

TOGETHER Model: A Participatory Student-Development Model in Multicultural Society for Thailand's Deep South University Network

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to synthesize an integrated student-development model in multicultural society for Thailand's deep south university network. Data collection was conducted through brainstorming, group discussion, critique meeting, and subsequent forum for data return and opinion sharing. The 45 key informants included 8 higher-education institutional presidents from the three southern-border provinces, 7 student-development practitioners, 20 student leaders, 5 alumni representatives, and 5 civil-society representatives. The derived data were used in a content analysis logical based on related concepts, theories, and research studies. TOGETHER Model, a participatory student-development model, was operated under TDSUN Network which is an integrated student-development network in multicultural society for Thailand's deep south university network. The findings revealed that the model covered 6 following activity areas: 1) academic; 2) sports and recreation; 3) promotion of Thai culture; 4) community service and environmental protection; 5) exchange programs for students and student-development practitioners; and 6) knowledge enhancement. The results of this study were found fruitful to the participatory student development as they fostered an integration of student activities which was in line with the concepts of peace building and multicultural society of the three southern-border provinces.

Keywords: TOGETHER Model, Student-Development Activities, Multicultural Society, Higher Education Institutions in the Three Southern Border Provinces

Introduction

Higher education institutions are key organizations in the mission to produce graduates, conduct research, provide academic services, and to maintain the arts and culture. By roles, higher education institutions are also key players to drive change and innovate solutions to social problems (Perkin, 1973). Nonetheless, under various transformational conditions, these institutions are forced to make administrative strategy changes in response to different needs of various public stakeholders (Kotler & Fox, 1995) to maintain and sustain their missions in an ever-advancing era of globalization, scientific race, and technological growth (Paris, 2003). Consequently, it is crucial to put an emphasis on student development activities especially to ensure that the students realize the necessity to develop a moral/ethical compass

so that, in the future, they can become quality role models or leaders in the social, economic, or political world. In general, three essential qualifications to be developed comprise being: 1) knowledgeable; 2) intellectual; and 3) adaptable (Sinlaratana, 2014). Same goes for Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Pattani Province; Princess of Naradhiwas University, Narathiwat Province; and Yala Rajabhat University, Yala Province which are the higher education institutions in the three southern-border provinces of Thailand, a.k.a. the deep-south universities, the institutions have been affected by political violence and unrest. The institutional administrative structures were forced to transform in response to environmental and contextual developments (Palasai, 2009) with goals to implement a more effective holistic management paradigm. The emphasis is to improve the institutions by creating competitive edges in various areas through establishing a cooperation network that would ensure that these deep-south universities could sustainably operate with substantial public recognitions (Dessler, 2004). In addition, networking is also a mechanism beneficial to the universities in mitigating the Thai southern unrest (Office of the Council of Education Ministry of Education, 2009). Nonetheless, after reviewing 6 relevant documents and studies on the development of student activities and educational quality in the three southern border provinces including Education Reform in Southern Border Province (Farungsang, Uttayawalee, Sungtong, & Haji-Awang, 2011); The Reconceptualization of Student Affairs (Innoy & Bunpak, 2011); Organizational Challenges of Educators in the Era of Education Reform and Unrest: A Case Study of Southern Border Province (Sungtong & Nitjarunkul, 2012); A New Paradigm for Administration of Higher Education Institution for the Three Southern Border Province: A Framework for Sustainable Development and the ASEAN Community (Suwanvong & Chaijaroenwattana, 2013); Guidelines for Student Activities of Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus (Chelong, 2013); and Appropriate Strategies and Model for Administration of Higher Education Institutions in the Three Southern Border Province (Suwanvong, 2014), it appears that there has been no concrete solutions to the problem of student development and not that the proposed solutions would fit the spatial, contextual, and application contexts. This is consistent with the need and problem analysis, a step of this study, which revealed the difficulties these deep-south universities had in participating and carrying out student development activities. The difficulties were due to the administrative policies issued from central or other related agencies assigning the deep-south institutions to organize specific student development activities pursuant to the predetermined designations. The assignments are often created with failure to address the deep-south demographic limitation or characteristic which is diverse in religions, beliefs, and lifestyles under a multicultural context. As a result, student development activities are not effectively implemented in the region not responsive to the needs of every target group. This often leads to activity overlaps with poor variety. In addition, each institution carries out the activities in an isolated fashion with minimal joint cooperation where it leaves no room for post-activity feedback for a better further organization of student-development (Kadem, 2013). It is undeniable, therefore, that there is a dire need to examine and come up with a participatory student-development model in multicultural society for the deep south university network. The conduct was executed by firstly, exploring a number of possible models that fit the context; and secondly, learning the model mechanisms. The post-examination findings were projected to be beneficial to the deep-south higher educational institutions as well as governmental agencies responsible in designing and issuing student-development policies. Ultimately, this aims to ensure that the graduates would acquire necessary characteristics that harmonize with regional identities. Cooperative networking of the deep-south universities to expand the knowledge on student development in this specific context can be further useful both for themselves as well as other regional higher education institutions as the derived knowledge can be used to organize a student-development activity with better compatibility

under multicultural contexts.

Research Objective

To examine the participatory student-development models in multicultural society for the deep south university network.

Methods

Study Area and Target Group

This study purposely selected the studied area as a case study based on the geographic and demographic criteria of firstly, being culturally diverse i.e. ethnicity, language, livelihood, lifestyle, religion, and belief (Muslim Studies Center, Institute of Asian Chulalongkorn University, 2006); and secondly, being the deep-south higher education institutions i.e. Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus; Princess of Naradhiwas University; and Yala Rajabhat University. Through purposive sampling, the 45 key informants comprise 8 higher-education institutional presidents from the three southern-border provinces, 7 student-development practitioners, 20 student leaders, 5 alumni representatives, and 5 civil-society representatives.

Data Collection

This qualitative study employed brainstorming, group discussion, critique meeting, and subsequent forum for data return and opinion sharing for its data collection.

Data Analysis

1. Open Coding: The derived data from brainstorming, group discussion, critique meeting, and subsequent forum for data return and opinion sharing are open-coded as much as possible (Creswell, 2013). The coding was conducted sentence by sentence or page by page in two following degrees:
 - 1.1 Open coding from data: the derived data from the key informants through speeches, supportive notes, suggestions, arguments, and opinion exchanges were coded. Simply put, the coding separates and groups the obtained content and issue.
 - 1.2 Open coding from theoretical indications: the derived data from the review of literature and relevant theories were used a base to code the content and issue obtained from the key informants.
2. Generation of subject matter: The data codes that share similarity and relevancy, or are somewhat related to one another through context; condition; method; or result, clearly proven to be through an analytical process of phenomena or issues obtained from the key informants, were used to generate the subject matter.
3. Axial Coding: The generated subject matters were analyzed for their relationships with other occurred contexts through axial coding. The goal is to generate the main subject matters, subtopics, and nature of the relationships.

Result and Discussion

After sessions of brainstorming; group discussion; critique meeting; and subsequent forum for data return and opinion sharing with the key informants to cooperatively analyzed and determined the participatory student-development model, it was discovered that the appropriate participatory student-development model in multicultural society for the higher education institutions in the three southern border provinces was an integrated model with six activity areas known as “TDSUN Network: Thailand’s Deep South University Network”. The model aims to develop the students following the concepts of peace building and harmonious living within a multicultural society like the three southern border provinces. More in detail, the results can be divided in two parts as follows:

The Participatory Student-Development Model in Multicultural Society for Thailand's Deep South University Network known as "TOGETHER Model"

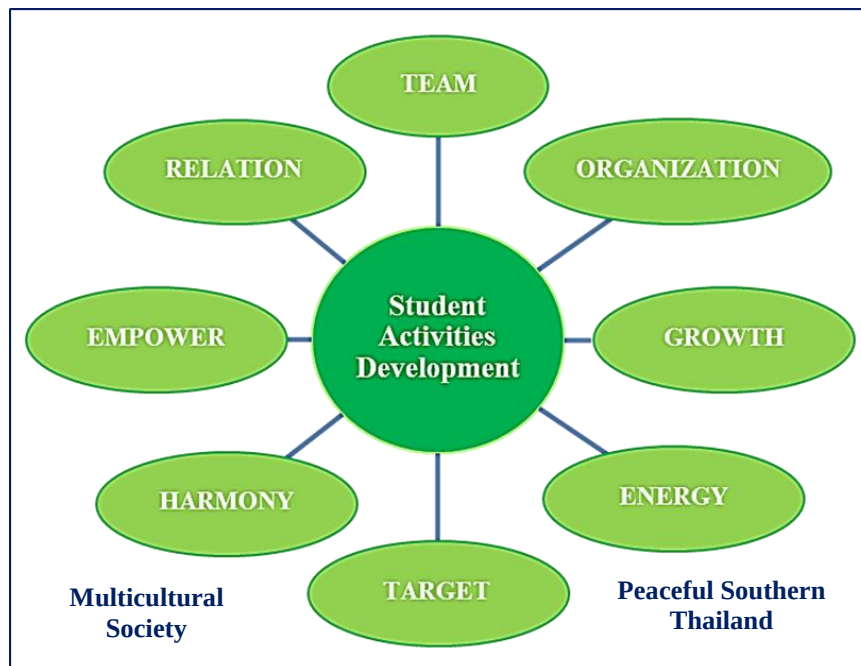


Figure 1 "TOGETHER Model": The participatory Student-Development Model in Multicultural Society for Thailand's Deep South University Network

"TOGETHER Model" is an abbreviation from the following letters and meanings:

T = Teamwork: An establishment of a team to run the participatory activities for the Thailand's deep south university network. The team contains university administrators, student-development practitioners, student leaders.

O = Organization: The deep south university network comprising Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus; Yala Rajabhat University; and Princess of Naradhiwas University.

G = Growth: The network's development and planning to enhance student development in accordance with the area context and current social evolution, and the cooperation of all sectors on a singular student-development mission to produce graduates with adequate intellect, capability, and value to serve the society.

E = Energy: The network's ability to transfer knowledge on student development and activities for further constitution of knowledge, understanding, empathy of differences, as well as essential skills to harmoniously coexist in a multicultural environment where cultural diversity can be used as an advantage to creatively drive further social development.

T = Target: The network's common goals in designing and developing participatory student-development activities to meet the needs of all groups of target participants with minimal to none limitation so that the students can optimally understand the diversity of lifestyles and cultures that exist within in their very society.

H = Harmony: The effort to foster cooperation among member institutions of the network to ensure that the objectives of participatory student development are well understood so that the student activities can successfully become facilitating mechanisms that promote the students to be moral, intellectual, knowledgeable, eager to learn, and socially accountable. In addition, leadership, valuing democracy, self-responsibility, and social responsibility are also among the desirable qualities.

E = Empowerment: The necessary reinforcement required for the network to systematically

and efficiently operate the student-development scheme consistently with the framework of the Second 15-Year Long Range Plan on Higher Education of Thailand (2008-2022) of the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC), Ministry of Education, coupled with the student-development goals to enhance life skills and expertise; produce graduates with desirable characteristics; develop in accordance with Thailand 4.0 policy; promote lifelong learning; create happiness; and be successfully employed suitably with the era of the 21st century.

R = Relationship: The association in a form of network among higher-education administrators, student-development practitioners, and student leaders within the network members with the goal to drive student development to a practical state where it can be conducted at maximum efficiency.

In order for the network to efficiently run student-development activities, it is crucial that the development model begins with being participatory and multicultural and for that, “TOGETHER Model” suitably served the purposes. It allowed the higher education institutions in the three southern border provinces to develop and implement their student-development activities to meet the needs of the target students and reduce duplicate activities through an involvement of all sectors. This is consistent with Farungsang (2014) which asserted that the three southern border provinces contain the social capitals beneficial to national development because the area forms its social relationship with multi-ethnic and multi-religious awareness under a common national culture. In terms of the society being multicultural, its education system is also based on cultural diversity. The key target groups of this study joined hands in raising the opinions on the exit strategies and solutions to the problems to ensure that the student development activities can run efficiently smooth for the optimum benefits as follows.

“..It is now the time for higher education institutions in the three southern border provinces to make strategic change to their student development model jointly under a strong, efficient, and equipped network who can drive the student development towards the satisfaction which meet the needs of all target groups and foster collaboration of all related segments to develop solutions to all problems in order to support the students so that they can further participate in peace building for the three southern border provinces...” (Waelateh, Vice President for Student Development, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus)

“..Students in the three southern border provinces live in a multiculturally diverse environment with strict religious lifestyles following their faiths. More importantly, in addition to the shared culture and identity the local population as well as the majority of the ASEAN population has, the geographic locations of these higher education institutions in the area very advantageous for networking and academic cooperation...” (Sangmanee, President of Princess of Naradhiwas University)

“..Student development in higher education institutions of the three southern border provinces should promote skills and preparedness in all areas to ensure that the students possess necessary advantages to compete effectively in the labor market both domestically and internationally. The promotion emphasis should go especially to developments of knowledge, potential, and expertise of specific field which shall be done simultaneously with is an enhancement of life skills necessary for a graduate to be full of quality, employed, and useful for future career market...” (Hayeewaenawae, Head of Student Activities Development, Yala Rajabhat University)

“..Having an opportunity on joint planning and exchange of ideas with other student leaders is important as the first milestone for student development. In the future, more joint cooperation including activity design and development will come. It is essential to ensure that the development produce quality activities to meet the needs of all target groups especially, it should be in concert with the development direction of the nation e.g. the development of 21st

century students, the promotion of lifelong learning, and the policy of Thailand 4.0..."
(President of Student Leader, Princess of Naradhiwas University)

From the student-development concepts above, it is, therefore, a responsibility of the deep south universities to network and identify a concrete approach to student development. To ensure that the graduates are produced with socially desirable quality, "TDSUN Network: Thailand's Deep South University Network" was used as it can drive the student development systematically and efficiently with activity varieties. More into the empirical results on the integrated student-development network in multicultural society for Thailand's deep south universities is discussed in the next section.

Empirical Results of "TDSUN Network": An Integrated Student-Development Network in Multicultural Society for Thailand's Deep South Universities

"TDSUN Network" is an integrated student development network that aims to develop the students under a mission to produce graduates with socially desirable qualities, promote the importance of being a social leader who also possess intellectual quality, equip them with adequate capability for further self-advancement, social development, and national improvement. Peace building is also added to as a higher purpose to be achieved in the student development scheme to ensure living harmony under a multicultural context. The empirical results of "TDSUN Network" suggested that the model covered six dimensions as exhibited below:

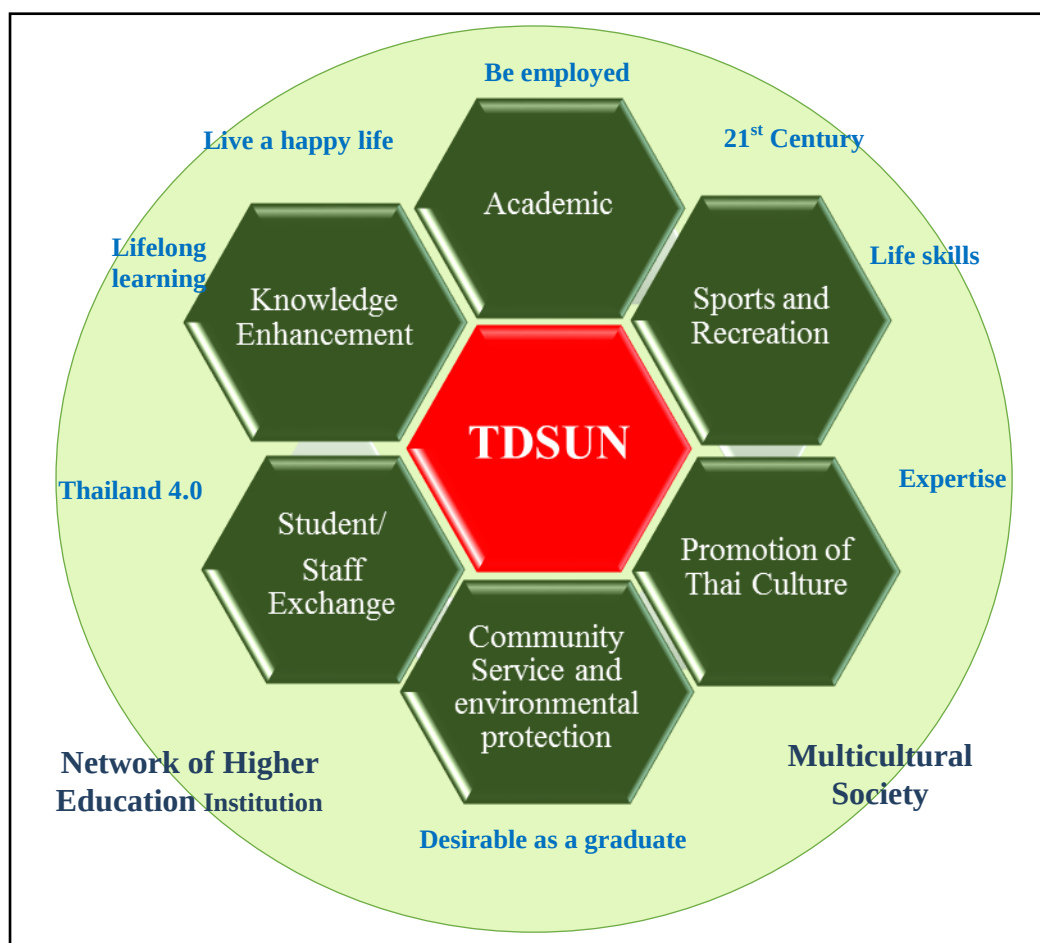


Figure 2 “TDSUN Network”: An Integrated Student-Development Network in Multicultural Society for Thailand’s Deep South Universities

1. Academic activities: Academic student-development activities focus on improving academic, professional, research, academic-service skills. The purpose is to offer during-education professional experience, promote work efficiency, foster systematic thinking, support them to efficiently make use of the gained experiences in problem solving, and increase awareness on knowledge preparation for career competition. In addition, another parallel development dimension is learning to respect cultural diversity. After the establishment of student-development network, many significant academic activities took place. This included signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Student Development Cooperation Higher Education Institutions in Three Southern Border Provinces, an knowledge exchange program on student development activities, and a student leader network of the three southern border provinces. Since academic activity is an important milestone before all other areas of student development as well as a key indicating factor for a modern higher education institution, it is important to make proper organizational development and adjustment; create student-development activities, courses, or programs out of existing resources; and transfer the knowledge with the right measures and the institutions should have an ongoing strategic planning with prudence in determining the aims that would lead to the achievement student-development goals which produce graduates with academic knowledge and professional skills. It is also considered to be a beneficial development process with creation of competitive advantage and efficiency for the graduates to use when entering domestic and international career markets. In order to achieve such goals, the institutions are suggested to come up with a clear, solid, modern vision, mission, and goal

that facilitate a systematic collaborative workflow (Kotler & Fox, 1995).

2. Sports and recreation: An integration of student-development activities that put an emphasis on athletic skills, healthy exercises, sportsmanship, teamwork, dedication, and good physical and mental health. Students can voluntarily join the non-compulsory activities at any time and these would promote emotional and psychological development, offers new experiences, encourage participation and self-confidence, and, in general, improve the life quality. After the establishment of the network, a significant sports event, TDSUN GAMES, has been organized. It holds sports events including sports for the health, folk sports, and sports competition. The types of sports include soccer, futsal, volleyball, group jump rope, tug of war, and 31-legged race. Rattapasakorn (2015), an academic professional on student-development activities, regarded sports and recreational activities as an effective measure to promote unity since everyone, regardless of religious or personal beliefs, can participate in sports without causing any violation against any doctrine of any religion. In addition, when focusing on sportsmanship, teamwork, and dedication, the process grows the body and mind positively, provides new opportunity to express ideas, encourages positive use of free time, establishes positive relationships among participants, fosters disciplines, cultivates and trains the students to know when to lead or follow, improves the decision making skill, and increases an opportunity to create reputation for the educational institutions (Paenluea, 2007).

3. Promotion of Thai culture: Activities under this category include preservation of religions, local culture, and Thai national arts and culture which aim to cultivate the students to value and respect people of different belief, identity, ethnicity, and culture. At the same time, development of morality and ethics; and dissemination of local and national art and culture are also supported through the activities in this category. After the establishment of the network, a significant cultural-promotion event compatible with the area context and identity was organized, Ashure Fellowship or the making of ashure dessert porridge. It has long been a tradition of Thai Muslims in the three southern border provinces. However, the activity sequence has been adjusted to be coherent with the modern world and making ashure is now used as a friendly shared activity among local people regardless of their religious belief. It now helps strengthening all kinds of friendships, promoting trust among people, and bringing unity to communities. Promoting Thai arts and culture through activities is another important role of higher education institutions in the three southern border provinces. As institutions, their role is to support the learning and cultivate the value of being Thai. As a Thai citizen, one should help preserve national arts and culture (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2008) and follow policies of peace building in the three southern border provinces through the use of geographic advantages of all institutions which are located in a multicultural society. Students of these institutions can mainly be divided into three groups including Thai-Malayu, Thai-Buddhist, and foreign students e.g. Sri Lankan, Chinese, Pakistanese, Lao, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Indian, etc. (Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2013). Student activities that promote Thai culture essential for national development as culture can unite the citizens and enhance national stability. On that grounds, culture plays a vital role in national development and it is also a factor that leads to national prosperity, civilization, and identity which reflect the diversity of its citizens living in different social contexts (Piriyaajitra, 2006).

4. Community service and environmental protection: Activities are integrated purposely for the students to serve the community and society; and protect the environment. Academic knowledge from classroom is applied in activity actions according to the needs of specific operating areas and target groups. Student participation is paramount and this is a venue where the knowledge can be exchanged; local wisdoms can be learned; environment can be preserved; work experience can be earned; and harmonious coexistence of students, community, and community can be created. Establishing the student-development network

resulted a significant impact as TDSUN Volunteer Camp was launched. The camp runs of types of volunteer works including construction of public properties, community service, and other volunteering assignments. The deep-south universities aim to cultivate the students on morality, ethics, and ideology. Public-mindedness, social service, and teamwork are encouraged through training and practices (Chelong, 2013) while local wisdom and environmental protection are being taught. Activities were conducted in four categories: 1) community service in education; 2) community service in public health; 3) community service in public utilities; and 4) community service in agriculture (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2009). The students learn to dedicate themselves for a greater good through applying their academic knowledge or experiences in community and social development. In addition, these actions also offer an opportunity for the students to learn to be a good leader and follower (Rattapasakorn, 2015).

5. Exchange programs for students and staff-development practitioners: Students and staff-development practitioners are exchanged among the higher education institutions in the three southern border provinces to strengthen and support the student-development. This is to ensure that the exchange of relevant knowledge is executed effectively in a manner of cooperation-network. The network created two important initial-phase projects including 1) a knowledge transfer project to support quality assurance in student development; and 2) a student-leader workshop in the three southern border provinces, a.k.a. “Thai Graduates Grow Up Intolerant to Corruption”. The activity model was made adaptive so that it can constantly be applied and modified according to the activity operation, plan, and schedule that the network designates. During the past, the operation model has been to send the student representatives to various activities that the higher education institutions organized under with shared resource utilization which was in a form of network partnership with mutual network benefits as this ensures the development is holistic and sustainable with maximum efficiency (Taha, 2010). To make it happen, four factors on educational paradigms were shifted: 1) visions, goals, and objectives were reviewed and adjusted for a start with an aim to produce quality human resources; 2) educational and social sustainability were determined and reflected; 3) the designed visions were evaluated whether they can truly lead to and accommodate changes; and 4) the visions were compared and adjusted to ensure they were commonly agreeable among relevant parties of the organizations and among the network institutions and in addition to the exchange programs for students and student-development practitioners, higher education institutions in the three southern border provinces should put an effort to spread the knowledge and train the staffs and students for the 21st century in a concept to “prepare individuals to live a working life”. To do so, holistic potential development at individual, group, and organization levels must be employed. Recommended qualities for an individual to have in the 21st century are to be able to live in the world of competition and confront constant changes and such qualities require the following skills: 1) learning skill; 2) adaptability skill; 3) life skill; and 4) work skill (Panit, 2011).

6. Knowledge enhancement: Soft skills, expertise, and desirable characteristics are developed under this activity category pursuant to policies such as Thailand 4.0, lifelong learning, being employed, and 21st-century student development. The purpose is to develop the students with sufficient knowledge and capability to become valuable human resources to the society and nation. As academic and human resources development experts have suggested, higher education institutions must constantly be on the move to address the development challenges in a competitive, scientific, and technological world. To do so, higher education institutions should develop the knowledge and make sufficient methodological changes to fit in the era and changes the following six key factors might do just that: 1) community servicing; 2) curriculum and instruction; 3) student livelihood; 4) physical operation; 5) research support; and 6) development in policy and administration

(Fadeeva & Mochizuki, 2009). It is also crucial to note that in order to develop the knowledge; higher education institutions need a paradigm shift to be able to systematically develop the relevant factors while being under constant evolutionary influences from the nation and world. The development emphasis should be on administration which must be compatible with universality and the development of science and technology of an era with the development of knowledge for competition seems endless (Welsh, 2010).

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the results, it can be concluded that TOGETHER Model: a participatory student-development model in multicultural society for Thailand's deep south university network was the beginning of student-activity development in a form of network of the higher education institutions in three southern border provinces that involved participations of all relevant sections in opinion sharing, proposing an exit strategy, and addressing a solution to the problem. As a result, TDSUN Network: an integrated student-development network in multicultural society for Thailand's deep south universities emerged with six activity areas including 1) academic activities which are the academic-oriented integrated student-development activities that focus on improving the students on academic, professional, research, academic-service skills; 2) sports and recreational activities that aim to promote athletic skills, healthy exercises, sportsmanship, teamwork, dedication, and good physical and mental health; 3) promotion of Thai culture that aims preserve religions, local culture, and Thai national arts and culture through cultivating the students to value artistic and cultural preservation while maintaining the balance of cultural diversity and dynamics of the target groups; 4) community service and environmental protection activities that aim to serve the community and society; and protect the environment through actionable applications of academic knowledge from classroom to fulfill the needs of specific operating areas and target groups; 5) exchange programs for students and student-development practitioners that basically exchange human resources with knowledge and expertise on student development activities as well as those who are responsible in running the student-development institutional network in this study. This is to strengthen and support the student-development to ensure that the exchange of relevant knowledge is executed effectively in a manner of cooperation-network; and 6) knowledge enhancement activities that aim to develop the students with soft skills, expertise, and desirable characteristics pursuant to policies such as Thailand 4.0, lifelong learning, being employed, and 21st-century student development where the produce graduates can become sufficient in knowledge and capability as valuable human resources to the society and nation. The study discovered that the network could effectively facilitate the deep-south universities in using the derived knowledge in activity design and development. It is recommended that agencies involved in development of student activities should make use of the findings as supportive factors in formulating policies, methodologies, and strategies of a further concrete student development scheme. Doing so can enhance the quality of student development in response to current social changes which require students to be more understanding and passionate when living among cultural differences where they should mitigate conflicts through peaceful measures. In addition, the findings can be useful, in a form of systematic network, to improve student-development efficiency for the higher education institutions in three southern border provinces. The action is considered a new paradigm in operation planning as it involves all relevant sectors where student-development for multicultural society, like the three southern border provinces, can be executed simultaneously with provisioning of learning processes that enhance better understanding of history and ethnicity where cultural diversity is used as an advantage to creatively drive further social development. Nonetheless, such studies were still limited in administration i.e. the key informants who were the institutional administrators running the student development

division are rotated by terms. This affected the operational consistency of the participatory student development in multicultural society for Thailand's deep south university network.

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