Challenges of Research University in Thailand in the Era of Education Disruption

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Abstract

Higher education is undergoing a period of significant transformation. While older, more prestigious universities may be less impacted by these changes or experience their effects more slowly than other institutions, practically all universities are currently involved in attempts to adapt and change as the higher education market, finances, and technology advance. These adjustments, which may be challenging for big and complicated institutions with a strong sense of their history and reputation, might meet both internal and external pushback. Although the Thailand university system is in many respects stable, strong, and relatively well-functioning, this article is one result of the nation's recognition that universities may lack the strategic and institutional adaptability that the future will need. Due to the widespread COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid shift to digital teaching and remote learning, and the resulting economic and labor market disruption, along with the increasing uncertainty, complexity, and potential turmoil that societies were already experiencing prior to the pandemic, the importance of academic leadership and strategic renewal of education has been emphasized. Several major reforms of Thailand's university system have been accomplished in recent decades. In the immediate postwar era, enormous expansions of universities were undertaken to meet the demands created by fast industrialization, expanding

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welfare state goals, and the Cold War in particular. They accomplished this via the modernization and reorganization of research financing, as well as increased mobility between universities and society organizations like as businesses, government agencies, and hospitals. Thailand 's neutrality throughout the Cold War and its entry into international markets were secured as a result of this.

Keywords: Challenges, Education Disruption, Academic Renewal, Thailand University

ความท้าทายของมหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทย
ในยุคการศึกษาหยุดชะงัก

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาระดับอุดมศึกษาในประเทศไทยกำลังอยู่ในช่วงของการเปลี่ยนแปลงครั้งสำคัญ แม้ว่ามหาวิทยาลัยที่มีอายุเก่าแก่และมีชื่อเสียงกว่าอาจได้รับผลกระทบจากการเปลี่ยนแปลงเหล่านี้น้อยกว่าหรือได้รับผลกระทบช้ากว่าสถาบันอื่น ๆ แต่ปัจจุบันมหาวิทยาลัยทุกแห่งล้วนมีความพยายามที่จะปรับตัวและเปลี่ยนแปลง ซึ่งอาจท้าทายสำหรับสถาบันขนาดใหญ่และซับซ้อนที่มีประวัติและชื่อเสียงที่แข็งแกร่ง อาจตอบสนองการตอบรับทั้งภายในและภายนอก แม้ว่าระบบมหาวิทยาลัยของประเทศไทยจะมีเสถียรภาพ แข็งแกร่ง และทำงานได้ดีในหลายด้าน แต่บทความนี้เป็นผลจากการที่ประเทศยอมรับว่ามหาวิทยาลัยอาจขาดความสามารถในการปรับตัวในเชิงกลยุทธ์และเชิงสถาบันที่อนาคตต้องการ เนื่องจากการระบาดใหญ่ของ COVID-19 การเปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างรวดเร็วในการสอนดิจิทัลและการเรียนรู้ทางไกล และการหยุดชะงักของเศรษฐกิจและตลาดแรงงาน ควบคู่ไปกับความไม่แน่นอนที่เพิ่มขึ้น ความซับซ้อน และความวุ่นวายที่อาจเกิดขึ้นที่สังคมเคยประสบมาก่อนการระบาดใหญ่ ความสำคัญของความเป็นผู้นำทางวิชาการและการต่ออายุเชิงกลยุทธ์ของการศึกษาได้รับการเน้นการปฏิรูประบบมหาวิทยาลัยของประเทศไทยครั้งสำคัญหลายครั้งได้บรรลุผลสำเร็จในทศวรรษที่ผ่านมา ในยุคหลังการระบาดของโควิด-19 นี้ มหาวิทยาลัยจำนวนมากต้องปรับตัวเพื่อตอบสนองความต้องการที่เกิดจากการพัฒนาอุตสาหกรรมด้านเทคโนโลยีอย่างรวดเร็ว เพื่อบรรลุถึงความทันสมัยและการปรับโครงสร้างองค์กร เช่นเดียวกับการเคลื่อนย้ายที่เพิ่มขึ้นระหว่างมหาวิทยาลัยและองค์กรทางสังคม เช่น ธุรกิจ หน่วยงานของรัฐ และโรงพยาบาล

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Introduction

Thailand's current educational system has significant difficulties with research. The majority of students lack the ability to think analytically or to use their abilities for the greater benefit of the world. In addition to the nation, While the majority of students' study and practice memory and reading for examinations, they are not provided with opportunities to develop or improve in order to adapt to an ever-changing environment. While the study's objectives highlight the critical nature of establishing a research university, they equally emphasize the critical nature of creating a research university at all levels: student, faculty, and university to achieve achievement via research at the very least, collaboration from four essential sectors is required, Universities as a source of qualified employees and specialized information Government, which may be the one who selects the research issue from the country's difficulties and research budget sponsors; business sector, which will benefit from research and innovation by assisting in the resolution of problems; and community, which is representative of the true problem. As a result, research must be conducted in order to reach the community. Of course, in order to do high-quality research, both human and financial resources are necessary. This, in the context of Thailand's limited financial resources, is particularly important. Alternatively, the money may be dedicated to things that the government deems to be more vital. As a result, the funding for research work is significantly reduced.

Conducting studies and taking part in issue solutions at a national or private sector level This is a scholarly service. This is one of the instructors' missions, in addition to educating and producing graduates. Thailand's universities are increasingly aspiring to become research institutions. with increasing education beyond a bachelor's degree to graduate courses, which is another step forward. The university serves a variety of functions, including teaching and research. Simultaneously, education is both a role of the university, such as basic education, and the establishment's training of individuals for employment. Certainly not the university's primary function. There are two types of research: university-based and non-university-based. Institutions of higher learning may undertake research exclusively independently of the study. or outside of the university Certain universities may aspire to be teaching institutions rather than research institutions. The difficulty is that there is a university that is devoted to research in order to advance information, to practice tests, and to share a comparable intellect. Modifications to

the definition of a research university. It should be an adjustment to the fundamental principles of education in such a way that education and research complement one another and improve the quality of both. Thus, research-based education should be carefully evaluated. Thailand's higher education system has grown by emulating the Western model. The emphasis is on developing a body of knowledge that can be transferred for practical use. Education is founded on faith. It is contributing and constitutes knowledge or verifiable truth in terms of what constitutes knowledge, studying through lectures or texts, with sufficient listening, memory, and memorization. It is the attainment of that higher education that may be quantified by lecture attendance. Then in the test, revise the phrase. Who has listened extensively, and remembered extensively? is a well-educated individual. There are instances when information is comprehended and may be applied in a variety of contexts. If we consider the current state of science, which is characterized by large quantities and rapid change, as well as the current state of society, which is characterized by diverse conditions and rapid change, education aimed at developing cognitive memory and adaptation will not suffice for graduates who must live in the present and future worlds. It must be adjusted to achieve better outcomes, competencies, potential, and attitudes that have been selected and established by each institution.

The existing teaching and learning methods are inadequate. It might be considered the initial step toward numerous more advanced levels. The research process is a study instrument that has the potential to provide a variety of desired traits. Education must adopt a research-based mindset. Change from belief to intelligence founded on data and reasoning, critical, analytical, synthetic, creative, and innovative thinking can occur at various stages of the research process, including access to knowledge, reliability assessment, valuation, model development for usability, and power independent thinking and being yourself. It may be utilized as an educational tool in any way.

Why Is It Critical for a Country to Have Good Universities?

Although Thailand's universities have been gradually deregulated over the last three decades, they remain part of a politically-controlled public sector. This has provided a stable funding base that has, for the most part, been used in a countercyclical manner: during economic downturns and periods of higher unemployment, governments

(regardless of political affiliation) have tended to invest in increasing access to higher education and training opportunities (Ford, 2015). Meanwhile, universities sometimes face overregulation and a lack of institutional autonomy. Thailand universities are not permitted to function as distinct legal entities when it comes to construction, money, or intellectual property ownership, nor are they permitted to participate into legal agreements or some foreign partnerships. In addition to the previously noted swings in government attention and ambition, they must negotiate between state dependency on the one hand and relative institutional autonomy on the other, which may be a difficult task. According to Ross (2016), some critics, this has resulted in institutional lock-ins in which institutions are neither forward-thinking nor experimental enough. During an open society, free media, democratic rights, independent courts, and autonomous universities all serve as cornerstones. Independence of scientific exchange, as well as an environment in which scientific viewpoints, theories, and findings can be openly scrutinized and critically reflected upon, are prerequisites for finding solutions to national and global challenges in a world where such institutions are under attack and in danger of being undermined (Brown, 2019). However, Schwab (2016), universities must integrate their basic two objectives, instruction and research, with social dynamics in order to preserve and reinvent themselves. Basic curiosity-driven research as well as research that directly tackle social concerns is required for sustainable societal growth, and cooperation and co-creation with other actors in society are essential components of both types of research. The distinction between curiosity-driven and problem-driven research should not be overstated. Regardless of the relative balance, research policy must promote quality and global excellence. Investments in research and higher education are vital for a small, open knowledge economy like Thailand to preserve and grow its wealth, competitiveness, and global position. The phrases independence, quality, and relevance must be the watchwords of research and educational policy. There are two aspects that are critical to the long-term success of institutions. The first is on the role of universities in society. Thailand's universities must improve their formal institutional autonomy in respect to the state as well as their capacity to make autonomous strategic choices. Furthermore, higher education and research must be done in a manner in which academic independence and integrity are consistently asserted and supported in order to best contribute to addressing global issues and preserving sustainable social growth.

However, it is also about removing tangible barriers that prevent institutions from participating in many forms of partnerships on a national and worldwide level. Independence and interaction are mutually reinforcing characteristics of world-class colleges and are a cornerstone of democratic society.

The second long-term success aspect is that universities are able to strengthen their capacity for strategic renewal in terms of what they do, how they do it, whom they do it with, and the financial foundations of their operations. These challenges are especially significant in a system that is publicly financed and regulated, but is supposed to be globally leading, visible, and a contributor to capacity development in a society with expanding welfare responsibilities and a reliance on global markets (Gog, 2013).

Education Disruption Causes the University Need to Change

The systems of higher education as universities has been facing the education disruption and they need to develop their curriculum and it must not only provide high-quality instruction and research, but they must also be seen as relevant and beneficial by the general public. Graduates need to have the sorts of knowledge and skills that are useful for both the short- and long-term labor market and society, and research findings must be widely disseminated (Frey et al., 2013). New information and communication technologies, a quick process of digitalization, as well as new demand patterns and student learning methodologies, are transforming the way research is conducted and, more importantly, the way higher education is offered in this country, both factors, as previously said, offer difficulties. As a result, the focus of this article will be on how universities should respond to these developments, as well as what kinds of academic cultures and leadership are conducive to such transformations. This is not a small matter, and there are multiple completely valid strategic alternatives. One method is to go on a path of dramatic change. This technique is widely supported in some areas, mostly outside academics. Its underlying premise is that society and technology are changing at such a fundamental and fast pace that universities must adapt in response to these revolutions, just as they have done in the past. Increasing interdisciplinary in research and teaching, developing new study programs, experimenting with new pedagogical approaches, and placing a greater emphasis on problem-driven research and innovation are all part of the transformation agenda. Additionally, it often incorporates notions about the need

for new forms of governance and leadership, based on the premise that the inherited paradigm of college self-organization is intrinsically conservative and so outmoded (Brown et al., 2018).

Alternatively, by further reinforcing their fundamental ideals and distinguishing qualities, universities may expand their position in society and contribute to the advancement of society. Even while this technique is more often promoted inside colleges and might be seen as inward and backward oriented, it should not be dismissed as such without more consideration. Its fundamental rationale is that in uncertain or disruptive times, when populist movements and authoritarian regimes cast doubt on or even deny the value of scientific and scholarly knowledge, it is more critical than ever to defend universities' fundamental role as an independent, stable, and critical voice in society, and to strengthen academic core values of independence, autonomy, and integrity. As a result of this latter paradigm (Brown et al., 2018), the role of the university is primarily to cater for the long-term provision of new generic knowledge as well as to provide higher education through which students acquire general academic skills such as advanced proficiency in reading and writing, analytical thinking, and critical reflection in addition to up to date, scientifically based knowledge in specific subject areas. Chantarasombat, Sombatsakulkit (2021), the educational benefits of spending formative years in a university environment, getting to know fellow students from a variety of backgrounds and study areas, and participating in extra-curricular activities lend further support to the argument that traditional campus-based study programs have a future in an era of massive digitalization and globalization. Additionally, since the future is unpredictable, both the research portfolio and the technology offering must be safeguarded. Just as biological variety serves as the "gene pool" for future invention, knowledge diversity serves as the "gene pool" for future innovation. Despite the fact that universities aren't the only institutions in society that produce new information, they are perhaps the most significant and systematic "curators" of this large, diversified, and ever-developing knowledge base. As long as there is no presumption that any of the primary techniques or opinions is better than the others, they merit careful consideration. When stated boldly, as in the example above, they emerge as irreconcilable extreme points or ideal types. In truth, every approach will include a combination of the two. It is more useful, we feel, to begin with a discussion about which aspects of today's universities should be kept and which should be

lost rather than arguing that everything must change or that nothing must change (Freeman and Louca, 2001).

Thailand's Research Universities Face Unusual Obstacles

Universities in Thailand have historically seen significant shifts in their approaches to teaching, research, and cooperation, the relative stasis that defines Thailand's higher education system seems odd. Thailand's universities faced concurrent developments of modernization and growth in the early postwar period meet expanding educational demands and the necessity to align with the developing "welfare-warfare" state. There were two major government commissions involved in the latter: the 1945 university deliberative and visionary commission and the 1955 commission, which proposed radical measures to ensure that Thai universities were prepared for rapid growth in youth cohorts and the corresponding expansion of societal needs. It advocated for a shift away from tiny professoriates toward departments with a clear division of labor between teaching and research-intensive professors (Donpraipan, 2013). Simultaneously, the system of research financing evolved from a relatively primitive framework, with the establishment of a succession of research councils dedicated to certain fields and goals (Stevrin, 1978). All of these councils had a wide range of agendas, including strengthening Thailand's military (an atomic research agency), advancing the country's economy (a building research council), modernizing agriculture (a agricultural research council), expanding health care (a medical research council), and enhancing public services (a medical research council), (councils for the humanities and for social science, respectively). Universities in Thailand in the 1960s became three times larger than they were in 1945, and their roles and responsibilities were restructured as a result. In the postwar modernization of Thailand, they had grown from insular professorial fiefdoms with infrequent (though acute) social link points. This feat was accomplished without significant reorganization of university governance, which had remained largely intact with the academic oligarchy well entrenched. Rather than that, an elite combination of businessmen, public employees, and intellectual leaders accelerated the change

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Thailand universities underwent another major revolution, this time under the flag of relevance and resilience, the power structure of Thai universities underwent a significant alteration as well. In this era,

the spectacular development of the postwar period was coming to an end, and new mechanisms to ensure that what universities produced was in line with what society required were being defined. With the incorporation of vocational schools into universities, the teaching mission was considerably expanded, and research funding flourished fast and extensively in fields well outside the academic core (working life, substance abuse, renewable energy, just to mention a few areas of interventions (Srnicek, 2017). This time, decision-making procedures were overhauled, resulting in a complicated system of debates about educational requirements and desires. In the 1990s, a financial crisis in Thailand and a seismic shift in global economic and political connections (dubbed "the end of history") prompted Thailand's universities to reevaluate their missions and methods of operation once again (Samersak, 2005). A new focus on resource competitiveness and worldwide audits of quality, a decentralization of educational planning, and notions of universities as self-organizing networks of actors, interests, and resources, under the banner of "freedom," characterized this era of research financing. There has been a progressive shift from the official leadership levels of Thailand universities to strong research groups and constellations that rise financing for research, employ and plan without much articulation of the formal leadership level. Every solution brings with it a new set of issues. The 1990s' freedom revolution increased the efficiency and flexibility of personnel and requirements, but it also sparked an entire industry of evaluations and assessments to ensure that flexibility also led to greater quality. What we learn from international evaluations of the quality of research at Thai universities, such as government grants, private funds and university grants but also from the aforementioned government commissions, is that universities have adapted quickly at the micro level, with research groups and constellations dependent on external funding, but that there is a resulting acuity at the macro level, where university leadership retains significant funding and power, but with an unclear relationship to it. University leadership has substantially communicated the notion that duties and resources should be devolved to lower levels, and has ensured that devolution is handled in a responsible manner. However, it has been more cautious in defining clear strategic directives, so as not to disrupt the ground-level adaptive processes. The vast majority of grand challenge programs and the like have been treated with in this way, as if they were just another source of financing rather than an invitation to fundamental change (Chantarasombat, Sombatsukulkit, 2021).

What Are the University's Choices in the Midst of This Disruption?

Thailand's universities are now influenced by all three of these change modes: strong research groups, an emphasis on democratic discussions. At the moment, social relevance and resource flexibility are important. They now need to reconcile and hone them in order to face the present malaise and the need to participate in and even lead change-oriented coalitions in Thailand and elsewhere. Which difficulties are they confronted with in this location? When it comes to education, Thailand's universities confront a variety of obstacles. Traditionally, the educational offerings of universities are molded by a mix of external signals or demand from business, the public sector, or the government, as well as the research profiles and capabilities of the school. Path dependence also plays a vital role in practice. As one university president of a prominent Thai institution put it, "education is one of the most difficult things to update at a university." (Chantarasombat, 2018). In one sense, education is always being renewed, with instructors constantly revising course curricula or teachers and departments producing new courses or academic programs. In another sense, education is constantly being renewed. Several factors, however, obstruct a more systematic or deliberate renewal of education in Thai institutions. Thailand's universities, as previously stated, are took very little or prohibit from either Thai students. Rather than that, they get public funds for instruction. It is distributed according to a complex system, with each institution receiving an annual "maximum amount" depending on the number of students it accepts and the academic performance of those students do (in terms of finalizing courses), (Chaimayo, 2016). To further complicate matters, students in various faculty areas are rewarded differently, with students in departments such as humanities and social sciences being expected to pay less than students in fields like as science and technology, and so on. It's possible for each university to make its own educational decisions, but there is a limit or cap on the maximum amount of financing it may get depending on the number of students it accepts and how well these students do (in terms of finalizing course). To further complicate matters, students in various faculty areas are rewarded differently, with students in humanities and social sciences being expected to pay less than students in science and technology, etc. The educational offerings of the universities within this framework are in essence completely up to them, but there is a limit, or a cap, on the amount of money they may get from the government in total. In this paradigm, the overall number of students is decided

by the cap and the mix of students in various academic areas. A university may approach the limit by enrolling more students in "cheap" courses and programs or by enrolling fewer students in more "expensive" courses and programs. What this implies is that appealing colleges that provide education to the maximum extent possible have no motivation to establish new courses or programs, since they can only do so by lowering or eliminating current ones. The latter entails internal talks that are often challenging. The huge growth in competitive research funding has resulted in the creation of research settings that are not organically associated with teaching. An examination of the government's 2008 attempt to identify and finance a number of key research areas was harsh in its assessment of the sectors' contribution to teaching and education (Ross, 2016).

A number of reasons, some of which are stated above, contribute to what Donpraipan (2013) define as an increasing bias in favor of research at Thailand's largest research institutions. They note, after analyzing current developments, that: We discover that Thailand's universities have placed a heavy focus on research at the cost of teaching, which has had an unsettling impact on teaching quality and Thailand's worldwide desirability. This article bias is justified in part by the fact that academic performance is often linked with research brilliance in Thailand, overlooking the critical role of teaching. Additionally, it demonstrates and undervalues the critical role of students, and hence education, in determining the competitiveness and innovative ability of regions and nations. Along with an increased focus on research at the cost of teaching, we are seeing a growing disconnect between teaching and research, which is detrimental to both pursuits. One of the differences between the Thai and other nations' systems is that publicly sponsored research is more concentrated in universities (as opposed to research institutions), whereas teaching seems to be more isolated from research. We would argue that the way teaching is paid, rewarded, evaluated, and regarded does not support education's strategic renewal. Additionally, several departments hire academic employees largely on the basis of their research capabilities, and many do not engage in teaching. A government inquiry into the leadership and governance of Thailand universities reached a similar conclusion, stating that the Thailand funding system's quantitative approach, with government funding for education based on "performance metrics for educational volume" (as described above), does not incentivize universities to improve educational quality or differentiate themselves through attractive, new educational

offerings. As a consequence of universities concentrating on comparable courses and study programs, the effect is "a uniformity of the complete spectrum of courses and study programs across Thailand," which maximizes government appropriations.

The committee recommended a rethink of the tertiary education finance structure that would allow and incentivize institutions to engage more strategically on education renewal by distinguishing their educational programs and profiles. The government inquiry's conclusion is reflected in the following comment from a vice chancellor for research: "we are doing the same thing as everyone else, therefore we must be doing it correctly." The issues that Thailand's big research institutions confront in terms of strategic education renewal. We do this by recognizing both strong and weak indications and drivers of educational renewal. Thus, the educational offerings at Thailand's universities are heavily influenced by government funding models, rules and regulations, the skills and attitudes of current faculty and students, internal models for allocating resources to courses and programs, and, as a result, traditional modes of teaching. In comparison, contemporary university education is generally and naturally less impacted by prospective faculty or students and the needs, abilities, and preferences they may bring to the table. The same is true for social requirements, knowledge and skill developed outside academics, and innovative teaching methods and formats. By "new forms and formats of teaching," we mean both the potential created by digitalization, which far outweigh distant instruction, and more modular forms of education that are well-suited for lifelong learning offers (Inruengsri, 2011). It demonstrates the present system's significant path reliance. Inherently, path dependency is not negative. It may be perceived as guaranteeing stability or as causing inertia or even ossification, depending on one's judgment. However, we would argue that in times of social upheaval and growing societal issues, there is a case to be made for attempting to strengthen the weak signal found in our table.

Disruption Factors and Factors for University Adjustment

The fundamental characteristics of universities in general, and comprehensive research universities in particular, as a springboard for a discussion of the changes that are necessary to best prepare students for the major societal challenges and labor market of the future. For a minute, consider what comprises "the university as we know it" and how it is certain to change. In most nations, universities have an inherited structure that consists

of a variety of traits that, taken together, indicate the institution's mode of operation. One such feature is the gradual development of more specialized academic disciplines that have become highly institutionalized over time, both inside universities (by the establishment of specialized academic positions, study programs, and departments) and outside universities (through the emergence and proliferation of national and international professional organizations and specialized conferences and journals). This is a worldwide tendency that has lasted decades. We believe Thailand is one of the most structured nations in the world for conventional academic fields. One of its characteristics is that students are often pushed into relatively limited academic areas and vocations early in their education, in contrast to the aforementioned goals of generic skills and wide educational offers, such as the liberal arts education model (Susskind et al., 2015).

A second significant trait is the highly controlled and specialized academic recruiting and career structure that exists in the majority of nations. This is a highly meritocratic system aimed to foster academic excellence and ensure that each person, via the use of external peers in recruiting and promotion procedures, achieves criteria that are of a high national and/or worldwide caliber and merits advancement (Suang, 2006). This system has issues with valuing information and skills gained outside of academia, and it does not encourage movement between the academic and non-academic sectors. While Thailand's academia shares these characteristics with other systems, it also strikes international observers as having a less transparent career structure, slow recruitment processes, and a high degree of internal recruitment, in the sense that it is quite common to pursue an academic career at the same university where one received their academic training. Additionally, observers remark a dearth of strategic recruiting. Among the most fundamental features of a collegiate governance and leadership structure is the need that decisions involving academic judgments be made by those in positions of academic authority. As a consequence, academic leaders are seen as interpreters primus, and the majority of judgments are reached after collegiate discussions. This does not prohibit instances of proactive leadership, but they are more often than not the result of omission than conduct. A distinguishing aspect of Thailand, which is also shared by the other Asian nations, is a strong history and regulation of student engagement in university governing bodies. Peer review and peer discussion in all kinds of academic contexts such as committee work and external peer review for review for recruitment, research funding

and examination or publication are all important parts of an academic quality culture where the idea that quality is best assessed and enhanced through peer review and peer discussion in all kinds of academic contexts is the underlying principle. All three are also critical for the autonomy and academic integrity of universities. By stating that academic matters should be decided by the most competent academics, political, economic, religious, and other influences on research and curriculum may be minimized. Of course, the potential downside of these university characteristics is that they may cause institutions to become excessively introverted and static, making them less receptive to signals of changing trends and needs in society, relying heavily on rigid academic qualifications while ignoring societal relevance, and failing to recognize the value of collaboration with stakeholders outside academia or working to ensure that research results are utilized in industry. Finally, it is sometimes stated that collegiate models of administration and leadership have a weakness when it comes to allocating resources to novel forms or fields of research or instruction. The real challenge, from this vantage point, is to find ways to not only maintain but actively strengthen the quality-enhancing mechanisms, the pursuit of academic excellence, institutional autonomy, and academic integrity that are inherent in today's university culture, while also increasing the openness to external mandates and working more systematically to increase the capacity for renewing technology and research (Chantarasombat, 2018).

How to Make Colleges and Universities Self-sufficient and Flexible

In and of itself, academic leadership is a difficult challenge. However, high-quality research and teaching in academia depend on the presence of academics who are self-assured and independent, who possess a wide range of knowledge and expertise, and are willing and able to assume responsibility for their own work as well as for the advancement of the larger academic community to which they belong. In order for this to work, there must be a culture in which employees are encouraged to take initiative from the bottom up (Brown et al., 2018). Teaching others what to do and how to accomplish it is not an important part of academic leadership. It's rather an issue of putting in place procedures that encourage the organization to come up with fresh and creative approaches to research and teaching. Many Thai research universities have academic heads recruited via collegiate procedures, and it is critical that they be given

a clear mandate to promote growth and renewal, in addition to protecting integrity and quality. The principles proposed by Rifkin (2014) can be used to generate what they call "agile leadership," i.e., anticipating and articulating future needs and trends in order to build collective understanding and support for action, as well as creating conditions that allow for continuous learning and as many adjustments as necessary, in order to achieve this end. Finally, good academic leadership requires accountability, transparency, and openness to criticism and feedback (Frey and Osborne, 2013).

- **Enhance the drivers of education renewal.** The first step is to identify and attempt to reform those financial models and procedures, imposed by the government toward universities but equally crucial between various levels within the institutions themselves, that act as disincentives for change. As a result, the goal should be to become more sensitive to current social trends and to speed the translation of high-quality research into high-quality educational programs (both for undergraduates and graduate teaching and for lifelong learning). One way to strengthen the signals coming from the outside world about what is expected of tomorrow's leaders and specialists is to open up additional communication channels. One way to do this is to strengthen connections with alumni, professional associations, as well as labor market groups.

- **Improve the long-term circumstances and frameworks for success.** University growth and prosperity may be achieved within this framework. Government-academia interactions in publicly supported institutions of higher education and research are another terrible issue that has to be addressed. Government officials have a strong incentive to ensure that public funds invested in higher education have the intended societal benefits. Political organizations that grant big public funds for higher education have a major difficulty in convincing them that less detailed governance and steering generates better and more beneficial outcomes. Just as academic leaders should encourage change and innovation in education and research instead of prescribing exactly how professors should do their jobs, the government should do the same, i.e. set targets in broad and general terms of "what" universities are expected to "deliver," but refrain from detailed regulation of

"how" they go about doing it. Contracts between particular institutions and the government, where universities specify long-term objectives and assessment sites, in cooperation with the government, set long term goals and evaluation criteria, might work. If universities were given more autonomy than they presently have in Thailand, then this might be possible. There must be at least two parties involved in a contract in order for it to be a contract at all; otherwise, there is no contract.

- **Ensure that colleges and their students have a delicate symbiotic connection**. Universities fight for rankings and reputation, as well as for students, staff, and research funding, in order to maintain a high level of academic excellence. When it comes to forging political alliances, participating in collaborative learning activities, sharing infrastructure, developing joint teaching programs, and bringing together students from across the world for student exchanges, they have a lot to gain by cooperating on a national and international level. Although the amount of competition may be beneficial, governments and academic leaders should encourage more cooperation amongst universities as a means of promoting the branding and distinction of institutions. Not all universities' research, teaching, and engagement with society will be limited by the process of profiling or distinction. When it comes to fostering innovation, it's more about promoting experimentation and fostering the constant creation of new and better methods. To prevent system and institution ossification, it is important to promote dynamic divergence and renewal. Despite this, it is also normal in a competitive university environment for good ideas to be adopted and adapted by other institutions. This is a good thing. Continuous renewal occurs when the pendulum swings between successful localized testing and system-wide spread of the innovations that arise.

Conclusion

For universities, this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to galvanize support (from both inside and beyond academia) for transforming themselves in order to better serve society's transformation. As a result, universities would be better able to establish themselves as autonomous curators of knowledge (creation, usage, and cooperation).

With it, we can ensure that universities can continue to generate high-quality research, while also preparing society to deal with today's complexity and unpredictability while also enabling us to design the future we desire. The universities' role as proponents of international cooperation and the global enterprise of science would continue to provide a counterbalance to the present tendency toward nationalism, protectionism, and isolationism. It is vital that this historic chance to restructure universities is not lost for the good of universities and for the benefit of society. There are a few ideas for colleges and the government that might help them keep their basic beliefs while maintaining their legitimacy, identity, and autonomy in a complex and chaotic global environment. Similarly, we contend that the current economic crisis offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and impetus for academia to reinvent itself, strengthen collaboration across faculties and disciplines, develop new models for lifelong learning, and embrace digitalization as a way to improve educational quality and reach while also expanding the social role of universities.

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