

A LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGIES IN THAI HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: This study aimed to develop a leadership model for effective internationalization (IZN) strategies in Thai higher education institutions (HEIs). The study was based on three objectives: 1) To explore the leading factors for internationalization strategies in the global higher education institutions, 2) To validate a proposed leadership model for effective internationalization strategies in Thai higher education institutions, and 3) To verify a leadership model for effective internationalization strategies in Thai higher education institutions. The mixed methods used for this study included documentary review, semi-structured interviews, expert validation, and a questionnaire. 21 experts validated a proposed leadership model for effective IZN strategies in Thai HEIs; it was verified by Three-Stage Least Squares (3SLS) Regression of the results from the questionnaire survey on leadership factors and IZN strategies in two Thai private universities. The findings have shown that the experts validated in terms of suitability could apply five leadership factors and 15 IZN strategies to Thai HEIs. In addition, other three components, comprising institutional vision, context, and policy and priority, are needed for the successful implementation of IZN. Besides, the results from verifying the model reflect that all leadership factors have significantly influenced this leadership model. Since leadership in HEIs plays a very crucial role in enhancing effective IZN strategies to achieve their IZN goals. It is recommended that HEIs could use this study as an idea for developing their leadership model for successful IZN strategies that fit their vision, contexts, and priority.

Keywords: internationalization; internationalization strategies; Thai higher education

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Introduction

Since the twenty-first century, internationalization (IZN) has been among the most powerful forces affecting higher education globally (Rumbley et al., 2012). Higher education institutions (HEIs) must adjust their strategies—in dealing with new trends, such as global markets for students and new technologies (Altbach, 2015). As a result, HEIs embrace IZN as a central focus in policies and practices to build institutional capacity and promote reputation (Stromquist, 2007; Childress, 2009; Altbach and Knight, 2007).

IZN is a process of integrating an international dimension into the institutional purposes, goals, and functions in the delivery of higher education (Knight, 2003; Ellingboe, 1998; de Wit & Hunter, 2015; Beerkeens et al., 2010; Mullen, 2011). Therefore, the roles of leaders in HEIs are crucial for the process of IZN to succeed. To develop or enhance the IZN of HEIs, senior leaders, especially presidents, must have a strong commitment throughout the IZN process (Bruce, 2009), which consists of three phases: design, implementation, and evaluation (Ayoubi, 2006, Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007). In the designing phase, the IZN strategic plan must be focused on HEIs' strategic plan. Those strategies should be relevant to each institutional context for further effective implementation (Ellingboe, 1998; Childress, 2010).

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has caused a dramatic change in IZN strategies. For example, student mobility, which had been considered a strategic priority, may not be fully implemented due to limited physical mobility opportunities. This worldwide pandemic has proved the priority of "Internationalization at Home" (IaH). The integration of international dimensions into HEIs enhances students' intercultural competency and experiences and engages senior leaders, faculty members, and staff more closely in the IZN process. Besides, the role of digital technologies goes beyond teaching-learning devices and databases to storing captured knowledge and exposure, fostering meaningful sharing and building-on international experiences for education quality to students at their home HEIs. Along with previous literature review, this current global situation has called HEIs to emphasize implementing IZN in the institutions more.

In this study, leadership could be considered as "a process in which leaders are not seen as individuals in charge of followers, but as members of a community of practice" (Horner, 1997, p. 277). Senior leaders and leaders at different levels of the institution, such as academic leaders, professional service leaders, and student leaders, must exercise their leadership due to the integration of IZN throughout the institution (Middlehurst, 2008). Therefore, the researcher would like to find out key leadership factors needed for

adopting IZN strategies to compete in the global marketplace and aims to develop a leadership model for effective IZN strategies that Thai HEIs could apply to achieve their IZN goals.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the leading factors for internationalization strategies in the global higher education institutions.
2. To validate a proposed leadership model for effective internationalization strategies in Thai higher education institutions.
3. To verify a leadership model for effective internationalization strategies in Thai higher education institutions.

Literature Review

This study is based on three themes: 1) Global Leadership, 2) Strategic Leadership, and 3) Internationalization Strategies.

Global Leadership

A definition of global leadership has not yet been established and still needs to be discussed by many authors (Maryam et al., 2015). Adler (2001) defined global leadership as a process of influencing an international community's thinking, attitudes, and behaviors to work together towards a common vision and common goals. Maryam et al. (2015), based on a literature review regarding global leadership from 1997 to 2014, proposed that "global leadership can be defined as a leader who operates on a global stage with the global mindset in an environment that is complex and diverse with competencies that includes networking and flexibility." Globalization reflects the context of economic and academic trends (Albach & Knight, 2007); meanwhile, IZN refers to strategies, practices, and policies that countries, institutions, or individuals have to implement to deal with global trends (Albach, 2015). Global leadership is crucial for HEIs to be capable in the global market.

Strategic Leadership

Strategic Leadership is crucial for higher education to encounter an ongoing change, especially the challenges of globalization which needs higher education to aim for being internationalized. Internationalizing HEIs is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight, 2003, p.2). HEIs must have strategic intent to incorporate IZN into their institutions through mission statements, strategic vision, corporate strategy, and strategic planning (Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007, p.329-330). Besides, Strategic leadership

could be defined as "a means of building the direction and the capacity for the organization to achieve the directional shift or change" (Davies, 2005, p.244).

Internationalization (IZN) Strategies

A strategy could be considered "a method of interactive leadership that clarifies purposes and priorities mobilizes motivation and resources, and sets directions for the future (Morrill, 2007, p.xi). Strategy determines the direction of an organization in the long term, defines and communicates an organization's unique position, and determines how organizational resources, skills, and competencies should be combined to create a competitive advantage (Porter, 1985).

With globalization challenges, HEIs worldwide aim to be internationalized to be competitive in a global setting. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) initiated the project on "Higher Education in a New International Setting" in 1993 and the project on "Institutional Strategies for Internationalisation" during 1991-1994 (de Wit, 1995). From the latter project, "strategies" were scoped as "those strategic commitments which guide the institution's international orientations for the future" (de Wit, 1995, p.2). Due to other distinguished experts in the internationalization of higher education, Knight (2004) uses the term "internationalization strategies" to imply a more planned, integrated, and strategic approach to the IZN of higher education.

Conceptual Framework

The study proposed a leadership model for effective internationalization strategies in Thai higher education institutions. The conceptual framework was as follows:

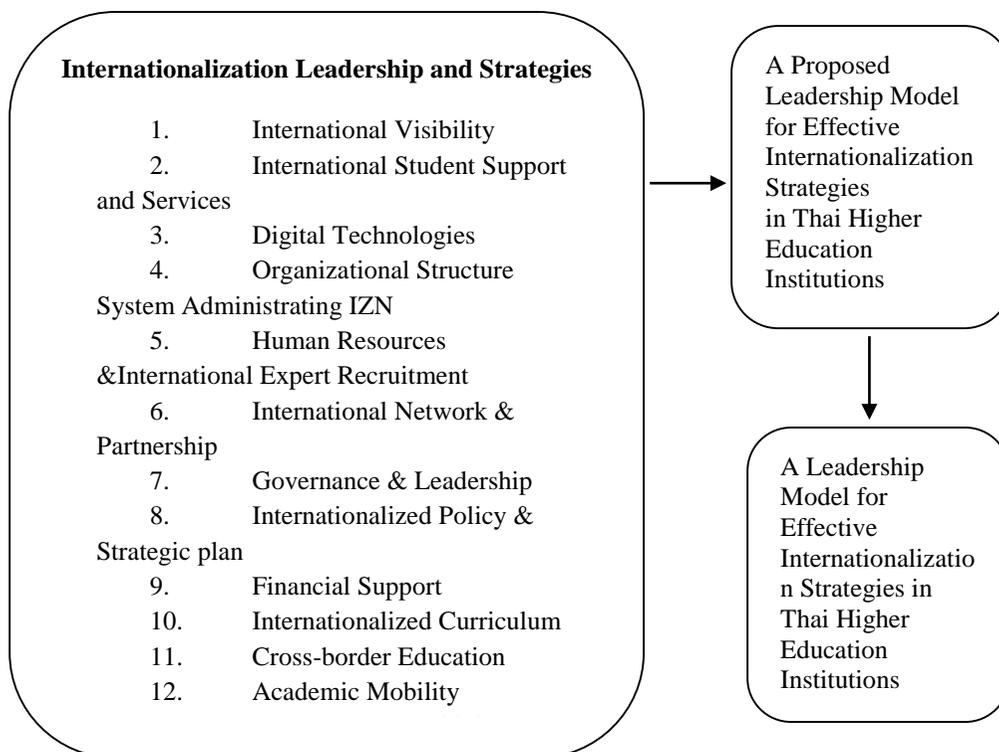


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The study applied qualitative and quantitative methods based on the aforementioned research objectives. For the qualitative methods, documentary review and semi-structured interviews were used to explore the global leadership factors and internationalization strategies in higher education. In research objective one, the documentary review used 112 sources from 1994 to 2020, which were chosen based on keywords for leadership factors and IZN strategies in HEIs. The frequency was used to define key leadership and strategies of the IZN. A semi-structured was conducted on three IZN experts by selected purposive sampling. The researcher synthesized the interview results and then verified by three other experts in the field. In research objective two, the researcher developed a proposed leadership model and later validated by purposive sampling of 21 university administrators and experts in IZN.

Expert validation was used to validate a proposed leadership model for effective internationalization strategies in Thai higher education. The results

from 21 experts' suggestions and recommendations were used to adjust the leadership model. In research objective three, using the quantitative method, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to a sample of 60 practitioners in two Thai private HEIs, currently identified as members of an international association of higher education in Asia. Descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis (Three-stage Least Square Regression) were used to analyze the data and to verify a leadership model for effective internationalization strategies in Thai higher education institutions. The following is a summary of the findings for each research objective.

Findings

Research Objective One

In order to explore the leading factors for internationalization (IZN) strategies in the global higher education institutions (HEIs), the researcher synthesized the results from documentary reviews and semi-structured interviews with three experts in internationalization. The keywords related to leadership factors and internationalization strategies were extracted. Additionally, this internationalization leadership and strategies were reviewed and approved by three experts. As a result, five leadership factors and 15 IZN strategies were considered key factors for enhancing IZN in the global HEIs. Five leadership factors were (1) global business expertise, (2) global organizing expertise, (3) global strategic perspective, (4) cross-cultural competencies, and (5) global mindset. The 15 IZN strategies were (1) international visibility, (2) international student support and services, (3) digital technologies, (4) organizational structure system administrating IZN, (5) human resources, international expert recruitment and staff empowerment, (6) international network and partnership, (7) governance and leadership, (8) internationalized policy and strategic plan, (9) financial support, (10) internationalized curriculum, (11) cross-border education, (12) mobility (both academic and non-academic), (13) intercultural sensitivity, (14) cross-cultural communication skills, and (15) multi-language proficiency.

Research Objective Two

In this stage, the researcher developed a proposed leadership model for effective IZN strategies in Thai HEIs using the research objective's results. The model made each leadership factor on equal terms, and then IZN strategies were grouped under each leadership factor according to their definitions. Later, the proposed model was validated by the 21 experts who possessed solid experience in the IZN and international education field. A total of seven experts have occupied the senior administrator position or have currently functioned as scholars in national and regional organizations. Two experts have been Presidents: one from a public university and another from a private

university. Seven experts have been Vice-Presidents of public and private universities in Thailand. The rest consisted of Deans, senior administrative staff, and faculty members engaging in the universities' IZN strategic planning and/ or international education.

After reviewing the experts' suggestions and comments for validating the preliminary model, leadership factors and IZN strategies were revised, as mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1

The Adjusted Leadership Factors and Internationalization (IZN) Strategies in Thai Higher Education Institutions

Leadership Factors	IZN Strategies
1. Global Business Expertise: An HEI can deal with complexity and understand the bigger picture of a business situation, including having business savvy, technology savvy, customer orientation, and key trends projected from looking into the future.	1. International Visibility <i>Objective:</i> To create HEI's international recognition and visibility in global higher education.
2. Global Organizing Expertise: An HEI nurtures strategic partnership by building partnerships, building teams, and designing processes that align, balance, and synchronize organizational behavior for	2. International Student Support and Services <i>Objective:</i> To provide international student support and services both academically and in social life in regional and international settings to achieve their study/exchange goals. (customer orientation) 3. Digital Technologies <i>Objective:</i> To utilize appropriate technology to support and coordinate key strategic international issues and activities and enable global academic cooperation.
	4. Organizational Structure System administrating IZN <i>Objective:</i> To establish/empower/enhance an organizational structure system that is mainly responsible for achieving IZN goals.
	5. Human Resources &International Expert Recruitment & Staff Empowerment <i>Objective:</i> To motivate existing faculty and staff for IZN contributions and recruit faculty and experts with an international orientation.
	6. International Network and Partnership <i>Objective:</i> To build and sustain international networks and create partnerships with recognized

Leadership Factors	IZN Strategies
possible long-term relationships at a global level.	international organizations and other HEIs aboard, particularly those with similar purposes and goals.
<p>3. Global Strategic Perspective: An HEI must be strategically orientated, translate strategy into action, align people and organizations, determine effective strategic intervention points, and develop strategic competencies at the global level.</p>	<p>7. Governance & Leadership <i>Objective:</i> To lead with IZN commitments through personal hands-on actions as role models in every step of IZN and continuous sharing of IZN trends and strategies.</p> <p>8. Internationalized Policy & Strategic plan <i>Objective:</i> To develop a strategic IZN plan by considering the institution's context along with regional and world movements.</p> <p>9. Financial Support <i>Objective:</i> To provide financial support and budget strategically in order to advance IZN.</p>
<p>4. Global Mindset: An HEI appreciates openness, awareness, and respect for diversity, creating a common understanding across a diversity of cultures, and being culturally adaptable with concern on global issues.</p>	<p>10. Internationalized Curriculum <i>Objective:</i> To integrate international bodies of knowledge/dimensions into its curriculum.</p> <p>11. Cross-border Education <i>Objective:</i> To promote cross-border education to further nurture intercultural awareness and understanding and foster international collaboration.</p> <p>12. Mobility <i>Objective:</i> To promote academic and non-academic mobility for senior leaders, faculty members, students, and staff.</p>
<p>5. Cross-Cultural Competencies: An HEI fosters effective and appropriate communication in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural</p>	<p>13. Intercultural Sensitivity <i>Objective:</i> To increase an individual's capacity to understand, respect, and appreciate cultural differences through international activities.</p> <p>14. Cross-Cultural Communication Skills <i>Objective:</i> To develop communication skills in culturally diverse situations/environments that create trust and further cooperation.</p> <p>15. Multi-Language Proficiency</p>

Leadership Factors	IZN Strategies
knowledge, skills, and attitudes.	<i>Objective:</i> To increase the foreign language skills of students, faculty, and staff.

Besides, the experts also mentioned the other three critical components, which were 1) context, 2) vision, and 3) priority and policy of an institution, as key factors for enhancing IZN in Thai HEIs successfully. These three components were added to the final model, as mentioned in Figure 2.



Figure 2. An Adjusted Leadership Model for Effective Internationalization Strategies in Thai Higher Education Institutions

For Thai higher education, HEIs were divided into four categories: Community colleges, Institutions focusing on bachelor's degrees, Specialized institutions, and Institutions focusing on advanced research and production of graduates at the graduate studies levels, especially the doctoral level. Therefore, each HEI has a different vision, context, and priority. The efforts of IZN advancement are certainly based on the vision and priority that senior administrators, who are University Presidents and the University Council, will

direct the dimensions of the university. If these senior administrators highlight IZN as their vision and priority, IZN will be emphasized and will be integrated into all dimensions of HEIs. As a result, IZN will be reflected through HEIs' policy and strategic plans.

Research Objective Three

To verify a leadership model for effective internationalization strategies in Thai higher education institutions, the researcher conducted empirical research on two selected Thai Private HEIs. The questionnaires were distributed to 60 participants of administrators, faculty members, and staff working related to IZN or international students. The results were analyzed using Three-Stage Least Square Regression (3SLS) to estimate the effect of the leading factors on the leadership model for effective IZN in Thai HEIs, and the effect of the IZN strategies on each leadership factor. The summary of statistical results of the proposed leadership model was as follows:

Table 2. *Summary of Statistic Results for all Regression Models was Estimated by the 3SLS Estimator*

Equation	Obs	Parms	RMSE	“R-sq”	chi2	P
Leadership model for Effective IZN Strategies in Thai HEIs	60	5	0.35	0.26	292.78	0.00*
Global Business Expertise	60	3	0.23	0.52	61.78	0.00*
Global Organizing Expertise	60	3	0.20	0.71	152.30	0.00*
Strategic Perspectives	60	3	0.28	0.57	69.37	0.00*
Global Mindset	60	3	0.23	0.52	58.17	0.00*
Cross-cultural Competencies	60	3	0.19	0.34	23.57	0.00*

Note: * P < .001

From Table 2, the R-squared for all of the regression models was estimated by the 3SLS estimator and presented with quite a very high value except for only one regression model to explain the Leadership model for effective IZN strategies in Thai HEIs (ol). Because the R-squared of this model is equal to only 0.2634, which means that the exogenous variables of this model have the potential to explain the leadership model for effective IZN strategies in Thailand at only 26%, these exogenous variables are 1) Global business experts, 2) Global organizing expertise, 3) Strategic perspectives, 4) Global Mindset, and 5) Cross-cultural competencies. Normally, the R-squared would be statistical to measure the degree of fit between a dependent and independent variables in the regression model. The R-squared for most of the regression models must have a statistics value of more than 50%, which that regression model can be accepted.

Besides, according to Table 3, it was found that "Global Business Expertise" (coef. = 0.88) has a positive direct influence on this leadership model at a statistical significance level of 95%. "Global organizing expertise" (coef. = 1.02) and "Global Mindset" (coef. = 1.03) have a positive direct influence on the leadership model at a significance level of 99%. Meanwhile, "Strategic Perspective" (coef. = -0.88) and "Cross-Cultural Competencies" (coef. = -0.74) have a negative direct influence on this leadership model at a statistical significance level of 95%.

Table 3. *Estimated Results of Leadership Factors Effect*

Endogenous variables	Exogenous Variables	Coefficient	Level of Significance
A Leadership Model	Global Business Expertise	0.88	0.015*
	Global Organizing Expertise	1.02	0.000**
	Strategic Perspective	-0.88	0.000**
	Global Mindset	1.03	0.000**
	Cross-Cultural Competencies	-0.74	0.054*
	Constant	-0.60	0.14

Note: *p < .05, ** p < .001

From the findings, it was shown that all leadership factors influence a leadership model. However, "Strategic Perspective" and "Cross-Cultural Competencies" negatively influence this leadership model. The findings are inconsistent with previous studies; thus, they may reflect challenges in these two participating HEIs' implementations of these two leadership factors. Or else, the findings are possibly due to this study's limitation that involved few numbers of participants in the survey. A larger number of participants in the survey should be further conducted.

Discussion and Recommendations

To enhance internationalization (IZN) in HEIs, top-level administrators are key persons to set IZN as an institutional priority with specific strategies in the institution's plan and policy. The results of semi-structured interviews with three experts in the field concluded that not many Thai HEIs had highlighted IZN in their strategic plans. Chang and Lin (2018) suggested that HEIs must have a strategic plan for IZN and be set self-regulated for the development and implementation. Green (2005) emphasized the role of leadership that those HEIs with successful IZN have gained strong support from their presidents and chief academic officers. Therefore, top-level administrators or senior leaders must understand IZN to engage others in the IZN process. In response to globalization, HEIs must be ready to change and focus more globally (The America Council on Education, 1998). Therefore, HEIs need to develop their

global leadership and strategic leadership to encounter the complexity and diversity (Goldsmith and Walt, 1999; Kinser and Green, 2009; Middlehurst, 2018)

Based on global and strategic leadership, five leadership factors were selected as leadership factors that would enhance the implementation of IZN in HEIs. They were 1) global business expertise, 2) global organizing expertise, 3) global strategic perspective, 4) global mindset, and 5) cross-cultural competencies. If these five leadership factors, or this set of competencies, are developed in leaders at all levels, there is probably IZN integrated into all dimensions of the institution.

In terms of global business expertise, it is suggested that they need active participation in the international forum, such as presenting at international conferences, promoting international exchanges, uplifting international citation of research work conducted by faculty members and students, etc. This will enhance the visibility of HEIs at the global level and attract more international collaboration activities. In addition, Thai HEIs should invest more in digital technologies to promote a virtual exchange of teaching, learning, research, and intercultural dialogue with the broad reach of the international academic community through the internet. It will provide more opportunities for faculty members, staff, and students to have international experiences to overcome physical constraints on traveling under the pandemic of COVID-19 and reduce relating costs. The virtual exchange also enables opportunities for disadvantaged students to exchange with foreign lecturers, researchers, and students.

Besides, to strengthen IZN, HEIs should allocate a specific budget to support IZN activities, and short-term and long-term implementation of IZN should be incorporated into HEIs' strategic plan with clear indicators and key success factors. Thai HEIs should also provide an additional budget to support international exchange for faculty members, staff, and students. An endowment fund should be created in order to provide funds to ensure the sustainability of the international mobility and exchange programs. Thai HEIs should balance their IZN activities according to the goals of institutions, such as financial profits, social services, global concerns (e.g., climate change, environment), and academic advancement. Balancing IZN activities will provide a means of budget allocation that will assure the achievement of the IZN goals.

In this study, a leadership model for effective IZN strategies in Thai HEIs was focused on an institutional level. The results indicated a general situation of

IZN in Thai HEIs rather than indicating the success level of IZN in Thai HEIs. The design of the study did not intend to determine the priority of success factors of leadership and IZN strategies. However, the researcher believes that this study will help facilitate the development of IZN in Thai HEIs. Each HEI may consider this research as a study model to develop strategies fit for its context and prioritize its strategies to serve the output and outcome of its IZN goals. In addition, further studies should be conducted to obtain an appropriate leadership model that would fit individual Thai HEIs.

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