



# Agile Excellence: A Context-Specific Management Model for Private Higher Education in Bangkok

**Ntapat Worapongpat**

*Eastern Institute of Technology Suvarnabhumi (EIT) and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University.*

*\*Corresponding Author, e-mail: [dr.thiwat@gmail.com](mailto:dr.thiwat@gmail.com), ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3071-5249>*

**Samrit Kangpheng**

*Intellectual Teacher Development Unit, Teacher Development Institute, Ministry of Education. Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, Thailand Isan Campus*

*E-mail: [skangpheng@gmail.com](mailto:skangpheng@gmail.com), ORCID RCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6668-6292>*

**Pichit Bhasabutr**

*Eastern Institute of Technology Suvarnabhumi (EIT)*

*E-mail: [Pichit.B@gmail.com](mailto:Pichit.B@gmail.com), ORCID RCID ID <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9070-6599>*

**Ratchyaphon O-sot**

*Siam Technology College*

*E-mail: [ratchyaphono@siamtechno.ac.th](mailto:ratchyaphono@siamtechno.ac.th) ORCID RCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8230-6787>*

**Surang Boonyapongchai**

*Siam Technology College*

*E-mail: [surangb@siamtechno.ac.th](mailto:surangb@siamtechno.ac.th) ORCID RCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5103-4541>*

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## Abstract

**Background and Aim:** Private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Bangkok are vital to Thailand’s knowledge-based economy but face increasing competition and quality challenges. Reports from ONESQA (2023) highlight persistent weaknesses in strategic management, research productivity, and curriculum alignment with international standards. Despite several quality models being proposed (e.g., Chaisawat et al., 2023), there remains a practical gap in integrated, context-specific management frameworks suited to the agility of private colleges. This study aimed to (1) identify key components of excellence management, (2) develop a management guideline tailored to Bangkok’s private HEIs, and (3) evaluate its feasibility and utility.

**Materials and Methods:** A sequential mixed-methods design was applied in three phases. Phase 1 involved quantitative data collection from 350 administrators, analyzed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (principal axis factoring, Promax rotation). Phase 2 employed expert interviews (n=5) to refine and validate the guideline, while Phase 3 conducted pilot testing with 10 administrators. Statistical analyses included KMO, Bartlett’s Test, means ( $\bar{X}$ ), standard deviations (SD), and content analysis. Reliability of instruments was acceptable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha=0.778$ ).

**Results:** Seven management dimensions were identified: Staff Development, Academic and Moral Activities, Student-Centricity, Leadership, External Network Engagement, Excellence Management, and Curriculum Management, explaining 79.41% of total variance. Feasibility ( $\bar{X}=4.56$ ,  $SD=0.44$ ) and utility ( $\bar{X}=4.57$ ,  $SD=0.31$ ) were rated at the highest level.

**Conclusion:** The resulting seven-dimensional management framework offers a practical, evidence-based model to enhance excellence and competitiveness among private HEIs in Bangkok and similar contexts nationwide.

**Keywords:** Private Higher Education Management, Excellence Framework, Quality Assurance, Strategic Management, Bangkok Context

## Introduction

Private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Thailand play an increasingly crucial role in producing skilled graduates, advancing research, and transferring knowledge to society—functions that are essential for the nation’s transition to a knowledge-based economy and the enhancement of global competitiveness (Pintong & Worapongpat, 2024). According to the Ministry of Higher Education,





Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI), more than 70 private HEIs are currently operating nationwide, with the highest concentration in Bangkok, the country's primary educational and economic hub (Office of the Permanent Secretary, MHESI, 2024; Qin et al, 2023). Despite their growing contribution, the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) has highlighted persistent challenges among private HEIs—particularly deficiencies in strategic management, quality assurance, faculty development, and alignment between curricula, labor market needs, and international standards (Thammajai & Worapongpat, 2024).

While previous research has emphasized integrated management and continuous quality improvement models for higher education (Weiyi et al, 2024), gaps remain in the practical application of such frameworks, particularly in the establishment of industry-academia collaboration and international partnership networks that drive sustainable institutional excellence (Worapongpat, 2025a). In Bangkok, where most private colleges are concentrated, competition is intense in the domains of teaching quality, research productivity, and community engagement (Worapongpat, 2025b). Empirical fieldwork and qualitative observations by the researcher revealed that while these institutions exhibit administrative agility and curriculum innovation, they face limitations in systematic quality management, digital integration, staff competency development, and external collaboration (Worapongpat, 2025d).

To conceptualize this issue, the present study adopts Total Quality Management (TQM) as its theoretical foundation, integrating key principles—continuous improvement, customer (student) focus, leadership commitment, process management, and evidence-based decision-making—within the specific operational context of private HEIs in Bangkok. TQM provides a holistic framework for achieving institutional excellence through participatory leadership, data-driven planning, and stakeholder-centered quality assurance (Deming, 1986; Juran, 1998; Oakland, 2014). Additionally, the study aligns its conceptual framework with Thailand's EdPEX (Education Criteria for Performance Excellence) and AUN-QA (ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance) models to benchmark international and national quality standards, highlighting areas where private HEIs demonstrate readiness gaps and implementation constraints.

Given the researcher's professional experience with strategic planning and internal quality assurance in private colleges, the need for a systematic, evidence-based management guideline tailored to Bangkok's dynamic educational ecosystem became evident (Worapongpat, 2025e).

Accordingly, this research aims to: Analyze the key components of management for private higher education colleges in Bangkok towards excellence; Develop a management guideline for private colleges towards excellence; and evaluate the implementation outcomes of the developed guideline. A Mixed Methods approach was employed in three phases: (1) quantitative analysis of management components; (2) expert focus group development of the management guideline; and (3) pilot implementation and evaluation. The findings are expected to contribute both practical and theoretical insights for administrative development in private HEIs, inform policy formulation in higher education management, and support Thailand's progression towards globally competitive, quality-driven higher education.

## Objectives

1. To analyze the components of management for achieving excellence in private higher education colleges in Bangkok.
2. To develop a management guideline for private higher education colleges in Bangkok towards excellence.
3. To evaluate the perceived feasibility and utility of the developed management guideline for private higher education colleges in Bangkok.

## Literature review

### 1. Studies on Higher Education Institutional Management

Effective higher education management is multidimensional, encompassing strategic leadership, academic quality assurance, human resource development, and responsiveness to labor market needs





(Bush & Middlewood, 2019; Marginson, 2022). International research highlights that universities achieving sustained excellence integrate transformational leadership, participatory decision-making, and evidence-based management systems (Bryson, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2023). These frameworks emphasize the interplay between academic autonomy and accountability, linking governance and institutional performance.

In Thailand, Worapongpat (2025f, 2025g) and Worapongpat & Arunyanon (2025) similarly underscore that leadership vision, continuous staff development, and market-responsive curricula are central to institutional effectiveness. However, most Thai studies focus primarily on public universities or K–12 educational institutions, with limited exploration of private HEIs, which operate under distinct financial models, governance structures, and accountability pressures (Worapongpat, Arunyanon, & Rianwilairat, 2025). Consequently, there remains insufficient empirical evidence on the management dynamics unique to private colleges in Thailand’s urban higher education landscape.

## **2. Private College Management in Thailand**

Thailand’s private higher education sector has expanded rapidly over the past two decades, yet concerns persist regarding strategic management, research capability, and quality assurance compliance (Office of the Permanent Secretary, MHESI, 2024; ONESQA, 2023). Studies applying Total Quality Management (TQM) principles to private HEIs (Worapongpat, Deepimay, & Kangpheng, 2025; Sallis, 2015) demonstrate potential for administrative improvement and curriculum modernization. However, traditional TQM approaches—rooted in industrial contexts (Deming, 1986; Juran, 1998)—are often criticized as procedural and outdated when applied to today’s knowledge-driven academic institutions (Harvey & Williams, 2020).

Contemporary research integrates TQM with higher education governance models such as the Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (EdPEX) and ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) frameworks, emphasizing leadership, stakeholder satisfaction, and process alignment (Oakland, 2014). Yet these frameworks remain largely standardized rubrics rather than empirically validated management models suited to local institutional contexts. Prior Thai studies reveal limited attention to how TQM principles can be contextualized for Bangkok’s private colleges—where resource constraints, digitalization needs, and internationalization pressures intersect (Worapongpat & Kanokon, 2025; Worapongpat & Kangpheng, 2025).

## **3. Collaboration and Partnerships in the Educational Context**

Global scholarship increasingly recognizes that inter-institutional collaboration and industry partnerships are essential drivers of higher education excellence (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2020; Marginson, 2023). Collaborative governance enhances innovation capacity, research productivity, and community engagement through what has been termed the “networked university model.” Studies by Worapongpat (2025i, 2025j) and Worapongpat, Thavisin, & Viphoouparakhot (2024) also highlight collaboration as a determinant of institutional success. Nevertheless, the Thai literature rarely explicates the mechanisms, governance structures, or sustainability strategies underpinning such partnerships—particularly in the private sector, where autonomy, resource dependency, and market orientation differ substantially from public HEIs (Yasuttamathada & Worapongpat, 2025).

## **4. Synthesis and Knowledge Gap**

The reviewed literature reveals several key insights: Leadership and staff development remain critical but underexplored in private HEIs. TQM-based management frameworks have been applied but insufficiently contextualized for Bangkok’s private education environment. Collaborative and digital transformation strategies are increasingly vital yet not systematically embedded in Thai private college management studies. Collectively, these findings indicate a significant knowledge gap: despite the existence of EdPEX and AUN-QA frameworks, there is no empirically derived, context-specific management model tailored to the unique structural and operational conditions of private HEIs in Bangkok. This study, therefore, integrates management theories (governance, transformational leadership, and networked collaboration) with TQM principles to develop a holistic management guideline, empirically validated through expert evaluation and pilot testing in the real-world context of Bangkok’s private higher education institutions (Zhou, Worapongpat, & Liuyue, 2024).





## Conceptual Framework

This research conceptualizes institutional excellence in private higher education colleges through an integrated framework that draws upon Total Quality Management (TQM) principles (Bartol & Martin, 1998; Lunenberg & Ornstein, 2004), the Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (EdPEX), the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) model, and Salmi's (2009) framework for world-class universities. Beyond these, the framework reflects insights from contemporary higher education management literature emphasizing governance, performance management, stakeholder co-production, and public-private sector dynamics (Marginson, 2022; Bleiklie & Kogan, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023).

### Independent Variables

1. Strategic Excellence Management
2. Learner-Centered and Competency-Based Education (Faculty and Staff Development)
3. Curriculum and Academic Standards Management
4. Academic and Administrative Leadership
5. Academic-Industry-Community Engagement
6. Research, Innovation, and Community Services

### Dependent Variable

1. Quality Operations
2. Teaching
3. Management

## Methodology

### Research Design:

A sequential mixed-methods design was employed, comprising three distinct phases. Each phase informed the next, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to develop and evaluate a context-specific management guideline.

### Phase 1 – Component Analysis (Quantitative):

-Population & Sample: Senior and middle-level administrators (presidents, vice presidents, deans, department heads) from private colleges in Bangkok.

-Sample Size:  $N = 350$  ( $\geq 10 \times$  the number of variables, 35 items).

-Sampling Method: Multi-stage random sampling, stratified by institution, faculty, and department.

- Instrument: Questionnaire with three parts:

1. Demographic information (closed-ended).
2. 30-item, Five-point Likert Scale covering seven management components (e.g., Strategic Management, Curriculum, Research & Innovation, Staff Development, Leadership, Collaboration, Community Service).
3. Open-ended suggestions on excellence management.

Data Analysis: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring and Promax rotation. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity assessed sampling adequacy. Items retained if loading  $\geq 0.40$ .

### Phase 2 – Guideline Development (Qualitative):

-Participants: Five experts selected via purposive sampling based on doctoral qualifications, administrative experience  $\geq 3$  years, and expertise in private higher education management in Bangkok.

-Instrument: Semi-structured interview protocol with two parts:

- Expert background (open-ended).
- Evaluation of draft guideline using a Five-point Rating Scale (scored 1–5).

-Data Analysis: Qualitative synthesis of expert interviews to refine the seven components into a preliminary management guideline. Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and SD reported for expert evaluation scores.





**Phase 3 – Pilot Testing and Evaluation (Quantitative & Qualitative):**

- Participants: 10 administrators from 1–2 private colleges in Bangkok, selected via purposive sampling.
  - Procedure: Three-month pilot implementation (second and third semesters of 2024).
  - Instrument: Assessment form measuring Feasibility and Utility (Five-point Likert Scale), plus open-ended feedback.
  - Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics (Mean  $\bar{X}$ , SD) and content analysis of qualitative feedback.
  - Instrument Quality Assurance:
    - Content validity assessed via Instrument Content Validity Index (IOC): Questionnaire = 0.87, Interview Protocol = 0.90, Pilot Assessment Form = 1.00.
    - Reliability: Cronbach’s alpha for main questionnaire = 0.778 (acceptable).
  - Mixed-Methods Rationale:
    - The sequential design allows:
      - 1.Phase 1 EFA to identify latent management components.
      - 2.Phase 2 expert synthesis to refine components and develop the guideline.
      - 3.Phase 3 pilot testing to assess feasibility, utility, and practical applicability.
- This approach ensures both empirical rigor and contextual relevance for private HEIs in Bangkok.

**Results**

1. Analysis of Management Components for Excellence

The first objective of this study was to analyze the key components of management for excellence in private higher education colleges in Bangkok.

1.1 Preliminary Assumption Testing for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity.

Table 1: Data Adequacy Assessment for Excellence Management Components

| Instrument                                  | No. of Items | KMO  | Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ( $\chi^2$ ) | df  | Sig. |
|---|--------------|------|--|-----|------|
| Private Higher Education College Management | 40           | .842 | 18,529.425                                 | 780 | .000 |

The results indicate that the data are highly suitable for EFA. The KMO value (.842) exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.60, and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity is statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), confirming sufficient inter-correlations among variables for factor extraction.

1.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis

The EFA initially extracted eight components with eigenvalues greater than 1.00, explaining 79.414% of the total variance. Rotation using Varimax Orthogonal method redistributed variance to facilitate interpretation.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained by Extracted Components

| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|           | Total               | % of Variance                       | Cumulative %                      |
| 1         | 15.728              | 33.926                              | 33.926                            |
| 2         | 8.258               | 17.813                              | 51.739                            |
| 3         | 3.036               | 6.549                               | 58.288                            |
| 4         | 2.568               | 5.540                               | 63.828                            |
| 5         | 2.314               | 4.991                               | 68.819                            |
| 6         | 2.051               | 4.424                               | 73.243                            |





| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings |
|-----------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 7         | 1.553               | 3.349                               | 76.592                            |
| 8         | 1.308               | 2.821                               | 79.414                            |

### 1.3 Component Refinement

Based on factor loadings (>0.20) and statistical criteria, the initial eight factors were conceptually refined into seven core management components, as Component 8 did not meet the minimum criteria of  $\geq 3$  variables.

Table 3: Core Management Components and Factor Loadings

| Component No. | Component Name              | Key Variables (Code)                                       | Factor Loading Range | Conceptual Focus                                       |
|---------------|-----------------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| 1             | Staff Development           | AE18, AE16, AE17, AE23, AE15, AE21, AE22, AE20, AE13, AE19 | 0.487–0.886          | Continuous enhancement of academic and support staff   |
| 2             | Academic & Moral Activities | AE39, AE37, AE40, AE38, AE30, AE36                         | 0.616–0.889          | Academic excellence and student ethical development    |
| 3             | Student-Centricity          | AE12, AE09, AE11, AE10, AE08, AE07                         | 0.544–0.849          | Instruction designed for diverse learner needs         |
| 4             | Leadership                  | AE26, AE27, AE28, AE25, AE29                               | 0.548–0.834          | Strategic and visionary leadership of administrators   |
| 5             | External Network Engagement | AE35, AE34, AE33, AE32, AE31                               | 0.493–0.770          | Collaboration with industry, community, and government |
| 6             | Excellence Management       | AE01, AE05, AE03, AE02                                     | 0.629–0.827          | Systems and processes for efficiency and quality       |
| 7             | Curriculum Management       | AE14, AE06, AE04   | 0.425–0.598          | Curriculum modernization and labor market alignment    |

Note: AE24 was excluded due to insufficient factor loading.

## 2. Evaluation of the Management Guideline

The developed guideline was piloted with 10 administrators to assess feasibility and utility.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Evaluation Level of Guideline

| Evaluation Item                           | Feasibility (X̄) | SD   | Level   | Utility (X̄) | SD   | Level   |
|---|------------------|------|---------|--------------|------|---------|
| 1. Introduction (Principles & Objectives) | 4.63             | 0.32 | Highest | 4.59         | 0.30 | Highest |
| 2. Content (7 Components, 39 Methods)     | 4.60             | 0.68 | Highest | 4.54         | 0.33 | Highest |
| 3. Conditions for Success (4 Dimensions)  | 4.50             | 0.37 | Highest | 4.58         | 0.32 | Highest |
| 4. Expected Outcomes (5 Dimensions)       | 4.50             | 0.37 | Highest | 4.56         | 0.28 | Highest |
| Overall Average                           | 4.56             | 0.44 | Highest | 4.57         | 0.31 | Highest |

### Summary:

- All sections achieved the Highest Level, indicating strong feasibility and practical utility.
- The seven management components and 39 methods were rated as comprehensive and implementable.





- Conditions for success and expected outcomes aligned well with the institutional goals for excellence.

The guideline demonstrates high suitability for enhancing administrative quality in private higher education colleges in Bangkok and can serve as a robust model for other institutions in Thailand.

## Discussion

### 1. Components of Excellence Management

The findings indicate that excellence management in private higher education colleges involves multiple critical dimensions, including Staff Development, Leadership, Curriculum Management, and External Network Engagement. These components collectively enhance administrative capacity and positively influence overall educational quality. The multidimensional nature of excellence management reflects the challenging and competitive environment of private colleges in Bangkok, which necessitates a comprehensive and integrated approach to achieve sustainable institutional excellence. These results align with contemporary management paradigms emphasizing the harmonious coordination of organizational elements (Bai, Wang, Alam, Gul, & Wang, 2022). In particular, staff development is highlighted as a pivotal factor for improving institutional performance and quality (Chao & Worapongpat, 2024).

### 2. Development of the Management Guideline

The developed management guideline was found to be highly appropriate and context-specific for private colleges in Bangkok. Its emphasis on fostering collaboration among administrators, staff, and students, as well as promoting activities responsive to societal and labor market needs, demonstrates its practical relevance. The guideline's effectiveness is attributed to its foundation in real-world insights and input from experienced local practitioners. These findings are consistent with strategic management theory and the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), which stress the importance of committed leadership and the integration of organizational components as key drivers of success (Chayboonkrong & Worapongpat, 2024; Jianfeng & Worapongpat, 2024).

### 3. Evaluation of Guideline Implementation

The pilot evaluation revealed that the guideline exhibits high feasibility and utility, with overall ratings at the Highest Level for both appropriateness and implementation effectiveness. The success of the guideline can be attributed to its user-centric design and inherent flexibility, enabling adaptation across diverse institutional contexts. These results corroborate previous studies suggesting that well-designed, contextually relevant, and adaptable management frameworks significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education administration (Kasalak, Güneri, Ehtiyar, Apaydin, & Türker, 2022; Makjod, Worapongpat, Kangpheng, & Bhasabutr, 2025).

In conclusion, the discussion highlights the significance of a multidimensional, evidence-based, and adaptable approach to excellence management in private higher education institutions, reinforcing both theoretical and practical implications for administrators in Bangkok and similar contexts.

## Knowledge Contribution

The study on excellence management in private higher education colleges in Bangkok yielded new knowledge, which can be summarized by the structural model shown in Figure 2:



## Knowledge Contribution:

### Excellence Management in Private Higher Education Colleges in Bangkok



Figure 2: Conceptual Structure and Interrelationship of the Management Guideline Components for Private Higher Education Colleges in Bangkok Towards Excellence

These components operate synergistically to enhance administrative efficiency, foster continuous improvement, and support sustained institutional performance. The research contributes a context-specific, empirically validated framework that integrates principles from TQM, strategic management, and higher education quality standards (e.g., AUN-QA, EdPEX), thereby bridging theory and practice in the management of private HEIs.

### Recommendation

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

#### 1. Recommendations for Practical Application

1.1 For Administrators in Private Higher Education: To foster organizational excellence and ongoing quality improvement, it is advised that administrators modify and use the defined management guidelines to fit their unique institutional contexts. Additionally, it should be a top priority to provide staff with ongoing training and capacity building so they can effectively address the problems and changes in education today.

1.2 For Policymakers and Relevant Agencies: Research and the creation of management recommendations specific to private HEIs are encouraged. To improve institutional strength and market competitiveness, special attention should be given to encouraging and enabling collaboration between colleges and both domestic and international partners.

1.3 For Practitioners and College Staff: Staff should endeavor to grasp and internalize the defined management guidelines. In order to foster a sense of shared ownership and common responsibility in advancing the college toward greatness, active involvement in the ongoing development and improvement of administrative systems is also essential.

#### 2. Recommendations for Future Research

An important novel finding of this study was the creation of management guidelines for private HEIs in Bangkok that are contextually appropriate. Future studies should expand on this basis by carrying out additional in-depth qualitative research to investigate the viewpoints and experiences of



staff, students, and administrators in private HEIs to get more varied and thorough data. Looking more closely at certain elements that affect management excellence, like risk management, instructional marketing, and the strategic use of digital technologies. A more comprehensive and up-to-date administrative framework will result from this. With an emphasis on successful technology integration and the development of strategic partnerships, this model's applicability should be extended and evaluated in other private universities under comparable circumstances.

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