

Dissertation Title	A Study of Internationalization Process in Two Asian Universities: How International Cooperation can be Enhanced
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ABSTRACT

The process of internationalization and international cooperation is increasingly playing a crucial role in advancing various aspects of higher education institutions and identifying potential opportunities for cooperation. Despite a decade-long cooperation between Pu'er University (PU) in China and Chiang Rai Rajabhat University (CRRU) in Thailand, they have made limited progress due to a lack of innovative cooperation programs. The goals were to examine how these two universities conduct international cooperation, which was accompanied by (1) to identify the challenges hindering international cooperation in each of these two universities, (2) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each university that affect international cooperation between these two universities, to compare the international cooperation in each target university, and to explore key factors integrated in the guideline to enhance bilateral international cooperation.

A synthesized conceptual framework with ten key components for international cooperation was tailored for the context of Chinese and Thai local universities. This framework served as a tool for evaluating international cooperation efforts and providing information as a basis for developing guidelines for bilateral future development strategies. A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was adopted to gain insight into individual evaluations of internationalization and a comparative analysis of mutual partnership. Purposive sampling was adopted to select target research participants, involving administrators, administrative staff, and lecturers. SPSS and MAXQDA were used to support data analysis.

The findings of this study were triangulated by analyzing multiple data sources, covering semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, and policy texts. The process of identifying challenges, strengths, and weaknesses of PU's and CRRU's international

cooperation verified the consistency of the ten components proposed for the synthesized conceptual framework and the dimensions for factors extracted from quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Meanwhile, the process further explained the comprehensive functions of higher education institutions in international cooperation.

Evaluated by the synthesized conceptual framework and based on the contribution of the three codes with the highest frequency extracted from MAXQDA on qualitative data analysis, the distinct characteristics of international cooperation at PU and CRRU were revealed individually. The findings were multi-dimensional, interactive, and context-specific, reflecting the distinct characteristics of individual international cooperation efforts. To further enhance bilateral international cooperation, four considerations should be integrated into the future guidelines: (1) both universities should strengthen bilateral communication, including administrators and the people implementing cooperation affairs; (2) cooperation forms should be expanded to academic degree promotion and teacher exchange programs; (3) both universities should create a shared communication platform for clear working responsibilities and mutual working mechanisms; (4) both universities should strengthen teamwork and appoint specialized personnel to oversee cooperation programs.

Given that the study focuses on enhancing international cooperation between PU and CRRU, the research instruments were designed with specialized and contextually specific questions tailored to bilateral cooperation programs. Moreover, the limited number of participants involved and the experts' evaluation of the research instruments are expected to be expanded in future studies. It is recommended that universities combine their immediate needs of internationalization development and the specific international cooperation programs when referring to the synthesized conceptual framework.

Keywords: Internationalization, Higher Education, International Cooperation, Comparative Analysis, Asian Universities