

Title: Insights into academic understanding of the university's third role in a developing system: empirical evidence from Thailand.

Subtheme: S4 University in regional innovation and social development

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1 Introduction

There is growing interest in the development of regional innovation systems (RISs) and the involvement of higher education institutions. In Thailand, RISs are being widely promoted; it is assumed that the knowledge economy will be built not only at the national but also at sub-national levels. This idea is emphasised during the effective period of recent National Economic and Social Development Plans, particularly that of the Ninth (2002 - 2006) and the Tenth (2007 - 2011) plans (NESDB, 2005; Termpitayapaisit, 2009). This is reinforced by Webster (2006, p.1) who states that '[t]he geographic dimension of development will become even more important during the Tenth National Development plan . . . [the objectives of development are] all place-based concepts'.

Given the national mission, public universities are expected to play their roles in the RIS within their regions. Implicit in this policy, academic staff are expected to help fulfil the third role of their universities, alongside the mainstream activities of research and teaching. Notwithstanding this recognition of academic involvement, there is very little literature regarding the delivery of academic services at operational levels and concerning the way in which these academics make sense of and fulfil the university's third role; expectations of their involvement are often made from the national and institutional viewpoints but very rarely have previous studies looked at the involvement from the perspective of academic staff themselves, especially in the context of a developing country.

In this regard, the majority of existing literature in the areas of KE and approaches to regional knowledge transfer in Thai communities has been conducted at the policy-making and institutional level; an explanation of individual academic involvement is missing from the literature. Therefore, previous studies (*e.g.* Intarakumnerd and Chaminade, 2007; Liefner and Schiller, 2008; Schiller, 2006) suggest that this missing part needs to be dealt with further.

This paper therefore takes a distinctive approach by delivering insights into the perceptions and practices of academic staff regarding their roles in the RIS. In this sense, the physical connection between the university and its region lays a foundation for this inquiry made into academic roles in making a contribution to the economic and social development of the region.

2 Research Methodology

The presentation of this paper is based on grounded theory research involving three investigatory propositions, namely regional, institutional and individual profiling of individual academic members of staff. The setting of this investigation is a multi-site case study carried out in three traditional public universities in Thailand. According to the OEC (2004), this type of university is expected to play a leadership role within their regions, producing and delivering suitable knowledge that meets the social and economic needs of the country. Additionally, in order that these universities can adopt an entrepreneurial approach to enhance their organisational management and academic performance, they are currently encouraged by the government to become

autonomous institutions (OEC, 2004; ONEC, 2002).

Given the empirical setting above, research findings presented in this paper are drawn from semi-structured interviews with 24 academic staff from various academic and professional backgrounds and positions of leadership and management. A range of government and institutional documents was also used as a supplementary source of research data.

With the grounded theory approach employed, a substantive theory was eventually developed to explain academic involvement with the RIS, taking into consideration the national policy, the institutional profiling of their universities, the region of which their universities are a member and the individual profiling of the academic staff themselves.

The presentation of this paper is expected to throw some light on the way in which regional services could be performed as an efficiency-oriented function, rather than letting this part of academic work be conceived as 'a voluntary third' as was previously the case. Given this purpose, research findings are presented as the processes of a strategic thinking to be carried out at departmental level in universities as follows.

3 Starting the Thinking

Agreeing with several studies in existing literature (e.g. Amey, 2002; Fairweather, 1996), empirical data of this paper suggested that an enhancement of academic services would best be carried out starting from department level, which was the operational level of academic activities. Consistent with this, Rhoades (2001) finds that there are diverse departmental cultures across disciplines leading academic departments to have different goals and productivity functions.

The researcher therefore proposed that strategic planning for regional academic services should start at departmental level whereby the planning information would subsequently give the university managers 'a sense of purpose to act' (Whittington, 2001, p.23). Given the empirical evidences of interviews with diverse Thai academic managers and staff, three features of a development plan are identified as follows:

1. **Regional profiling:** shared vision for regional services together with well defined activities, suitable resources utilisation and expected outcomes;
2. **Institutional profiling:** linkages between institutional expectations and academic understanding about academic services in the knowledge economy;
3. **Individual profiling:** the implementation of the plan is to be in harmony with existing university environment and academic cultures.

The above features are dealt with in the following three sections.

4 Making Sense of Regional Academic Services

As the first step of strategic thinking, university regionalisation should be well known as a **shared departmental vision**, as the vision leads to a mission. If there is an institutional regional agenda, the vision promoted at departmental level should be in accord with that agenda. In other cases, even if there is no existing institutional regional agenda, there should be one developed at departmental level.

By having the agenda, it must be borne in mind that this does not imply an additional obligation for academic staff to limit their services within the defined territory; rather, with a clear idea of this surrounding targeted service territory, these staff would conveniently address regional needs in respect of their areas of expertise. In other words, the vision is assumed to help shape the ideas of academic staff concerning three aspects of the regional territory; those are :

1. **The targeted service territory:** this would help guide academic staff to regional needs as well as to potential service recipients.

2. **The territory of regional resources:** this would help clarify material and non-material assets existing within the region.
3. **The territory of co-operative partners:** this would help identify other regional organisations, public and private, regarded as potential partners who share regional interests and/or regional resources used for the organisational operations.

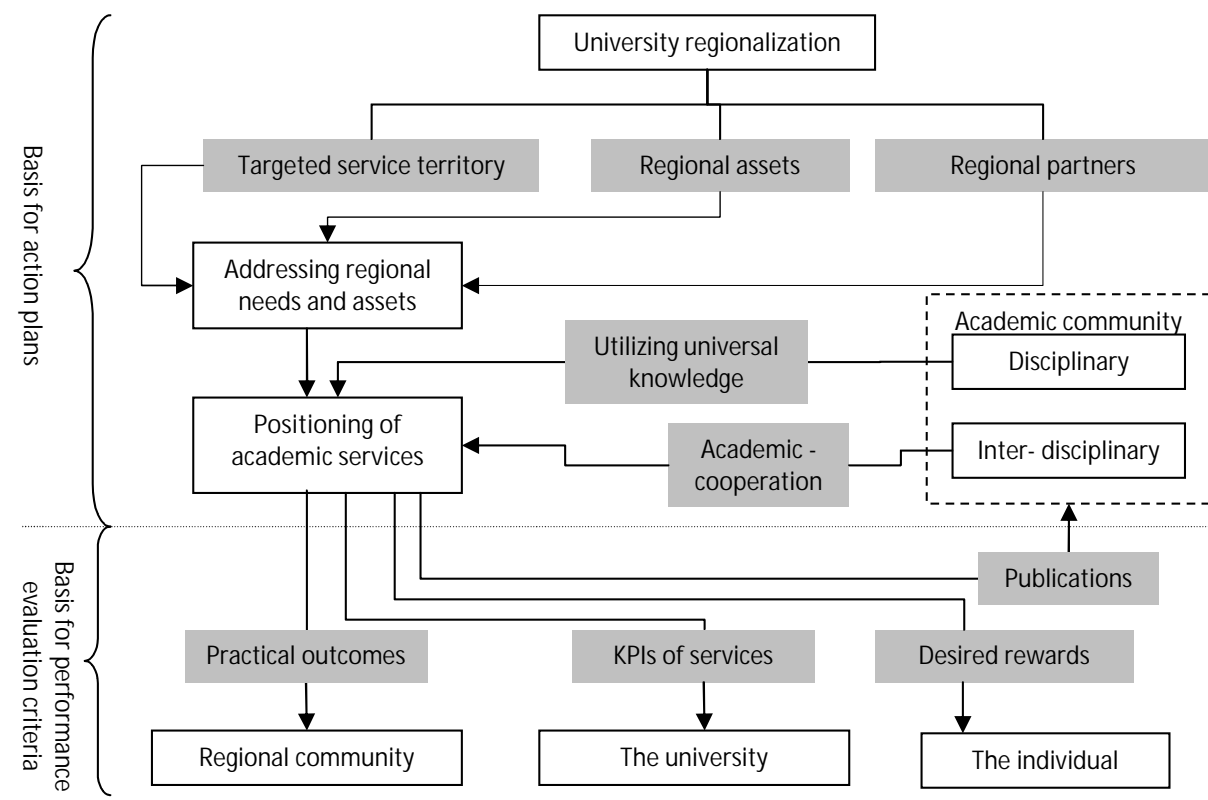
With regard to the above aspects, enabling locational factors would be emphasized; for instance, convenience of transportation and communications, access to material and non-material assets into the performance of academic work and inter-personal contacts with regional authorities, potential academic partners at other knowledge institutions and knowledge recipients.

4.1 Strategic Positioning of Services

The employment of strategic ideas adapted from business management is believed to enhance the departmental operational effectiveness (Nelson, 2002; Sharma, 2004). In respect of the significance of the university regionalisation discussed above, the researcher proposed that the shared regional vision and mission would facilitate the building of 'strategic positioning' of an academic department.

As defined by Porter (2004, p.42), 'strategic positioning means performing different activities from rivals' or 'performing similar activities in different ways'. By applying the meaning to suit academic activities, the researcher proposed that a recognition of 'regional needs' as well as 'regional assets' would help academic departments to gain not only operational effectiveness of academic services but also their enhanced competitiveness known as a 'competitive advantage' of locational factors (OECD, 2007; Sujatanond, 2008). In other words, with strategic regional engagement, these departments would be acting beyond a typical 'generalized' and 'universal' knowledge facilitator in their knowledge region (Laredo, 2007). Figure 1 illustrates this idea:

Figure 1: Strategic Positioning of Academic Service



Source: developed by the authors.

4.2 Responding to Regional Knowledge Needs

As seen by the empirical data, academic services can facilitate either one-way or two-way flows of knowledge. They could also be either linear or non-linear (interactive) activities. Additionally, in respect of academic freedom, individual staff became involved with service activities reflecting their own choices and motivations.

The planning of regional services should therefore not specify patterns of academic involvement. Rather, it should only help shape the ideas of the staff about the delivery of systematic services. The purpose of so doing is to widen these staff perspectives, which is one of the key factors leading to the performance of regional services being under-accounted. To explain further, any outcomes of academic activities dealing either with 'regional needs' or using 'regional assets', material or non-material, could be seen as the performance of regional academic service. Having said that, however, the services could be delivered in diverse forms, leading to a difficulty in the systematic accounting of the work. To help minimize the under-accounting, detailed departmental thinking concerning 'the shared vision' and 'the goals' leading to the formulation of 'a plan' should be carried out (Nelson, 2002).

5 Thinking at Departmental Level

According to Whittington (2001), there are four schools of theories of strategy, namely 'classical theory', 'processual theory', 'evolutionary theory' and 'systemic theory'. By discussing the way in which strategies are developed, Macmillan and Mahen (2000) consider that the first two schools are deterministic, whereas the latter two are emergent (Table 1).

Table 1: Four Schools of Theories of Strategy

Classification	Flow of the Thinking	Schools
Deterministic strategy	Top-down	Classical theory
		Processual theory
Emergent strategy	Bottom-up	Evolutionary theory
		Systemic theory

Source: developed by the author after Macmillan and Mahen (2000).

Regarding classical and processual theories, organisational managers undertake 'a deliberate process of thinking' about outcomes of the planning. In contrast, according to the views of evolutionary and systemic theories, the managers are likely to 'have very limited ability to determine outcomes' (Macmillan and Mahen, 2000, pp.24–25). Considering this difference, the researcher therefore proposed that the perspectives of emergent theories are more suitable for public university organisations; she proposed that **strategic thinking should initially emerge from academic departments rather than from the management.**

The researcher's proposition was made with respect to the organisational structure of the Thai traditional universities comprised diverse faculties, within which are various academic departments. Also, by making comparisons across departments, the universities had different values, cultures, perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of academic service. Considering this issue, it is not likely that senior managers were able to determine their service outcomes in order to plan a strategy that suited the departmental operation.

Bearing in mind the two schools of emergent strategies, namely processual and systemic, the key difference between these two schools was that the former aims at a **single outcome** whereas the latter aims at **plural outcomes** (Jongbloed, 2004; Whittington, 2001). Implicit in this distinction, the latter considers the various politics, interests, resources and social groups of each department as part of the strategy development; accordingly, plural outcomes are normally expected (Whittington, 2001). In this regard, taking into account the complexity of academic communities, the researcher made recommendations following **the systemic perspective**. In this sense, it is assumed that (Whittington, 2001, p.27):

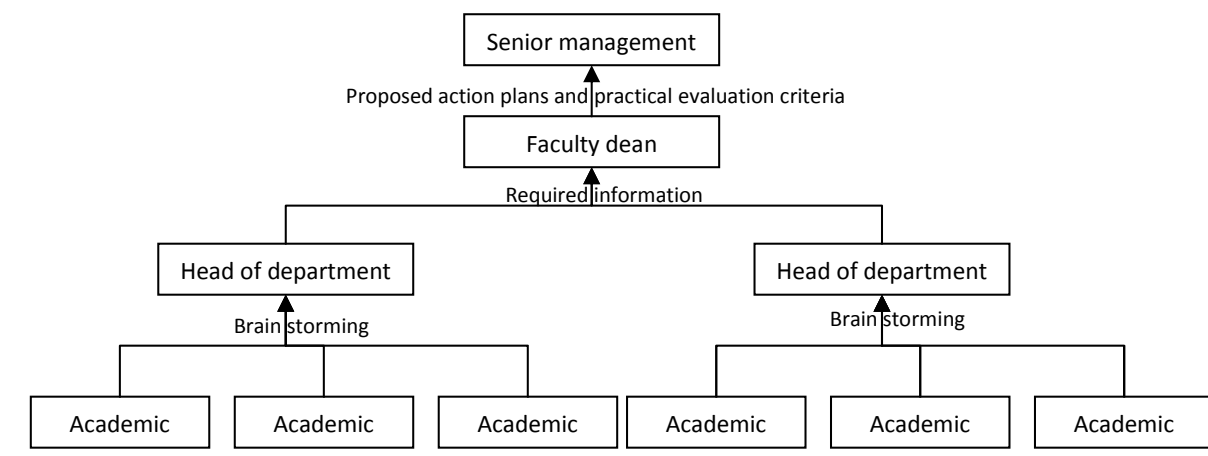
'[universities] differ according to the social and economic systems in which they are embedded. . . . The internal contests of organisations involve not just the micro-politics of individuals in departments but the social groups, interests and resources of the surrounding context.'

To explain further, with respect to the difference in subject areas, academic managers at the top level hardly sensed the perspectives and capabilities of academic staff at the operational level of individual departments, except for those particular departments where they had previously worked for or with which they were especially familiar. Considering this point, in order to develop a strategic plan that is as practical as possible, **the initial strategic thinking therefore needs to emerge from the staff perspective.**

However, the plan is not to be a perfect form of 'emergent strategy' as each university management has some 'intentions' set for services performance (Mintzberg, 2004). In Thai universities, this was found in the form of the KPIs for services. To start development of the plan, linkages between the staff perspectives and the intentions of management are therefore vital during the process of strategic thinking.

According to empirical data, middle-level managers, departmental Heads and Faculty Deans, were expected to facilitate these linkages. By carrying out the thinking, the roles of these Heads and Deans should clearly be recognised. That is, all departmental Heads within the faculty should be able to provide the Dean with the required information in order that strategic planning can be formulated. Such a developed plan will later be presented by the Dean to the university senior management (Figure 2).

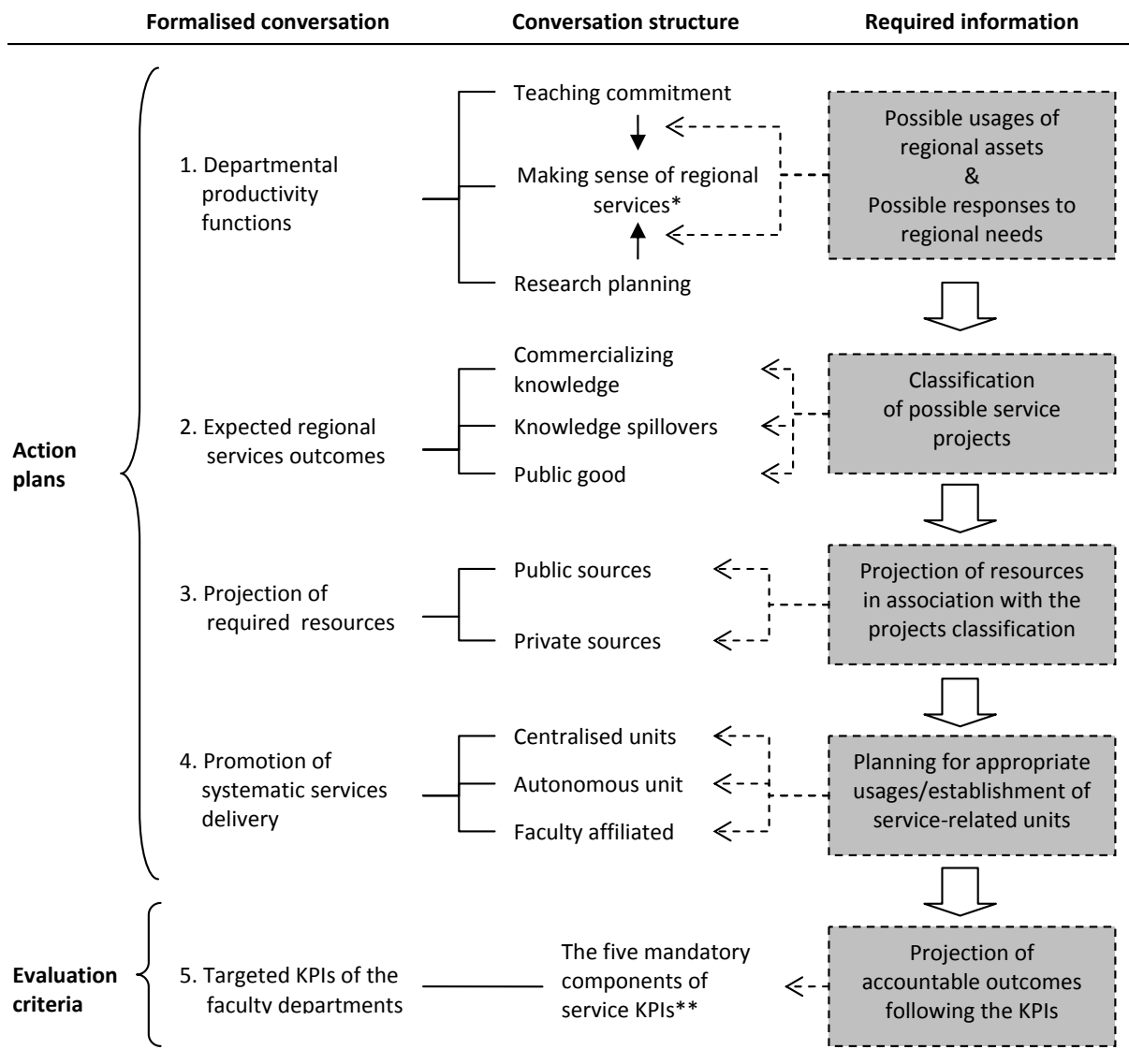
Figure 2: Initial Strategic Thinking



Source: developed by the authors.

Based on research findings, the researcher proposed the required information comprising five elements, as outlined in Figure 3:

Figure 3: Departmental Conversation of Strategic Thinking of Services



Source: developed by the authors.

Given the above outline, collegial conversations between the Heads and their departmental academic members are vital. The ways in which the conversations should be made are suggested as follows.

5.1 Departmental Productivity Functions

As evidenced by empirical data, academic staff regarded teaching and research as their mainstream work, whereas service was only seen as a voluntary third stream. It is therefore suggested that the thinking gives priority to these two functions with an attempt to make regional services enhance these activities.

By considering teaching and research productivities as the basis for strategic planning of service development, strategic thinking should be undertaken once the departmental plan for teaching and research has been formed. That is, before the thinking takes place, each of academic members should already have the detailed information of their teaching commitment. Also, they should have their plan for targeted research performance and publications.

To make the strategic planning of services harmonize with the normal practice of academic planning, the planning should be carried out annually. Once this has been done by faculty departments, the Dean would

have the background information required for the formulation of annual **faculty targeted KPIs**, services included, to be presented to senior management. Notwithstanding this approach, in the case of long-term service projects (continuing longer than one academic year), revision of the project might also be undertaken.

At these thinking and planning stages, as suggested by Nelson (2002), middle-level managers should be aware of different individual capabilities and professional goals. With respect to individual differences, the discussions at these stages should be realistic, particularly in terms of the challenges faced by departmental members and advantages regarding the individual profiles of these members.

With respect to diverse academic and professional profiling of academic staff, Table 2 summarises these challenges and advantages by staff profiles:

Table 2: Challenges and Advantages of Service by Individual Profiles

Individual Profile	Profiling Detail	Key Challenges	Key Advantages
Qualification	Junior academic (Lecturer or Assistant Professor)	Academic recognition; connection building; promotional tension; Relative less academic work experience; low esteem for academic service task; career assurance	Being able to play a passive role
	Senior academic (Associate Professor or Full Professor)	Academic status maintenance	Academic recognition; connection building; relative high academic work experience; positive personal value on academic service work; relative less tension on career assurance
Administration	No administrative position	Misconception of expectation of academic service.	Being able to play a passive role
	Middle-level academic manager (at departmental or faculty level)	Time management; collegial management skills; academic status maintenance	Good connection with service work at operational level; high esteem on academic service work
	Senior academic manager (at university level)	Time management; low connection with service work at operational level; academic status maintenance	Policy making power; high esteem for academic service work
Academic Discipline	Health Sciences	Under-accounted academic service	Disciplinary relevance; high esteem for service work; low teaching workload; relatively high publication opportunity; additional source of income
	Science and Technology	Under-accounted service; values of Thai wisdom; investment cost of equipments	Disciplinary relevance; relatively high publication opportunity; additional source of income
	Social Sciences and Humanities	Under-accounted service; heavy teaching workload; relative low publication opportunity; sources of funding and inputs	Additional source of income

Source: developed by the authors.

5.2 Outcomes of Regional Academic Services

Considering academic capabilities, which are normally in accordance with individual qualifications, some academics may prefer research-related activities, and some may prefer teaching-related. However, some may lack the ability to weave the service agenda into either of their research or teaching.

Additionally, despite individual staff having their own areas of specific expertise, Heads of department should not leave excessive room for their peers to choose their own work directions. Rather, regional agenda should be brought into the academic planning conversation. In order to help academic members outline their service activities, The preferred forms of service outcome should therefore be addressed together with the incentives associated with their mainstream activities of teaching and research.

In order to carry out departmental brainstorming, academic members should discuss activities they are possibly capable of delivering with the primary targeted outcomes identified, chosen from the following forms:

1. **Commercialising knowledge:** the person paying for knowledge gets a responsive knowledge service.
2. **Knowledge service as a public good:** what is provided becomes a public possession.
3. **Knowledge spillovers:** the individual who provides the knowledge service also gains the knowledge possession.

When some activities are likely to result in more than one form of outcome, the academic suggesting the activity must address one as the primary, whereas the other should only be regarded as secondary to avoid confusion. Also, the primary incentive must be addressed in accordance with the type of service. In the same way as for secondary expected outcomes, other additional incentives should only be regarded as secondary.

5.3 Projection of Required Resources

As an attachment to the planning of expected outcomes, costs of all planned activities must also be projected. To do so, academic staff should clearly state the projected **operational costs** and **investment costs** of their proposed services activities. Also, potential sources of funding should be provided (Table 3).

Table 3: Projection of Required Resources

Type of knowledge	The knowledge possession	Preferred resource	Resources provider
Commercialising knowledge	The knowledge recipient	Private	The knowledge recipient
Public good	Public	Public	The university, government authorities, or private organisation with no specific private demand on the knowledge production.
Knowledge spillovers	The knowledge server	Public or private	The knowledge recipient, the university, government authorities or private organisations.

Source: developed by the authors.

In accordance with the projected costs, guidelines for preferred provision of resources outlined in Table 3 above can be explained as follows:

1. Commercialising knowledge

The service of commercialising knowledge should be funded by private sources. The term 'private' in this sense refers to 'private use' of the knowledge; sources of funds could be both private and public organisations potentially making a demand for responsive knowledge service that meets their private purposes.

2. **Public good**

A public good should be funded by public sources. The term 'public' in this sense refers to 'public use' of the knowledge; sources of funds could be both public and private entities as long as the funds are granted with no specific private use of the knowledge.

3. **Knowledge spillover**

Service activities resulting in a knowledge spillover may be provided to the knowledge recipients through academic publication, inter-personal connections or the knowledge embedded in students. Knowledge spillovers can be funded by either private or public source. The key consideration is the possession of the knowledge belonging to the knowledge server, such as academic staff or participating students.

6 **Promotion of Systematic Services Delivery**

According to Porter (2004), strategy requires constant discipline and clear communication. Agreeing with this, there should be a shared understanding of systematic service delivery with the university's full recognition. As evidenced by the three studied universities, leading public universities in Thailand were likely to develop institutional units functioning as educational and research units attached to service objectives.

Together with the planning of service outcomes and the projection of required resources, academic staff should indicate a preferred channel of service delivery. The Head should persuade their academic peers to deliver all services with the university's full recognition. That is, the Heads should communicate with their peers about systematic channels of service delivery.

It is recommended that the departmental members plan to obtain the resources required for their activities through services units developed throughout layers of their organisation. Also, given this organisational structure, there are four modes of connection by which academic staff could become involved in regional services:

1. individual academic's personal connections;
2. individual academic's connection with the university service unit;
3. connection with the outside entity made on an institutional basis;
4. internal connection made across institutional service units.

6.1 **Targeted Services KPIs**

The employment of KPIs in the Thai HE lacked standardised performance evaluation, which sometimes resulted in under-accounted service as some service work was not reported, although, in practice, the work was delivered. As the empirical evidenced showed, this problem led to the relatively minor influence of the KPIs on academic practice.

Bearing in mind the function of strategic plans, the influencing power of the KPIs is assumed to be enhanced as the plan is developed. To support this assumption, this is due to strategies cannot be developed without clarified criteria for performance evaluation (Macmillan and Mahen, 2000).

As another issue to be considered, academic staff evidently viewed the KPIs as being of concern to the faculty and departmental leaders. This view often resulted in academic staff lacking their involvement in the service mission of their faculties.

By having a plan, the above problem might be solved; the department is believed to lessen a gap between the perspectives of academic staff and middle-level managers. Also, rather than conceiving services as a kind of 'ad hoc' activity, where the work is to be delivered in response to demands made (Mintzberg, 1979), the function can be planned in a proactive manner following the processes this section has presented.

7 Sending Messages to Senior Management

Given the developed plan consisting of the elements of information presented in the previous section, to send departmental messages to senior management is a further step. This step is associated with the purpose of having a departmental plan, as pointed out by Nelson (2002, p.98), that '[the plan] guides the Chair [the Head of department] in creating a dynamic department recognized by the university, faculty, students and surrounding community.'

In the preparation of messages, the Dean should be assisted by departmental Heads. This suggestion is reinforced by Cramer (2006, p.533), who suggests that '[t]he department chair [Head], working in concert with the Dean and Provost/Vice-President for academic affairs, must provide the resources and clarity of vision to faculty [academic staff] in the department to facilitate scholarly activities to the greatest extent possible'.

Then, to send messages, the Dean of Faculty should function as not only the messenger but also the translator of the message; they are to turn the detailed strategy into demanding and convincing messages. Based on the five elements of the developed plan, the Dean should convey messages to the senior management negotiating issues as follows.

7.1 External Linkages

As the plan has been developed, several external knowledge stakeholders should, by this stage, have been clarified as targeted service recipients, regional partners, regional authorities, or targeted external sources of funding. With respect to this information, these stakeholders might be either individual or institutional entities.

While individual and small institutional entities (*i.e.* regional firms) could be dealt with by academic staff themselves or with the help of middle-level managers, large institutional entities (*e.g.* regional and national government authorities, national and international funding bodies, other public and private knowledge institutions) might require a connection built at institutional level. The Dean should therefore be able to convince the top management to support this level of connection.

To support the proposition above, an evidence from Thailand showed the case of one studied university that the top management of this university was appreciated by their middle-level managers assisting them with the information of potential linkages to be made with regional knowledge stakeholders. The view of the management was also reinforced by this university having a very clear regional agenda and building a strong linkage with its region.

7.2 Internal Support for Investment

Bearing in mind the three forms of knowledge service discussed earlier, not all the forms could be commercialised and generated satisfactory economic return. For those that lack a return on investment but would benefit the regional public in a wider extent, the Dean should therefore be able to convince senior management to support the cost of investment relevant to the planned activities.

7.3 Practical Performance Evaluation

It must be borne in mind that different Faculties have their own advantages and disadvantages of performing service with respect to their disciplinary characters. The Dean should therefore be able to convince and negotiate with the management about practical performance evaluation that suits the Faculty's disciplinary characteristics.

For instance, it is difficult for social sciences and humanities staff to produce a large number of publications (codified knowledge, possibly being used as a knowledge spillover or commercialising knowledge) compared with S&T and health sciences staff. These staff might, instead, mainly provide more professional, hence less academic, commercialising services (*e.g.* consulting services) or a public good knowledge (*e.g.* an academic radio broadcasting, a public project aiming at the preservation of Thai traditional arts).

With respect to these differences, evaluation criteria for service performance, of both the Faculty and individual

members of staff, should be planned using a shared understanding between the Dean and the top management.

8 Making an Enabling Department

Bearing in mind findings about the institutional environment at departmental level, Deans of Faculty and Heads of Department play different roles. In one Faculty, the Dean was mainly responsible for policy making and administrative decisions whereas Heads of department dealt with the work of individual academics following the Faculty policy.

It is therefore suggested that Heads of Department are essential in making departmental cultures an enabling factor of regional service performance that simultaneously serves the university management expectations. In this regard, four features of the departmental culture are to be promoted: (1) values of regional academic service, (2) making use of academic freedom, (3) the departmental mentoring system, and (4) balancing traditional and entrepreneurial activities. Explanations of these features are provided in this section.

8.1 Values of Regional Academic Services

For strategic planning, in addition to a shared 'vision' (see, for instance, Nelson, 2002) and 'mission' (see, for instance, Porter, 2004), shared 'value' is another essential component of strategic operations (Campbell and Yeung, 2004). According to Campbell and Yeung (2004, p.275), 'values provide a rationale for behaviour that is just as strong as strategy'.

However, unlike the first two strategic components, values and beliefs could hardly be measured as they are 'moral principles' lying behind the organisational culture (Porter, 2004, p.275). It is therefore a managerial challenge to promote departmental values of regional academic service.

Considering values of academic service, the evidence from Thailand presented two sources of values that promote academic involvement in regional service; one was **personal values** and the other was **peer pressure**. It also argued that senior staff were likely to be influenced by personal values whereas peer pressures were potentially to work on junior ones.

With regard to the above findings, it is therefore recommended that Heads of Department be assisted by the rationale of 'academic freedom' to promote 'personal values' for senior staff. Then, for junior members, these managers are recommended to help foster 'peer pressures' of senior staff on their junior colleagues.

8.2 Balancing Traditional and Entrepreneurial Activities

Traditional universities in Thailand are being encouraged to become autonomous universities. These universities would be more flexible with their internal personnel and financial management. There is therefore more concern, compared with previously, on entrepreneurial operations regarding the investment costs and the returns on investment of academic activities (Virasa, 2008).

By proposing the development of departmental strategic planning for services, the researcher agreed with Renault (2006, p.229) that '[d]epartmental norms could support traditional activities while university-wide policies and economic incentives may encourage more entrepreneurial activity'; as discussed previously, linkages between academic staff at the operational level, whose work was surrounded by the departmental norms, and the management, whose responsibility was to oversee the university-wide policies, was claimed as one of the key benefits of having such plan.

To make use of the plan developed in order to balance traditional and entrepreneurial activities, it is essential that academic departments clarify their service goals, both public and private, bearing in mind that strategic plans are involved with the development of 'goals' and 'strategies'.

To explain further, various information gained during the strategic thinking, as presented previously, is to be used to classify expected service outcomes as either traditional serving 'social goals' or entrepreneurial activities serving the 'commercial goals' of the department (Heracleous, 2003). By so doing, the balance between these goals should be carried out in association with the ONESQA's KPIs for service delivery.

8.3 Making Use of Academic Freedom

Recalling the development of strategic planning in public universities, the employment of strategic ideas is adapted from business management (Nelson, 2002). However, unlike the business organisation, Heracleous (2003) argues that public universities seeking for competitiveness and business-like efficiency of their operations need to balance social and commercial rationales. By discussing these two rationales, De la Fuente (2002) and the ONEC (2002) find that academic freedom is the key factor influencing the balance.

To explain further, if individual academic members are to propose their own choice of regional service activities based on their own personal goals, realistic academic capabilities and preferred channels of systematic service delivery are necessary. By doing so, these individuals are revealing their 'goals', 'capability beliefs' and 'context beliefs', which Colbeck and Wharton-Michael (2006, p.19) indicate as the three components of motivation that promote academic involvement in public scholarship.

With the information above, the departmental leader would be able to assess each member's values and motivations for providing regional service. For those revealing few or less relevant personal values, peer pressure is to be applied through a systematic mentoring system, which is discussed next.

8.4 The Departmental Mentoring System

With respect to the proposition that middle-level academic managers are playing the essential roles of 'putting things together', it must be borne in mind that the values are moral principles, not to be promoted using the institutional administrative system. Rather, human activity, or inter-personal connection, is a vital tool (Heracleous, 2003). This assumption was also reinforced by the view of interviewed managers that emphasised the significance of collegiality for the management of academic staff.

Recommended as an effective tool, a departmental mentoring system is to be adopted. This recommendation agrees with Macfarlane (2007, p.265) who points out that, for academic staff, to participate in the mentoring system is regarded as a 'collegial service', which is a part of their academic citizenship.

According to Macfarlane (2007), there are five communities that academics serve: (1) students, (2) colleagues, (3) their institution, (4) their discipline and (5) the public. In order to develop such a system, the middle-level academic managers should be able to classify their colleagues by professional goals, areas of interest and academic capabilities.

Then, by letting departmental members reveal their professional goals while participating in the brainstorming of departmental strategic planning, these Heads should gain the information needed in order to classify their staff. Consequently, once the plan is developed, these managers should try to match active senior staff to those junior staff with similar expertise backgrounds.

9 Conclusion and Contributions to the Knowledge

This paper proposed a strategic thinking, which could lead to the development of strategic planning at departmental level in order that service performance could be enhanced. This proposition made is regarded as a 'model' for systematic work built after the 'theory' developed (Burden and Roodt, 2007). A summary of theoretical implications underpinning the model is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Developed Hypotheses and the Model Development — Services Strategic Thinking

Investigation proposition	Hypotheses of the Developed Theory	Component of the Developed Model	Purposes of the Development
Regional profiling	H-REG-1: The regional proximity hosts regional needs and regional assets used as inputs to regional services .	Making sense of regional academic services.	To help promote a shared vision about significance of the surrounding region for academic work.
Institutional profiling	H-INS-1: The institutional expectation is reflected by the organisational structure and the academic management of the university. H-INS-2: The organisational structure and the academic management serve systematic performance and delivery of regional service.	Strategic thinking at departmental level. Sending messages to senior management.	To make use of existing designate structure of the university organisation and academic management for the promotion of systematic academic services using systemic plans and practical evaluation criteria. To create linkages of understanding between the university management and academic staff at operational level.
Individual profiling	H-IND-1: Despite the institutional organisation, academic staff do not fully use the designated system for their services. H-IND-2: The underused system is caused by under-accounted and undermined services. H-IND-3: The under-accounted services happen at academic departments formed following the ordinary disciplinary fashion of academic community.	Making an enabling department.	To minimize as much as possible under-accounted and undermined academic services.

Note: H = Hypothesis, REG = regional profile, IND = individual profile, INS = institutional profile, KE = knowledge economy.

Source: developed by the authors.

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