The Influence of Stakeholders on Curriculum Development and Contributions of its Development: A Case Study of Islamic Educational Administration and Management Program, Prince of Songkla University

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Abstract

In the ever changing global economy and the higher education market complexity and dynamics, higher education institutions have to constantly think about the present and future needs of stakeholders and to be ready to take accountability issues in developing graduate attributes and skills that meet the needs of stakeholders and job markets .The response of higher education institutions to the global needs is crucial. While each community has its own individuality such as local activity, local wisdom and indigenous knowledge which require specific values, knowledge and skills .Thus, producing graduates who are equipped with universal and local work related and people skills, and attitudes become necessary to succeed in the global and local job market .For graduates to have the opportunity to experience these key areas of development and to attain the relevant expertise in the competitive era, it is critical to examine what and how can stakeholders influence the curriculum development. Thus, the purposes of this study were) :i (to examine how the program-level curriculum in Islamic Educational Administration and Management Program)IEAMP(, College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University)PSU (was developed based on stakeholders' needs and)ii (to evaluate the contributions of curriculum development to local community .Documentary analysis and focus group interview were used to collect relevant data and presentation of the results will be narratively described .It is hoped that the study would provide guidelines for developing curriculum based on stakeholders' needs, which could be adopted by curriculum developers, especially, at program level of higher education.

Keywords: stakeholders, curriculum development,
Islamic educational administration and management

Introduction

Prince of Songkla University was established in accordance with the South Thailand development policy with its intention to be the main university in the southern part of Thailand. The core functions of the university were to produce graduates, conduct researches, provide academic services and preserve arts and culture. The University' s educational management focuses on developing human to be the leading force of the society and on adhering the national education management guidelines by emphasizing student learning center. To achieve this learning approach, the educational management should be based on outcome based education. The university believes that the curriculum implementation and learning process that can response to achieve outcome based education is to organize learning activity by using active learning, especially the use of problem based learning, project based learning, work integrated learning and service learning. This approach taken can serve to realize the spiritual motto declared by the university which is to be the university for the benefit of mankind.

To best serve for the benefit of mankind in the context of academic service is that to ensure the roles of university and its program implementation work in a perfect compliance with the needs of society. In the context of Thailand, especially in the three southern boarder provinces, in which the university is located, a large number of Muslim in the region are interested in studying Islam. From the past till now, parents or adults have been continually attending *halaqah* (study circle) to study about Islam at *Pondok* (a traditional and informal religious institution) and *Masjid* (mosque). They send their children to study Islam at *Tadika* schools (primary religious schools attached to a mosque). Muslim parents in the three southern border provinces prefer to send their children to schools that offer Islamic studies subjects because they want to ensure that their children have a good grounding in Islam. That' s why, the number of Muslim students' enrolment in Islamic private schools become greater than the public schools, though the public schools also provide religious education, but their teaching hours of Islamic studies are less than the former ones. Consequently, Islamic private schools become a popular Islamic institution for the children in this region. Zehner (2017) asserted that Islamic schools have been mushroomed not only among Malay speaking Muslims in the southernmost provinces of Thailand such as Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun and some parts of Songkla provinces, but also among Thai speaking Muslim in the upper south of Thailand.

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As an extension of Islamic studies curriculum being implemented in Islamic private schools as well as public schools, the establishment of higher educational institution that focuses in the field of Islamic studies seemed necessary in an effort to provide platform for conducting training, research and producing Islamic studies graduates. Thus, College of Islamic Studies was established in 1989 as the first public higher education institution in the field of Islamic studies offered for Muslims as well as Non-Muslim (who are interested to learn Islam) in Thailand. Under this college, numerous undergraduate programs were offered, namely, Islamic studies, Islamic law, Islamic economic, and teaching of Islamic education. For postgraduate program, two programs were offered, namely, Islamic studies program (offered for both master and Ph.D level) and Islamic Educational Administration and Management program (IEAMP).

As this study is concerned with IEAMP, its brief information is worth mentioning here as follows. This program was the first master degree program on Islamic educational administration and management course offered in higher education institution in Thailand, where Muslims are considered as minority group within Buddhist atmosphere. IEAMP was primarily introduced based on the educational philosophy that aims to produce graduates who possess various competencies, namely, mastery in theories, researches, and practices; skillful in communication and technology; distinct in administrative profession and integrity; capable of integrating conventional theories with Islamic perspectives within local and regional context (Faculty of Islamic Sciences, 2017).

The program was also introduced with the aim to produce graduates possessing competencies that are in compliance with the national qualifications framework for higher education in Thailand and educational professional standards and practice laid down by the Teachers' Council of Thailand. The specific objectives of IEAMP are to produce graduates who have the following characteristics (Faculty of Islamic Sciences, 2017): i) be a good model in work conduct and personal practice, especially, in terms of spiritual, ideological, and ethical dimensions; ii) mastery in their profession iii) distinct in critical and innovative thinking, communicative skills, technology literacy, data searching and synthesizing, educational leadership, and realization of multicultural education; and vi) be able to use a research as a tool to embark on new body of knowledge and able to apply it to problem solving in the field of educational administration. IEAMP consists of 44 total credits. It has 2 modes of study, namely, i) thesis and coursework and ii) independent study and coursework. Students are required to take a number of courses covering prerequisite, compulsory, elective, and thesis. Students are also required to make a

practicum in schools and offices of private education or educational service areas for them to obtain professional educators which are in compliance with the professional standards and code of ethics recognized by the Teachers' Council of Thailand. Thus students who graduate from IEAMP would obtain both academic transcript and educational administrator license (however, teaching professional license is a prerequisite for obtaining educational administrator license).

In the situation in which the number of students' enrolment continues to decline each year and the growing of market complexity and dynamics, the universities encounter a great challenge regarding their survival, job market opportunity and competition between public and private higher education. Each program offered at university level constantly analyzes and highlights its strength and distinctiveness as strategies to boost the attractiveness of the program. Competitive situation of getting a student enrollment become apparent as each program needs to analyze their products in term of their alignment with stakeholders' needs. Given the higher unemployment rate and the changing workplace, more people put much thought and reflection about job market/ career opportunities and options before making their decision to go into any kind of learning mode. People ask what are the skills and experiences a person might need for a particular type of position and are the learning modes offered by the program actually serving their needs. Thus the setting of learning outcomes aligned to the stakeholders' needs is very crucial. The program curriculum should be designed to make teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks are aligned with the set leaning outcomes which are based on stakeholders' needs analysis.

As for IEAMP, a majority of students in the program are fully employed as in-service school personnel and they joined this program to achieve their goals of expanding knowledge, skills and abilities in the area of Islamic educational administration and management. Thus, getting employment after graduation was not an issue of concern for IEAMP, unlike some of bachelor programs. But the real issues of concern or challenges faced by the program is that how graduate students from this program can bring about change and improve their works by translating the theories, skills and attitude learned into action. In another word, how can graduate students bridge the gap between theory and practice, convert contents of morality into personality, and be able to transform the model extracted from the course syllabus into module, supplemented with action plans that could lead to achieving an organizational/school goal. As a way to cope with this challenge, IEAMP has taken initial stage to develop curriculum that is aligned with the stakeholders' needs.

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Purposes of the Study

Under the challenges encountered by IEAMP as mentioned above, examining the program-level curriculum development and its implementation outcomes (or contributions) become essential, and this leads to the setting up two purposes of this study as below;

1) To examine how the program-level curriculum in Islamic Educational Administration and Management Program (IEAMP, College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University (PSU) was developed based on stakeholders' needs.

2) To evaluate the contributions of curriculum development to local community.

Research Methodology

This study used documentary and focus group interview method. For documentary study, some relevant documents; such as syllabus of Master of Education Program in Islamic Educational Administration and Management, a handbook for certification of degree, professional standards and practices in education published by the Teacher Council of Thailand, and national qualifications framework for higher education in Thailand were reviewed and synthesized for the purpose of writing this paper. Focus group interview method was conducted to make need assessments from the program's stakeholders for the purpose of this study.

Development of Program-Level Curriculum in Islamic Educational Administration and Management Program (IEAMP) Based on Stakeholders' Needs

IEAMP is a program which serves to develop professional educators to be in compliance with the professional standards and code of ethics, under the supervision of Teachers' Council of Thailand and Office of the Higher Education (Thailand). The graduates of IEAMP are not conferred a master degree only, but also a professional license in school administration, educational administration and supervision. As far as stakeholders are concerned, the standards and requirements prescribed by the Office of the Higher Education and Teachers' Council of Thailand were deemed to be the major elements to be considered and included in the program syllabus. It is almost 70 percent of program structure, contents and activities were developed based on the standards and requirements set by these two government bodies, which are considered as stakeholders who have power to influence changes or decisions. While the rest about 30 percent derived from field data collection from the other types of stakeholders such as school administrators and mentors,

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alumni, office of private education, educational service area, academic staff and students.

As regard to program's stakeholders, they can be divided into four categories, namely, i) stakeholders that have power to influence changes or decision (e.g. national accreditation board, Office of the Higher Education, Teachers' council, Islamic private school administrators, university' s graduate school, and alumni); ii) key stakeholders involve in governance and decision making bodies (e.g. faculty member, and academic staff of program); iii) stakeholders that are least affected and have no influence over the changes or decisions (e.g. general public, government school administrators, office of private education, and educational service area); and iv) stakeholders that are affected by the changes or decisions (e.g. students) (Education Innovative Learning Academy, 2019).

Regarding the program implementation process, the management of teaching and learning in the program is under the control and supervision of the Office of the Higher Education, while the management of educational professional practice is under the supervision of Teachers' Council of Thailand. Program specification, program structure, teaching and learning approach, student assessment, academic staff quality, support staff quality, student quality and support, facilities and infrastructure and quality enhancement were developed based on national qualifications framework for higher education in Thailand. The contents related to educational administration profession were developed based on a handbook for certification of degree, professional standards and practices in education published by Secretariat Office of the Teachers' Council of Thailand.

In curriculum development process, four steps have been taken to develop the curriculum, namely, i) gathering information required for developing curriculum, ii) curriculum development, iii) curriculum implementation and iv) curriculum evaluation. As this study is concerned with curriculum development, the first two steps only were discussed in this study. In gathering information, a handbook for certification of degree, professional standards and practices in education published by Secretariat Office of the Teachers' Council of Thailand was predominantly referred and analyzed in order to synthesis the contents of program curriculum. Core competencies laid down by the Teachers' Council, such as, administrative professional development; instructional leadership; educational and school administration; curriculum, instructional management and assessment; student affairs administration; quality assurance; professional codes of ethics; educational supervision; educational research; innovation and educational technology were key contents of program curriculum that have been mapping out for all courses. In addition, co-curriculum activities were also conducted to develop students in

compliance with the above set core competencies. While the structure of curriculum and the components of curriculum implementation such as program specification and structure; teaching and learning approach; assessment system; academic staff quality, student quality and support; facilities and infrastructure; and quality enhancement prescribed by the Office of Higher Education of Thailand were reviewed to set out to achieve the program goals.

Field data collection from alumni, students and administrators of Islamic private schools in southern provinces of Thailand were also collected by formal and informal interview. The data from the stakeholders on the ground was analyzed in order to include knowledge, skills and attitudes into the program syllabus/curriculum that are aligned with their needs and demands. From the data obtained, it was suggested that the program should provide courses based on issues/problems encountered by the schools, especially, Islamic private schools. For example, the problem of school administrators' lacking of innovative leadership skills and supervision skills. Based on this data obtained, the program has ensured that the curriculum developed was responsive to stakeholders' needs by offering courses on developing leadership and supervision skills. In curriculum development process, the program has considered this need by including this subject area in curriculum contents. For example, the program offers its related courses as follows; school supervision, educational administration leadership, innovation and information technology in education. IEAMP also organized workshop for school administrators to make them equipped with the necessary skills required to be effective school leaders. Recently (on July 6, 2019), focus group discussion with program's stakeholders (i.e., alumni and Islamic private school administrators from the southern provinces of Thailand) was conducted to obtain information about graduate attributes required by the schools. Some of following information obtained, namely, communication skills, graduates who are equipped with integrated knowledge (i.e, general and Islamic perspective), ethical and creative leadership, innovative and technology leadership, coaching leaders, and Islamic personality. This information was in line with the present developed curriculum, in which the IEAMP put emphasis on creating well rounded leadership personality equipped with 21st century leadership skill and the uniqueness of this program is to provide integrated knowledge in which theory/principle of education administration was examined from both general and Islamic perspective. However, the program needs to organized more activities and workshops to support the realization of the above graduates attributes.

In developing curriculum document, the program has set a curriculum committee development, who were assigned to draft the curriculum. The information obtained from handbook for certification of degree, professional

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standards and practices was thorough reviewed and synthesized into three major group course contents for the program-level curriculum, namely, courses related to foundation and theory, such as foundation of education, theories and principles of educational administration and management, educational administration leadership, school supervision, student affairs administration etc.; courses related to instruments, such as English for administrator, research in education, seminar in research for thesis, innovation and information technology in education, applied statistics for educational administration research; and courses related to administrative profession, such as professional educational administration, integrity and professional codes of ethics, practicum in school and educational administration.

One of the main data obtained from National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Thailand: Implementation Handbook (2006) published by the Office of Higher Education of Thailand was about the five domains of learning, which need to be included in the program curriculum, namely, i) ethical and moral development, ii) knowledge, iii) cognitive skill, iv) interpersonal skills and responsibility, and vi) analytical and communication skills (Office of Higher Education of Thailand, 2006). And the program has added one more domain of learning to make the curriculum compliant with the professional standards and practice set by Teachers' Council of Thailand that is school and educational administrative skills. Thus, making a total of six domains of learning to be included in program syllabus and co-curriculum activities.

The curriculum document of IEAMP consists of general information and specific information of the program-level curriculum; system of education, curriculum structure and its implementation; learning outcomes; teaching and assessment strategy; criterion for student assessment; staff development; curriculum quality assurance; curriculum evaluation and improvement. After this curriculum document was developed and it was then reviewed by expert panels. The curriculum document was later proceeded for reviewing and verifying to other subdivisions of the university level, such as, curriculum committee development, graduate committee of faculty, graduate committee of university. And it was then sent to the Teachers' Council of Thailand and the Office of Higher Education of Thailand for final verification and endorsement.

Contributions of Curriculum Development to Local Community

IEAMP plays a vital role in producing qualified graduates in educational administration and providing services to the community. Some of the contributions having been made by the program are as below;

1. Developing body of knowledge in educational administration. Students research paper and thesis have been conducted based on both theoretical

testing, and innovative and development research. In inception phase of program development (since 2008 - 2016), majority of students' research focuses on theory testing and survey research, which were aimed at examining the existing phenomenon related educational and school administration based on the proposed theoretical framework. In the second phase (from 2017 to the present), students' thesis focuses more on innovative and development approach and the theme of their thesis were about the issues related to academic affairs administration, personal administration, general administrative affairs and organizational behavior.

2. Embarking on the contemporary concept of Islamization and integration. This agenda was clearly reflected in the philosophy of IEAMP. To actualize this concept, the teaching by the process of "Islamization" and "Integration" deemed necessary. This process is done across the curriculum where the concepts against Islam are Islamized or Islamic perspectives are introduced in parallel to the western or general perspectives.

3. Legalizing administrators' profession. There are still a number of schools' administrators who have not yet obtain license for educational administrative professional practice. However, they were allowed to run their schools with certain conditions and within time frame. To further their study in IEAMP then paves way to obtain such license.

4. Providing academic services to the community

In the past, a number of academic services activities were organized by IEAMP. These activities were conducted in the form of training and workshop for improving school quality, for example, workshop using HIKMAH program for developing creative leadership, and workshop on design thinking for developing school strategic planning. Apart from these, national conference on Muslim and Islamic Studies and post-graduate colloquium were organized to provide platform for students as well as lecturer to present their works and researches, thus extending their horizons of knowledge and practices.

5. Expanding opportunity for educational continuation. Students who enrolled into the IEAMP were vary in terms of their educational qualification. They obtained their first degree from local university, from Middle-east countries, Southeast Asia especially Indonesia, Pakistan or even India with different specializations from different faculties, namely, Islamic studies, education, human science. The program offers them chance to continue their study with condition that their educational qualification must be approved by Office of the Civil Service Commission (Thailand). In addition, IEAMP also provided opportunity for foreign learners serving as teachers in Islamic private schools in southern border provinces of Thailand to further their study.

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Conclusion

Given the number of students' enrollment continues to decline and the higher education market complexity and dynamics, all program-level curriculum at higher education institutions have to constantly think and reflect about the present and future need of the stakeholders in particular, and the society in general. The labor market and the competition between public and private higher education has been the challenge for the survival of higher education. This study assumes that examining the stakeholders' needs is crucial to develop program-level curriculum that is aligned with stakeholders' needs. If the curriculum developed serves their needs and provides quality education corresponding with their expectation, then the marketing education of program will be possible. This study has gathered data about stakeholders' needs and it was found that one of the program stakeholders' needs is the needs for developing innovative leadership and supervision skills and this data was important ground information used for developing program-level curriculum. However, much of program curriculum regarding its structure, contents, activities, assessment were based on standards and requirements prescribed by the Office of the Higher Education and Teachers' Council of Thailand. A distinctiveness of the program is the adoption of Islamization and integration process, in which most of subject contents were permeated with Islamic knowledge or perspective.

Some of the contributions having been made by the program are as follows; 1) developing body of knowledge in educational administration, 2) embarking on the contemporary concept of Islamization and integration, 3) legalizing administrators' profession, 4) providing academic services to the community, and 5) expanding opportunity for educational continuation. It is hoped that the study would provide guidelines for developing curriculum based on stakeholders' needs, so that the curriculum being developed and the outcomes of its implementation will provide educational service quality aligned with the present market orientation, students' expectation and stakeholders' priority needs and values.

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