

# Chapter I

## Introduction

### 1.1 Statement of the Problems

The English Program schools (EPs), particularly Montfort College, Secondary Section's EP, Chiang Mai Province, Thailand has been faced with variety of problems in regard to managing a cross-cultural workforce of the Western staff: include British, American, and Australian teachers; the Eastern staff: include Chinese, Indian, Filipino, and Thai teachers and administrators. This cultural mix has resulted in a difficult situation due to personnel management problems, which are generally related to, differences in cultures, life style, background, knowledge, experience, and so on. Thus, there has been a large communication gap, and misunderstandings frequently occur, leading to problems in the workplace.

This example situation illustrates the influence of globalization as it affects every part of an organization. Even at a school, a small organization could not only be impacted by such problems, but also could be used as an example of how to manage problems concerning human resources.

In the world today organizations have to deal with the challenges of managing a diverse workforce, due to expansion of labor mobility in the global economy and business diversity. In addition, many organizations today are struggling with problems caused by cultural diversity. While organizations are becoming more diverse, there is an increase of cultural issues occurring in the workforce. This is a very complex and difficult issue to deal with. It shows that the diverse workforce management is a serious problem for countries that have their own languages and cultures; especially organizations in Thailand.

As commerce becomes globalized, there will be greater numbers of people conducting businesses across national and cultural boundaries. The influence of diversity presents new challenges for businesses and managers within organizations due to the workplace including people with different backgrounds, (Goodman *et al.*,

2007, p. 14). Culture-clashes will continue to impact all aspects of international business (Frey-Ridgway, 1997). The view of diversity has dramatically changed to a more proactive concept. Many business leaders are now beginning to believe that diversity is important because a business with a more diverse workforce can more effectively understand and meet the needs of a rapidly growing base of minority consumers (Allen *et al.*, 2004).

The report “Internationalization Development of Thailand’s Higher Education: Positioning Thailand as an International Education Center for The ASEAN Region” states that “Technological advancement and trade investment liberalization under the World Trade Organization (WTO) framework have prompted Thailand to play a more active role regionally and internationally. The former Ministry of University Affairs (MUA) which has been changed to Commission on Higher Education has taken the initiative to formulate Thailand’s First Long-range Plan for Higher Education Development (1990-2004) with more proactive and dynamic approach in responding to a changing environment. The Long-range Plan emphasizes five major dimensions of higher education development: 1) access and equality; 2) efficiency and accountability; 3) quality and excellence; 4) internationalization and regionalization; and 5) privatization and corporatization (Chang, 2009).

With the rapid movement of globalization, international collaborative relationships amongst nations are highly valued. Internationalization and regionalization projects have been launched to meet the expected demand. The underlying strategies are to promote international education programs and encourage staff and student exchange programs within foreign institutions. International Programs have been widely encouraged to promote International Education in Thailand. As a result, the number of international programs taught at Thai Higher Education Institutions has increased considerably. At present, both Thai public and private universities offer altogether 520 international programs using English as a medium of instruction at both undergraduate and graduate levels:

- 176 undergraduate programs in 107 fields of study in 31 universities
- 217 master’s degree programs in 174 fields of study in 29 universities
- 127 doctoral degree programs in 108 fields of study in 18 universities.”

(Chang, 2009).

In summary, the International Programs must truly reflect the international aspects in the program quality and the efficiency of the program's administration, the curriculum structure, the instructors, the student body, the academic leaning environment, international staff, cultural diversities, facilities and services.

The need for improved English skills has arisen in schools because of the impact of Positioning Thailand as an International Education Center of the ASEAN Region. Thus, there is the Requirement of Ministry of Education 1065/2001 in terms of Policy, Principle, and Process of teaching and Learning' Management of the Ministry of Education's curriculum in English: To enhance Teaching and Learning in English of school/institute both government and private sectors with quality, equality, fairness and according to principles and objectives of the curriculum and the government policy. At present, there are many English Programs (EPs) in schools throughout Thailand, specifically in 2009, there were 204 English Programs (EPs), in private schools. The English Program is now divided into two types: first: private schools offer 142 EPs and vocational colleges offer 6 EPs; second: government schools offer 56 EPs (the Requirement of the Ministry of Education 1065/2001). This has lead to competition among English Programs (EPs) in schools in order to produce sustainable programs. Therefore, managing a workforce of diverse cultures in organization should be taken into consideration for effective management.

Moreover, the National Economic and Social Development (NESDB) plan of Thailand sees Chiang Mai as the center of the northern region affected by globalization. Chiang Mai will be the center of the international trade market and will increasingly attract foreign investment. In other words, regional trade and investment liberalization affects an increase in regional intra-industry trade, which in turn helps all countries in the region to grow together and generate larger flows of foreign investment within the region (Webster, 2006). Meanwhile, diversity management is gaining increasing attention due to globalization and the concomitant need for organizations to reach customers and employees across the world (Saji, 2004). With the effects of the impact as mentioned above, many school directors in Chiang Mai have urgently implemented the new education strategies preparing for the expansion in trade and economy of the northern region. At present, there are a number of English Programs in Northern Part of Thailand; Chiang Mai Province offers 7 EPs in

private schools, 3 EPs in government schools, and 6 international schools (Chiang Mai Educational Office Area 1).

As consequences, in today's climate of international's collaboration it is important for children to receive quality language teaching from a very early age. EPs, in which English is used as the teaching language, are of great interest to both students and parents. Thai Language (both a way of teaching and its structure) is so different from the English language (way of teaching) that it has become necessary to recruit foreign teachers from overseas to teach in the EP. Therefore, it is a challenge for the administrators of schools with a diverse cultural workforce to develop suitable strategies that both support their employees and develop their organization (Carvel, 2001). A cross-cultural workforce, when managed properly, can also improve organizational productivity and creativity tremendously. There are the potential for both high levels of accomplishment and for unavoidable conflicts in managing a cross-cultural workforce (Reichenberg, 2001).

According to the regulations of the Ministry of Education, all EPs in schools throughout Thailand must employ only native speakers to teach English and Foreign teachers to teach other subjects in English. Some schools opt for having both Thai and Foreign teachers to teach together as co-teachers in each subject, except in Thai, and Thai culture. Consequently, there are a variety of foreign staff in the EPs, especially the EP at Montfort College, which is comprised of Western staff (British, American, and Australian) and Eastern staff (Chinese, Indian, Filipinos, and Thai). Management of such a cross-cultural workforce can be quite complicated and difficult.

In addition, the teaching system of Montfort College is comprised of two sections: one is a Regular Program (RP) which teaches most of the subjects in Thai, (except English), the other is an English Program which uses English as the medium of teaching, except for Thai Language and Thai Culture). Therefore, the organizational structure of the school is mixture of a Regular Program (RG) and an English Program (EP). Moreover, the inclusion of the EP into the school system has made the management of the school more complicated, and this has an effect on the performance of other school members. Due to the school's organizational (Figure 1.1), the main administration is run by administrative staff of the RG, so the management of the EP depends on the RG's administrators. Importantly, almost all

administrative staff: Head of each departments, Assistants of each departments, Head Department of Sciences, Mathematics, Foreign Languages, Social sciences, Thai Language and Culture, Physical Education, Vocational and Technology, and Art rarely if ever deal with the EP staff directly. They always manage the EP separately from the RG, for example when Thai staff has a meeting the foreign staff is not invited. So, they expect that Thai teaching staff of the EP will inform the foreign staff; meanwhile Western staff, Eastern staff, and Thai staff seldom talk together, even they are teaching partners. Possible causes are differences in work load and different rates of salary. Thus, in the separate groups have become isolate (Figure 1.1).

Importantly, foreign staff both Western and Eastern feel that their position entails an unclear job description, with duties and responsibilities not clearly defined: for example, they are sometimes told to join the RG activities, sometimes not. They rarely know the school's plans; they know only what they are told by the Head of EP or by issued documents. When they ask questions, the administrative staff usually gives vague or unclear answers, and when foreign staff asks Thai staff most of them generally say "I have no idea.", "I don't know.", or "you should ask administrators." Furthermore, the administrative staff never visits the EP office, so both administrators and the EP staff have a communication gap. More importantly, when either Western staff or Eastern staff submits suggestions for developing the EP, they never receive responses from the administrators.

Thus, the management of this school has unknowingly caused the organizational performance problems which, as time goes by, have become more and more noticeable. The situation in the EP has resulted in responsibility conflicts, communication gap, work relationship problems, and curriculum conflicts. This in turn has led to a misunderstanding between personnel, especially with the foreign teachers and has caused a tendency to protectiveness in their over time.

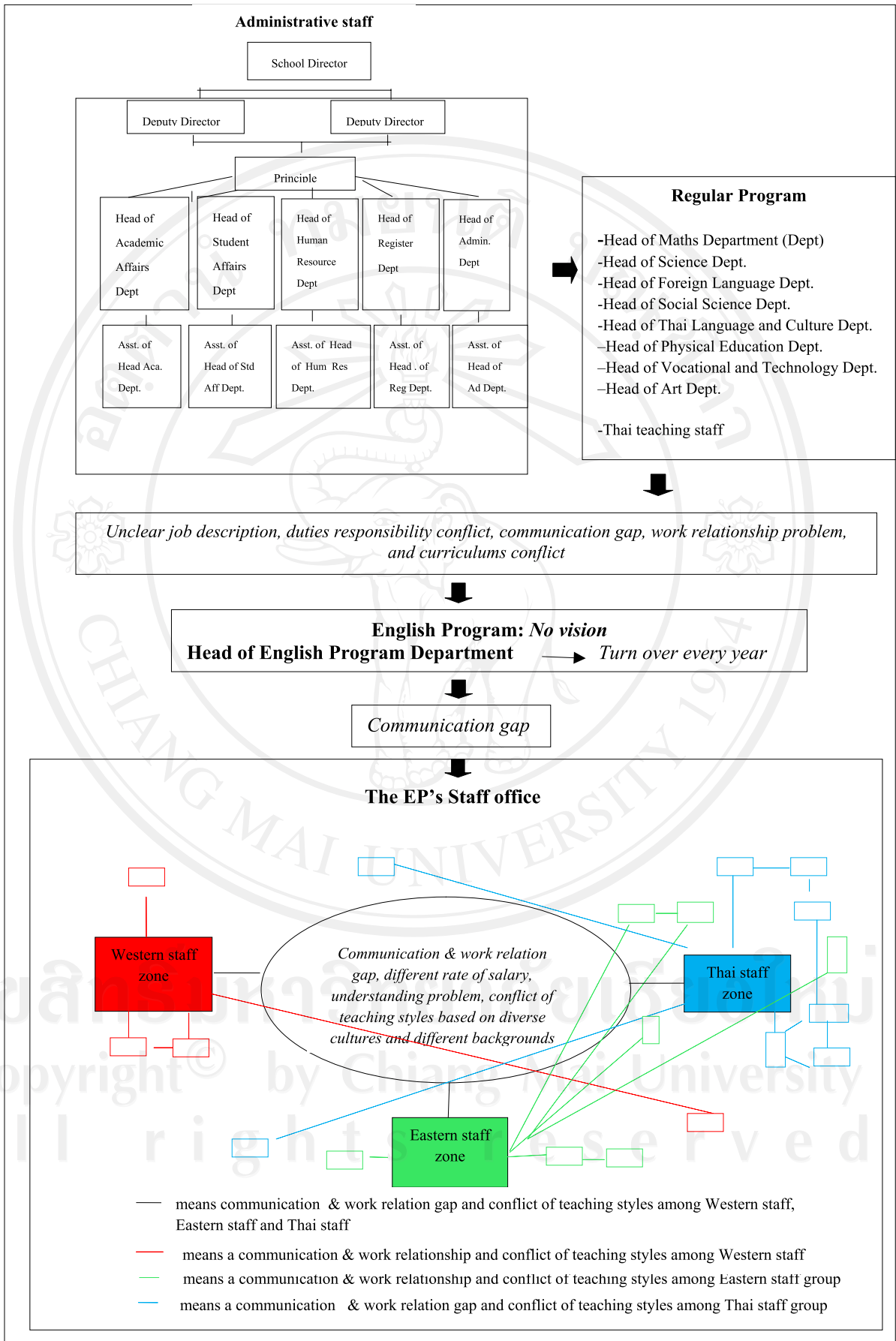
However, some administrative staffs recognize the need to change but still hesitate to take action or rather, don't have enough courage. The logic behind global advertising appeals is based on the premise that cultural value systems are converging (Watson *et al.*, 2002). However, organizational development can still respond to the recognition of specific problems (Williams, 2005). Managing a cross-cultural workforce is difficult, especially for managers of today's diverse workforce. The

positive and negative outcomes of addressing diversity are all challenges for an EP. Cultural diversity within such organizations should be taken into consideration and effectively managed (Seymen, 2006).

Since the EPs were opened, they have encountered myriads of problems in regards to personnel. The barriers to effective EP management have arisen meetings of administrative staff and have concerned foreign and Thai staff, and parents' delegates together with petition letters of the teaching staff to the administrators. Important problems that occur are related to leaders and the cultural differences that create misunderstandings and miscommunication between the administration and the staff, and this in turn affects the performance of the EP. Most importantly, the EP not have its own vision, and this causes the staff to be unclear as to the focus and direction of their works. Study of the problems from 2004 to the present show that the major problems identified derives from barriers to cross-cultural work relationships.

In summary, managing a cross-cultural workforce and the work relationship problems of the EP staff through cross-cultural barriers are major hurdles in the management of the EP. This also agrees with the idea that communication and management risks also account for societal concerns and values. Perception risk also has a direct impact on how each person responds to risk management activities (Frewer, 2004).

In addition, most members in the leadership team as well as Thai staff in the EP are quite weak in English communicative skills. The lack of sufficient language skills in multicultural environments is a significant barrier to building adequate mutual understanding and cooperation for the smooth operation of a multicultural organization. Communicating inter-culturally will aid in managing a diverse



**Figure 1.1:** The situation of English Program

workforce (Henry & Evans, 2007). Human errors cause a communication gap and misunderstandings among administrators and EP staff. This has resulted in foreign staff being confused concerning their duties. Due to this critical issue, most of the foreign staff does not understand how to respond, participate, or develop a sense of belonging to school activities. Moreover, they are often blamed for being unable to learn and adapt. This represents a negative perception that makes them appear unfit as team members/workers. More importantly, the EP staff's actions are over-protective and work relationship gaps that generates conflicts due to three different rates of salary for native speaking staff; Eastern staff; and Thai staff, thus making an already difficult situation; even more difficult to resolve. These are all related barriers to managing a cross-cultural workforce relationship in the EP that have become more and more relevant through increasing internationalization and that have implications for a number of different parties, due to the EP has high turnover administer and teaching staffs. For example, the head of the EP Department is changed every year. There were eleven Western staff and Eastern staff who have resigned in the last three years.

The author has conducted a preliminary study and identified problems concerning the management of the English programs in the private schools, especially Montfort College, Secondary Section. This study found that the major and important barrier is cross-cultural communication. Moreover, the author further investigated the key problems based on cross-cultural communication in the EP in three other schools, in Chiang Mai Province. The findings indicate that the most significant problem in the EP management in terms of cross-cultural communication is defensive routines. Importantly, the author also investigated the root causes of problems based on cross-cultural communication in the EP at Montfort College, Secondary Section, which is a case study of this research. The finding reveals that *work relationship* is the main problems of the EP management.

A major goal of the research will be to identify the most suitable Knowledge Management (KM) tools such as *ba* (Nonaka *et al.* (2000)). This method includes such ideas as a shared space for emerging relationships, which can be physical (e.g., an office, a room, a forum, conference room etc.) mental (e.g., shared experiences, ideas, knowledge etc.), virtual (e.g., computer, teleconference, e-mail, etc.). To participate in



a *ba* is to get involved and transcend one's own limited perspective or boundary. Within an organization, *ba* is an interactive opportunity for individuals to play key roles in value creation as teams. Thus, *ba* is a time-space connection as much as a shared mental space and the related human experience space, where individuals are held together through shared emotions, mutual recognition, shared values and actions (Nonaka *et al.*, 2000).

Moreover, this study also applies CommonKADS knowledge engineering methodology, which is focused on OM-1, OM-5, and OTAM-1 worksheets (Schreiber, *et al.*, 2000). It is an organization model that will serve as a feasibility study for improving the system. The study is conducted based on problems and opportunities; it can focus on such areas as: structure, process, people, culture and human power bases, resources, process breakdowns and knowledge assets. The organizational model serves three main purposes: the identification of the area in an organization where knowledge-based application can be implemented, the identification of what impact the knowledge-based application will have in the organization when it is implemented, and where in the organization the applications will be deployed (Schreiber *et al.*, 2000).

Therefore, KM tools and techniques, originating *ba* and dialoguing *ba*; knowledge sharing, Knowledge Engineering methodology: CommonKADS may help engender a positive cross-cultural environment that enables solving of problems in the English Program at Montfort College, Secondary Section.

## 1.2 Objectives of the study

There are four objectives of this study:

1. To identify and specify problems among cross-cultural workforce in extension of the English Program in Thai private school as a case study at Montfort College, Secondary Section, Chiang Mai Province.

2. To apply KM tool and technique for formulating problems and suggestions for solving the English Program management.

3. To design solution such as building shared vision by the EP staff: Western, Eastern, and administrators for the effective management of the relationship in a cross-cultural environment.

4. To find out the outcome from the designed building shared vision.

### 1.3 Research Questions

In order to solve the teachers' relationship problems and create a beneficially friendly atmosphere in the EP through cross-cultural communication, the utilization of KM tools and techniques will be created as a model to produce effectiveness in managing a multi-cultural workforce relationship.

There are four key questions that need to be answered:

1. What are managing cross-cultural workforce problems in the English Program at Montfort College, Secondary Section, Chiang Mai Province?
2. How to solve the English Program management based on problems and suggestions from the EP staff?
3. What is the appropriate type of shared vision technique for effectively managing work relationship in cross cultural-environment?
4. What is the outcome from the designed building shared vision such a shared vision implementation?

### 1.4 Scope of the study:

#### 1.4.1 A case study at Montfort College, Secondary Section's English Program.

Montfort College is a private school, established in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 1932. Montfort upholds these principles:

- Our ultimate goal is to know the truth and apply it to our daily life.
- Labor omnia vincit - diligence conquers all.

A Montfortian does all for God. Montfort supports students' self-development, believing that all are capable of phutha, or enlightenment and awareness of all things. Montfort and other schools have the duty to integrate students into society and help them relate with other people. The ideal society is one where justice, peace, and

freedom prevail.

Montfort aims to produce students with the following qualities:

- Fulfilled. Developed in all areas—knowledge, physical, spiritual, social.
- Warm. Friendly, trustful, reliable.
- Generous. Helpful in all situations, giving to others and society.
- Moral, Joyful, and good to others.
- Well rounded. Skillful, knowledgeable, efficient, and sociable.

It was initially a boy's school. Girls are now admitted to grades 10 to 12. The school has 4,684 students —2,298 in the primary and 2,386 in the secondary section—and over 400 teachers, 50 of whom are non-Thai. English, French, Chinese, and Japanese are taught. The school structure is divided into four key stages: the first three years in elementary school, Prathom 1 - 3, are for age groups 6 to 8, the second level, Prathom 4 through 6 are for age groups 9 to 11, the third level, Matthayom 1 - 3, is for age groups 12 to 14. The upper secondary level of schooling consists of Matthayom 4 – 6. The school year in Thailand is divided into two semesters, and for primary and secondary schools generally begins on or around 15 May and end in October for the first semester; and begins again in November and end in March for the second semester.

The former director of the schools long ago realized the importance of the English language as a major core subject in school. It has been a compulsory subject at varying levels for several decades. Since 2004 schools have been encouraged to establish English Program (EP) departments where the subjects are taught in English. The EP has opened in four grades: the first stage is Prathom 1; the second stage is Prathom 4; the third stage is Mattayom 1; and the fourth stage is Mattayom 4.

Since the EP was opened, there have been problems due to personnel management. In addition, this school has two Programs: Regular Program (RG) and EP, and since both are in the same organizational structure, this makes it complicated in terms of management. Therefore, the EP has been misinterpreted by other teachers as another channel to become admitted into the RG. This problem is worsened by the fact that throughout the six years of operation, the English Program has witnessed six heads of program and many changes of teaching staff. Some teachers just chose to

resign, some the school chose not to renew the contract and still others just stopped coming to school without informing the school.

At the teaching staff level, the school chose to appoint an American who knew very little about the Thai curriculum and who had no experience administering a teaching staff. To make the matter worse this person promised things that couldn't be delivered, which caused many parents to complain bitterly. Appointment of personnel is often carried out in the manner of 'first come, first served'. Some teachers who are employed later are better qualified than the Head of the Program. Most of the teaching staff does not understand the way the school is run. They thought that they should be given information in a timely manner, as in Western schools, and when this doesn't happen they complain long and hard. Another point that causes dissatisfaction among the teaching staff is how the salaries are assigned. The native speakers, such as Western staff: Americans, British, Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders enjoy the highest pay rate, then the other nationalities with non-native speaker: Eastern staff such as Chinese, Indian, and Filipino less than Western staff. Thai staff, meanwhile, feels that they do most of the duties but receives the lowest salary.

The most importantly difficulty seems to lie in communication among administrators, foreign staff (Western staff & Eastern staff) and local Thai of various departments of the school. This is not only due to the limited knowledge of English of the Thai staff, but also to the way administrators and leaders of each subject department communicate to the EP staff (by using documents, not two ways communication). Only recently have things improved with the appointment of a particular person to act as a go-between. Still, some of the foreign teachers cannot adapt themselves to the working atmosphere of a Thai school. Most foreign staffs (Western and Eastern staff) complain about school policies, about an unclear job description; duties and responsibilities; and the mixing of the Thai curriculum (RG) and the EP curriculum, and so on.

All these problems impact on management of the English Program. Due to these serious problems, the author selects Montfort College, Secondary Section's English Program as a case study for this research.

#### 1.4.2 Scope of population and sampling group

The population and sample group of this study relates to as the following:

1) Administrators, who deal with the EP of Montfort College, Secondary Section, Chiang Mai Province. They are 5 *administrative staff* and their positions: 1 Head of the EP Department, 1 Head of Academic Affairs, 1 Assistant Head of Academic Affairs, 1 Head of Students Affairs, and 1 Assistant Head of Students Affairs.

2) The English Program staff of Montfort College, Secondary Section, Chiang Mai Province which comprises of seven nationalities with 21 *teaching staff*: \ with 5 Western teachers: 2 British, 2 American, 1 Australian; 16 East-Asian teachers: 1 Chinese, 1 Indian, 6 Filipino, and 8 Thai. They are English Program's teachers and also stay in the same office. They all teach students who enroll in this Program. In addition, they are also classroom teachers who have to look after the students and work together, sharing their knowledge, and experience for integrating their subject with classroom activities.

#### 1.5 Definition

1. **English Program** is a program which manages to organize teaching both in English and Thai languages for students who enrol in this program.

2. **English Program management** means an educational administrator who guides, facilitates, and supports the success of all staffs by managing operations and resources to provide efficient, and effective cross-cultural learning environment.

3. **Cross-cultural communication** is an interaction of staff in each organization, which concerns language, communication and culture in terms of understanding, concepts, perceptions, and trust.

4. **Diverse workforce management** is dealing with international diverse individuals in the workplace which bases on open communication and cultural differences that will enable leaders to serve as change agents to maximize the benefits of culturally diverse workforce.

5. **Work relationship** is the way of interaction between two people or groups who feel and behave in work towards each other in their organization.

6. **Management** is getting work done through others which is concerned with efficiency and effectiveness in the work process.

7. **Knowledge Management (KM)** is the art of creating value from organization's knowledge asset which is transferred and shared from one person to the others in the workplace. It is also transferred and shared knowledge and experiences together in terms of cross-cultural relationship environment.

8. **Building shared Vision** is creating a shared picture of the future's and translating it into a feasibility organizational vision in terms of a set of principles and essences level based on guiding practices.