

## ABSTRACT

**Title** : Strategies and Management Systems for Student Retention at Suranaree University of Technology  
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As the first public autonomous university in Thailand which emphasizes on science and technology curriculums, Suranaree University of Technology (SUT) has recognized the importance of the student retention and implemented various measurements to increase the student retention rate. However, in order to obtain effective strategies, measurements and administrative systems for the student retention, SUT has approved the research proposal entitled “Strategies and Management Systems for Student Retention at Suranaree University of Technology”. The main objectives of this research work are: (1) to systematically study aspects and issues related to the student retention in higher-education institutions abroad and in Thailand; (2) to study factors affecting student retention at SUT, using both qualitative and quantitative statistical methods; (3) to propose and validate structural equation model for the student retention at SUT; and (4) to suggest effective strategies, measurements and management systems suitable and applicable for the student retention at SUT.

The research report on “Strategies and Management Systems for Student Retention at Suranaree University of Technology” consists of three major parts; (1) analyses and discussions on research publications on student retention in higher-education institutions abroad and in Thailand; (2) construction and validation of the structural equation model for the student retention at SUT; and (3) suggestion of strategies, measurements and management systems suitable and applicable for the student retention at SUT. The results are summarized as follows.

Analyses of relevant research publications showed that higher-education institutions in the developed countries, such as in the United States, United Kingdom

and Australia, have recognized the problems of student retention and developed various strategies and measurements to improve the student retention rate at the institutional, program and student levels. Studies have shown that, at the institutional level, providing students with appropriate academic and non-academic environments could positively encourage students to persist with their studies and at the same time help develop their personalities. Whereas at the student and curriculum levels, research results have consistently indicated that academic achievement, reflected for example from GPA, and the self-regulated learning (SRL) are positively related and the issues of particular interest are the learning behavior and the life style of students.

Models and theories to explain factors affecting student persistence have been put forward, among which the model proposed by Tinto (1975) represents one of the most important theoretical foundations. Tinto (1993) showed that the student's decision to persist or dropout is directly influenced by their institutional and goal commitment, which could be evaluated from student characteristics and the interactions with the social and academic environments of the institution. Tinto (1975) concluded that the student's commitment to the goal of completing a higher education degree is one of the most influential factors for persistence and the level of the student's integration into the social and academic systems plays an important role. Tinto's theory has received much attention and his structural equation model for student retention has been widely accepted, further developed and tested extensively in various countries.

In the present work, based on the model proposed by Tinto, a structural equation model for the student retention at SUT was developed, in which the student retention is measured by seven factors: (1) *student's demography* (2) *education goal and institutional commitment*; (3) *education strategy*; (4) *social integration*; (5) *academic integration*; (6) *learning motivation*; and (7) *learning efficacy*. The statistical analyses showed that the proposed model is valid and fitted quite well with the empirical data. The results also indicated that, in the context of SUT, *education goal and institutional commitment* was the only direct factor influencing student retention, whereas *social integration* and *academic integration* indirectly affected student retention.

Based on the analyses of the research publications and the results of the structural equation model, vision and strategies for the student retention at SUT were proposed, with four important objectives; (1) to retain students while maintaining high-academic quality; (2) to develop and establish effective, integrated management systems for quality student retention processes; (3) to increase the student retention rate at SUT while maintaining high-academic quality through the self-regulated learning processes and high quality services; and (4) to create environments and cultures in the institution which support proactive and participatory student retention processes at all levels in the institution, e.g. the attitude of “students come first”.

According to the vision, objectives, administrative systems and organization cultures of SUT, the following six student retention strategies were established: (1) proactive student recruitment and management in the transition period; (2) increasing the degree of student’s commitments to education goal and institution; (3) creating appropriate environment and systems to support academic development of students; (4) creating appropriate environment and systems to support social and personality development of students; (5) creating student’s motivation to develop their potential through the self-regulated learning processes; and (6) creating appropriate physical structures, academic atmospheres, and effective administrative systems for quality services. Based on the vision, objectives and strategies, the researcher suggested an administrative system for the student retention at SUT, with examples of responsive persons and units, which can be modified, customized and improved upon changing circumstances. The researcher believes that, by improving and strengthening of the quality of education and services, integration of all academic and non-academic activities and service units concerning with the student retention, and proactive participations of personnel at all levels, SUT could achieve the goals of student retentions within a short time.