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**An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Business  
Simulation Course at Payap University**

**Srisuda Sae Lee**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education**

**Faculty of Education  
Launceston, University of Tasmania**

**June, 2005**

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## **DECLARATION**

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Srisuda Sae Lee

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## ABSTRACT

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Recent educational reform in Thailand has recognised the importance of a student-centred approach to learning. This change of emphasis reflects a global trend to prepare high level graduates who can meet the present and future needs of communities in general and of business in particular. By meeting the challenges presented by globalisation, Thai universities can grow and thrive in a new economic era, which is characterised by constant change and ever-increasing educational demands. Courses which prepare students to meet the practical demands of the workplace are being introduced in universities worldwide. To test whether experiential learning is practicable in a university learning environment, a Business Simulation Course (BSC) at Payap University was evaluated. The course is intended to facilitate business students' learning, by integrating theory with practice, which involves students working in 'real-life' business contexts.

The study data were collected from three sample groups of stakeholders. Stakeholders sampled included: BSC students, staff members at Payap University and non-university respondents who included villager leaders, parents of students, suppliers and policy-makers. Eighty respondents were surveyed by questionnaire, and 20 respondents were interviewed. The data were collected during the second semester of the 2003 academic year. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data were undertaken, in addition to a review of relevant literature. In this study, a 'grounded theory' approach used the modified 'Constant Comparative Method' as a means of both data collection and data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998b).

The findings of the study indicated that the course is an effective means of linking theory with practice by experiential learning. Stakeholders expressed the view that practical courses such as the BSC helped students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills and gave them the necessary experience to work co-operatively in a 'real' business world. However, non-university stakeholders were more in agreement with this point than students and staff. The data also indicated that students tended to prefer classroom learning by case study to learning-by-doing in a

'bona fide' business setting. The reasons given for this were that stress levels were higher for students in experiential learning, largely due to the extra demands on their time and the added pressure of teamwork. In addition, increased resourcing of the course was seen as necessary to produce more effective teaching and learning outcomes in the BSC. The data also indicated that stakeholders believed that working in the community context is an important focus of the university because each institution is part of a unique local community. Also, all stakeholders recognised that business ethics are an important aspect of business life, which should be incorporated in the curriculum. However, students, staff and non-university stakeholders all agreed that learning in a simulated business environment is useful for future employment, because it allows students to experience 'real-life' business problems and develop solutions to them.

Thus the study provides valuable feedback from stakeholders in the BSC. This is useful as part of the process of improving curriculum design as it closes the loop between purpose —implementation — review of the course. This feedback enables faculty staff at Payap University responsible for curriculum design and implementation to refine their activities in courses such as the BSC. Feedback is also provided in the term of useful practical and theoretical advice to the university sector. Finally, policy-makers senior bureaucrats and high level administrators in government will also benefit from the insights provided by this study.

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## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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BHERT	Business/Higher Education Round Table
BSC	Business Simulation Course at Payap University
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
MOE	Ministry of Education (Thailand)
MUA	Ministry of University Affairs
NUS	Non-University Stakeholder
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONEC	Office of the National Education Commission (Thailand)
OTOP	One Tambon (sub-district) One Product (Product Community)
PBL	Problem-based Learning
PDC	Payap Dummy Company
PYU	Payap University
UNESCO	The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCHE	World Conference of Higher Education