FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENT DECISION TO CHOOSE A FACULTY

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ABSTRACT

The process of choosing, being accepted, and matriculating to a university can be a daunting and scary adventure for Thai college freshman. Even more important however, is choosing a field of study, or faculty. This decision to study in a particular field for 4 or more years may actually directly influence the rest of a life of a student. Factors such as family demands, friends' choices, and individual goals as an employee all influence this decision. This study examines how Thai university students choose their faculty and towards the end of their study how they feel about the choice they made.

Keywords:

1) **Faculty** refers to a group of departments within an educational institution, which provides knowledge in a particular subject or group of subjects

2) **Student satisfaction** refers to the level of being satisfied or pleasant feelings that students have toward a faculty.

3) **Future career** refers to a job or a particular occupation which students plan on working after they graduate from a faculty.

1. Introduction

Background and Rational of the Study

Thailand's education is mainly divided into four levels, which are; primary, high school, university, and graduate level. For some students, high school is a critical time in their lives because it is the first step before they face the transition from high school to university. There has been research that utilized the conversion from high school to university as the context for studying the relationship between various emotional and social abilities and academic accomplishment (Parker et. al, 2009, p.165) Thai students have major life decisions to make since the coming results can affect their university lives and whatever they study will most likely be linked to the future career.

2. Research Questions

1. What factors influence NUIC students to choose their faculty?
2. Are students satisfied with major component of their faculty choices?
3. What percentage of NUIC students are planning to work in a field related to their faculty?

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3. Literature Review

There are many different faculties opened for students in Thailand. Each of them provides various curriculums to meet the need of students. Students will choose the faculty, which is suitable for their abilities, and skills or they will choose based on their passions and interests.

Environment

There are many factors that influence students to choose and study. One of them is the environment in their faculties. Butta and Rehmanb suggest that "In this competitive environment only those institutions can excel which are providing quality education and constructive environment to their students, since these factors can influence their choice of admission" (2009,p.5,446). Kardong-Edgren et. al., (2008,p.10) said in their report that the constructive environment was a good factor which was identified by faculty. The environment in the classroom can affect on the productivity of students. They will be more productive if they study in the place, which they feel comfortable with. With the stressful environment, students may feel under pressure and it is hard for them to concentrate and focus on what they are doing.

Peers, staff & lecturers

The students' behaviors likely change due to the people they are surrounded by such as peers, staff and lecturers in the institutions. Peers, staff and lecturers are the important factors that have impacts on students' decisions. Lally and Kerr stated in their report that they mentioned that their peers from the intercollegiate subculture powerfully had an impact on their beliefs and perspectives early in their university careers (2005,p.283). Hanushek et. al., (2006) said that "If innovations to behavior form an important avenue through which peers affect outcomes, the inability to capture such behavior might lead to a serious underestimation of peer influences "(p.542) and "Peer average achievement has a highly significant effect on learning across the test score distribution"(p.542). In 2003 Lundberg said in her report that "A second way student learning may be enhanced is through peer learning" (p.682).

Career options

In 2001 Sabaa suggested that "A career is an evolving sequence of work activities and positions that individuals experience over time as well as the associated attitudes, knowledge and skills they develop throughout their life" (p.2) Work experience is also important for getting a job since it provides opportunities to take on some interesting responsibilities and it also provides a clue for students who do not know what career they want to do in the future. Work experience is a good way for students to explore career options. Edwards and Quinte stated in their report that "Career choice is a complex decision for students since it determines the kind of profession that they intend to pursue in life. As students try to make career choice while in secondary school, they face problem of matching their career choices with their abilities and school performance" (2011, p.81).

Communication

In 2002 Picciano suggested "A student's physical presence in a face-to-face course assumes that she or he has a sense of belonging to the class or group of students enrolled in the course. He or she listens to the discussion and may choose to raise a hand to comment, to answer or to ask a question" (p. 22). Once there is an effective communication occurring in the classroom, students are prone to take part in the activities. The effective communication can bring about clearly understanding to students, so they will do their work correctly. The positive communication can also maintain and create better relationship between students. "there is a strong, positive relationship

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between student perceptions of their interaction in the course and their perceptions of the quality and quantity of their learning" (Picciano,2002,p.28). Once students interact to people that have the same personalities, they can affect communication between them. Zalk et. al., (2009, p. 1155) said in their report that individuals easily become friends if communication is more interesting for them and they think they have something similar

4. Methodology

This was a quantitative study that utilized surveys to collect data. That data was then analyzed by using SPSS. Each participant was taken from Naresuan University and purposive sampling method was used by select participants/students from Naresuan University International College including male and female. The participants were at least 20 years old. We followed Yamane's formula to find out the sample size which was 151 participants.

We focused on the students who are studying in Bachelor degree at NUIC. In 2017, the total amount of third- and fourth-year student who were in an undergraduate academic degree is 242. A 95 % confidence level was used along with 5% or 0.05 as an acceptable sampling error. A likert scale was the instrument used to collect responses.

5. Results and Discussion

For this section, it included determinants that can have impact on student decision to choose a faculty concerning environment, career option, reputation, peer and family, and interest. The result will be described as a descriptive statistic.

Table 1: Student's Satisfaction

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I feel pleasant with my faculty.	151	3.97	0.765
2. I want to graduate from this faculty.	151	4.11	0.913
3. I think that I choose a right faculty.	151	3.83	0.854
4. I can get along with my friends and my lecturers very well.	151	3.74	0.971
5. All people in my faculty treat me well.	151	3.64	0.920
6. Classrooms are well-prepared and appropriate for students.	151	3.67	0.929
7. Courses I have learned are useful and interesting.	151	3.81	0.867
8. My faculty provides all facilities I need.	151	3.61	0.916
Total	**151**	**3.80**	**0.892**

Research Question 1
What factors influence NUIC students to choose their faculty?

The interest of students on faculty was the most influential factor ($\bar{x}$= 3.95, S.D. =0.879). In addition, students also agreed that career option, environment, and reputation were factors that they concerned before they decided to go to a university. ($\bar{x}$= 3.91, S.D.

=0.833), ($\bar{x}$= 3.83, S.D. =0.816), and ($\bar{x}$= 3.59, S.D. =0.970) respectively. However, peer and family seemed not to affect student decision because the ranks of mean score were interpreted as neutral ($\bar{x}$= 3.01, S.D. =1.331) which could have two explanations. The first one was that their friend suggestion and family suggestion might attract them to choose a faculty.

Research Question 2

To what extent students are satisfied with their faculty choice?

Obviously, there were many students (42%) strongly agreed thatthey wanted to graduate from the faculty they were studying. Most students (53 %)expressed the high level of satisfaction for their faculty that they agreed that they felt pleasant with their faculty ($\bar{x}$= 3.97, S.D. = 0.765). In addition, most students(39%) agreed that they could get along with their friends and their lecturers very well. This refered to the relationshio between people in the institution that they could maintain a good connection with each other very well.

Research Question 3

What percentages of NUIC students are planning to work in a field related to their faculty?

The result indicated that most students (83.4%) wanted to work in a field related to their study and they (90.1%) agree that what they have learned can help them make a decision on their future career.

Discussion

These results are very significant to current and future university students in Thailand. Some students may not do enough reseach or planning when they choose a faculty, because when a high school student is 16, 17, or 18 years old, they may not be mature enough to consider all factors involved with such a big decision. This study may help future students reconsider their possible career path, and look at how they can study and obtain a degree they are proud of and can use in the future. Future research could be qualitative in nature, and find more depth and clarity as to perceptions and feelings related to this work, and get the story behind the stats.

6. Conclusion

Limitations

Although the research has reached its aims, there were some unavoidable limitations. Firstly, there was time limitation for collecting all data that was only three weeks. It would be better if it were done in a longer time. Second, this research was conducted only a small size of population who are third- and fourth-year students from Naresuan University International College. Therefore, to generalize the result for larger groups, the study should have had more participants at different level.

Recommendations

This study was conducted with a small group of population and there were only some factors given for collecting the information, so it should have involved more participants and provide more factors so that the result may be more general for other students. Therefore, there will be more other factors that can affect students when they have to start their bachelor degree such as tuition fee and the distance from a house to a university. As a result, if you would like to study further about this, you can add more factors.

Conclusion

In this study, the researcher focused on five factors that are environment, career option, reputation, peer and family, and interest. According to results of research, it was discovered that the interest of students for a specific faculty apparently had the greatest impact on students when they were in the faculty selection process. The environment of the faculty including suitable area, facilities and the relationship could also affect student to choose a faculty since they had to stay in a faculty throughout their university life. Therefore, the environment also had a huge impact on student decision to study at that faculty. In addition, career option also influenced NUIC students to choose this faculty because studying in international program could give them more opportunities to get a good job after they graduate from there.

Some NUIC students may study in this faculty because they knew already about the reputation of this faculty or from others who have known this faculty well. On the other hand, peer and family might not be significant factors that could convince students to choose a faculty because participants might want to create their own direction for their life. However, there were still other factors that could affect student decision when they choose a faculty such as tuition fee and particular skills and talents of students. Essentially most students in this study were happy with their choice, and over 90% feel that this faculty will help them get a job they want and can be happy with in the future.

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