

Development of International Program Management for Schools in Thailand

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Received July 22, 2020; Revised August 11, 2020; Accepted February 20, 2021

Abstract

International programs should be well-managed and efficiently operated because they develop potentially global citizens with thinking, communication, technical skills, and understanding of social and cultural diversity of others. The objectives of this research were to study international program management from the sampled countries: Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, and to develop and evaluate components of international program management for schools in Thailand. The research procedures commenced with a review of the international program policy management from the five sampled countries, followed by the synthesis of the data, conceptual framework development, and evaluation with soliciting thirteen experts' opinions. The findings indicate that mission, tuition fees, and curriculum should be set by the original owner of the International Program. Authorization should be carried out with the cooperation of the original owner of the International Program and the Ministry of Education. Evaluation and quality assurance should be regulated by schools that offer the international program and the original owner of the International Program. Schools that offer the International Program should be responsible for teacher employment. Mission, teacher employment, and curriculum should be determined by schools that offer the Bilingual Program. Authorization should be carried out by the Ministry of Education. Tuition fees and quality assurance should be regulated by the Ministry of Education and schools that offer the Bilingual Program, while evaluation should be undertaken by schools that offer the Bilingual Program and the Ministry of Education.

Keywords: components of program management; International Program; Bilingual Program

Introduction

In an era characterized by the inevitable impacts of globalization and interdependence, societies have undergone multidimensional transformation all over the world. Thousands of economic, environmental, health, social, demographic, and technological issues yield international consequences. These realities compel educational institutes to take an international scope of their teaching, learning, and research and service mandates into account. They have committed themselves to make their curricula, campuses, and communities more internationally oriented (Government of Manitoba, 2017). As a result, international programs at all levels of education play an extremely salient role in almost all nations around the world, especially when moving toward the goal of “global citizens” (Power, 2000) who are equipped with knowledge, languages, and cultures encompassing various perspectives. A consensus has developed aimed at the novel generation of citizens of the world. To elaborate, being a global citizen has become an indicator of success in terms of better opportunities for their own lives as well as for their nations. Consequently, there is now a tendency for the authorities in many nations to make a great effort in pushing their people to become “global” by means of “international programs”, an ultimate act of investment for the future (Woolf, 2002). If we pay close attention to each nation, we will perceive an increasing awareness of how crucial international programs are (Wait, 2008) in their state actions, policies, regulations, and management. For instance, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Singapore are attempting to become international education hubs in Southeast Asia by pushing international programs as a national agenda. Even in developed nations like the United States, international programs play an important role in educational systems (Stephanie Bell-Rose, 2007; Terence James Chulavachana, 2012). There are many organizations responsible for international programs, such as the Department of Education, American Councils for International Education, and the American International Education Foundation.

This continuous effort can be observed in the form of the current government’s attempts to establish a national agenda regarding international programs at the basic education level to prepare Thai people to become global citizens in the 21st century. The concept of international programs is

becoming even more popular as Thailand moves toward integration with the ASEAN community. At the basic education level, a great number of international or English-oriented programs have been initiated to serve this international education policy (Jack Van de Water, 2005). In addition, all educators, and teachers who teach core subjects, are encouraged to use English as a medium of instruction. Every sector of Thai society seems enthusiastic about raising awareness of the importance of English as the key component of international programs. As Wit (2011) points out, however, international programs are not merely educational programs in the English language perceived as part of the overall success of international program management in Thailand. This is only one example of how Thai authorities in the field of education misinterpret the concept of international program management in Thailand. The misconception must be accepted by education-related authorities because it leads to an aspect of misleading and disorganized management. It is well known that properly managed international programs are a major indicator of success in attaining global citizenship for all Thais. If the disorganized management continues without any endeavor to reorganize, the most pathetic victims will be the Thai people and nation in the end. Without a clear-cut and systematic conceptual framework for international program management, all of these problems will be left unsolved.

In sum, although international programs at the basic education level have played an important role in Thailand for more than a decade, their management is still disorganized as deficiencies are apparent in many educational institutes in Thailand. Besides, very few studies pertaining to the mentioned problems have been conducted. This research therefore aimed at developing components of international program management as guidance for schools in the Thai educational system.

Research Objectives

1. To study all relevant information pertaining to international program management of sampled countries.
2. To develop and evaluate components for international program management for schools in Thailand.

Literature Review

Due to the current educational challenge in Thailand of elevating the education system to prepare Thai citizens to become effective 21st-century world citizens and members of the ASEAN community in the present years, the English Institute under the supervision of the MOE has proposed several types of international programs: IP (International Program), EP (English Program), EBE (English Bilingual Education), as pathways to success for the Thai education system. The concepts of these proposed programs are explored by Wanna Chongdarakul (2013) as follows:

International Program (IP)

The fundamental concepts of the International Program are as follows:

- Teaching and learning must be as qualified in the same way as those of international schools.
- Every subject must be taught in English with internationally oriented extracurricular activities as well as an emphasis on English subjects for students who receive certificates from foreign curricula such as the IGCSE.
- The IP involves cooperation with educational institutes in other countries.
- Students graduating from the international program will receive certificates pertaining to both Thai and foreign curricula.
- All expenditures will be funded by parents.

English Program (EP)

The salient concepts of the English Program are as follows:

- Schools can offer English programs from elementary to upper secondary levels.
- Students attain a high English proficiency level close to international standards.
- The English language is used as a medium of instruction at least 18 periods a week.
- Students are exposed to international perspectives through pedagogy, interaction with foreign teachers, and the use of the English language in the program.
- Students' ICT skills are developed through teaching and learning as well as extracurricular activities.
- Schools can ask for financial support from parents for any additional expenses.

BP (Bilingual Program)

EBE is a kind of a bilingual program utilizing the following concepts:

- It aims to increase opportunities for teachers and students to use the English language.
- It is applicable to grades 1–6.
- It will be offered in small-scale and medium-scale schools.
- Only sciences, mathematics, and social studies are taught in English.
- Teachers who teach the required subjects will be trained to teach in English.
- No additional expenses are required.
- Students' fluent use of English and teachers' confidence in using English are core objectives of the program.

Methodology

Research procedures consist of three phases: preparation, data synthesis, and conceptual framework development and evaluation. For the preparation phase, the researcher reviewed concepts and management policies utilized by international programs from the sampled countries, namely New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore. The researcher chose the sampling countries that offered international programs based on the availability and accessibility of relevant resources regarding international program management using purposive random sampling. International program management policies were collected and analyzed using content analysis.

Research procedure

Then the researcher synthesized relevant information of sampling countries from available resources regarding international program management components, namely mission, authorization, tuition fees, numbers of students, curriculum, teaching and learning management, evaluation, and quality assurance. After that, a questionnaire was developed based on the conceptual framework and was given out to selected educators, scholars, or experts to check the validity of the data. Thirteen experts of the present study were purposively selected according to the following criteria: having knowledge and experience in international program management at both the policy and operation levels; having knowledge and experience of the basic education system, having knowledge and experience of

educational laws and regulations; and having knowledge and experience of educational administration. They were selected from education bureaus such as the English Language Institute and Ministry of Education, from schools that offer international programs, and from the faculty of humanities or language institutes from various universities.

Analysis of research results

The experts could be interviewed for more information when the researcher needed data clarification. The obtained data from the questionnaires and interviews were then analyzed using percentage, frequency, and content analysis. Next, analyzed data from the questionnaires and interviews were used to develop management components of international program management for the present study. Finally, evaluated management components were proposed as an international program management framework for schools in Thailand.

Results

The data obtained regarding international program management from the selected countries, New Zealand, Australia, and Singapore, indicate a certain degree of similarities and differences regarding international program management. To begin with, the international program that is recognized and accredited worldwide is the International Baccalaureate (IB program), originally administered by the IBO (International Baccalaureate Organization). According to the obtained data, the IBO possesses full authority to administer and regulate mission, authorization, curricula, teaching and learning management, evaluation regarding programs, students, program recognition and quality assurance. Other education-related perspectives lie in the authority of each nation to control within the management system, including tuition fees and teachers' employment regarding recruitment, qualification, remuneration, number of students, and teacher evaluation.

The obtained data on bilingual program management from the selected countries, Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore indicate that there is no absolute consensus on managing bilingual programs in each country. It certainly depends on national contexts and backgrounds. The Ministry of Education in each country has full authority to administer and regulate all aspects of bilingual programs. In the obtained data, certain significant aspects regarding bilingual concepts, official language policy, and

program recognition were identified. In all these countries, bilingual programs refer to programs in English and in the national language that the majority use in the country as the mediums of instruction and subjects taught. English is decreed as one of the official languages of Hong Kong and Singapore to achieve national prosperity in the global economy and awareness. Program recognition depends on the system of exit examinations implemented in each country. Graduation from the Bilingual Program in Hong Kong and Singapore is recognized in certain countries where Cambridge Assessment International Education is accepted.

International program management suitable for Thailand consists of nine components – mission, authorization, tuition fees, teacher employment, numbers of students, curriculum, teaching and learning management, evaluation, and quality assurance – that should be taken into account for International Program management in Thailand. Mission, tuition fee, and curriculum should be determined by the original owner of the International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). Authorization should be carried out with the cooperation of the original owner of the International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) and the Ministry of Education. Evaluation should be regulated by the stakeholders of the school and the original owner of International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), while quality assurance should be undertaken by the original owner of the International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) and schools that offer the International Program. Schools that offer the International Program are responsible for teacher employment. The ideal number of students is 20–30 per class. Finally, the International Program should be offered at primary and secondary levels at basic education in Thailand.

Secondly, bilingual program management in Thailand should take the proposed management components into account. Mission, teacher employment, and curriculum should be determined by the schools that offer the Bilingual Program. Authorization should be carried out by the Ministry of Education. Tuition fees and quality assurance should be regulated by the Ministry of Education and schools that offer the Bilingual Program, while evaluation should be undertaken by stakeholders of the school and the Ministry of Education. The ideal number of students is 20–30 per class. Ultimately, the Bilingual

Program should be offered at kindergarten, primary and secondary levels within the basic education level in Thailand.

Discussion

The Role of the Ministry of Education in International Program management

The Ministry of Education is one of the key success factors for international program management in Thailand as it has set an official direction with education strategies for schools under the basic education level to manage International Programs (Tanate Chitsuthipakorn, 2004). The Ministry of Education is responsible for the authorization and evaluation of the program. Currently, there are core official guidelines regarding establishing international programs issued by the Ministry of Education, but these guidelines are mostly applied to private schools where an International Program is established. In Thailand, however, there are two types of international program operation. One is undertaken among private schools that mostly adopt IB programs called IB World Schools. The other is operated in certain government schools under the MOE policy to promote Thailand as an Education Hub of ASEAN and is called the IP or International Program. IB world schools are operated under the supervision of the Office of the Private Education Commission, MOE. The major obligation of OPEC is to determine whether a school is ready to offer the IB program or not and to evaluate the school's management afterward. For the International Program in government schools, the Office of the Basic Education Commission, MOE, regulates and facilitates whether the schools offered IP are on the same track or not. OBEC plays an important role in the quality assurance of International Program management in these schools especially when IP school management is dramatically diverse.

The Role of Schools in International Program management

Schools have a profound influence on personnel in International Program management (Chaiporn Skulphanarak, 2010). The perspective about personnel management is in line with the consensus of the experts. The obtained data indicate that a school must take a very responsible role in International Program management, especially in teacher employment. The school has to appoint boards of trustees to recruit teachers with certified qualifications aligned with the qualification framework issued by the Ministry of Education. Qualifications of teachers must consist of holding a university degree in education

or teaching qualifications from an accredited teacher education program or related field of study, having teaching experience, and having a language proficiency level as required by the MOE. Not only the recruiting process, but also the school is also responsible for teachers' official documents such as work permits and visas, social security, health insurance, remuneration, and welfare. Also, as part of the English Program policy from the Ministry of Education, the school is obliged to annually provide teachers with professional development.

Factors affecting the success of Bilingual Program management

Policy factor

Education policy is considered significant as quality assurance for Bilingual Program management. Whichever education policy level – government or school – it affects the success of Bilingual Program management one way or another. A government policy for Bilingual Program management is effective as law. Any schools that offer Bilingual Program must conform to the policy or else they will be illegal. Currently, there are two government policies for Bilingual Program management: the English Bilingual Education policy and the English Program policy. The government policies are significantly issued not only to direct Bilingual Program management but also to protect the right of stakeholders. For example, the policy limits the range of tuition fees for Bilingual Programs between 35,000 baht for lower secondary level and 40,000 baht for the upper secondary level to protect the rights of parents.

Regarding school policy, it is considered as a rule that it can be flexible to fit the context of each school. Although the status of a school policy is more like a rule, it has a salient influence on the success of Bilingual Program management as well. The experts of the present study also highlighted that the most crucial school policy for Bilingual Program management was mission statements. Mission statements ultimately have a great impact on the success of the program and students' academic achievement.

Leadership factor

The leadership of the school principal is scrutinized as another key to the success of Bilingual Program management. Nguyen et al. (2017) also assert that the success of Bilingual Program management lies in the leadership roles of principals in vision development and implementation, physical

and organizational structure, professional development, and leading and managing instruction. The obtained opinions from the experts also state how important the leadership roles of a school principal are toward the success of a Bilingual Program. They suggest that a principal who administers any school with a Bilingual Program or intends to offer a Bilingual Program in the future should understand what a Bilingual Program is. The principal must comprehensively understand the core objectives of the Bilingual Program and be able to coach all schooling staff working in the Bilingual Program. A few experts who are school principals added that a principal for Bilingual Program needs to be a coach who helps set a direction and give out suggestions for Bilingual Program management and at the same time to be a good facilitator who is willing to provide any kind of support for personnel in the Bilingual Program.

Educational collaboration factor

As the obtained data show, Bilingual Programs are managed by the Ministry of Education in each country. Whether the program is widely recognized therefore solely depends upon how the Ministry of Education works collaboratively with educational organizations of other countries. The obtained data from the sampled countries (Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan) also highlight the effect of educational collaboration on the success of Bilingual Program management. Graduation from a Bilingual Program in Singapore is recognized with the results of the Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level or Advanced Level. Also, graduation from a Bilingual Program in Hong Kong is recognized in certain countries around the world: China, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Canada, France, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States (Education Bureau, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2009). This results from the fact that the Ministries of Education of these two countries work collaboratively with educational organizations in other countries. On the other hand, graduation from a Bilingual Program in Japan receives no recognition from other countries because Japan has not entered into any multilateral treaties about the mutual recognition of certificates or diplomas (NUFFIC, 2015). In Thailand, there is an attempt at a school-to-school level to seek collaboration in the form of an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) to elevate academic excellence and practices of Bilingual Program schools in Thailand with other school networks around the world. Recently in 2012, a

group of Bilingual Program schools from the central and eastern regions of Thailand signed an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with a group of high schools from the Manawatu region of New Zealand through an arrangement with the Education NZ organization. The purposes are to exchange students for short and long term programs as well as to collaborate on academic excellence and practices between Bilingual Program schools from the two countries. However, this kind of collaboration solely operates at a school level which cannot bring about program recognition as a whole.

With this clear example of how salient educational collaboration is for Bilingual Program management, undoubtedly the experts of the present study urge the Ministry of Education in Thailand to be more aware of educational collaboration at a state-to-state level and to attempt to seek more opportunities to make Bilingual Programs in Thailand internationally recognized.

Flexibility in International Program Management

Flexibility in education policy is very crucial for International Program management. An effective education policy needs to be flexible enough for a revision to fit in rapid changes of the education context (Natnicha Buadee, 2007). A few experts of the present study who are school principals indicate that a government policy for International Program management affects the quality of teaching and learning management. For example, the Ministry of Education sets the maximum salary for a foreign teacher at 45,000 baht. This makes it difficult for each government school with an International Program to recruit qualified foreign teachers who have graduated from the field of education or the direct field of study related to the subject taught because most of the private schools with International Programs or Bilingual Programs are capable of providing higher salary rates and more benefits.

However, there are a few aspects of International Program management that are quite flexible and ultimately results in the quality of the program management. For example, not only Thai students are allowed to enroll in International Programs, but also other international students are welcome as well. This policy brings about a multicultural environment for the overall program. The same as students' enrollment, a Thai teacher with required qualifications and a score of TOFEL more than 600 is also allowed to teach in Bilingual Program. To some extent, this flexibility solves the problem of the shortage and turnover rate of foreign teachers. Ministry of Education, therefore, should take these concerns into

account and make the education policy flexible for International Program management because ultimately this flexibility affects the effectiveness of the management of the overall program.

Suggestions for research

Suggestions for policy

– The Ministry of Education should issue a clear-cut and comprehensive policy for international program management especially in government schools in Thailand and provide an orientation for program management for schools that offer international programs.

– The Ministry of Education should encourage schools to adopt an international curriculum from worldwide recognized international organizations because it will ultimately lead to program recognition and the transferability of students in the program.

– The Ministry of Education should revise language policy for international programs regularly by taking the current situation of language use around the world and in Thailand into consideration.

– Ministry of Education should seek more opportunities to expand education networks with other education organizations in other countries. This practice will lead to collaboration in international program management at the international level.

– The policy for international program management both at government and school levels should be flexible and adjustable within the current educational context. With such flexibility, program management will be much more effective and finally result in achievement by the program and students.

Suggestions for future research

– The researcher of the present research study recommends other researchers study each component of international program management in depth regarding how it should be managed. For example, the recruiting process for qualified teachers for international programs should be studied in depth.

– Further research should focus on a comparison between the program management of other international organizations and the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). This will be useful for enabling schools with the international program to have more perspectives regarding international program management.

New knowledge

Based on the findings from the present study, the component framework for international program management suitable for Thailand is developed as presented in Tables 1–2.

Table 1 Components of International Program Management suitable for Thailand

The component framework of the International Program	Management details of the component framework
1. Mission	The original owner of the International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)
2. Authorization	Ministry of Education
3. Tuition fees	The original owner of the International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)
4. Teacher employment	School that offer the International Program
5. Number of students	20–30 per class
6. Curriculum	The original owner of the International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)
7. Teaching and learning management	Primary and secondary level
8. Evaluation	Stakeholders of the school and the original owner of the International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)
9. Quality assurance	The original owner of International Program such as International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) and schools that offer the International Program.

The new knowledge from Table 1 indicate that there were nine components – mission, authorization, tuition fee, teacher employment, numbers of students, curriculum, teaching and learning management, evaluation, and quality assurance – that should be taken into account for International Program management in Thailand. Mission, tuition fee, and curriculum should be determined by the original owner of the International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). Authorization should be carried out with the cooperation of the original owner of the International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) and the Ministry of Education. Evaluation should be regulated by stakeholders of the school and the original owner of the International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), while quality assurance should be

undertaken by the original owner of International Program such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) and schools that offer the International Program. Schools that offer the International Program should be responsible for teacher employment. The ideal number of students is 20–30 per class. Finally, the International Program should be offered at primary and secondary levels at basic education levels in Thailand.

Table 2 Components of Bilingual Program Management suitable for Thailand

The component framework of International Program	Management details of the component framework
1. Mission	Schools that offer the Bilingual Program
2. Authorization	Ministry of Education
3. Tuition fees	Ministry of Education and schools that offer the Bilingual Program
4. Teacher employment	Schools that offer the Bilingual Program
5. Number of students	20–30 per class
6. Curriculum	Schools that offer the Bilingual Program
7. Teaching and learning management	Kindergarten, primary and secondary level
8. Evaluation	Stakeholders of the school and the Ministry of Education
9. Quality assurance	Ministry of Education and schools that offer the Bilingual Program

The new knowledge from Table 2 indicates that there are nine components – mission, authorization, tuition fee, teacher employment, numbers of students, curriculum, teaching and learning management, evaluation, and quality assurance – that should be taken into consideration for the Bilingual Program management in Thailand. Mission, teacher employment, and curriculum should be determined by schools that offer the Bilingual Program. Authorization should be carried out by the Ministry of Education. Tuition fees and quality assurance should be regulated by the Ministry of Education and schools that offer the Bilingual Program, while evaluation should be undertaken by stakeholders of the school and Ministry of Education. The ideal number of students is 20–30 per class. Ultimately, the Bilingual Program should be offered at kindergarten, primary and secondary levels at the basic education level in Thailand.

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