



Exploration of localization model of internationalization in a local higher education institution: Taking the example of Pu'er university in China

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Abstract

In the current situation of higher education, there is a pressing need for Chinese local universities to delineate their conception of internationalization. To develop a localization model suited to the context of Chinese local higher education institutions, this study examines the internationalization characteristics of Pu'er University (PU) in China by utilizing the Knight's Two Pillars of Internationalization model. This is a primary stage of the researcher's dissertation focusing on the documents and pilot interviews at PU. Employing a qualitative research approach, content analysis is the primary methodological tool, complementing the purposive selection of participants for personal interviews. Central to the analysis is Knight's Two Pillars of Internationalization model, which provides a conceptual foundation for assessing the data. The data are triangulated by literature review, content analysis of documents texts, and content analysis of personal interviews. The findings underscore the alignment between Knight's model and the localization model of internationalization formed at PU by comparing the codes extracted from interviews and the terms of Knight's model. However, it also advocates innovation in extracurricular activities and the utilization of multilingual instruction on characteristic disciplines at PU for better global engagement.

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Introduction

International education has emerged as a focal point across nations, irrespective of their developmental status, with a shared emphasis on its internationalization (Yan, 2006). This global phenomenon has exerted two discernible influences on higher education: intensifying competitiveness within the sector and prompting institutions to devise diverse organizational strategies (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2007). Firstly, higher education has recently operated within a global market framework, encompassing international student exchange, academic discourse, and research funding flows. Secondly, the activities undertaken by higher education institutions have grown both in scale and complexity, driven by the imperative to maintain competitive advantages through international collaboration. Moreover, beyond traditional factors such as economic and cultural considerations, emerging variables such as geopolitical tensions, natural calamities, and public health crises have also left their imprint on the internationalization of higher education (Tran et al., 2023).

Internally, the impetus for advancing higher education in China is propelled by national governments through the formulation of policies, laws, and regulations governing the sector (Deng, 2018). These governmental directives not only depict the trajectory of higher education internationalization but also serve as central guidance for coordination and implementation. Illustratively, the *Opinions on Promoting Opening Up Education in the New Era* released by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MOE, 2016b) emphasizes China's commitment to enhancing educational openness, advocating cultural communication, continuously enhancing the quality of China's education and international influence through various means, including promoting the quality of international education, advancing win-win cooperation in the field of education, and implementing 'the Belt and Road' initiative. Subsequently, the supporting document, *Promoting Jointly 'the Belt and Road' Initiative Education Action* (MOE, 2016a), offers detailed strategies for realizing international educational collaboration.

This study endeavours to investigate the localization model of internationalization at Pu'er University (PU) in China, which is conceptualized as an approach finely adjusted to balance both the university's unique internationalization needs and the utilization of local resources. By employing Jane Knight's Two Pillars of Internationalization as a theoretical framework,

the research aims to assess PU's current internationalization strengths and weaknesses and formulate a contextualized internationalization model for itself. Utilizing qualitative content analysis of institutional documents and personal interviews, this study seeks to fill the research gap in the internationalization models of Chinese local higher education institutions, offering insights for strategic refinement in their internationalization endeavours.

Literature Review

Relationship Between Globalization and Internationalization

In terms of internationalization on higher education, such can be traced back to the word 'globalization'. The two terms, globalization, and internationalization, show intricacies when scholars define them, but they keep their uniqueness too. While, for many studies, these two terms are often interchangeable or overlap in the theoretical domain (Tight, 2021), the purpose of trying to clarify these two terms' definitions is to reduce the confusion and misunderstanding between them so that there is a common understanding of the terms when people analyze the similar phenomenon existing (Knight, 2004).

The frequency of using the term internationalization in the education sphere has proliferated since the early 80s, which is different from its original use being more related to political science and governmental relations at its emergence (Knight, 2004). From Knight's (1994) viewpoint, internationalization is a process integrating international and intercultural dimensions into institutional functions. Van Der Wende (1997) argues that there are limitations on the definition of internationalization starting from an institutional-based perspective and redefines internationalization as any systematic endeavour from higher education responding to the needs and challenges led by the globalization of social and economic factors, as well as labour markets. Söderqvist (2002) states internationalization as a process with changes given to international higher education institutions, which includes broader international dimensions to achieve the goals expected that are beyond the teaching and learning sectors. The evolution of the updated conception of internationalization shows the inclusiveness of the term at the institutional level.

The way of defining globalization is also complicated. Houghton and Sheehan (2000) define globalization as the result of cross-exchange between integration and interdependence of groups. Having similar attitudes

to Houghton and Sheehan, Altbach and Knight (2007) insist that globalization is “the context of economic and academic trends” and is correlated to the interaction between facilities and trans-local entities. Moreover, they point out that driven by global capital, internationalization may be the reaction to the process of globalization (Altbach & Knight, 2007). From their viewpoints, globalization is stressed by the context of economy and academy, while internationalization is the coping strategy to globalization that is influenced by policies and practices from both academic systems and institutions. Dodds (2008) identifies globalization with a series of activities, such as a flow of capital, people, information, culture, marketization, and ideology. However, when discussing the function of higher education institutions advancing globalization, Dodds (2008) argues globalization has affected higher education institutions and the function of higher education institutions underplays in the process of globalization.

There are various opinions on the relationship between globalization and internationalization. Some researchers state that globalization equals internationalization. While most experts can figure out the subtle differences between these two terms. Knight (2004) points out that internationalization and globalization are diverse but correlative processes and defines globalization as the result of the mobility of technology, economy, knowledge, people, value, etc., which goes beyond the borders. Internationalization of higher education has become one of the important criteria for measuring the level of educational development in a country (Feng, 2003).

Chaiprasit (2013) states that influenced by globalization, there has appeared a changing trend in higher education structure and the emergence of new modern universities. Globalization leads higher education institutions to upgrade their international communication functions and roles to serve the national ambition of producing graduates to work in modern markets both internally and externally. Internationalization of universities is occupied by the trends of the need of the global labour market linked to the political, sociocultural, economic, and academic rationales, which asks the universities to be concerned with the need to develop international advanced knowledge, engaging with international partnerships and supporting country competitiveness (Chaiprasit, 2013). Aiming for being internationalized, incorporating internationalization into institutions' mission, strategic vision, and plan, as well as cooperative strategy is a prerequisite for higher education institutions (Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007).

Consequently, regarding the relationship between globalization and internationalization, it could be concluded that internationalization is the outcome of globalization, which has been influenced by global market needs for diverse talents. Globalization is much more linked to the global economy, while internationalization is more relevant to political insights from governments at different levels.

Internationalization of Higher Education in China

The internationalization of higher education in China has been affected by national-related policies or initiatives. One of the representatives of national initiation is ‘the Belt and Road’ initiative proposed by Xi Jinping (2017). The core value of ‘the Belt and Road’ initiative is to achieve policy communication, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and connectivity about people-to-people exchange. China’s Education Modernization 2035 Plan states China should initiate new patterns of educational opening up and promote education action sturdily (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China & State Council of the People’s Republic of China, 2019). Liu (2020), the director of the Development Planning Department of the Ministry of Education points out a series of activities advanced by national strategic science and technology forces, such as promoting colleges and universities to make efforts on the construction of a national innovation system to optimize discipline layout, promoting interdisciplinary integration, strengthening basic research, focusing on original innovation, etc. China should accelerate and expand the opening-up of education in the new era, serving the promotion of ‘the Belt and Road’ initiative, actively introducing high-quality overseas education resources to improve the quality of studying in China, and constantly enhancing the international influence of China’s education (Liu, 2020). Lin (2020) addresses that the work on international relations in colleges and universities should become an important link in schools’ education and teaching reform.

The internationalization of higher education in China has achieved significant progress, playing a pivotal role in transforming the Chinese education system into one of the largest and most promising systems globally (Yang, 2014). The government has published a series of documents about opening education, like *Opinions on Promoting Opening Up Education in the New Era*, and the supporting document *Promoting Jointly the Belt and Road Initiative Education Action* (MOE, 2016a, 2016b).

Accordingly, China's national orientations on economics, policy, and society affect the internationalization of higher education in China heavily. As vital institutions to cultivate talents, universities and colleges in China actively participate in the construction of 'the Belt and Road' initiative based on the advantages of diplomacy policies and their characteristics.

Knight's Two Pillars of Internationalization

Knight's Two Pillars of Internationalization model is used chiefly in the study that shows more inclusive in explaining the relationship between internationalization and relevant factors. The most widely accepted definition of internationalization is the process of incorporating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the higher education institutions' purpose, functions, or delivery of education (Knight, 2008). Based on the definition, higher education policies and programs are two key components in internationalization, covering all forms of education across borders and at home and constantly becoming intertwined (De Wit & Hunter, 2018). To some extent, the two components are met with Knight's Two Pillars model of internationalization, which shares similar items at home and across borders.

The Two Pillars of Internationalization model is a meaningful development in the conceptualization of internationalization, which contains internationalization "At home" and "Cross-border" dimensions (Knight, 2012), listed as Figure 1 shown below. These two pillars are separate but intersectant. Knight (2012) develops

the concept of "at-home" to predominate campus-based strategies that strengthen international academic mobility. These 'At-home' strategies can encompass a systematic process incorporating intercultural and international dimensions in the teaching-learning process, research, extracurricular activities, and relationships with local cultural and ethnic community groups, as well as the integration of foreign students and scholars into campus life and activities (Knight, 2012).

Chinese Local Universities

In terms of classifications of colleges and universities in China, the two main general classifications include key universities under the direct control of departments of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the State Council, and the general colleges and universities affiliated with provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central government, whose finance is mostly funded by local administrative departments (Chen, 2009). Another classification of the general colleges and universities proposed is to classify Chinese universities into three tiers of development: national first-tier universities, provincial key universities, and newly upgraded universities (Cheng et al., 2018). Combining these two perspectives of university categories, the first-tier universities should be the universities under the direct control of departments of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council. The second and third types belong to the general colleges and universities scale.



Figure 1 Knight's two pillars of internationalization model

The evidence of PU's category belonging can be found in the history of its development. PU belongs to the newly upgraded universities (Cheng et al., 2018) and was elevated to national public university status in 2012 upon the foundation of Simao Normal College in 1978. Situated in the southwest of Yunnan Province, PU adjoins Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar, as well as enjoys the shortest linear distance from Thailand, which underscores its strategic geographical advantage.

Hence, the Chinese local universities in the study refer to general universities located near the boundary province that are affiliated with provinces, autonomous regions, or municipalities and are financed mostly by local administrative departments.

Research Questions

- 1) What is the definition of internationalization in the context of Chinese local higher education universities?
- 2) What is the localization model of internationalization for PU?

Methodology

Content analysis can provide a clear and structured way to analyze textual data and help researchers to identify and quantify patterns in response (Krippendorff, 2018). The approach can be also objective and reproductive on coding schemes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hence, utilizing a qualitative approach with content analysis, this study investigates the PU's approaches to internationalization by examining the institutional policy documents related to five-year international planning and conducting personal interviews at the Office of International Cooperation and Exchange Affairs (OICE). The review of documents serves as a vital tool to assess the proposed objectives for PU's internationalization. Semi-structured interviews facilitate a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives on the research questions in depth.

Participants

The OICE is an administrative department at PU dealing with international affairs at 'At home' and 'Cross-border' dimensions, such as formulating internationalization plans, fostering global communication, establishing and nurturing international partnerships, facilitating contract negotiations, coordinating exchange programs, and carrying out international faculty recruitment and administration, etc.

There were five working staff at OICE by the end of 2023, excluding the researcher herself, conducting this study. Based on the rules of participating voluntarily and purposive samples, all five people were invited to the interviews. During the invitation procedure, the researcher explained the purposes of the study, the way of participation, and the confidentiality of participants' information. To maintain confidentiality, participants were recorded anonymously as P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. The letter of informed consent was obtained both verbally and in written before their involvement.

Data Collection

Two kinds of data were utilized for the study. First of all, the personal interviews were conducted individually through voice calls with each lasting between fifteen to twenty minutes differently. Researchers obtained approval from participants to use the digital voice recorder during the interviews. Six open-ended questions were designed for the semi-structured interviews. Considering all the participants were Chinese, the interviews were conducted in Chinese to ensure clear and effective communication. To ensure the validity, the manuscripts of each interview recording were sent to the interviewees for checking. The second kind of data were department document texts, namely, the 13th Five-Year Development Plan for PU and the 14th Five-Year Development Plan for PU, whose roles played as the chief guidelines for PU's periodical comprehensive development. The Five-Year Development Plan is a programmatic document for PU's all-round development within five years. One of the important constitutions is the planning of PU's internationalization, which is drafted by OICE and approved by the university's party committee. The university was officially named PU in 2012 when it was upgraded from a college to a public university. The 12th Five-Year Development Plan covers the year 2011 to 2015. Hence, the department documents chosen to be analyzed are the 13th and 14th Five-Year Development Plans whose duration covers 2016–2020, and 2021–2025.

Data Analysis

These coding categories for qualitative content analysis should be derived from both deductive methods, drawing from existing theories or literature, and inductive approach, reflecting codes that emerge directly from the data (Saldaña, 2016, p. 3–40). Given that China's internationalization is influenced by national,

provincial, and institutional orientations, it is necessary to contextualize the internationalization process with multi-dimensions for a local university. Referring to the professional academic knowledge on understanding Knight's Two Pillars model, the terms from each phase of De Wit's model were employed as supplementary tools for coding the content of personal interviews, which proposed nine phases for the modified model of the internationalization circle, comprising analysis of context, awareness, commitment, planning, operationalization, implementation, review, reinforcement, and integration effect (De Wit, 2002). Meanwhile, some codes with similar meanings to the keywords from interview questions, but not the original terms from Knight's and De Wit's models were coded from the original words used by the interviewees, such as guidelines and principles used in the first interview question. The results of terms manually identified and coded for the interview questions are concluded in Table 1.

Researchers could either provide the category based on the manifest content analysis or use the category development as the base for theme development (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). The key terms coded extracted from the documents are listed in Table 2 below:

In terms of theme, Saldaña (2016, p. 14) states theme is the outcome of coding, categorizing, or the reflection of analysis. In Knight's Two Pillars of Internationalization model (Knight, 2012, 2021), two main themes are 'at home' and 'cross-border'. Under these two main

themes, there are sub-categories in detail used for categorizing terms. The connections comparing the key items abstracted from the documents and Knight's model are presented in Table 3. To reduce the wordy description, the key terms from Table 2 used the order number to replace, such as 1, 2, 3...6, and the full names of targeted documents were simplified as the 13th and the 14th. For example, in the first line of categories, number 5 below the 13th appeared in the categories of 'Curriculum/teaching/learning'. Number 5 in the 13th represents 'Strengthen discipline construction through recruiting international talents' whose key codes from the expression include 'discipline construction'. Since the meaning of 'discipline construction' could contain the design of curriculum, teaching, and learning, the code of number 5 has been categorized in the categories of 'Curriculum/teaching/learning'.

From the results of Table 3, it can be found the 'extracurricular activity' is missing in both documents. Changes in the 'domestic students/faculty' and 'research' categories can indicate the university has changed its attention gradually to scientific research. In the theme of 'Cross-border', 'mobility of provider' is ignored in those documents, but one change turns to 'mobility of policy', which indicates creating more opportunities to send internal students and teachers abroad is still the chief approach for current PU's internationalization. The improvement approaches are happening in scientific research and mobility of policy aspects.

Table 1 Results of personal interviews

Questions	Codes extracted from response with response frequency
1. Based on your working experience, what is your university's internationalization model or framework? (In your opinion, if there is no fixed internationalization model or working framework in your university, could you please describe the working principles or guidelines for your internationalization?)	context (5), planning (3), principles (1), guidelines (1), at-home (4), cross-border (4)
2. When you handle international affairs, what are the challenges you have met in your work?	context (5), implementation (5), review (2)
3. What departments and schools do you think are needed to interact with your department for internationalization work at your university?	context (5), commitment (5), planning (3), operationalization (3), implementation (3), integration effect (5)
4. Do you have criteria for measuring the success of its internationalization efforts? (If yes, how does your university measure it? Are there any standard criteria?)	awareness (2), planning (2), implementation (2), review (2)
5. Given the dynamic nature of international relations, how does your university adapt its internationalization strategies to changing geopolitical, economic, or technological circumstances?	context (5), planning (5), operationalization (5), review (5)
6. Looking ahead, what do you see as the future trends and challenges in your university's internationalization?	context (3), awareness (5)

Table 2 Items extracted and coded from the targeted documents

13th Five-Year Development Plan for PU	14th Five-Year Development Plan for PU
Codes extracted from planning content	Codes extracted from planning content
1. Actively advocate international cooperation and exchange, including international students' education, international scientific research & academic communication, cooperative education, recruitment of international talents, exchange of teachers and students	1. Establish new cooperative relationships (the scale should be expanded to institutions from European countries); Recruit international teachers for the short or long term; Jointly explore and establish international projects; Advocate the construction of the Chinese Language and Culture Center in Chiang Rai Rajabhat University; Making efforts on establishing a branch campus in Laos;
2. Strengthen the partnerships with universities from Southeast Asian counties	2. Strengthen the partnerships with universities from Southeast Asian counties
3. Popularize international Chinese in Laos and Thailand by holding Chinese competitions and cultural exhibitions and performances	3. Hold Chinese competitions and cultural exhibitions and performance
4. Improve the construction of teaching staff by recruiting international talents and encouraging internal teachers to go abroad as exchange teachers	4. Explore international cooperative programs on characteristic majors; recruit international students
5. Strengthen discipline construction through recruiting international talents	5. Encourage internal teachers to go abroad for academic visits, academic exchange, or cooperative research; run the Laos Research Center well and advance Sino-Lao academic exchanges
6. Clarify the duty of international work within the university	6. Establish a new mechanism of talent cultivation through cooperation with internal and international institutions; promote partial courses to teach in bilingual languages or English; establish a cooperation platform for both internal and international research

Table 3 Connections among key items

Knight's Two Pillars Model		The 13th	The 14th
Theme	At home	Intersection codes	Intersection codes
Categories	Curriculum/teaching/learning	5	4, 6
	Open access education	1	6
	Domestic students/faculty	4	
	International student/scholars	4, 5	1, 4, 6
	Extracurricular activity		
	Research		5
Theme	Cross-border		
Categories	Mobility of people	4	5
	Mobility of programs	2,3	1, 4
	Mobility of providers		
	Mobility of projects/services	2, 3	2, 3
	Mobility of policy		1

Results

1) What is the definition of internationalization in the context of Chinese local higher education universities? When asking the internationalization model, all the participants expressed the absence of a clear and fixed model or framework. Three of them including P1, P2, and P4 pointed out that the existence of clear documents or initiatives released by national and provincial departments of education acted as the core principle for PU's development guideline of internationalization. The codes of planning ($n = 3$), principles ($n = 1$), and guidelines ($n = 1$) were extracted from interviewees'

responses, which were treated as the main evidence for developing internationalization. P1 commented:

I prefer to use 'guideline' because there is no fixed model. Its design should be tight with the context of PU facing both internal and external aspects, especially the requirements from national and provincial guidelines. (P1)

Moreover, inquiring about the future trends and challenges in PU's internationalization, all the interviewees had the awareness of this issue ($n = 5$), but only three of them realized the context of developing PU's internationalization should consider the development goals of national, provincial, and principal governments. P2 stated:

One of the weaknesses of PU's current internationalization was the deficiency of research ability on regional studies, which could not meet the needs of local society and economy development and the requirements for the city's opening up. PU should combine the ways of introducing more international cooperation programs to attract more international students to the campus, which should play full roles of the city's geographic advantages, and actively going out to communicate with more countries along with the 'Belt and Road'. (P2)

However, the goals listed in the target documents were congruent with Knight's Two Pillars model that presented the internationalization of PU as a moving process and contained various activities from both internal and external dimensions. The changes in goal setting also indicated dynamic movements for PU's internationalization, which required keeping fast pace in various contexts of international development and serving local society development.

Accordingly, a proper definition of localization for PU's internationalization could be internationalization as a dynamic process moving around the context of geopolitics timely that integrates factors from global, intercultural, national, and local dimensions to its institutional missions and objectives.

2) What is the localization model of internationalization for PU?

Semi-structured interviews revealed evidence from the perspectives of context, awareness, planning, implementation, and reinforcement. The contexts of external, institutional internal, and departmental dimensions brought huge challenges and information gaps for the operation of international cooperation. P2 identified high competitiveness from the external environment, which might turn geographic advantages into disadvantageous due to the China-Laos railway operation.

Before 2018, PU enjoyed an advantageous location to attract international students from Thailand and Laos. With the operation of the China-Laos railway, the geographic advantage has turned out to be a disadvantage because the students can go to any place along 'the Belt and Road' route in China conveniently. (P2)

All five participants have the awareness confirming PU's internationalization relied on a holistic effort and engagement from all schools and departments at PU. P1, P2, and P3 suggested imperatively forming a leading group constituted by OICE and other relevant departments

directly linking to international students' teaching and learning, academic cooperation, and publicizing and reporting activities. P2 commented:

Internationalization needs everyone to participate. But the dominant role of OICE should be highlighted in policy making and dealing with international affairs. (P2)

All participants agreed that geographic advantages and the local government's needs for international development were still the core bases for PU's international orientations. The two factors should be paid high attention to policy making and refinement. P3 explained:

PU is located on the route of 'the Belt and Road'. The guidelines from both national and provincial levels have given the orientations on the university's openness. Even though the China-Laos railway provides more chances for international students to go to the famous university, we should say it is also an advantage for us having the shortest distance from Lao and Thailand. Moreover, the local government scholarships focusing on Lao and Thai students are another support for us. (P3)

With the geographic advantages of Pu'er City, PU enjoyed unique and convenient transportation channels from land, navigation, and aviation to Thailand and Laos. Therefore, in the target documents, strengthening partnerships with universities from Southeast Asian countries and jointly cultivating international talents who can serve the local society was kept a priority continuously.

The interviewees' responses revealed that PU's internationalization did consider the dimensions of 'at home' and 'cross-border'. The comparison results between the content analysis of the department documents texts and Knight's Two Pillars model indicated that there were intersection categories of 'at home' and 'cross-border' dimensions. However, due to the lack of theoretical knowledge on guiding the university's internationalization planning making, there was not an established model or concise definition of internationalization at PU.

Consequently, the localization model of PU's internationalization coincides with Knight's Two Pillars model that emphasizes 'At home' and 'Cross-border' as mainstreams. However, influenced by the insufficient foundation in academic research and inexperience in international affairs, PU's approach to internationalization relies heavily on personal experiences while there is a significant potential that could be brought by extracurricular activity for PU's future international endeavors.

Discussion

In the content analysis of policy documents and interviews, one issue missed but which should be deeply considered is the language used for international communication. With the development of the globalization process, English has become a lingua franca in the world, which attracts more and more non-English native speakers to learn so that to be able to communicate with more people from different cultures globally (Zhang, 2016). Cai (2015) points out that language is the carrier of all activities, and which kind of language is selected correctly will directly influence the economic, and political development model and direction of an enterprise, a university, or even a country. In his arguments, one of the basic requirements for internationalization is English, which is gradually becoming a lingua franca (Cai, 2015). However, in the target policy documents, there is no evidence for using which kind of language as the communication media, including languages for international students' instruction, and languages for recording international activities.

The problem existing in the process of universities' internationalization in the world is universities increasingly projecting themselves as international universities, but their English language policies do not necessarily meet with their real competencies (Jenkins, 2014), especially for a university located near a boundary with geographic advantages in international communication.

It can be found that the role of languages used in PU's internationalization is obscure from the results of content analysis of policy documents and interviews. However, all participants acknowledged English was still the chief mode in international communication especially in bilateral or multipartite communication and negotiation. Wang (2018) uses local universities in Western China as examples to illustrate the countermeasure for universities facing internationalization to focus on multilingual majors' development that can meet the needs of social economic development in western areas. Hence, there is a dilemma for Chinese local universities regarding language choices.

However, if only promoting English plus a country's national language as the language policy in Southeast Asian countries, the national language policy could turn to bilingualism, rather than multilingualism (Kirkpatrick, 2017). Chinese universities should also consider this concern. Zhang (2013) suggests that Chinese local

universities should deal with the correlations between localization and internationalization. Then the universities can realize internationalization based on featured localization by making good roles of geographic features and discipline features. The interview results revealed the majors of Thai language, Lao language, and Burmese language were the characteristic majors at PU, which served for the joint cultivation of international talents with the nearby countries from Southeast Asia. The multiple kinds of international cooperation established by PU and the cooperative partners from Southeast Asian countries, such as language teacher exchange, student exchange and internships, and international conference holding, etc. have shown that English is not the only communication medium for their international communication. Accordingly, the current language used for various language majors' instruction could affirm PU trying to push both English and other languages together.

Internationalization of higher education in China is affected by policies released by governments at different levels. One of the significant policies of Chinese local universities located on the route along with 'the Belt and Road' is 'the Belt and Road' initiative, which encourages educational cooperation with countries along the route (Wang, 2018). And the plan of 'Study in China' provides international students the chance to study at Chinese universities (Wu, 2021). During the process of cultivating international students, the internationalization of curricula involving integrating global perspectives and adopting English as a medium (EMI) of instruction is an important issue, also a requirement proposed by the American Council on Education in 2008 (Zhang, 2013). However, implementing EMI raises challenges such as ensuring the quality of English language teaching, maintaining academic standards, and addressing the potential marginalization of the Chinese language and culture (Hu & Lei, 2014).

The features of PU are dominated by its school running orientations that 'PU identifies localization, regionalization, application-oriented, and internationalization as the orientations' (Pu'er University, n.d.). Among the characteristic disciplines, such as Gardening, Art, Cuisine and Nutrition Education, and Tea Theory (Pu'er University, n.d.), the languages used for instruction are limited in Chinese. One approach to realizing internationalization for Chinese local universities is to dig into their advantages and combine them with the local cultural characteristics (Wang, 2018). Although English remains the dominant role of instruction medium in international education,

providing additional languages for cooperation programs can attract more students from non-English speaking countries. Two examples of the limitation of English as a Medium for Instruction in higher education illustrated by Kirkpatrick (2014) could show the increasing need for multilingual instruction. One example of European universities shows the successful approach of multilingual instruction in international education, which offers students from neighboring countries multilingual choices, including English, French, German, and other widely spoken languages. This approach not only expands the students' learning base but also reflects the university's inclusivity in international education (Kirkpatrick, 2014). Another example is about language policy in universities in Hong Kong, China, which treat English equally with Chinese. International students could choose the courses taught in either English or Chinese (Kirkpatrick, 2014). Furthermore, the emphasis on English may create inequalities among students and faculty, particularly those from non-English-speaking backgrounds (Hultgren et al., 2015). It is recommended that when universities make their language policy multilingual skills should be encouraged to be used in the courses teaching and learning (Kirkpatrick, 2014). Trying to build these featured disciplines in multilingual instructions could be an innovation for PU's internationalization approach.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Universities worldwide are increasingly branding themselves as international universities, although their English language policies do not align with this projection (Jenkins, 2014). Given the diverse contexts of universities, there should be different definitions of internationalization based on their practical development. The qualitative data collected in this study indicates that PU's internationalization planning has been influenced heavily by national, provincial, and local government policies. These policies act as mainstreams in shaping the institutional plan for internationalization. The integration of factors from various governmental levels into PU's institutional plan exemplifies the transformation of an internationalization model into a localization one, highlighting one of the responsibilities of Chinese higher education institutions to serve societal needs.

Consequently, the localization for PU's internationalization could be explained as a dynamic process of internationalization moving around the context of updated geopolitics and integrating factors from

global, intercultural, national, and local dimensions to its institutional missions and objectives. The localization model of a university's internationalization shows the combination of policy orientation from different government levels, the university's functions regulated by the national education department, and the university's characteristics gradually formed in its development, which is merged into the university's internationalization planning. The localization model could relate to guidelines, principles, or strategies, but the main purpose is to promote a university's internationalization.

Referring to the limitation of the study, the study primarily focuses on the perspective of administrative staff, especially the members of OICE who are directly involved in international affairs. Further studies should include perspectives from other departments or schools related to international affairs to provide a more comprehensive analysis of factors influencing PU's internationalization model. Additionally, the validity of benchmarks for PU's international results, recorded as institutional documents, should be verified. During the personal interviews, one of the participants pointed out the language barrier as one of the biggest challenges for international affairs. Therefore, future studies could explore the role of language in internationalization in Chinese local universities.

Conflict of Interest

The first author has two affiliations currently as a Ph.D. student at Mae Fah Luang University in Thailand and administrative working staff member at Pu'er University in China at the same time. The copyright of this paper is the property of Mae Fah Luang University as the partial constitution of her graduation's dissertation. As for the co-author, she declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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