

***Development of Internationalization of Library and Information Science (LIS)
Programs in Thailand***

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The IAFOR International Conference on Education – Hawaii 2017
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Internationalization has been recognized as a key strategy to cope with changes and establish the capacity and potential of the programs. This documentary research aimed at studying the development of the internationalization of LIS programs in Thailand. Research instruments comprised a documentary analysis form. Findings showed that 1) Internationalization was found since the founding of library education in Thailand in the year 1951 at Chulalongkorn University, as evening classes for the holders of a bachelor's degree under the auspices of Fulbright foundation of the United States. Fulbright scholars from U.S.A. played active roles in the internationalization of library programs in Thailand, 2) the inauguration of the LIS Ph.D. programs in Thailand was the hallmark of the internationalization as internationalization has been implemented in all missions of higher education: management, teaching and learning, research and academic services, and 3) key driven factors of the development of internationalization included the national policies and quality assurance.

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Introduction

Internationalization is a concept in constant development and many different definitions have been proposed during the course of the past three decades or more. The conceptual framework of the word 'internationalization' was varied in the explanation and interpretation in different approaches, perspectives and context. This is supported by Tammaro (2014, p. 315) that alongside the growing importance of internationalization, the concept itself has acquired a vast number of interpretations.

Diverse, often more specific ways, have been used to describe the process, such as, international education. (International Association of Universities, 2015). A new definition of internationalization was proposed by a globally recognized scholar in the internationalization of higher education, De Wit (2015), as "the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society." The subject of internationalization has been one of the most discussed issues in academic environment.

Internationalization of higher education has been promoted for several decades. Experts in the higher education believed that this subject is a new paradigm and inevitable approach in the universities and curriculum. (Ghasempoor; Liaghatdar, & Jafari, 2011, p.35). Four broad categories of rationales for internationalization: political, economic, social and cultural, and academic were identified by De Wit (2002), with economic rationales become increasingly motivated and more dominant in the present situation. The rationales of internationalization may vary in importance by program, by institution, by country, and by region and change over the time, but are becoming more and more interconnected. According to Knight (2008: 25), emerging rationales are at the national level (e.g., human resource development, strategic alliances, income generation/commercial trade, nation building, social/cultural development and mutual understanding) and at the institutional level (e.g., international branding and profile, quality enhancement/ international standards, income generation, student and staff development, strategic alliances and knowledge production).

Internationalization has affected library and information science educational settings and programs primarily in Europe and the U.S.A. (Abdullahi, Kajberg & Virku, 2007), Previous studies on the internationalization of LIS education focused on the western world. "Europeisation," "Bologna Declaration" and "Bologna Process" are some achieved European internationalization experiences of library and information science education in Europe. In Thailand, special efforts have been made to internationalization LIS programs to respond to the challenges of an increasing global world. As internationalization is a global trend that LIS programs and institutions are engaged, and an important research issue of interest to LIS educators and researchers worldwide. This study will highlight the research findings of the "Internationalization of LIS programs in Thailand" (Sacchanand, 2016), focusing on the development of the internationalization of LIS education. This will help to look forward the future, to establish and advance the capacity and potential of LIS programs and institutions especially graduate levels.

Research objectives

This research aimed at studying the development of the internationalization of library and information science education in Thailand.

Research Methodology

This documentary research used a recording form as research instrument.

Data collection A comprehensive literature review related to LIS education and internationalization of higher education in Thailand was conducted.

Data analysis Qualitative data from documents were analyzed using content analysis and synthesized to create a more complete picture of findings and present descriptively to answer the research objective.

Findings and Discussions

1. Internationalization of LIS education in Thailand was found since the founding of library education in the year 1951, at Chulalongkorn University, the first university in Thailand. The evening classes for the holders of a bachelor's degree under the auspices of Fulbright foundation of the United States was conducted in English. A lot of international activities and contribution were implemented by Dr. Frances Lander Spain, the first Fulbright scholar who was honored to be the founder of modern librarianship in Thailand and by the succession of five outstanding Fulbright scholars, each of whom taught library science course for one year. Since then the first undergraduate program, Bachelor of Arts degree program in library science was inaugurated in 1959, following with the offering of Master of Arts degree program in 1964 at Chulalongkorn University, based on the evaluation report of the diploma and B.A. degree program and guideline proposed by Morris A. Gelfand, UNESCO expert, from the United States.

This is as argued by Gorton (1979) that the period 1950-1976 has seen encouraging developments in the field of Thai academic libraries and librarianship. In 1951 there was no trained librarian in the country. During the 1950s and 1960s, in schemes supported by the Thai and American governments and various international agencies, expansion took place and has led to a present situation of great potential. A lot of activities and contribution from LIS scholars and professionals abroad have played active roles in the establishment and development of LIS programs in Thailand. Thus, internationalization of library education in Thailand started at the post-graduate level.

2. The inauguration of the Ph.D. program in Library and Information Science/ Studies in Thailand was the hallmark of the internationalization of LIS education. The first Ph.D. program in Information Studies which started in the year 2003 at Khon Kaen University, was supported by Fulbright Foundation. Professor Robert D. Stuart, Fulbright scholar from United States helped inaugurated and internationalized the Ph.D. Program. The second Ph.D. program in information science using distance learning was offered in the year 2010 at Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU). Internationalization of STOU Ph.D. Program was found important and

necessary and research about the internationalization of the Ph.D. program was conducted and laid the foundation for a successful implementation of STOU Ph.D. program in information science. (Sacchanand, Gaikwang & Vipawin , 2011).

The internationalization of STOU Ph.D. program emphasized on policies, strategic planning, specific allocated budgets, curriculum, teaching/ learning, research, teaching faculty and student development, learning resources, international cooperation and network, and academic services to the community. Various recommended international strategies were conducted, e.g. international academic network and cooperation with universities, LIS programs and professors abroad for the teaching/learning activities; international seminar/ conference in the area of library and information science, study abroad program, and joint research.

3. Internationalization of LIS Ph.D. programs in Thailand has been implemented in the management, teaching and learning, research and academic services. Khonkaen University and Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University which offer Ph.D. programs as well as Mahasarakarm University (MSU) and Chulalongkorn University (CU) which plan to offer Ph.D. Program implemented internationalization in all missions, management, education, research and academic services, and they are among the leading group of internationalization.

Management: LIS graduate institutions in Thailand had the missions, vision, policies, plans, strategies related to the management of internationalization at the university level. MOU with the LIS programs or institutions abroad were conducted at the university levels.

Teaching and learning: LIS graduate programs in Thailand internationalized LIS curriculum; recruited faculty members with degrees and professional experiences abroad; provision of grants to support paper presentation, conference attendance, training and workshop abroad. Issues related to LIS global issues were integrated in the curriculum, teaching and learning to create awareness of the students and faculty members in the international context and perspectives. Some other important activities included English language proficiency requirement for the entrance /graduation of the programs, student mobility, study abroad program, extra curricular activities, and virtual form of internationalization through the web and social networks. No LIS programs in Thailand developed or offered international programs, credit transfer with institutions abroad, off campus provision abroad, English program, joint degree programs or double degree programs with institutions abroad and joint course material production in English.

Research: The research activities that most LIS graduate programs implemented are offering grant for joint research between faculty members of the programs and other LIS programs abroad, research or academic articles publishing in the international journals or presentation at the international conferences.

Academic services: Few LIS graduate programs conducted joint conference, workshops, seminars and training programs. The activities that faculty members of most LIS programs performed are members of editorial board and peer reviewers of

international journals, guest professors, speakers and resource persons of international academic activities.

4. Key driven factors of LIS education internationalization were national policies and quality assurance.

National policies: Internationalization has been first incorporated into the 1st 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education (1990 – 2004) formulated by the Ministry of University Affairs (The National Commission on Higher Education (CHE) at present) to respond to changing environments with more proactive roles, and later the 2nd 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education (2008 – 2022) which aims at enhancing higher education and country's competitiveness. The Ministry of Education also issued *Guidelines for Academic Cooperation Between Thai Higher institutions and Foreign Higher Institutions* (2007) and *Best Practice in Internationalization of Higher Institutions Under the National Commission on Higher Education* (2013) as part of its implementation. The international strategies for Thai Higher Education by the National Higher Commission on Higher Education were in accordance with the global rationales and trends of internationalization focusing on higher education capability building enhancement, quality enhancement, international standards, student and staff development. In addition, the Ministry of Education also recognized English as an international language and the world's most widely spoken language as an international official language, thus, the English language proficiency became a requirement for graduates as well as new faculty members. These showed that internationalization of higher education has been a prime concern of the Thai government at the high level and a key driven factor to the internationalization of the LIS graduate programs.

Quality assurance: Quality assurance is also growing in importance in the internationalization of LIS higher education as a means to improve the quality of education through collaborative network. Regionalization has been highlighted to promote quality assurance in library and information science education in ASEAN. (Sacchanand, 2015). This is in line with Knight (2012) who emphasized that regionalization is seen as a complementary process to internationalization, a process of building closer collaboration and alignment among higher education among education actors and systems in a designated area or framework, commonly called a region. Knight (2013: 15) also indicated that a notable evolution in the internationalization of higher education in the last decade has been the increasing emphasis on regional level collaboration and reform initiatives.

Recommendations

Library and information Science programs have undergone many reviews and changes continuously over last two decades. The development of internationalization of LIS education is a long process that takes multiple roads. The following recommendations are proposed :

1. As internationalization opens a new horizon and offers an untapped opportunity, internationalization should be strengthened at the university and program levels , so that internationalization will play a more prominent role in LIS education, to prepare globally competitive graduates who can function effectively in the global environment and to enjoy higher standing of LIS education and profession.
2. Internationalization through collaboration or collaborative networking especially in the ASEAN region should be key strategy and a driving force of the internationalization of LIS education and research in Thailand.
3. LIS educators in Thailand should play a more proactive roles nationally and internationally.
4. Quality assurance through the adoption of international standards related to education and internationalization in policies, curricula, teaching and learning, research and academic services should be the key to the development of internationalization of LIS graduate programs.

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