

An Academic Administration in Higher Educational Institutions

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Introduction

A modern vision of higher education aims to foster expertise, the professions and research in order to disseminate and increase knowledge and develop Thai society. This will result in attaining international standards and world-wide recognition. The goals of the management of the higher educational institution must, therefore, be in line with changes in the socio-economy, technology, and the labor market. Administrators in the higher education institution play an important role in meeting these goals. They are also key personnel in the setting up of academic and administrative guidelines and the implementation of the four major tasks of a university, i.e. teaching, research, academic services, and the fostering of the arts and culture. Of the four tasks, academic administration is the most important of all the administrative tasks of the institution. The quality and standard of education provided by the institution heavily emphasizes academic work. Academic work is the

key performance indicator of the academic standards of the educational institution. Academic work, furthermore, is at the heart of the higher educational institution, which also creates scholars and applies the findings of research for the benefit of society as a whole.

The Significance and Meaning of Academic Administration.

Academic administration means the direct implementation of those teaching-learning activities that contribute to the quality of education. Therefore, any activity that relates to teaching and learning and promotes teaching-learning efficiency is considered to be the task of academic administrators. (Predeedilok 1994:57)

Smith et al. (1971:170) studied the use of time in the administration of educational institutions and the importance of various tasks. They found seven types of administration responsibility, as follows:

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| 1. Academic Affairs | 40% |
| 2. Personnel Administration | 20% |
| 3. Student Affairs administration | 20% |
| 4. Financial Administration | 5% |
| 5. Faculty Administration | 5% |
| 6. Public Relations Administration | 5% |
| 7. General Administration | 5% |

In addition, Miller (1965:175) pointed out that academic affairs were at the heart of any educational institution, and the most important aspect was the management of teaching-learning programs and evaluation.

In short, the implementation of academic affairs and commitment to every kind of activity for developing students' quality and efficiency appear to be key responsibilities of educational administrators.

As for the meaning of academic administration, seen from the vantage point of its procedures, academic administration can be defined as the process of administering every kind of activity concerning the improvement of teaching-learning. These ranges from goal-setting, planning, improving, developing, teaching and learning, and educational evaluation, all of which conform to the curricular and educational goals for the students' ultimate benefit. (Wong-anutroté, 1992:16). Wisalaporn (1999:10-11) defined the three concepts of academic administration in the higher educational institution as follows:

1. The curriculum and instruction consist of the teaching activities that the institution offers to the student,

including the goals of the curriculum, the curriculum structure, teaching-learning activities, and measurement and evaluation.

2. Academic support and control include the implementation and control of academic activities as planned to produce academic tasks of the necessary standards.
3. Academic activity supervision consists of the monitoring of academic implementation, ranging from the curriculum and instruction, academic support and control, as required by regulations, resulting in academic administration excellence and the maintenance of standards.

In conclusion, academic administration is defined as the administration of every kind of activity relating to the curriculum, teaching-learning improvement and development, to academic support and control, and to academic activity supervision that will result in instructional efficiency.

A New Paradigm of Academic Administration

The 1999 National Education Act is a new law that ushers in a new dimension in educational administration. It is regarded as a major educational reform law that will cause changes in the entire educational system. The main goal is the restructuring of learning that will contribute to the realization of the potentials that will enable

Thai people to take a place in the learning society. It stresses the learner as one who learns how to learn extensively and who participates in various forms of life-long learning of the requisite quality and efficiency.

According to section 4 of the 1999 National Education Act, educational management can be defined as follows:

1. The principle of educational management holds that the learner is able to learn and develop her/himself and that the learner is the most important person. Instruction must focus on knowledge, morals, the learning process, and the integrity of knowledge.
2. Learning process management supplies the contents and activities consistent with the learner's attitudes and interests by allowing her/him to learn from experience. These experiences include thinking process skills, problem-solving, knowledge integration, life-long learning resources, institutions offering the learning process within the community, the development of efficient teaching-learning processes, and support for research into learning development.
3. The diversity of the curriculum emphasizes its appropriateness to the learner's age and potential. The central unit is responsible for creating the core curriculum, whereas the school

prepares the local curriculum. The higher educational curriculum stresses academic development, the professions, and research.

4. To evaluate students' opportunities to further their studies, the educational institution evaluates the students using various criteria, such as their development, participation in activities and examinations results. The institution should employ diverse approaches to screen students who want to further their studies.

According to the concept of educational management as embodied in the National Education Act 1999, the academic process at the higher educational level must be changed dramatically, especially with regard to the new requirement to conform to the educational principle that stipulates that the student is at the center of learning. The higher educational institution is consequently required to offer teaching-learning activities that encourage the student to think, analyze, synthesize, and integrate knowledge. (Sinlarat 1999:16)



Modifying Approaches Used in Academic Administration

The academic process in the sphere of higher education needs to be modified and developed in the direction of the creation of, application of, research into and extensive encouragement of knowledge. Those aspects of academic administration that need to be modified are described below.

1. The management of student-centered instruction. Educational management aims to produce a morally and intellectually sound individual who can live happily in an ever-changing society (Ketutat 1999:15). The term “student-centered instruction” focuses on the student as learner. The content of what is taught in the classroom should address the learner’s needs. Activities within the classroom must be appropriate to the level and learning style of the learners. Where students are at the center of learning, they will learn by thinking, researching, experimenting, and making the teachers’ knowledge their own. The teacher will become a manager and planner who will direct and facilitate the student in her/his learning. Therefore, student-centered learning management or student-centered instruction means managing the students and the classroom environment to enable students to learn by themselves. In other words, it is a reform of learning itself. In short, the management of student-centered instruction requires the student and the teacher to share responsibilities

as follows (Pornkul 2001:51-52):

The students are responsible for their own learning by selecting what they want to learn and by planning to participate in learning and research, and by evaluating their learning.

The teacher is responsible for the students’ learning by planning and preparing what is appropriate for the student. The teacher also observes, directs, advises and evaluates the student’s learning.

Sirimahasarkorn (2002:83) indicated that student-centered teaching and learning consist of three important principles:

Self-Learning

Learning by doing

Enjoying learning

If a teacher applies these three principles in her/his teaching, it means that s/he is following the student-centered principle of instruction. These principles of learning conform to Dr. Chaianant Samutawanit’s ideas as contained in his book entitled “PLEARN”, which is derived from two words “PLAY + LEARN”. The content of the book focuses on the students’ happiness while learning.

2. The new measurement and evaluation system in higher education. In higher education, the educational institution needs to reform both its teaching-learning and evaluation systems by following the stipulations of the National Education Act 1999, which adopts a new way of evaluation called ‘Authentic Assessment’. Evaluation is important in the

sense that it plays an important role in the learner's success. If the teacher does not understand the principle of evaluation and uses the wrong way of evaluating the student's learning achievement, it is harmful to the student as far as both learning achievement and academic perception are concerned. Evaluation in the context of student-centered instruction is called authentic assessment, which is carried out in appropriately authentic learning situations (Wongyai 2000:6).

Authentic assessment means the evaluation of performances that stresses the application of knowledge, ideas, and skills to solving problems occurring in real situations or the real world (Prawanpruk et al. 1999:6). Student-centered teaching and learning will not be successful without the simultaneous reform of evaluation. Conventional evaluation concentrates on learning by heart or rethinking of what the teacher said. The student learns by heart to pass the exam. Therefore, in order to achieve the goal of student-centered instruction, which aims to develop the student's learning potentials, the teacher should employ an

evaluation method that is consistent with the teaching and learning method by using an appropriate system of evaluation, i.e. authentic assessment (Phuwipadawat 2002:89).

3. The educational quality assurance system in higher education. Educational quality assurance is a process designed by the educational institution to be used as a guideline to make sure that the education provided by the institution will be deemed appropriate according to the requirements of the customer. Educational quality assurance covers all the important implementation frameworks, such as quality standard allocation, quality control, quality verification, and quality evaluation. The quality evaluation of the educational institution allows us to know its strong points and weak points, as well as indicating opportunities and threats. The results of this evaluation can be used to improve the institution and its services. Internal quality assurance is what the educational institution and its parent unit need to perform. It consists of three points (Nongmak 2001:7-8):

- 3.1 The quality assurance system
- 3.2 Follow-up as a part of the routine activity
- 3.3 An annual report to the parent and related units for the purposes of public relations, leading to the preparation of an external quality assurance statement



The external quality assurance of the educational institution is conducted by the Educational Standard and Evaluation Commission. This commission is run by the public sector. The educational institution is required to be evaluated once every 5 years. The commission reports the results to the relevant unit, particularly the evaluated institution and its related units; a report to the public is included. The evaluation report must be used as a tool for improving and developing the institution. When the institution receives the recommendation, it must take action to improve as recommended. If not, the commission must report to the higher parent unit of the institution so that action will be implemented according to the line of command. The quality assurance evaluation of the educational institution is the guarantee that the institution is seriously and continually developing its educational quality to meet the goals of education.

Conclusion

In the future, the higher education system of Thailand will play an important role in the development of human resources potential and will have a significant part to play in the strengthening of Thai society. The indicator of the success of the academic administration of an educational institution can be clearly seen from the quality of its graduates, graduates' employment prospects and their employers' satisfaction, academic output, and research

that gains international recognition. The new paradigm of academic administration, touching on the curriculum and teaching-learning management, must be modified. Furthermore, the teacher needs to conduct research regularly to update the students' knowledge; conducting research is itself one of the major responsibilities of the teacher in higher education.

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