Is Knowledge Management Performance in Thailand's educational institutions really the path to success ?

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Abstract:

Knowledge Management concepts (KM) has become popular in many educational institutions worldwide so the Ministry of Education of Thailand now gives precedence to educational development. Thus, the Thai government has initiated the Stimulus Package during 2010-2012 (SP2) in order to elevate Thailand education to match the world class education by using KM theories. However, the SP2 project has been clouded with corruption, difficulty of project performance, and ambiguous procurement practices. As a result, the continuation of this stumbling project has been put in jeopardy. This paper discusses the general background and difficulties of using KM in Thailand's educational development.

Keywords: Basic education level, vocational education level, non-formal and informal education, higher education level, Stimulus Package, Strong Thailand project, The Royal Decree, National Education Act.

Nowadays, Knowledge Management (KM) methodology is becoming very popular for organizational development. This trend is likely to continue in developing countries as well as in developed counties. As a result, many educational institutions worldwide are becoming more interested in the use of the KM concept for their development. Branin (2003) states that Knowledge Management Method (KM) has been applied to the education industry since

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post World War II and the Sputnik era of 1950 to 1975. KM concepts have been initiated in Thailand government service earnestly sine 2003. According to Thailand Royal Decree on Criteria and Procedures for Good Governance, B.E. 2546 (2003), on Section Number 11, "the government agency, for result-based management under this Royal Decree, shall make itself a global learning organization. For this purpose, the government agency shall acknowledge and analyze information in all aspects and shall then apply analytical results to its administration for correct, quick, and suitable service. The government agency shall also promote and develop capability, vision, attitude and co- learning of its officials" (Office of the Public Sector Development Commission, 2003). In more detail, in Chapter Number 3 from the Public Administration for originating government responsibility accomplishment, in heading number 3 of the Royal Decree Execution Handbook as proposed by the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission states that "from the new public administration style, government sectors must enhance enough knowledge proficiency for the civil service performance in order to be in agreement with the quickly changing social and environmental developments worldwide. The readjustment of public administration performance is very important for the fulfillment of the Royal Decree aims so government officials must change their previous observations and opinions to new ways of public administration performance by using new technical concepts in order to establish the perfection of continuous learning organization" (Office of the Public Sector Development Commission, 2003). Moreover, the National Education Act of B.E. 2542 (1999) and the National Education Act of B.E. 2545 (2002), National Education Reform Act for Further Development of the Thai People summarizes that recently, the tendency of social and economic developments have been changing in severity all around the world so foreign countries intend to develop their own countries to social intelligence and learning organization. For this reason, the way of Thailand's development as with foreign countries is the use of information technology in order to be effectively accessed. Besides, information technology is useful for knowledge sharing so The Ministry of Education is determined to assist with computer and internet use within all education institutions (Office of the National Education Commission, The Ministry of Education Announcement 2002). Therefore, this paper will discuss the phenomenon of knowledge management performance in Thailand's academic industry. It will pay particular attention to describing problems and some possible solutions using knowledge management practice from three main levels of Thailand education, such as basic education level, the non-formal and informal education level and vocational education level, and higher education level.

The first evaluation of KM performance in Thailand's academic industry is basic education level. Basic education level is the education provided for 12 years before higher education and the student's age range of basic education level is from three to eighteen years old (Islam and Liangrokapart 2006, pp. 245-250). After two or three years in kindergarten, students must spend three years in pre-primary education. Then, students also must spend three years in primary education. From then on, students have to spend three years in lower secondary education, and they typically spend three years in upper secondary education respectively (Islam and Liangrokapart 2006, pp. 245-250). Normally, students may complete basic education level by 18 years of age and the Thai government provides basic education level of good quality and free of charge for all of Thailand's citizens (Islam and Liangrokapart 2006, pp. 245- 250). The number of primary schools in Thailand is around twenty two thousand five hundred and thirty seven schools and the amount of secondary schools is ninety thousand six hundred and forty five schools so total quantity of basic education schools in the ordinary way is thirty two thousand one hundred and eighty two schools (Siribodhi 2007, pp. 1-17). The Ministry of Education has begun to assign an education ICT master plan with the policy and standard of information and communication technologies development for Thailand education since 1999 (Office of the National Education Commission, The Ministry of Education Announcement 2007). This policy makes people perceive the essentiality of ICT because of global environment change. After that, Jurin Laksanawisit, the chairman number forty-four of the Minister of Thailand Education has admitted to the use of ICT by expecting abundant upgrades to education quality on 15 November 2009 (Laksanawisit 2009). This idea is also in line with UNESCO execution as the use of ICT dissemination for education covers twenty one countries including Thailand (Laksanawisit 2009). Therefore, the Ministry of Education is allocating the high budget of 137,975 million baht from the Strong Thailand Project 2012 in the Economic Rehabilitation Plan as the second period or Stimulus Package during 2010-2012 (SP2) but the Office of Basic Education Commission received only 69,098,248 million baht from this budget. The Ministry of Education must operate fifteen great projects to follow Knowledge Management concepts (KM). Firstly, Tutor Channel broadcast for increasing knowledge for all primary students and secondary students. Secondly, 3D nice schools projects aims to produce the new generation realization that is aware of Democracy, Decency, and Drug-free life. Thirdly, the quality improvement of small size

schools education is in nineteen parts, such as set up the central network schools, set up the ICT center, the promotion activities of best practices, the motivation building for teachers and executives, the selection of mainstay schools for following a sufficient economic philosophy, illiterate problem solving, the permitting of internal organizations quality assurance, the budget allocation for installing of satellite instruction media, the promotion of knowledge management in the form of mixed level courses, the mixing of course levels of education, the cooperation between central network and schools, the promotion of work evaluation, research and development, permitting of aid systems, providing satellite teaching and learning, providing co-teachers for the administration jobs, set up and develop parents network, develop schools executives committee, and coordinate with the Department of Local Administration (Office of the Strategy Management and Integration Education no.8 2010). The schools quality improvement in the faraway areas, disabled child schools, and royal idea schools are the fourth SP2 project of Thailand Ministry Education. Fifthly, the library development project is to be implemented in three excellence ways, such as excellent books and instructions media, good places and environment, and good activities and librarians to develop libraries for the center of knowledge management within local areas. Sixthly, the purchasing of computers for education to increase the number of school computers in order to change the assessment ratio from forty persons per one personal computer to ten persons per one personal computer. Seventhly, universities internet network project (UniNet) to provide high speed internet network for linking with all universities including private universities, vocational education colleges, the education service areas, learning community centers, and local schools. Eighthly, lecturers' potential development project to provide training courses for improving teachers' latency skills. Ninthly, the education hub in South East Asian countries project expects to be the education center of ASEAN. Tenthly, National Research Universities Project (NRU) aim to improve the research latency for all universities in Thailand. Eleventh, the improvement of vocational education project means basic infrastructure development for helping in learning and teaching processes in order to produce high quality students. Twelfth, education free TV broadcasting project (E Free TV) is to provide all kinds of education information using satellite transmitting for all Thai people and non- formal and informal education classes. Thirteenth, the establishment of district offices of the non- formal and informal education project expects to increase the number of non- formal and informal education offices in all districts around the country

for establishing the learning community. Fourteenth, the education development for three provinces in Southern Thailand border project aims to provide a vast sum of money in special cases for increasing the quality of education in Southern border areas. Finally, universities development project aims to increase the quality of universities' education for through international universities worldwide (Laksanawisit 2010). Overall, the SP2 project from the Ministry of Education is perfect and the majority of SP2 minor projects are providing for basic education level but this SP2 project has been discontinued because of the corruption in procurement processes (Manager Online 17 March 2010, p.1). Even though some durable articles passed from the inquiry to purchasing approval this project is still stumbling because of money delay. As a result of this, SP2 project must spend a lot of money to be completely successful because the development of this project requires a large amount of money for many things, such as hardware, software, durable articles, and academic equipment. The SP2 project of Thailand Ministry of education intends to improve all academic institutions and this project also aims for knowledge sharing by using information and communication technology (ICT). Despite this, the use of ICT in Thailand education development has many benefits but the negatives outweigh the positives because it is being applied in the wrong way. The use of ICT conveys pornography to innocent children and these students can have access to a lot of dangerous information by the use of cyber ways, such as gambling, brutal simulation games, prostitute trading, distorted information, crime, drug trading, and drug used. Parents and teachers must coordinate and control students use of cyber technologies carefully because it is a two-edged sword. Besides, the access ability gap of information consumption between center city schools and the countryside has been increasing sharply because of the poverty. As a result of this, students from rural areas have less of a chance to enter famous universities in Thailand than students from the capital city areas. Lecturers who are specialists probably need to work in the famous schools in the center city areas so the Ministry of Education pays a large amount of money about 1,408,146,000 baht for increasing the quality of rural teachers by giving scholarships to study an advanced degree in inadequate fields in order to follow the SP2 project (Matichon Daily 26 March 2010, p.22). Moreover, the fairness of the admission process for rural students is less than for urban students because of inferior opportunities. Conversely, urban students get high pressure to take extra tutorial classes for choosing from their field's requirements in famous universities, so the parents'

burden has increased a lot because they must spend too much money for their children's' tutorial. Most shrewd teachers from urban schools snatch this good opportunity to open new tutor institutions for earning vast sums of money from wealthy students. The admission systems in 2010 feature four main parts, such as Grade Point Average 20% (GPAX), Ordinary National Educational Test 30% (O-NET), General Aptitude Test 10%-50% (GAT), and Professional Aptitude Test 0%-40% (PAT) so the total score of the admission system is one hundred percent (National Institute of Educational Testing Service 2010). As can be found from the admission systems, this system is quite good in terms of fairness. Despite the fact that this system is causing justice problems, such as the difficulty of GPAX calculation between countryside schools and urban schools, examination standard of O-NET exam, an error of GAT exam marking, and the standard of PAT examination. National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS) also confessed that the difficulty of O-NET examination and an error of PAT marking are NIETS's fault (Thaipost 1 April 2010, p.1). As a result of this, some students have been losing faith in the admission system and some rural students do not have enough money to apply for all three main exams so these poor students may lose a good opportunity to enter the famous universities. This may cause low quality of basic education for students so many famous universities have changed to admit new students using their own examination because this direct admission is useful for reducing the number of retired students in the future. It can be found that the SP2 project from the Ministry of Education has followed KM concepts but this project has many problems and threats in project performance.

The second part of the analysis of the KM performance situation in Thailand's academic industry is the non- formal and informal education level, and formal vocational and technical education levels. The vocational education is actually one of the basic education levels but this curriculum is different from general basic education in terms of production target because these courses produce specialized technicians for supporting all kinds of industrial equipment. The number of vocational education institutions in Thailand totals four hundred and four schools that include 109 Technical Colleges, 36 Vocational Colleges, 44 Colleges of Agriculture and Technology, 54 Polytechnic Colleges, 144 Industrial and Community Colleges, 5 Commercial Collages, 3 Industrial and Ship Building Technical Colleges, 2 Arts and Crafts colleges, 3 Business Administration and Tourism Colleges, 3 Fishery Colleges, and 1 Kanchanapisek Golden Jubilee

Royal Goldsmith College (The Vocational Education Commission, Colleges Statistic 2010). Vocational education contains three levels, such as Lower Certificate of Vocational Education, Diploma or Vocational Associate Degree, and a Degree (The Ministry of Education, Bureau of International Cooperation 2008). The lower certificate of vocational education is for upper secondary students who need to change their way of study to the vocational education and the diploma or vocational associate degree given to post secondary students who need to study vocational education. The degree is given to vocational education students who need to earn a degree. The vocational education levels offer ten fields of study, such as trade and industry, commerce and business, art and crafts, home economics, agriculture, fisheries, business and tourism, textiles and commerce, information and communication technology, and graduate diploma of teaching profession (The Ministry of Education, Bureau of International Cooperation 2008). In addition, over one million students have enrolled in various vocational study pathways (The Ministry of Education, Bureau of International Cooperation 2008). According to project number eleven of the SP2 project, the improvement of the vocational education project means basic infrastructure development for helping in learning and teaching processes in order to produce a good quality of students. The vocational education commission earned 6,585 million baht for the development from SP2 project. In fact, this project is in a difficult situation due to the strangeness of procurement, while some catalogues of durable articles passed from the approving processes for premising to purchase but this project is still ambiguous so all vocational education institutions are not clear on development direction. Besides, the Ministry of Education also allows all vocational education colleges to offer the bachelor degree to their own students as a two-year Bachelor of Technology Degree. This policy may duplicate the universities so the competition between previous universities and vocational colleges increases dramatically. Another basic education pattern is non-formal and informal education level and most people know this education style as the distance mode of study. Office of the non-formal and informal education spread to all provinces of Thailand and the number of district offices is around seven thousand. According to project number thirteen of SP2 Ministry of Education, the establishment of district office of the non- formal and informal education project expects to increase the number of non- formal and informal education offices to all districts all around the country for establishing the learning community. The office of the non- formal and informal education (ONIE) earns 10,442 millions baht from

the Strong Thailand Project 2012 and this state agency plans to spend 634 million baht on basic ICT infrastructures for all district offices. ONIE also plans to establish lifetime learning centers in every village so this project follows KM concepts distinctly. Although an increase in the number of ONIE offices is a very good project the Thai government must be concerned about the quality of this kind of education because most people believe that formal education is of higher quality than informal education and only a few students need to study in this style. It can be summarized that the Ministry of education means well in OINE development and this government sector follows the KM concept but the Ministry must be concerned about wasted money due to unworthiness. Furthermore, the vocational education commission also must consider offering the bachelor degree modules that may duplicate the original universities' curriculums.

The final part discusses KM performance in Thailand's academic industry higher education level. Higher education is the studying of courses that provide for the passed upper secondary students or vocational students and universities also grant the degree for graduated students from their own field of study. The total number of government universities in Thailand is seventy eight and the total number of private universities is thirty seven. The total number of private colleges is also twenty seven and the total number of private institutions is five. The total number of community colleges is nineteen. These education institutions are under control of the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC). According to SP2 project, there are three main projects that relate to higher education, such as UniNet project, National Research Universities (NRU), and Universities Development. The ministry of education plans to provide 4,000 billion baht for the UniNet development project and this project aims to develop university internet networks that link with 550 vocational colleges and 185 regions of the learning community centers (Laksanawisit 2010). The ministry of education also announces nine institutions of national research universities, such as Chulalongkorn University, Mahodol University, Kasetsart University, Thammasat University, Chiangmai University, Khonkaen University, Prince of Songkla University, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, and Suranaree University of Technology. This ministry allocates the large budget of 9,000 million baht to theses universities. The ministry must spare 3,000 million baht for the other sixty nine universities for the local development (Laksanawisit 2010). These projects assist the universities development for adjusting to the world class universities

because of the impartiality of development. In fact all universities have been classified into three levels, such as first class universities, second class universities, and third class universities so the allowance from the government is not equivalent. As a result, the vocational colleges that will offer the bachelor degree to their students may rank in the fourth class. Furthermore, some universities have poached from other areas all around the country by opening their small campuses or centers. This trend is likely to continue in both kinds of universities, such as government and private universities so this situation is called education business because universities must survive in the autonomous system. Moreover, some universities offer the great campaign of study courses to some students who need to graduate more easily because of the desiring of standard evaluation. Some universities also offer alternative levels of higher education to students who need to study advanced degrees and the number of private universities and colleges has been increasing sharply so OHEC cannot control the quality of graduates directly. Another horrible situation of Thailand higher education is the quality of graduates due to the direct result of the domino effect from basic education standard so universities' lecturers must deal with this large responsibility in order to improve the basic education skills of their students. Consequently, it may be concluded that the development policy of the Thai government is quite good and the policy also harmonizes with KM concepts but in real commitment is very hard to follow from the SP2 projects because of the differentiation. Vision and mission from all universities is also different so simultaneous development is very difficult to do achieve.

To sump up, the SP2 project for basic education level follows from KM concepts but this project has been stumbling because of corruption and ambiguous procurement so these problems also have a direct effect on vocational education development and non-formal and informal education. Furthermore, the simultaneous development for all universities that include private and government universities is very difficult to do because of the quality, the unruliness of new universities reincarnation, the competition in form of education business, and the inequitable situation between established universities and newborn universities. However, the education development from SP2 project neglects to consider the way of indigenous knowledge conservation so this knowledge will no longer be in existence because most people only pay attention to E- Learning, ICT and other technologies. As a result of this, some day Thai people may neglect the ancestry of the nation so the Thai government must

find ways to protect native knowledge and keep it by using technologies for utilizing and carrying it down to the new generation. The new Thai generation must flourish with technologies and Thai culture concurrently. Likewise, the current admission systems do not relieve parent obligations because the secondary students must take too many extra tutorial classes in order to enter eminent universities from their field's requirements so this is a good chance for wise teachers to pass on knowledge at the tutorial schools only. As a result, the number of tutorial schools has been increasing sharply all around the center city areas. This circumstance puts very high pressure on secondary students and parents must spend a lot of money for their children's tutorial classes. In addition, rural students who come from poor families may lose a good chance to enter famous universities so the Thai government should consider rehashing the traditional entrance systems to increase the fairness between poor students and rich students. It may be concluded that Thailand education systems may follow the wrong pathways so the Thai government has to take this phenomenon into account and the government must find the best ways to solve these problems carefully in order to achieved effective performance. Basically, though strength fails, boldness is praiseworthy and where there is a will, there is a way.

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