STRATEGIC ADAPTATION OF GRADUATE EDUCATION:
A COMPARISON OF THE EXECUTIVE PROGRAMS
IN THE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FACULTIES
IN THREE THAI PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Examining committee approve this dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment 
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ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Strategic Adaptation of Graduate Education: A Comparison of the Executive Programs in the Business Administration and Public Administration Faculties in Three Thai Public Universities

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This research aims to study strategic adaptation of the executive programs in Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Master of Public Administration (MPA) Faculties which are offered in six Faculties in three Thai public universities. The objectives of this research are to explain different perceptions of these Faculties accounting for their different strategic adaptation, particularly in terms of the program expansion. It also aims to investigate how quality awareness influences the strategic adaptation of the individual programs.

This research is a multiple case study. The conceptual framework is developed on the basis of the open systems theory, in which perceived environment have great influence on organizational behavior. Research methodology uses qualitative analysis through interviewing key informants who are the important faculty members of the Faculties.

The research results show that strategic adaptation of the executive programs involves four main categories: market development, product development, geographic expansion, and market penetration. Market development and product development are more intense in MBA Faculties than in MPA Faculties, while geographic expansion is implemented only in MPA Faculties.

Strategic adaptation is dependent on perception of external and internal environment of the executive programs. The launch of the executive programs are the result of the faculty' perception of external environment including global trends, market demand, survival threat, and benchmarking, which dominate decision making of the faculty. However, perception of internal environment mediates the influence of
external environment, which leads to different program modification in terms of curriculum review and program expansion. Influencing factors include faculty preparedness, the leadership role, structural factors, and feedback from the environment.

Geographic expansion is the strategic adaptation that is implemented differently across the MBA/MPA Faculties. It is dependent on the faculty’s specific perception including the concern for expansion appropriateness, quality concern, the scarcity of resources, the recognition of the university mission, and the concern for the program’s contribution to national human resource development.

Quality concern plays the important role in the expansion decision. Most Faculties are aware of the executive programs’ quality in the same ways. They place emphasis on the quality of inputs, process, and outputs. They concern about the quality of the faculty, new entrants, instructors, space and facilities, teaching and learning process, innovative management, and quality assurance practices. The research found that the Faculties that use geographic expansion are aware of quality in terms of the executive programs’ ultimate outcomes. They perceived geographic expansion as the expansion of graduate education access to the people in the provinces, and that enhances the human resource development of the country at large.

This research suggests that geographic expansion of the executive programs should be advocated if the country needs to enhance adult workers’ competence in management and to remain competitive in this globalization era. However, expansion must be implemented in parallel with the uses of quality assurance and quality management system in order to induce stakeholders’ trust in the executive programs. In addition, benchmarking should be extensively conducted in order to investigate best practices to be used as inputs in the academic and managerial improvement of graduate education.
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Suwannee Sangmahachai
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