

First SEAMEO-UNESCO Forum on Higher Education  
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~~Keynote Address~~

Institutional Strategies for Reengineering  
of Higher Education

by

Prof. Dr. Wichit Srisa-an

President, Suranaree University of Technology and  
President of the Association of Universities  
in Asia and the Pacific (AUAP)

**Distinguished participants,  
Speakers,  
Ladies and gentlemen:**

It is a great pleasure and honor to be invited to present a ~~keynote~~ *paper* ~~address~~ on “Institutional Strategies for Reengineering of Higher Education” at this Regional Forum. But before proceeding to talk on this topic, allow me to congratulate the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, UNESCO PROAP, SEAMES and SEAMEO RIHED for organizing this very important event in our region. I believe the topic is very timely, relevant and significant in our preparation for the 21st century.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me begin by discussing forces for changes and some critical issues in higher education first. Then I will talk about institutional strategies necessary for reengineering of Higher Education.

**Forces for Changes**

Change is driven by many factors. We know very well these driving forces. They are mentioned in most of the conferences and seminars. These are information explosion, the globalization of the world economy,

the advancement of information technology, the emergence of regionalism such as APEC, ASEAN, AFTA, and the spread of a free-market economy. All of these factors have great impact on our academic community.

I suggest that these changes can be looked at four levels: an individual level, an organization level, a national level, and an international level.

If we look at higher education in this region we will see changes at all levels. Let me begin at the individual level, our students need new skills. They need skills in international communication and computer literacy. This is global competence.

At the second level, we witnessed a lot of changes and innovations. A new management paradigm of reinventing, restructuring, and reengineering is being introduced in our universities.

At the third level, there are a lot of initiatives in this region. A few examples can be mentioned here. Lao PDR has recently set up a national university, merging colleges from different ministries. Cambodia is now in the process of reinventing higher education. Vietnam has reorganized higher education system by merging higher education institutions into national and regional multi-campus universities. Philippines has created the Commission of Higher Education to supervise all institutions of higher education. Malaysia has gone very far to corporatize all public universities. Thailand has experimented with the concept of public autonomous universities and is now launching the IT campuses. These are responses to external forces at the national level.

At the fourth level, the international level, many activities are going on. The UMAP programme is created to promote university mobility in Asia and the Pacific. The UNESCO UNITWIN is intended to promote cooperation and collaboration among colleges and universities. A year ago, at Suranaree University of Technology, an Association of Universities in Asia and Pacific or AUAP was formed to promote cooperation and collaboration among colleges and universities in the region. Last December, at the ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, ASEAN University

Network or AUN was created by the heads of ASEAN member countries. All of these movements, I believe, are to promote the internationalization of higher education.

### **Critical Issues in Higher Education**

What are the critical issues in the development of higher education? I believe there are three of them. The first is internal efficiency. The second is external efficiency. And the third is quality and standard. Internal efficiency is concerned with the internal operation of a university such as staff management, business management, and other similar functions. Corporate management will be incorporated into university management in order to ensure greater efficiency. The second issue is concerned with external efficiency. This is the responsiveness of higher education institutions to the community and society. It is also referred to as the concept of relevance of higher education. In the narrow sense it is the matching of the skills of the graduates to the market demand - to the demand of global competence as I mentioned earlier. In the broader sense it means concern for global problems that have become so evident nowadays. The third issue is very important as it becomes the concern of both national and international bodies. Nationally people will question whether their societies are getting high value in investment in higher education. Internationally, students will be questioned when credit transfer is requested.

*academic  
administration*

What I am saying here is that institutional strategies must be explored for the purpose of solving these problems.

### **Institutional Strategies and National Policy.**

In this region, there are many models of reorganizing higher education. The first is to reorganize the higher education system by transferring universities and colleges from concerned ministries to ministries of education or <sup>national</sup> coordinating agencies. Many countries have completed this process but some countries are still starting to experiment with this model. This is what is happening in countries in Indochina.

The second model is privatization. Many countries in this region have adopted these policies. The Philippines, Japan, South Korea, and Indonesia have a great number of private higher education institutions. Thailand promulgated a Higher Education Act <sup>in twenty-seven years</sup> a long time ago. Now there are more private higher education institutions than the public ones. Thailand has recognized the important value of private higher education institutions as permanent partners in sharing the government burden in providing higher educational opportunities to the people. Thailand has gone very far now to initiate a new policy of granting permission to the private sector to establish open colleges or universities. During my term as <sup>the</sup> a Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of University Affairs, we had worked very hard to set up guidelines for the establishment for a private open institution. I believe the private sector will respond to this new policy, <sup>in Thailand only</sup>

The third model is public autonomous university. In the Western world, public universities enjoy institutional autonomy. This is guaranteed by the institutional charter granted by the state. In the US, public universities are authorized by state constitutions. This makes a public university the fourth branch of the government, in addition to the administration, the congress and the court. Public universities thus enjoy greater autonomy than <sup>state</sup> state colleges or state universities. <sup>in our region</sup> In Thailand, the concept of a public autonomous university has been initiated. An attempt has been made to move state universities from the status of state-controlled institutions to state-supervised institutions. Only new universities are successful. Suranaree University of Technology was the first institution to be granted this status by the <sup>an Act of Parliament</sup> new charter, followed by Valailak University; a third university is being considered under this model.

The fourth model is pioneered by Malaysia. The underlying concept is corporatization. So far as I know, the Malaysian government has passed a law on corporatization of universities and research institutes. I understand <sup>that</sup> the principle of corporate management will be the new management paradigm of these institutions.

The last model is the internationalization of higher education institutions. With the spread of the market economy and the globalization movement, many countries open the doors for foreign partners to set up

private international universities and colleges on their lands. This is happening in Malaysia, Thailand and other countries.

Different models have different impact on institutional strategies. For public universities, reengineering higher education means adoption of the third or the fourth models. I believe in such models, new strategies can be effectively implemented.

*Future*  
**Institutional Strategies for ~~Future~~ Universities.**

As presented on the following table, many strategies could be adopted for future universities. I will discussed some of the key strategies here.

## PRESENT AND FUTURE INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES

Dimensions	Present	Future
National Level	Control by national agencies	Supervision and coordination by national agencies
	More power at the national bureaucracies	More power at the institutional governing board
Institutional Level		
♦ Mission	Based on basic functions	Based on strategic planning
♦ Governing Board	Limited participation Rubber stamp	Broad participation Exercising full authority
♦ Senate	Limited power	More power in academic decisions
	Concerned with staff.welfare	Concerned with institutional performance
♦ Academic Units	Faculty with walls	Faculty without walls
	Election of academic leaders	Selection of academic leaders based on their abilities
♦ Support Units	Fragmented coordination of common facilities	Centralization of common facilities
Curriculum and Teaching - Learning	School learning	Life-long learning
	Emphasis on technical skills	Emphasis on technical skills with global competence
	Value-free education	Value-based education
	Supply-driven programme	Demand-driven programme
	Emphasis on local and national programmes	Emphasis on regional and international programmes
	Limited use of IT	Extensive use of IT, e.g. Internet
	Traditional and open universities use different instructional technologies	Traditional and open universities use more of similar instructional technologies
Finance	Rely heavily on the government support	Rely on many sources of funds
	Limited income-generating activities	More income-generating activities
Management	Limited linkages with outside agencies	More linkages with the private sector
	Universities provide all service	Universities buy available services from outsiders
	Use collegial and bureaucratic models	Use corporate management model
Institutional Evaluation	Minimal use of self-evaluation	Systematic use of self-evaluation
	Minimal use of external assessors	Extensive use of external assessors
	Staff enjoys status	Periodic evaluation of staff performance

(a) Redefining the mission

We have to define and redefine our mission. Each institution has a specific mission. We have to look for the niche of our business. When I started the open university in Thailand in 1978, we stated clearly the mission of the new institution. It is stated in the mission statement that Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University holds to the principle of life-long education. The University uses the distance teaching-learning system which consists of correspondence media, radio, broadcasts, television programmes, and other methods that enable students to study on their own without having to enter an actual classroom. This mission statement becomes the guiding principle in institutional building. There is no classroom at STOU campus.

My second experience is with Suranaree University of Technology which we started six years ago. Suranaree University is a technological university. It has specific missions to perform. Let me cite two important missions:

- The training and production of highly qualified scientific and technological personnel in response to national development needs.
- <sup>Transferring and developing appropriate</sup> Adapting and disseminating <sup>suitable</sup> technologies for increased national scientific and technological self-reliance.

By defining the mission we have the guiding principle to follow. At SUT, we have a technopolis. This is built under the mission of adapting, <sup>transferring</sup> and disseminating <sup>developing appropriate</sup> suitable technologies. The Technopolis at SUT is now institutionalized as a part of the university serving as a hub of both government and private organizations to conduct research and develop new products and processes as part of new technology.

Distinguished colleagues, the mission is like the star guiding the navigator. You will never get lost when you know you are in the right direction. So decide first what kind of institution you would like to build.

(b) Redesigning the governing structure

Our universities are run by governing bodies which are known in different names such as the Board of Regents, the Board of Trustees, the University Council. At SUT, our council is a kind of bipartite: the council consists of distinguished outsiders and faculty members elected at large. The ex-officio members consist of the President of the University, the President of the <sup>Education</sup> Council for Industries of Thailand, and the President of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. As the technological university, we need representatives from industries and commerce who will help to guide the development in these two areas. Broad representation in line with the mission of the university is most desirable.

But the point I would like to make here is the balance between institutional autonomy and state control. In the past, as experienced by many countries in our region, there used to be very tight control by the ministry concerned. The emphasis is now moving from control to supervision. Institutional autonomy and efficiency will be reduced if the state has control over internal functions of an institution. To find the proper balance, we need to transfer the power and authority to the university council, <sup>the governing body</sup>. This could not be done if a university is still functioning as a <sup>department</sup> ~~branch~~ of a ministry or bureaucracy.

Next, to the university council is the Academic Senate which is a body responsible for making academic decisions. In many countries, the academic senate exists in a university, serving as a body to oversee the academic undertaking of the university. In Thailand, we have a faculty senate which is mostly concerned with the welfare of faculty members. At SUT we have created the academic senate to be the second highest governing body. It has the mandate to oversee overall academic matters having to do with teaching, research, services, and safeguarding standards and quality of the university. With broader and active participation of the academic senate, I believe it can contribute to the higher performance of the university.



(c) Restructuring academic units

Traditionally universities consist of schools and faculties. Schools and faculties are subdivided to departments. What we have often heard is that faculties and departments become the walls separating faculty members from close collaboration. One way to promote close cooperation is to demolish the wall. I have two experiences in dealing with this problem. When we created the open university, STOU, we decided to create a school without departments. The University used the course team approach to create self-instructional materials. The course team can easily be promoted in schools or faculties without walls. It is recognized that this approach has contributed to the high performance of the University.

My second example is with SUT. We decided to create a cluster of schools. Instead of having many schools we decided to have four clusters or institutes at the beginning. They are Institute of Social Technology, Institute of Agricultural Technology, Institute of Industrial Technology, and Institute of Resources Technology. We have now added the Institute of ~~Medicine~~ <sup>Health</sup>. Each institute is organized into a school. For example, in the Institute of Social Technology, there are 4 schools: School of General Education, School of English, School of Information Technology, and School of Management Technology, and a research department. The school is the smallest academic unit. There are no departments within a school. The underlying concept is to promote close collaboration among faculty members in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary programmes. We even house the faculty members of all institutes in the same building - the academic building which is specially designed with 564 faculty office rooms. I have the high hope that this new arrangement will promote greater cooperation among faculty members and hence higher performance for the University.

(d) Rearrangement of support units

Performance could be increased if we could increase the efficiency. Inefficiency occurs when facilities are not used up to the maximum capacity.

At SUT we approached this problem by pooling resources together and distributing resources according to the needs. Two examples are illustrated here: one is classroom utilization and the other is laboratory utilization.

As I mentioned earlier, faculty members stay together at the Academic Building. For students, they study together in four classroom buildings. No classroom is assigned to a particular institute or school. All classes are scheduled centrally by the Center of Educational Services. By this arrangement, classrooms can be used to maximum capacity.

The second example is laboratory utilization. The same principle is applied: no laboratory is assigned to an individual institute or a school. Students and faculty members use laboratory facilities together. SUT has six equipment buildings with student laboratories and research laboratories. Facilities are centrally arranged by the Center for Scientific and Technological Equipment. The benefit of this arrangement is the maximum use of facilities.

Ladies and gentlemen, centralization<sup>can</sup> increases efficiency but at the same times it<sup>may</sup> decreases satisfaction among<sup>^</sup> faculties and students. But appropriately<sup>^</sup> arranged and managed, you can have both.

(e) Redesigning the processes.

We have talked about a new paradigm in teaching and learning. With the principle of life-long learning, we can have the new clientele in higher education. With the use of IT, we can organize learning activities any where and anytime. University administrators have to think more of demand-driven strategies. But we must also find the proper balance between market-driven education and value education.

Concerning programme design, we have to change our curriculum in line with the changing needs. Earlier, I mentioned about global competence. International communication, international or regional language, computer literacy, and global understanding have to be incorporated into university programmes.

Flexible learning is more available now. I have heard that the Internet university offers about 700 courses and the Global Academy about 6000 courses through internet. Information could be accessed by the world-wide information network. Distance education is now said to be in the fourth generation. Distance learners are using more interactive media. I believe in the future, traditional and open universities will move in the same direction in using more information technology to enhance their teaching - learning.

In term of university finance, we have to mobilize funds from different sources. Tuition is one important source. This year the Thai Government launches a massive Student Loan Programme. It gives rooms for tuition adjustment. Income-generating activities should also be undertaken by universities. Units responsible for these activities such as a seminar center and a print shop should be run similar to private enterprises.

Universities have to establish linkages with the private sector, industry and the government. They are sources of funds as well as sources for enhancing experiences and education of students and faculties.

One way to down-size an institution is to buy available services from outsiders. Janitorial work, cleaning, gardening, security service can be contracted out. In this way we can have good services as well as efficient operation.

The last process is quality assurance. It is going to be a major concern at institutional level, national level, and international level. The university must be concerned with its own internal mechanism for quality assurance. It must have a regular programme review with the aim for programme improvement. Outside academic assessors must be used to assess the programme.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have shared with you my experience and ideas about institutional strategies. I hope some of the ideas presented this morning will become the inputs for your discussions.

Thank you very much for your attention.