

# Application of Knowledge Management of HEIs in Thailand

Dr. Pimonpan Prasertwong Raper\*

## บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้แสดงให้เห็นถึงความสำคัญของการจัดการความรู้ในสถาบันอุดมศึกษา บอกเหตุผลที่สถาบันอุดมศึกษาในประเทศไทยควรมีการจัดการความรู้ให้พร้อมสำหรับสังคมเศรษฐกิจที่มีความรู้เป็นฐานรองรับข้อกำหนดที่สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการอุดมศึกษาให้มหาวิทยาลัยต้องปฏิบัติให้สอดคล้องกับการตรวจประกันคุณภาพภายใน ในบทความมีการยกตัวอย่างการจัดการความรู้ของมหาวิทยาลัยอีสเทิร์นเอเซียในการพัฒนาความรู้ด้านการวิจัยของอาจารย์และการพัฒนาความรู้ด้านจริยธรรมและศีลธรรมของนักศึกษา

**คำสำคัญ:** การจัดการความรู้, สถาบันอุดมศึกษา

## Abstract

This paper points out the importance of Knowledge Management (KM) in higher education institutions. It presents reasons why Thai higher education institutions need KM in the knowledge economy. An example is presented of how one higher education institution in Thailand has applied KM practices to better its mission and responsibilities in a higher education setting. This example focuses on the areas of research skill development among junior faculty members and the development of student ethics and morals at a medium- sized, private university-Eastern Asia University (EAU).

**Keywords:** Knowledge Management, higher education institutions

---

This paper is based on a keynote speech given by the author at the International Symposium on Global Business Operation and Management arranged by Cheng Shiu Uniersiry, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

\*Associate Professor Eastern Asia University

## Introduction

Professor Kimiz Dalkir (2011) of McGill University writes in her book entitled “Knowledge Management in Theory and Practice” that KM has been in existence for millennia. Ancient societies, their organizations and even primitive tribes developed varieties of KM practices for preserving knowledge. One example of early KM was the codification of “Hamburabi’s Law” during the ancient Babylonian empire. Likewise, in early Thai history the stone inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great is a significant historical record that reveals a picture of Thai society in the Sukhothai Period around 1238 A.D., including aspects of politics, warfare, law, society, and religion. These are examples of what we would call explicit knowledge today.

Dalkir (2005, p. 16) points out that the importance of “knowledge” to the growth and survival of organizations has increased immensely, even more than traditional physical and tangible assets. Similarly, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995, as cited in Andriessen and Van den Boom, 2007) write that “in an economy where the only certainty is uncertainty, the one sure source of lasting competitive advantage is knowledge.”

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a time of advanced technologies and innovation, especially with the Internet, which links and shrinks the world into a borderless space. We can communicate with each other at the speed of light. Then comes the phenomenon called “globalization” which is the process whereby countries become more and more integrated via the easy movement of goods, capital, labor and ideas (Cranfield and Taylor,

2008). This results in the trends associated with a “knowledge society” where there is a great rise of information and communication technologies accompanied by a cultural revolution brought about by “uncertainty” of individual identity, social affinities, gender roles, jobs and careers (Cranfield and Taylor, 2008).

Kidwell and others (2000) point out that the application of knowledge management techniques is as important in colleges and universities as it is in corporate organizations. She added that KM can help educational institutions effectively manage explicit and implicit knowledge in many ways. Knowledge Management practices will help educational institutions make better decisions as well as help reduce the cycle time in developing the “product” e.g. curriculum, research, administrative and students services. Therefore, HEIs, just like other business organizations, non-profit or for-profit institutions, need to stay competitive to ensure their graduates have the experience, knowledge and skills needed for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thailand is entering the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. Immense challenges lay ahead as we enter this knowledge-based economy. We have seen the Thai government set out policies emphasizing the importance of creative economy, human capacity building, producing research outputs with value added and the use of local wisdom to enhance national competitiveness. So HEIs, both public and private, should put their efforts toward helping build a knowledge-based society by creating new knowledge and transferring it to communities, promoting life-long learning, strengthening R&D activities, and using

information and communication technologies (ICT) for providing continuing education programs (Thai Higher Education: Policy and issue, no date.)

### **The Context of Higher Education Institutions in Thailand**

The higher education system in Thailand is very complex (Kirtikara, 2001). Universities in Thailand vary in size and level. According to the Office of Education Council (2012, p. 24), there are 162 higher education institutions, comprised of 92 public universities, 40 Rajabhat universities, 9 Rajamonkon universities, 14 Specialized Professional Institutes, and 72 private universities.

The Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) categorizes HEIs into four groups: (1) research and post graduate universities; (2) specialized-including science and technology and comprehensive universities; (3) four-years universities and liberal arts colleges; and (4) community colleges. All four of these groups are responsible for serving “national priorities and strategies as well as addressing global, national, regional and local demands with the goals to enhance the country competitiveness and to serve as prime-movers for the development of real sector workforces, manufacturing and service sectors.” In addition, these HEIs are supposed to accomplish long-term goals for “the decentralization of governance, continuing and lifelong education, social and economic productivity improvement, right down to equipping migrant workers with requisite skills and knowledge.” (OHEC, no date, p. 1)

The requirements of accreditation and

internal quality assurance are demanding time and resources of all HEIs to conform to government requirements (Sukhothai, 2008). Thai OHEC policy and Acts propose changing the governance of public universities by allowing them more autonomy and/or introducing corporatization or privatization so that they are more flexible and responsive to the competitiveness at the world level (MOK, 2011).

### **The Concept of Knowledge Management in Thailand**

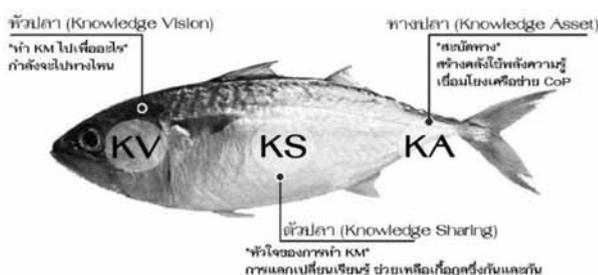
The concept of KM as a business process that enhances the benefits to business organizations has been accepted as an important factor in organizational development in Thailand for quite some years. This can be seen through the efforts of private sector and governmental organizations at all levels. The Knowledge Management Institution (KMI) was set up in 2002 for driving KM initiatives. Professor Vicharn Panich (Conference on KM, June 11-13, 2007, Cairo, Egypt), Chairman of the Knowledge Management Institute Foundation under the Thailand Research Fund and the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, summarized the KM experiences undertaken in Thailand during the past years thus: “[The] KM movement in Thailand is unique.” He confirmed the uniqueness of KM practices in Thailand in that the KM implementation has been applied in every sector of Thai society, including farms, rural development and poverty alleviation, public sector, higher education, schools, and the business sector.

In order to drive Thailand into a knowledge-based, learning society, KMI provides several significant activities and services, including

conducting an annual national KM conference, organizing a public sector KM facilitator's network, starting and maintaining a KM research network, providing an internship program, publishing a bi-monthly newsletter, books, VCDs, maintaining a website, [www.kmi.or.th](http://www.kmi.or.th), and a weblog, [www.gotoknow.org](http://www.gotoknow.org), for sharing ideas and applications of KM. The weblog in particular turns to be very popular for use by several KM practitioners - around 2.2 million pages were viewed in 2007 and at present around a million persons use the website (statistical count on [www.gotoknow.org](http://www.gotoknow.org)).

The Knowledge Management Institute has developed a well known KM model called the "Fish Model" using it to illustrate three components of a successful KM practice.

Note. From "Knowledge Management Institute"



by Knowledge Management Institute, 2012, Retrieved from [http://kmi.or.th/5\\_Link/Article\\_PVicharn/0001\\_IntrotoKM.html](http://kmi.or.th/5_Link/Article_PVicharn/0001_IntrotoKM.html)

### Knowledge Management: Why HEIs Need KM?

Knowledge Management has gained credibility as a discipline and is taught in several academic settings (Cranfield and Taylor, 2008). It is also accepted as an efficient management tool for an enterprise or organization to gather, organize, share, and analyze knowledge in terms of resources, documents, and people skills (Pontzi,

2002). Petrides and Nodine (2003) reported in their study that educational institutions are to be considered as adaptive social systems where people work together to achieve common purposes. They create and process knowledge to pass on to others-whether they are students, teachers or staff. These educational institutions keep growing and revitalizing themselves through fostering relationships in exchanging knowledge between them. Petrides and Nodine (2003) also highlight the importance of "knowledge management that it will bring together three core organizational resources which include people, processes, and technologies to enable the organization to use and share information more effectively."

The application of KM in education institutions is supported by Rowly (2000, p. 332) who mentioned that higher education institutions are said to be in the "knowledge business" since they are involved in knowledge creation, dissemination and learning. The question is only how will HEIs manage knowledge in an efficient and systematic way to comply with their mission and purpose, as well as enhance competitiveness. In addition, Birgeneau (2005) contends that universities have, and always will be, keepers and creators of knowledge. HEIs must distinguish between what is knowledge and what is knowledge management so that KM practices are able to prepare new generations with the skills, cultural and scientific literacy, flexibility, and capacity for critical inquiry and moral choice necessary for their own contribution to society. A similar idea has been supported by Budsayamas Sindhuprama (2003, pp. 91- 92) who also considered KM practice as

one of the major missions of Thai HEIs where human resources of the country will be nurtured to help move the country towards a knowledge-based society.

The Knowledge Institute in Thailand aims to promote every part of Thai society to be involved in creating a knowledge society. In 2004 it helped with the initiation and support of a university KM network (UKM) composed of seven Thai public universities (Panich, 2007). Members of this network “regularly meet every three months, rotating the venue and theme for sharing success stories in innovative work and the application of KM” (Panich, 2007). It has been reported that one of the UKM members has extended the network of a mini-UKM since 2008, consisting of seven universities in the north and northeast of Thailand aiming to promote the development of quality educational standards (KM-MSU blogs, 2010). At present, all colleges and universities--private and public--have applied KM practices in a greater or lesser degree conforming to the Internal Quality Assurance requirements of the Office of National Education Standards (ONESQA) dealing with research. Within this component is a requirement for “A knowledge management system for research and innovations (ONESQA, 2008).

### **KM at Eastern Asia University (EAU): Two Examples of KM Practices**

The Vice President for Research is the major person to drive KM for research and development at EAU. With the support of the President, budget, time, and space for staff and faculty members are allotted to move the KM

initiatives at EAU. About four topics relating to research knowledge and skills have been selected for practice. Knowledge Management activities were organized by interest groups who have the common need to clearly understand the research process and how to accomplish it. These include: how to write a problem statement; research methodology; appropriate statistical technique; ethics in writing research report without plagiarism; and how to write a research article to get published.

KM practices have been performed through four seminar-like discussion groups, organized four times during 2011 and early 2012. In the first three sessions, participants were grouped according to their interests. Each group would have one to two specialists for consultation. The fourth discussion session was organized as a follow-up in which the selected drafts of the research proposals were critiqued and suggestions for revision were given by peer-participants. The university has put out one academic journal entitled EAU Heritage Academic Journal so new knowledge and/or research results of faculty members can be published and distributed to the public.

The other significant activity that has been practiced at EAU is the development of student ethical and moral behavior. Moral knowledge (MK) has been practiced as part of three general education subjects for first, second, and third year students. About one-third of the content in the syllabus is dedicated to MK. The KM process is used as means of teaching and learning. In a group discussion, students select topics of common interest related to three key words of the university’s philosophy--E (thics), A (daptability), U (niversal knowledge).

In each session questions are raised and answered, all by students under supervision by a team of teachers, including specialists who are monks. For at least two sessions of three days and two nights, activities are conducted at Buddhist Wat Phra Srimahatata at Bangkean, Bangkok. Beginning the last semester of the 2011 academic year, one session for MK has been set up at a seaside camp.

In terms of the KM practice to develop research skills for junior faculty members, the outcome has shown that the number of research papers submitted requesting research funds from the university has increased from 20 projects in 2010 to 41 projects in 2011. The completion of on-time projects also increased from 3 projects in 2010 to 23 projects in 2011.

Pertaining to the ethical and moral knowledge development among students, the outcome has been a great success. Students

expressed high satisfaction with the activities. In addition, students showed improved behaviors demonstrated by better control of manners, better listening and showing more respect to other students and teachers.

## Conclusion

According to several researchers on KM, the application of knowledge management in colleges and universities is as important as it is in corporate organizations. KM will help HEIs stay competitive in the knowledge-based economy. HEIs can use KM as an efficient management tool for developing knowledge and skills of students, faculty members and staff. Therefore, quality products including curriculum, research, and services can be expected from practicing effective KM.

---

## References

- Andriessen, D. & van den Boom, M. (2007). East is East, and West is West, and (n)ever its intellectual capital shall met. *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, 8(4), 641-652.
- Birgeneau, R. (2005). The Role of the University and Basic Research in the New Economy, in Jones, G., Mccarney, P. & Skolnik, M. (Eds.) *Creating Knowledge, Strengthening Nations*, University of Toronto Press.
- Budsayamas Sindhuprama. (2010). Knowledge management in Thai private university context. *EAU Heritage Academic Journal of Eastern Asia University*, 1(1), 91-98.
- Cranfield, D. & Talor, J. (2008). Knowledge management and higher education: a UK case study. *The Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management*, 6(2), 85-100.
- Commission on Higher Education, Bureau of Standards and Evaluation. (2008). *Manual for Internal quality assurance for higher education institutions*. Bangkok: Author.

- Dalkir, K. (2005). *Knowledge management in theory and practice*. Boston: Elsevier/Butterworth Heinemann.
- Kidwell, J. J., Vandle Linde, K. M., & Johnson, S. L. (2000) Applying corporate knowledge management practices in higher education. *Educause Quaterly*, 4.
- Kirtikara, K. (2001). *Higher education in Thailand and the national reform roadmap*. Invited paper presented at the Thai-US Education roundtable, Bangkok, 9 January, 2001.
- Knowledge Management Institute. (2012). *Knowledge Management*. Retrieved from [http://kmi.or.th/5\\_Link/Article\\_PVicharn/0001\\_IntrotoKM.html](http://kmi.or.th/5_Link/Article_PVicharn/0001_IntrotoKM.html)
- Mok, K. H. (2011). *Regional cooperation or competition? The rise of transnational education and the emergence of regulatory regionalism in Asia*. Paper prepare for the 2011 senior seminar co-hosted by East-West Center, UNESCO Bangkok, and Hong Kong Institute for Education, 4-6 May 2011.
- Nonaka, I., & Takeuchi, H. (1995). *The knowledge creating company: How Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education. (2012). *Transnational Education*. A handout distributed in the national seminar at Arnoma Hotel, Bangkok on Friday 17, February 2012.
- Suchatanon, C. (2010). *Internal quality assurance (IQA) in Thailand*. Retrieved from <http://www.onesqa.or.th/onesqa/th/file/APQN2010/3-1430-Chantawit.pdf>
- Office of the Higher Education Commission (no date). Thai higher education: Policy & issues. Bangkok: Author. Retrieved from [www.inter.mua.co.th](http://www.inter.mua.co.th)
- Panich, V. (2007). *Summary of Five Year Experience of Promoting KM in Thailand*. Bangkok: The Knowledge Management Institution Foundation. Presented at the “Conference on Knowledge Management as an Enabler of Change and Innovation in Africa”, June 11-13, 2007, Conrad Hotel, Cairo, Egypt Retrieved from <http://www.gotoknow.org/blogs/posts/98775?locale=th>
- Ponzi, L. & Koenig, M. (2002). Knowledge management: another management fad? *Information Research*, 8(1).
- Pretrides, L. A. & Nodine, T. R. (2003). *Knowledge Management in education: Defining the landscape*. Half Moon Bay, CA: The Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education.
- Rowly, J. (2000). Is higher education ready for knowledge management? *The International Educational Management*, (14, 97), 325-333.
- The Stone Inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng: [http://thailand.prd.go.th/inbrief/inbrief\\_view.php?id=8&titleno=29KM-MSU](http://thailand.prd.go.th/inbrief/inbrief_view.php?id=8&titleno=29KM-MSU). (2010). Mini\_UKM: ความเป็นมาและกิจกรรม (History and activities). Retrieved from <http://www.gotoknow.org/blogs/posts/410025?locale=en>