

ระบบการศึกษาทางไกลระดับอุดมศึกษาไทยในทศวรรษหน้า

A DISTANCE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR THAI HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE NEXT DECADE

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 1) เพื่อศึกษาสภาพเกี่ยวกับระบบการศึกษาทางไกลระดับอุดมศึกษาไทยในปัจจุบัน 2) เพื่อพัฒนาระบบการศึกษาทางไกลระดับอุดมศึกษาไทยในทศวรรษหน้า และ 3) เพื่อประเมินระบบการศึกษาทางไกลระดับอุดมศึกษาไทยในทศวรรษหน้า

กลุ่มตัวอย่างประกอบด้วย 1) ผู้บริหาร อาจารย์ และเจ้าหน้าที่ในสถาบันอุดมศึกษาในประเทศไทยที่มีการจัดการเรียนการสอนทางไกล จำนวน 3 แห่งจำนวน 285 คน และ 2) ผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านการศึกษาทางไกล จำนวน 17 คน เครื่องมือในการรวบรวมข้อมูล คือ แบบสอบถามสำหรับบุคลากรในสถาบันอุดมศึกษาในประเทศไทยที่มีการจัดการเรียนการสอนทางไกล แบบสัมภาษณ์และแบบสอบถามสำหรับผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านการศึกษาทางไกลตามกระบวนการวิจัยด้วยเทคนิคแบบ EDFR (Ethnographic Delphi Futures Research) วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยการหาค่าความถี่ ค่าร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน ค่ามัธยฐาน ค่าพิสัยระหว่างควอไทล์ และการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาสำหรับข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพ

ผลการวิจัยในประเด็นสำคัญ คือ 1) บุคลากรในสถาบันอุดมศึกษาในประเทศไทยที่มีการจัดการเรียนการสอนทางไกลมีความคิดเห็นในภาพรวมของสภาพการบริหารจัดการการศึกษาทางไกลในปัจจุบันตามองค์ประกอบทั้ง 9 ด้าน อยู่ในระดับมากที่สุดและระดับมาก เรียงลำดับจากมากไปหาน้อยได้ดังนี้ ด้านอุดมการณ์ ด้านการจัดการเรียนการสอน ด้านการบริหารและการจัดการ ด้านการวัดและประเมินผลของการเรียนการสอนทางไกล ด้านสื่อและเทคโนโลยีการศึกษาทางไกล ด้านผู้สอน ด้านการให้บริการการศึกษาทางไกล ด้านผู้เรียน และด้านหลักสูตร ตามลำดับ 2) การพัฒนาระบบการศึกษาทางไกลระดับอุดมศึกษาไทยในทศวรรษหน้าประกอบด้วย 11 องค์ประกอบ ได้แก่ ด้านอุดมการณ์ การบริหารและการจัดการ หลักสูตร ผู้สอน ผู้เรียน การจัดการเรียนการสอน สื่อและเทคโนโลยีการศึกษาทางไกล การให้บริการช่วยเหลือผู้เรียนในระบบการศึกษาทางไกล การวัดและประเมินผลของการเรียนการสอนทางไกลการประกันคุณภาพ และการวิจัยสำหรับการศึกษาทางไกล และ 3) ผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านการศึกษาทางไกล ส่วนใหญ่มีความเห็นด้วยในระดับมากที่สุด กับ 11 องค์ประกอบดังกล่าว

คำสำคัญ : ระบบการศึกษาทางไกล, อุดมศึกษาไทย

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to study current status of distance education system of the Higher Education institutions in Thailand, to develop a distance education system for Thai Higher Education institutions in the next decade, and to evaluate the distance education system for Thai Higher Education institutions in the next decade.

Samples who participated in this study can be divided into 2 groups. The first group consists of 285 participants; they were selected from administrative teams, instructors, and general officers who work for 3 Thai higher education institutions where distance education is offered. The second group consists of 17 participants selected from distance education specialists. Data collection instruments were survey questionnaires designed for officers from Thai higher education institutions where distance education is offered. Interviewing questions and survey questionnaires designed for distance education specialists based on the EDFR (Ethnographic Delphi Futures Research) technique. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, median, and interquartile range. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis.

Research findings are shown significant results. First, the officers who work for Thai higher education where distance education is offered implied that they had very positive and positive attitudes toward overall 9 items regarding distance education administrative and management status at present. The items can be ranked from the highest to the lowest score as follows: Ideology, Teaching method, Administration and management, Distance education evaluation and assessment, Distance education media and technology, Instructors, Distance education service, Learners, and Curriculum respectively. Second, the distance education system for Thai Higher Education institutions in the next decade which was developed consisted of 11 components, namely Ideology, Administrative and management, Curriculum, Instructors, Learners, Instruction, Distance education technology and media, Distance education support for learners, Distance education evaluation and assessment, Quality assurance, and Research on distance education. Third, in general, distance education specialists strongly agreed with such 11 components.

Keywords : Distance education system, Thai Higher Education

Introduction

Thai higher education is known as the institution where knowledge, sciences, and various types of intelligences are distributed to learners. It is also a place to initiate research, technology, and other types of educational innovation. Practical skills which are necessary for professions are taught at vocational and high vocational level as well as knowledge.

Higher education administration and management has its crucial role as a tool to develop human resource as well as increasing knowledge, morality and ethics that are regarded as fundamental of sustainable national development. To accomplish its goal, the government concentrates on improving quality of education so that the learner can obtain knowledge and morality. Another goal is to provide opportunity for education equally and thoroughly for developing the new generation and creating moral society based on wisdom. Four major missions of higher education in Thailand will be explained in following paragraph.

1. All categories of educational institutions should concentrate on instruction and graduates production.

2. Academic development and institutional quality administration and management should be encouraged by conducting research.

3. Social academic service should be provided to the society lead by institutions and learners which result in social activities.

4. Arts and culture should be preserved. The learners are required to collaborate in preserving and transferring national and cultural heritage according to Ministry of University Affairs (1992).

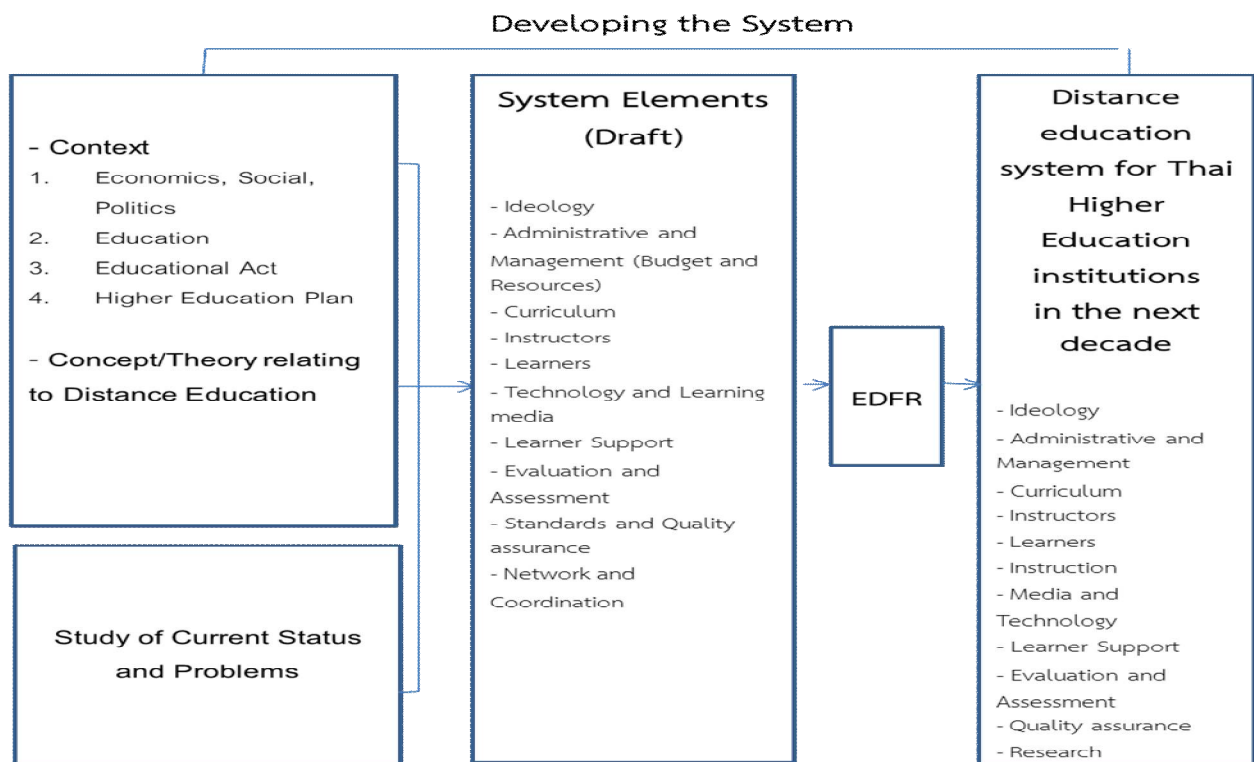
Distance Education is applied in order to provide educational opportunity to learner equally and thoroughly. Distance education can be defined as an educational method invented for instruction. The advantage is that it does not require instructors and learners to meet in person everyday. Instead, learners are required to self-study through education media transferred by instructor. The learners have to manage themselves well. Both instructor and learner may meet each other occasionally. This innovation has been invented because of the number of population growth which rises steadily. With the technology development, distance education aims to provide educational opportunities in more area as well as to increase the level of education for learners and to encourage equality to receive high standard educational services. Also, this new innovation helps decrease educational problems. For learners, they will face fewer problems regarding lack of resource, places, and time for study. For instructors, they will face fewer problems of preparing course materials, spending times, and lacking instructors. At the same time, the quality of instructional administration and management will be increased. Distance education can be applied in many areas. It is accessible for numbers of people from places to places.

According to the Office of the Higher Education Commission (2014), it implies that the number of higher education institutions, which provide distance education curriculum, is still small in number: SukhothaiThammathirat Open University is the first institution to apply this learning method; the university employs distance education called a single mode model, which requires no classroom. To be successful, the learners can self-study from all types of media provided. Other higher education institutions in Thailand later began to offer distance education and applied other distance education methods. The curriculums offered to learners, provided limited choices.

To make further development and to intensify distance education system applied to higher education institutions so that distance education can be another alternative of education in the future, to adapt with the changes successfully, and to find other possible outcomes, which may affect, it is important to make prediction on the new trends. Even though future is unpredictable, the processes along with the testimony and empirical data can be applied during the development. It is also important to be aware of any uncertainties and the plausibility reasoning before using image in passive and active strategies planning (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2008, p. 5).

The reasons mentioned above draw my interest in distance education for Thai higher education in the next decade with the aims to improve distance education system applied to higher education institutions in Thailand in the future as well as take this study as a tool to make adjustment for Thai Higher Education institutions with a context in the future.

Theoretical Framework



Research Objectives

1. To study the current status of distance education system of the Higher Education institutions in Thailand.
2. To develop the distance education system for Thai Higher Education institutions in the next decade.
3. To evaluate the distance education system for Thai Higher Education institutions in the next decade.

Research Methodology

Population and sample

The population in this study could be divided into 2 categories. First, two hundred eighty-five administrative officers, instructors, and general officers from 3 Thai higher education institutions which offer distance education program. The researcher calculated sample sizes using the Krejcie and Morgan Table. Convenience sampling was applied for selection. Second, seventeen distance education specialists were selected by purposive sampling.

Data collection tools

Data collection tools for those who work for Thai higher education which offer distance education program were survey questionnaires. Tools applied for distance education specialists were EDFR (Ethnographic Delphi Futures Research) survey questionnaires.

Data collection

The researcher corporated with Thai higher education institutions which offered distance education program. In addition, distance education specialists were asked for cooperation. The researcher used the EDFR (Ethnographic Delphi Futures Research) technique for three times.

Data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, median, and interquartile range. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis.

To propose the distance education system of Higher Education institutions in Thailand in next decade, the researcher analyzed and synthesized all information, which were related to research objectives. For the EDFR (Ethnographic Delphi Futures Research) technique, the quantitative data were analyzed using median and interquartile range. In addition, qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. Then, the distance education model of Thai higher education in the next decade was prepared.

Research findings

1. Current status of distance education system of the Higher Education institutions in Thailand

Officers who work for Thai higher education institutions, which offer distance education program implied that they had relatively positive and positive attitude toward overall distance education administrative and management according to 9 items. The items could be ranked from the highest to the lowest scores respectively as follows: 1) Ideology (4.55 in mean score) 2) Instruction (4.19 in mean score) 3) Administration and management (4.16 in mean score) 4) Distance education evaluation and assessment (4.15 in mean score) 5) Distance education technology and media (3.98 in mean score) 6) Instructors (3.97 in mean score) 7) Distance education services (3.94 in mean score) 8) Learners (3.81 in mean score) and 9) Curriculum (3.77 in mean score) as shown in Table 1

Table 1 illustrated participants' average level of satisfaction towards overall current status of the distance education administration and management in all aspects.

Distance education element	Mean (\bar{X})	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	Satisfaction level
1. Ideology	4.55	.608	Very satisfied
2. Administration and management	4.16	.680	satisfied
3. Curriculum	3.77	.811	satisfied
4. Instructors	3.97	.701	satisfied
5. Learners	3.81	.758	satisfied
6. Instruction	4.19	.692	satisfied
7. Distance education technology and media	3.98	.752	satisfied
8. Distance education service	3.94	.767	satisfied
9. Distance education evaluation and assessment	4.15	.675	satisfied

2. Developing draft of distance education system for Thai Higher Education institutions in the next decade

By synthesizing the information retrieved from study of current status of distance education offered by Thai higher education institutions with the information derived from reviewing literatures related to distance education administration and management, a draft of the distance education system for Thai Higher Education institutions was created by consisting the 11 following components: 1) Ideology 2) Administration and management 3) Curriculum 4) Instructors 5) Learners 6) Instruction 7) Distance education technology and media 8) Distance education service 9) Distance education evaluation and assessment 10) Quality Assurance and 11) Research.

3. Evaluating the distance education system for Thai Higher Education institutions in the next decade.

3.1 From the analysis the results of the distance education specialists' opinions on the draft of distance education system for Thai Higher Education institutions in the next decade by using EDFR technique for three times. 104 significant findings were found. The participants agreed with all items related to codifying the drafts as an element of the distance education system for Thai Higher Education institutions in next decade with the mean score of 3.50 and above and Interquartile range (I.R.) from 1.50 and lower.

Component 1: Distance education ideology

The finding implied that the participants strongly agreed with 4 items (Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1), including 1) Encourage lifelong learning 2) Learners can learn everywhere and every time 3) Provide opportunity and equality in education and 5) Lead the changes in distance learning education.

The participants agreed with 1 item (Mdn. = 4, I.R. = 0 or 1), namely 4) Provide philosophy of institutions to lead everyone to the same direction.

None of the participant disagreed with any item.

Component 2: Distance education administration and management

The participants strongly agreed with 16 items (Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1), included:

- Officers: 1) Academic officers and academic support officers offering training courses to support distance education management. 2) The officers understand philosophy and distance education system offered by institution and be able to support distance education.

- Budget: 3) Budget and officers are managed effectively. Some programs with less number of learners are to be merged or revised. 4) Budget is managed reasonably with a number of tasks. 5) Provide enough budget for instructional media production to meet learners' requirement.

- Distance education materials and technology: 6) Prepare sufficient learning resources and facilities so that students can benefit from learning. 7) Up-to-date technologies are applied for instruction and management processes, starting from student application, instruction, and educational support. 8) Fiber Optic high-speed internet is improved as well as wireless internet so that everyone can access to the information for education purpose. Also, the information can be provided extensively at once.

- Administration and management: 9) Identity of the institution should be created and explained to everyone. When all members understand, they will strive to meet the requirements. 10) Marketing strategy is employed to promote the institutions and programs offered. 11) Distance education management covers the remote area to provide life-long learning. 12) Distance Learning Center is provided along with Provincial Learning Center. 13) Institutions which benefit for distance education administration and management are studied. 14) Some curricula, which receive small number of students, are merged altogether. Otherwise, the curriculum should be revised. 15) Increase more projects and activities for maturing and aging learners, including caretaker of those with special need, to enhance quality of life for seniors and people with special needs such as disability and autistic learners. And 16) Cooperation between institutions are built. Also, working with specialist from other countries is suggested.

Distance education specialist did not object to any item.

Component 3: Distance education program

The specialists strongly agreed with 11 items (Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1) shown as follows,

- Program administration and management: 1) The program is designed with the major focus on learners. The learners can study by applying distance education technology. 2) The program is revised regularly to meet the requirements of the changing society and community. 3) The program is revised to produce the graduates according to the employers' or workplaces' requirement. 4) The curriculum is revised based on experience, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary opinions with the aim to create action. 5) The

program is revised and developed so learners can choose what to learn (on demand).6) The program is revised to meet requirements of government and national strategies.

- Program categories(Graduate degree and certificate program):7) All graduate degree are offered,namely graduate degree and certificate programs.8) International program offering both graduate degree and certificate program are opened. 9) A short-course is provided to comply with the requirement of ASEAN Economic Community.10)A short course and experience-based learning course are developed. Learners can accumulate and transfer credits for graduate degree. And 11) A special program is designed for aging learners and learners who require special support.

Distance education specialist did not object to any item.

Component 4:Distance education instructor

Distance learning specialists strongly agreed with 18 items(Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1), included:

- Instruction: 1) An instructor should have knowledge and understand of distance education.2) Instructor should understand philosophy, vision, policy and regulation of the organization.3) The instructor can adjust his or her roles in various situations. Also, the instructor should take major role as a facilitator.4) The instructor facilitates and provides method of learning and accessing to the knowledge sources to learners.5) Learners can learn in a class through media instead of a traditional face-to-face classroom.6) The instructor is keen on his or her subjects. They can provide students with suggestions and recommendation regarding distance education. The lecturer should be able to assess education progress and indicate objectives of the study. 7) The instructor can create distance education programs.8) The instructor must have faith and sacrifice himself or herself for the institutions.9) The instructor realizes of individual differences and concentrate on activities that require participation from learners.10) The instructor can conduct researches.11) The instructor knows how to make evaluation and assessment.

- Ability to apply technology in teaching:12) The instructor keens on applying information technology. 13) The instructor has basic knowledge of dual-mode communication technology or mobile electronic devices including computers and computer network knowledge. 14) The instructor can apply all updated technology to produce distance education media.15) The instructor can integrate traditional technology with new technology altogether.16) The instructor should improve their instruction through distance education media; instruction is to be conducted through electronic media and apply technology effectively for teaching.17) The instructor can manage instruction through distance education technology.

- The ability of administration and management:18) The instructor can comply with rules and regulations of the institution, including all requirements regarding grade submission and curriculum revision.

Distance education specialist did not object to any item.

Component 5: Distance learners

Distance learning specialists strongly agreed with 10 items (Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1) regarding

- Type of learners: 1) Learners who aims to obtain degree or certificate. 2) Learners who do not aim to obtain degree.
- Learner qualification: 3) Learners in distance education system should be able to connect to communication technology to receive information and news such as grade report and other information. 4) Learners have learning motivation. 5) Learners have positive attitude towards distance education, be ready to pay attention, and believe that they can be successful. 6) Learners can manage time for distance learning with their skills and distance education media. 7) Learners can apply knowledge and basic knowledge of communication technology (dual mode), mobile electronic devices, and computer, including computer network, basic. 8) Learners should have motivation, attitude, inspiration, and internal drive. 9) Learners have self-discipline and high responsibility. 10) Learners have language skills such as English and Chinese. And 11) Learners have presentation skills.

Distance education specialist agreed with 1 item (Mdn. = 4, I.R. = 0 or 1), item 12, Learner can invent innovation.

Distance education specialist did not object to any item.

Component 6: Distance education instruction

Distance education specialist strongly agreed with 12 items (Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1), namely

- Instruction management: 1) Instruction is designed for degree, profession, and life skill development. 2) Distance education is managed through mixed media; main media and supporting media are clearly separated. 3) Instruction is conducted applying different methods such as Active Learning, Experience Learning, Transmitting, Mentoring, and so on. 4) Standard instruction is conducted. Also, the instruction is managed to meet personal requirement. 5) Instruction is changed in perspective from theoretical based to concentrate on analysis and problem solving skills. 6) Instruction is changed from textual content dependent, new instruction method concentrates on producing projects and solving problems in various forms. 7) Edutainment instruction is applied. 8) Corporate with other institution to apply knowledge and updated education technology to meet the requirement of higher education system.
- Interaction: 9) Two-way communication through Internet connection telephone, email, and face-to-face are made between learners, instructors, and institutions. 10) Encourage interaction between instructor and learner. 11) Encouraging interaction between learner and learner. And 12) Encouraging social interaction via social media.

Distance education specialist did not object to any item.

Component 7: Distance education technology and media

Distance education specialist strongly agreed with 8 items (Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1): namely 1) Media selected for instructors and learners are not very complicated for application. 2) Printed media and digital media are employed as the distance education media. 3) Educational system and instruction through network connection is improved. 4) Institution applies Learning Administrative and Management System: LMS to the organization. 5) Improving quality of distance education media available at the institutions so that learners can access to the information. 6) Keeping learning tools up-to-date with new technology. 7) Fiber Optic and wireless internet are applied for unlimited educational purposes. Also, these methods allow everyone to send a lot of information at once. And 8) Updated media and technology, namely Digital badges, 3-D Printing, Flipped Learning, Learning Analytics, Voice of Information Retrieval, Digital Textbooks, Gamification, Digital Learning Content, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), The Open Educational Resources (OER), Cloud Technology, Ubiquitous Technology, Augmented Reality (AR), Social Media are applied.

Distance education specialist did not object to any item.

Component 8: Distance learner support

Distance education specialist strongly agreed with 6 items (Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1): namely 1) Distance learning centers are available in provincial areas to provide service such as online admission, online examination, and so on. 2) Providing learners who require special need such as aging learners and handicap with special support. 3) Providing support via electronic network such as e-Library, VDO on demand, Audio on demand, e-tutorial, e-Counselor to encourage life-long learning. 4) One Stop Service is available for learner. 5) Providing 24-hour service during weekdays and weekends: distance education institution should adopt practices of Digital University. And 6) Provide learner monitoring system.

Distance education specialist did not object to any item.

Component 9: Distance education evaluation and assessment

Distance education specialist strongly agreed with 7 items (Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1), included:

- Evaluation and assessment criteria: 1) Evaluation and assessment criteria for distance education are designed based on international standards. 2) Mixed media are applied for distance education. Main media and supporting one are clearly separated.

- Assessment method: 3) Numbers of method are employed for assessment based on context of the subjects. 4) Evaluation and assessment consist of the formative assessments and the summative assessment. Technology is applied to support the evaluation process. 5) Evaluation and assessment are conducted through electronics network.

- Certification of class equivalency and transferring credits: 6) The equivalency testing and credit transferring are standardized and accepted by other. And 7) Equivalency testing and credit transferring practices are standardized and accepted by other.

Distance education specialist did not object to any item.

Component 10: Quality Assurance for Distance Education (QA)

The distance education specialist strongly agreed with 5 items (Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1): namely 1) QA criteria for distance education is provided. 2) Prepare handouts to provide information regarding QA Mechanics to ensure standard, quality and reliability as traditional educational programs. 3) Codify criteria for distance education evaluation and assessment. They should be different from other universities which are not open universities. 4) Each university should have specific QA system. And 5) QA to assess distance education quality should be conducted regularly based on time frame. However, in case of unexpected situation or context changes, QA should be conducted before schedule.

Distance education specialist did not object to any item.

Component 11: Research for distance education

The distance education specialist agreed the most with 4 items (Mdn. = 5, I.R. = 0 or 1): namely 1) Preparing sufficient budget to conduct a research regarding distance education. 2) Providing training program to enhance officers' potential, which specifically related to conducting distance education research. 3) Developing a platform for training, distributing, and sharing research topics regarding distance education. And 4) Research is conducted in accordance with all aspects of distance education, from distance education system, instruction to evaluation and assessment.

Distance education specialist did not object to any item.

3.2 Distance education system for Thai Higher Education in the next decade

By synthesizing information derived from 3 research objectives, the model of distance education system for Thai Higher Education in the next decade was designed. This model consists of 11 components: Ideology, Administration and management, Curriculum, Instructor, Learner, Instruction, Distance education technology and media, Distance education learner support, Distance education evaluation and assessment, Quality assurance, and Distance education research. The summary is illustrated in the following diagram.

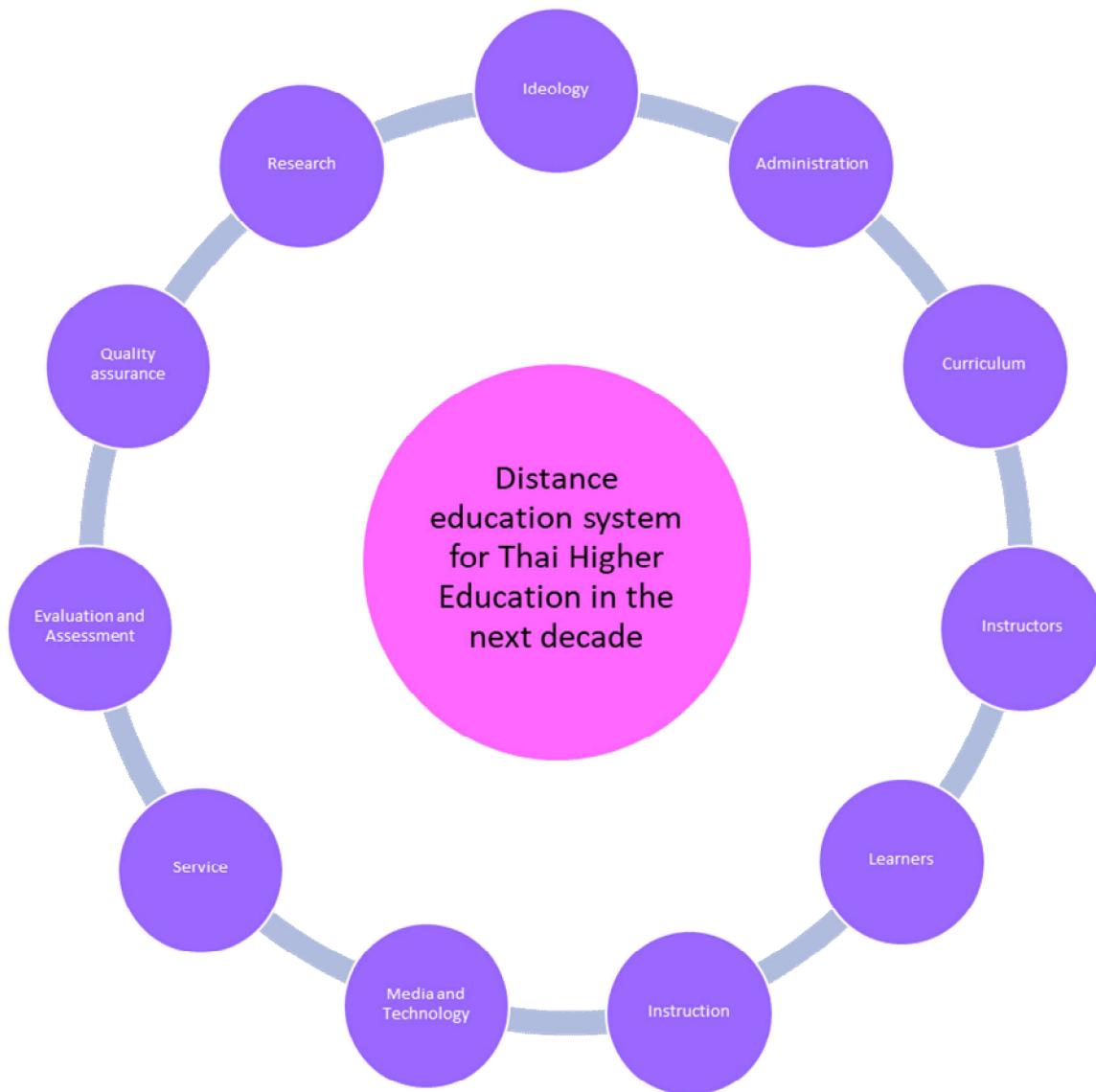


Chart1 A Distance education system for Thai Higher Education in the next decade

Discussion

1. The officers who work for Thai higher education where distance education is offered implied that they are very satisfied toward the overall 9 items regarding the current distance education administrative and management status at present. The items can be ranked from the highest to the lowest score as follow: Ideology, Instruction, Administration and management, Distance education valuation and assessment, Distance education media and technology, Instructors, Distance education service, Learners, and Curriculum respectively. The result implied that distance education program offered by Thai Higher Education institutions remains their previous goal to encourage life-long learning and provide equal opportunity for everyone to study at tertiary level, especially those who have no opportunity to study in traditional classroom at the university; the information supports previous study conducted by Sathitwittayanan and others (2014, p. 104-110)

2. Distance education specialist reported that the system which are applied to Thai Higher Education institutions in the next decade should consist of 11 components, namely Ideology, Administrative and management, Curriculum, Instructors, Learners, Instruction, Distance education technology and media, Distance education support for learners, Distance education evaluation and assessment, Quality assurance, and Research study for distance education, because all 11 components are considered as factors to enhance quality of distance education. This, accordingly, support SufiananaKhatoon Malik (2015, p. 238-248) research finding which suggested factors of successful distance education. Also, these findings are relevant to Rattanasuwachat's research findings (2008, p. 9-54) who conducted study and present 9 major elements of distance education form offered by Thai Higher Education institutions.

Suggestions

This finding should be applied for following practices.

1. Distance education policy codification for Thai Higher Education institutions should consist of 11 components: Ideology, Administrative and management, Curriculum, Instructors, Learners, Instruction, Distance education technology and media, Distance education support for learners, Distance education evaluation and assessment, Quality assurance, and Research study for distance education. These elements will be platform for qualified distance education management at Higher Education institution. Also, this would be a model for Thai Higher Education institutions which plan to apply distance education in the future.

2. The management guideline for the Distance Education System for Thai Higher Education in the next decade consists of 11 components in which issues like the existing problems, the readiness, and the needs, have always been under the consideration. However, other components such as Distance Educational Ideology, Curriculum, Instructors, Learners, Instruction and so on have also been implemented along the way. Furthermore, there are also some additional components that should require extended attention, e.g. QA components. Infact, from the research finding, it was suggested that the QA criteria for Distance Learning should be different from other regular higher education institutes, or should be uniquely fit each institution. In addition, even the research component, it is suggested to be conducted in accordance with the nature of the teaching and learning.

3. The distance education system for Thai Higher Education in the next decade could be modified; also, it could be flexible according to various situations, context, and purposes; appropriateness and proper practices at different institutions should be taken for consideration.

Suggestion for further studies

1. The distance education system for Thai Higher Education should be studied based on instruction methods offered by the institutions. The method can be divided into 3 categories, namely 1) Open university,

2) Dual mode university, and 3) Integrated tertiary institutions in form of knowledge market and cooperative education.

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