed or needs improvement in future plans/strategies/performance, etc.

4. Concluding Remarks

Despite the frequent lack of a precise definition, the term internationalization is often used to refer to one, or a combination of, the following activities: (a) the international movement of students and staff between countries; (b) internationalization of higher education curricula; (c) international links for research and open learning programs; and (d) bilateral, regional and international recognition of higher education qualifications (Harman, 2004). Further, the competitive environment requires ASEAN higher education institutions to develop their learning ability and knowledge management for their survival and future growth. Undoubtedly, this would become a nightmare without competent management to transform their

organizations to cope with rapid developments in the new era. Most significantly:

Whilst acknowledging peer review process by and large as a useful tool in ensuring quality of publications by academics, the main focus should be to be practical in research activities and academics must ensure acceptance of their research work by managers who run hospitality businesses (Jayawardena, 2001, p. 313).

Therefore, we discussed the mechanisms, and the possibilities to apply the notions, and strategies offered in this study with RMUTL's administrators to begin to implement some action plans.

Although there is a plethora of interpretations on the meaning of internationalization of higher education institutions, we agree that all tactics, philosophies, and perspectives provided in this study serve all individuals in educational settings. According to Kehm and Teichler (2007) "many analyses on the international dimensions of higher education are so much driven by normative assumptions of the authors that they hardly offer any enlightenment to persons not sharing this normative umbrella" (p. 237). Therefore, we did not attempt to propose subjective ideas or common sense to report constructive and trustworthy information to the reader. Ultimately, despite numerous arguments that qualitative case study findings cannot be generalized to communities or nations, we believe that we can at least generalize our findings to theoretical propositions.

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