

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Background and the Importance of the Problem

Education is not the only main factor to develop the country beside the socio-economic and politics but also a means to prepare the population with quality. Therefore the educational management for a nation must be in accordance with the policy on socio-economic and politics of the country. Today, Thailand is in a dire need to develop the country sustainably, and the country needs to develop the human resources with higher quality compared to those in the past. The global conference on the higher education, arranged by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) between 5 and 9 October 1998 in Paris, France reaffirmed the world declaration regarding the higher education for the 21st century that aims to the learners' development. Today, creativity and critical thinking are necessary for adaptation to the rapid change of the world. These skills must be implanted through a child-centered model and respecting the diversity of the learners, the contents, the methods, the implementation and model, accommodating the others like the cooperation of community and society, and leading to solutions and responsibilities towards the society (International Relations Division, Ministry of University Affairs, 2000).

Anyway in the past, the Office of Higher Education of Thailand faced the problem on the quality of the teaching and learning that focused mainly on technical knowledge rather than on teaching the learners to understand the thinking process (Office of the National Education, 1999: 37). The teaching in higher education level faced the problem also that some the lecturers used the lecture teaching method that emphasized the rotting of words. This teaching method utilized the technique of transferring knowledge more than using the teaching method that emphasized on knowing how to think, to actually practice; or it can be said that it emphasized rotting more than analytical and critical thinking. In addition, with the nature of Thai students mostly trend to be more passive rather than active. As a result, the number of graduates who finished education with enough knowledge or practical skills was reduced compared to their numbers in the past (Vittayakorn Chiangkul, 2001 and Pansak Polsaram, 2003: 3). This finding was correlated to the research findings of Somchai Rattanathongkom (2002: 86) and Narumon Saratapan's (2003: 78) who studied the thinking development among the learners in higher education level. Their findings showed that the teaching and learning condition used by some of lecturers at present still emphasize on lectures. The means of learning evaluation is still done through students' listening to lectures and taking examinations. The system still lacked the learning management process that emphasizes on the proper thinking process.

Witnessing such state of affairs, many academicians state that the learning management in the higher education, which facing the rapid changes in the globalization and uncertain future demands the universities to provide additional knowledge beside theories. These additional sets of knowledge are the knowledge that students can understand and master through thinking processes. If the

conventional lecture-based teaching method is still practiced emphasizing the rote of words and theories or taught by lecturers who control everything, the learners become only passive receivers. This practice tends to create students with chronic lack of thinking and problem-solving skills. Therefore the learning management in the higher education should emphasize the supplementary activities and learners' development through diversified methods. The learners train thinking, synthesizing and reviewing the knowledge from the learning inside and outside the classroom (Pansak Polsaram, 2003; Krissanapong Kirtikorn, 2005 and Phetcharee Rupavijetra, 2006: 12).

Critical thinking is a development of skill on the ability to think. This is a logical target of education at present because in the knowledge-based society and economy, the ability to think critically will help learners to solve problems efficiently. Therefore the lecturers should see its importance and eager to create it in the learners. This is something that the learners should develop in the condition of educational management, as the sign of persons who can access education (Pun Thongchumnum, 2001: 169; Sombat Kanjanarakphong, 2002: 1 and Penpisut Nakamanurak, 1994: 1).

Critical thinking is a skill to think carefully before making efficient decision, using the information that leads to the analysis based on knowledge, thoughts and experience of oneself. Critical thinking will lead to proper conclusions and the reasonable decision making. Therefore critical thinking is a quality that all parties think as important because "knowing how to think" is considered a desired character in the future. The graduates in the 21st century consider critical thinking as an important character of a person who is successful in learning, studying, working and performing occupation in the 21st century (Huitt, 1998; Wichai Wongyai, 2000: 3; and Kriengsak Chareonwongsak, 2003: 68). Critical thinking is considered the target of arrangement of education at all levels. Phra Dhammapitaka (1989) states that critical thinking is necessary to work and solve problems in the era of information. It is the thinking that aims to use the filtering of the information or the situation based on the knowledge, thought and experience of oneself in order to survey the evidence or proof that lead to reasonable conclusions and to problem solving. Critical thinking creates human beings with potentials in learning, working, and developing the knowledge and life skill that one can learn to cope with or learn more. It is the necessary tool in leading life in accordance with the social changes (Jinda Keawkongdee, 1999: 2; Phasin Tangchuang, 2005: 96 and Lakkhana Sariwat, 2006: 87).

According to Warin Sinsoongsud (1999), critical thinking is a character that signifies the policy of Thai education in higher education level. Therefore the educational reform plan in the 21st century in term of educational management must focus on the learning- and learners-centered (child-centered) approach more than on the lecture-centered methods. This different focus will allow the students to learn by themselves and be eager to learn for the rest of their life (life-long learning). Furthermore they also know how to think critically or know how to work in teams and they are also well-prepared to have skills to perform the work or to perform self-employed jobs (Padungchat Suwanwong and Paitoon Sinlarat, 1999: 80-81). Therefore creating the critical thinking as part of students' character is considered as a noble mission of educational management in the higher education level (Beck, 1999).

From the review of literature of the previous researches conducted on the development of critical thinking such as the researches of Asamani (1995), McCrink (1999), Somchai Rattanathongkham (2002) and Narumon Saratapan (2003), it has been known that the teaching method of the lecturers in the class affects negatively the development of critical thinking of the learners. But the mostly found problems are the lecturers' lack of knowledge on teaching theories, methods and techniques for the development of thinking skills, and the learning management processes that focus beyond rotting and memorizing; therefore the learners lack the proper training on learning to think critically and to solve problems. This set of drawbacks affects the learners because the lecturers cannot teach the learners to think critically and eager to seek for knowledge by themselves. Thus creative is the problem in arranging the learning that can result in the enhancing of thinking for the learners. Therefore it is necessary to develop the lecturers to be able to build their thinking skills (Erwin, 1993; Office of the National Education Commission, 1999: 2, and Kriengsak Chareonwongsak, 2000: 62). In addition, Tissana Khammani (2003: 38) suggested a way to solve such problem that the teachers and lecturers should be trained in developing and exchanging the learning on the learning arrangement methods and techniques in order to develop the thinking process of the learners. This way, which is responding to the Ministry of Education's (2005) policy to develop the teachers to be able to arranging the effective instruction, can develop the ability to think among learners through the teaching of thinking skill as the supplementary to the existing curricula. This development can be achieved through a combination of the objectives of teaching contents together.

The model to develop the learning management skills in the past revealed that the development of learning management skills of teachers though training can efficiently increase such skill through various training techniques such as shown by the researches for examples, Natthajari Thammathatnanon (2003), Wiyada Rattanasuwan (2004), Notzer and Abramovitz (2008) and Lai (2010). However, the concept for development of the learning management skills of modern lecturers that considers a new paradigm is important in developing lecturers to be able to manage efficiently the teaching and thus produce positive results to students. It is the development of lecturers who can perceive, understand and aware of applying the learning management methods in order to develop the teaching and learning systematically. The more important is that bringing the new innovation to use in the organization requires the feeling of participation in collaborative learning (Hord et al., 1987). Many researches, for example McDonald and Walters (2009), Kotelawala (2010) and Bowne et al. (2010), reveal that the collaborative learning among lecturers can help developing the learning management skills efficiently through brainstorming and other exchange of ideas among lecturers through collaborative learning. This learning approach is important for developing the learning of teachers because exchanging of knowledge creates positive reactions in developing the skill. The learning by doing together creates the sharing of different perspectives under the atmosphere of collegial culture. This system will improve the success in changing the behavior of the lecturers and leading to actual implementation. Fullan (1990) states that collaborative learning can lead to the reflective approach among lecturers so they can think critically and review of teaching situation in the classroom through the record of discussion among themselves in order to bring the discussion to improve

their teaching techniques. The researches by Tompkins (2009), and Yoon and Kim (2010) on apply the reflective approach method of lecturers/teachers and find that the reflective approach can efficiently increase the teaching skill. Thompson (1992: 139) suggested that teachers participate in facing the problems in teaching and learning by themselves, and they evaluate and reorient their own belief system through reflective approach, which leads to the change in the instructional behavior and the desired learning results.

Such information lead the researcher as well as the lecturers of the Thai language in Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna into an interest on the development of learning management skills that promotes the critical thinking for the Thai Language lecturers. This development is done through the principle of training, collaboration and reflective approach as the guideline for the development of the learning management skills for the lecturers to apply such skill in their learning management in order to promote the critical thinking skill among the students in the college level.

2. Research Questions

1. What is the ideal model to develop the learning management skills to enhance critical thinking skills among the Thai language lecturers in Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna?
2. How are the results of implementing the model of developing the learning management skills that enhance critical thinking skill that affects to the Thai Language lecturers on the knowledge on the learning management that promotes critical thinking skill, ability to prepare the learning management plans, and attitude toward the model of development on the students on critical thinking skill and their opinion toward the learning management?

3. Objectives of the Research

1. To develop the model for constructing the learning management skills that enhance critical thinking skill among the Thai language lecturers in Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna.
2. To study the result of model implementation for developing the learning management skills that enhance critical thinking skill among the Thai language lecturers in Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna.

4. Scope of the Research

Scope of the population

The study population is the group of Thai language lecturers in Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna and the freshmen among bachelor degree students at the college who enroll the Thai Language 1 course in the academic year of 2010.

Scope of the Content

The learning management skills that enhance critical thinking skill of the lecturers covers the general knowledge on learning management that promotes critical thinking skill, the ability to prepare the learning management plans that promote critical thinking skill, and their perspective toward the model of developing the learning management skills.

The Critical thinking among students covers six aspects, which is identifying the problem issue, gathering data, considering the reliability of data and differentiating the data, setting up assumptions, and inferring and evaluating the summary and conclusion.

The opinion/attitude toward the learning management that enhances the ability to think critically covers the opinion toward the aspects of lecturers, contents, learning activity arrangement, instructional media, evaluation and assessment, and opinion towards the whole learning management /arrangement.

5. Research Definitions

The Thai language lecturers mean the lecturers who teach the Thai language 1 course at Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna in six campuses in Chiangmai, Chiangrai, Lampang, Tak, Phitsanulok and Nan.

Thai 1 Course means the course of Thai language 1 which is one of the general compulsory course for the freshmen among bachelor degree students in all majors in Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna. The content contains the skill on communication in Thai language. The objective of the course is the students can act critically upon receiving information.

Critical thinking means thinking carefully through the thinking process of six aspects which are identifying the problem issue, gathering the data, considering on the reliability of the data and differentiating the data, setting up assumption, inferring and evaluating the conclusions based on the data evidence that lead to the consideration, and analyzing, based on the knowledge thought and experience of oneself carefully, to lead to making conclusion and making decision reasonably.

Development Model of Learning Management Skills that Enhance Critical Thinking means the implementation to develop the learning management skills that enhances critical thinking for the Thai language lecturers. It is composed of three steps, which are 1) the training step through the self-directed training and workshop, 2) the monitoring step in the classroom, which is composed of the planning, implementation, observation, and reflection steps, and 3) summary and evaluation steps.

Results of the implementation of the model to develop the learning management skills that enhance critical thinking mean the efficiency of the model to develop the learning management skills that enhances critical thinking. It is as identified as the followings.

Results on lecturers

1. The Thai language lecturers can make the average score on general knowledge on the learning management skills that enhance critical thinking after development (post-test) higher than before the development (pre-test) with measured statistical significance.

2. The Thai language lecturers can together prepare the learning management plans that enhance critical thinking at higher quality than “good” quality level.

3. The Thai language lecturers who attend the learning management skills development express their opinions toward the model of development as “useful” for developing the learning management skills that enhance critical thinking.

Results on the students

1. The students who received impact from the learning management that enhances critical thinking from the Thai language lecturers who had attended the learning management skills development show the average score higher on critical thinking (post-test) than before the learning (pre-test) with good statistical significance.
2. The students express their opinions toward the learning management that enhances critical thinking on agreement at high level.

6. The Benefits of the Research

1. Production of a model for developing the Thai language lecturers of Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna on the aspect of learning management skills that enhances critical thinking
2. Setting a guideline for developing the learning management skills that enhances critical thinking for the Thai language lecturers in the higher education level.
3. Preparing the learning management method for the course of the Thai language that enhances critical thinking for bachelor degree students of Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna.
4. The students who attended the learning management have knowledge and understanding on critical thinking and could bring it to use and apply this concept for studying with other courses and in daily life.
5. Preparing a guideline to study on the development of learning management skills that enhances critical thinking for the lecturers and others who are interested.

7. Conceptual Framework

