

Modern Education and Social Dynamics: Internationalisation, Technology, and Community Development

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Abstract

Thailand has become one of Southeast Asia's more consequential meeting points between global higher education and local social change. This editorial introduces Volume 2, Issue 1 of the International Journal of Social Sciences and Business Research, and reads its contributions through a single organising idea: that contemporary education and social dynamics are best understood together rather than apart. Three pillars structure the argument — the internationalisation of higher education and the cross-cultural experience it produces, the integration of digital and artificial-intelligence technologies into teaching and administration, and the evolving social and consumer dynamics of an ageing, digitally connected society. Each pillar is represented by empirical work in this issue, and each converges on Thailand as an educational hub. Taken together, the studies suggest that internationalisation, technology, and community development are not parallel trends but mutually conditioning forces, and that the most pressing questions for educators and policymakers concern the connections between them rather than any one in isolation.

Keywords: internationalization, artificial intelligence, learning management systems, cross-cultural adaptation, ageing society, Thailand

Introduction: Education and Society in a Regional Hub

Few countries illustrate the entanglement of education and social change as vividly as Thailand. Once chiefly a sender and transit point for students moving within the region, it has become a destination in its own right, drawing scholars — Chinese students most visibly — into its universities at the very moment its own society is undergoing a demographic transition of unusual speed. This issue of the International Journal of Social Sciences and Business Research gathers work that sits at exactly this intersection, and the editorial that introduces it takes a deliberate position: the papers are more illuminating in conversation than in isolation.

The organising idea is set out in Figure 1. Three pillars — internationalisation and cultural integration, technological and educational innovation, and evolving local social dynamics — are treated not as separate research silos but as forces that converge on a single site, Thailand as an educational hub. Internationalisation defines who now populates Thai classrooms and administrative offices; technology reshapes how those classrooms and offices function; and the surrounding society, ageing and heavily mediated, alters both the community into which graduates move and the market that universities serve. The convergence is the point. A university recruiting Chinese postgraduates, deploying an artificial-intelligence layer in its learning management system, and operating in a city whose over-sixties are its fastest-growing cohort is managing all three pressures at once, and it experiences them as a single problem of adaptation rather than as three tidy research questions.

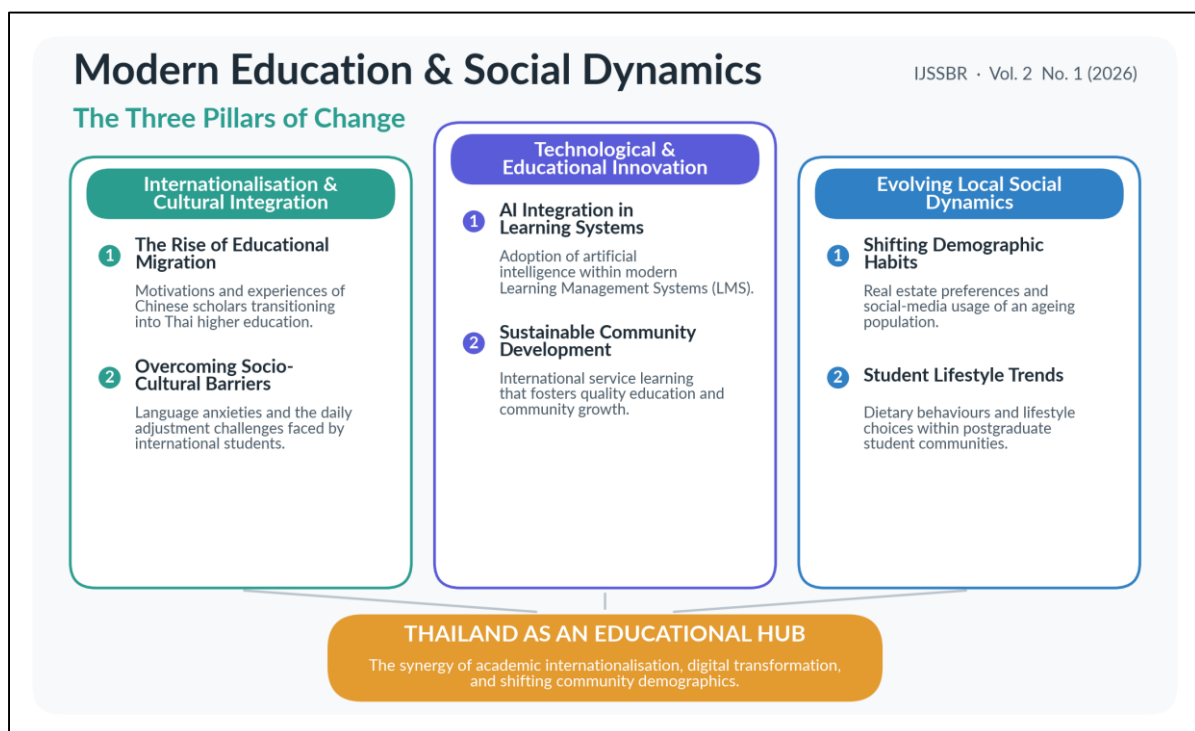


Figure 1. Modern education and social dynamics: the three pillars of change converging on Thailand as an educational hub.

Internationalisation, in Knight's (2004) still-serviceable definition, is the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of higher education. In the Thai case the process carries a demographic driver that celebratory accounts rarely acknowledge: a shrinking domestic cohort. As the birth rate falls and the population ages, universities face declining home enrolments and turn outward, and the regional supply of mobile Chinese students meets that need (Siricharoen, 2023). What looks

like an educational strategy is therefore also a response to social change — the first of many places in this issue where the classroom and the wider society prove impossible to separate.

This editorial proceeds through the three pillars in turn, drawing on the studies collected here and on the wider scholarship each engages, before returning to the hub that binds them. The aim is not to summarise every paper but to explain why they belong in the same volume.

This journal's remit spans the social sciences and business research, and the present issue is deliberately interdisciplinary in a way that remit invites. Educational migration is at once a sociological phenomenon and a market; the adoption of learning technologies is a question of pedagogy and of institutional management; an ageing society is a social fact with sizeable commercial consequences. Reading the collection across these registers, rather than confining each paper to a single discipline, is not an editorial indulgence but a fairer reflection of how the phenomena actually behave.

The First Pillar: Internationalisation and Cultural Integration

The first pillar concerns who moves, why they move, and at what personal cost the move is made. Educational migration into Thailand is now substantial enough to reshape institutional strategy, but its human texture is easily lost in enrolment statistics. Two of this issue's contributions insist on that texture, and they are best read against the motivations that bring students in the first place.

The rise of educational migration

Chinese students constitute the largest single group of international enrolments in Thai higher education, and their motivations are more varied than the familiar narrative of overflow from an intensely competitive home system. Siricharoen (2023), studying Chinese undergraduates and doctoral candidates in Bangkok, found their choices shaped by affordability, cultural and linguistic proximity, and the specific opportunity to acquire language and teaching experience, rather than by academic pressure alone. A contribution to the present issue, examining the motivations of Chinese students enrolling in international programmes in Thailand, extends this picture and complicates any single-factor account. Motivation matters here for more than description: what students expect on arrival conditions how they interpret the difficulties that follow, so the push and pull that bring a scholar to Bangkok are also the frame through which early disappointment or resilience is understood.

The scale of this movement lends the human stories their weight. Chinese enrolments in Thai higher education numbered in the tens of thousands by the early 2020s and have continued to climb, concentrated in private institutions for which international recruitment has become a matter of financial survival rather than prestige (Siricharoen, 2023). Thailand's ambition to position itself as a regional education hub thus rests on a foundation that is partly demographic accident and partly deliberate strategy, and the distinction matters for policy. A hub built chiefly to offset falling domestic demand will be tempted to treat international students as a revenue stream; a hub built as genuine internationalisation, in Knight's (2004) sense, must instead integrate an intercultural dimension into its purpose and its delivery. That difference is felt most acutely by the students themselves, and it is their experience that the following contributions document.

Overcoming socio-cultural barriers

Arrival is where motivation meets friction. Language is the most immediate site of that friction, and it is rarely a purely linguistic matter. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) established foreign-language anxiety as a distinct construct — a complex of self-perception, belief, and feeling specific to the language classroom rather than a simple deficit of proficiency — and their framing remains indispensable for understanding why capable students freeze in an unfamiliar tongue. A study in this issue takes up precisely this theme, examining anxiety and mental health in English-language learning among Chinese students at a Thai public university, and in doing so links a well-known pedagogical construct to the broader question of student wellbeing.

Beyond the classroom lies the slower work of sociocultural adjustment. Ward and Kennedy (1999) drew a durable distinction between psychological adaptation, which concerns emotional wellbeing, and sociocultural adaptation, which concerns the practical competence to manage daily life in a new setting; the two follow different trajectories and respond to different kinds of support. Berry's (1997) account of acculturation adds that adjustment is not a single scale from distress to comfort but a set of strategies — integration, assimilation, separation, marginalisation — that migrants adopt in negotiating heritage and host cultures. A further contribution to this issue, tracing the everyday negotiation of language, food, and transportation among Chinese students in Thailand, gives these abstractions their concrete form: adaptation is enacted in the market, on the bus, and at the dinner table, not merely felt. Read through Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, and Todman's (2008) synthesis, which recasts culture shock as a learnable process spanning affect, behaviour, and cognition, the practical lesson for institutions

is clear. Sociocultural competence can be taught, and support that treats language anxiety and daily adjustment as related rather than separate problems is likely to do more than either a language centre or a counselling service acting alone.

It is worth dwelling on what these adjustment difficulties imply for institutional responsibility. When language anxiety shades into persistent distress, the matter ceases to be pedagogical and becomes one of duty of care. Ward and Kennedy's (1999) separation of psychological from sociocultural adaptation is useful precisely here: a student may achieve competent daily functioning while remaining emotionally unsettled, so that the outward markers of adjustment can mask genuine need. The contribution in this issue on anxiety and mental health among Chinese learners is therefore not a niche wellbeing study but a signal to any institution that recruits internationally. Support conceived only as language provision, or only as counselling, will miss the students who fall between the two, and the transnational setting — where help-seeking norms themselves differ across cultures — makes that gap wider still.

The Second Pillar: Technological and Educational Innovation

If internationalisation changes who is in the room, technology changes what the room can do. The second pillar covers both the digital instruments of modern education and the pedagogies that put learning to social use, and this issue speaks to each.

AI integration in learning systems

Artificial intelligence embedded in learning management systems has moved quickly from novelty to infrastructure. The evidence for its benefits is now reasonably settled: in a systematic review of 148 studies, Msambwa, Wen, and Daniel (2025) found that AI tools strengthen personalisation, assessment, and engagement, while cautioning that these gains depend on preserving a balance between automated and human interaction. What sustains adoption, however, is less the technology than the trust placed in it. Baig and Yadegaridehkordi (2025) identified ethical considerations and data security as decisive for continued use of generative AI among academic staff, and Mexhuani (2025), combining acceptance and diffusion theories, showed that enthusiasm routinely coexists with faculty resistance and privacy concern. Awashreh (2025) sharpens the warning, treating algorithmic bias and over-reliance as governance problems rather than technical footnotes.

A study in this issue turns this literature towards a group it usually overlooks. Where most research examines students or faculty, the contribution on perceptions of AI-enhanced learning management systems in smart higher education administration examines administrators — the actors who set policy and allocate resources. Its finding is instructive: strong endorsement of the enabling conditions for adoption, from policy and training to ethical safeguards, sits alongside markedly weaker confidence that institutions are actually ready to implement them. That readiness gap is the administrative counterpart to the adjustment gap international students describe. In both, aspiration outruns preparedness, and in both the remedy lies less in exhortation than in patient institutional work.

The promise of AI in education is shadowed by a familiar risk. Every efficiency it offers can widen a gap as readily as close one, since the institutions and individuals best placed to exploit a new tool are rarely those most in need of it. Awashreh (2025) frames this as a question of equity and accountability rather than performance, and Mexhuani (2025) shows that the barriers to adoption are as much social — faculty confidence, institutional culture, trust in data handling — as technical. In a hub serving a linguistically and culturally mixed student body, these cautions acquire additional force: a system trained on one population's language and behaviour may serve another poorly, quietly reproducing disadvantage under the appearance of neutral automation. The administrators' readiness gap, seen in this light, reflects a reasonable intuition that adopting the technology is the easy part and governing it fairly is the hard one.

Sustainable community development

Technology is only one face of educational innovation; pedagogy is the other, and the most socially ambitious pedagogies push learning outward into the community. International service learning, which pairs academic study with structured community engagement across borders, has become a favoured vehicle for this ambition. Rodríguez-Zurita, Jaya-Montalvo, Moreira-Arboleda, Raya-Diez, and Carrión-Mero (2025), reviewing a large body of work, trace a decisive shift from curriculum development towards education explicitly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, and identify experiential, community-engaged approaches as effective means of building sustainability competence. In a hub such as Thailand the appeal is twofold. Service learning advances the fourth Sustainable Development Goal of inclusive, quality education, and it does integrative work besides, placing international and domestic students in shared civic projects that convert the abstract virtue of internationalisation into concrete local benefit.

The Third Pillar: Evolving Local Social Dynamics

Universities do not sit apart from the society around them, and the third pillar attends to that society directly. Two demographic facts dominate it: Thailand is ageing rapidly, and it is intensely digitally connected. Both reshape consumption, community, and everyday life, and both bear on the institutions that educate the country's young.

Shifting demographic habits

Thailand crossed into 'aged society' status in the mid-2020s, with more than a fifth of its population over sixty, and the shift is already visible in housing and consumption. Boonpan and Boonyachut (2024), studying accommodation for Bangkok's self-reliant elderly, describe a market moving towards value-driven, active-ageing housing that supports independence rather than merely providing care — a reconfiguration of real-estate preference that has few precedents in the country's recent history. Older Thais are also, increasingly, online. Kusumota and colleagues (2022) found that social-media use among older adults can reduce loneliness and social isolation and sustain family contact, even as the evidence remains mixed and largely cross-sectional. Contributions to this issue on the real-estate preferences and social-media habits of an ageing population document this transformation in the Thai setting, and in doing so remind us that the digital fluency universities cultivate in the young is now spreading, unevenly, across the generations.

These shifts are not only social but commercial, and they fall squarely within this journal's business-research remit. An ageing population is the engine of what is increasingly called the silver economy — the expanding market in housing, health services, financial products, and consumer goods designed for older adults. The reorientation of real estate that Boonpan and Boonyachut (2024) describe is one visible edge of a much larger reallocation of demand, and the migration of older Thais onto social platforms opens fresh channels for reaching a cohort that business has historically underserved. For universities, the silver economy is also a curricular and research opportunity: the same demographic pressure that reshapes their enrolments generates demand for expertise in gerontology, healthcare management, and age-friendly design that their graduates are well placed to supply.

Student lifestyle trends

At the other end of the age distribution, the everyday choices of student communities offer a different window onto social change. Diet is a revealing case. Aboueldahab, Vanutelli, D'Addario, and Steca (2026), surveying more than fifteen hundred university students, found

food choice governed less by nutritional knowledge than by taste, convenience, cost, and context, with markedly lower consumption of healthier foods inside institutional canteens than outside them. A contribution to this issue on the lifestyle and dietary behaviours of postgraduate students brings this line of inquiry into the Thai context, where the pressures of graduate study meet a fast-changing food environment. What appears at first to be a narrow question of nutrition opens onto a broader one about how consumer culture, convenience, and identity shape the habits of educated young adults — the same young adults whose international peers, examined under the first pillar, are simultaneously renegotiating food and daily life as newcomers.

The dietary evidence, finally, should be read with both caution and seriousness. Much of it, like the work on older adults' digital lives, remains cross-sectional, so claims about cause must stay modest. Yet the finding that convenience, cost, and context outweigh knowledge in shaping what students eat (Aboueldahab et al., 2026) carries a clear institutional lesson: changing the food environment on campus is likely to achieve more than exhorting students to choose better. For a postgraduate population already managing the demands of advanced study, the design of everyday choice architecture — what is available, affordable, and close to hand — is a quiet but real determinant of wellbeing.

Convergence: Thailand as an Educational Hub

Set side by side, the three pillars reveal connections that none displays alone. The most striking is a recurring structural gap between aspiration and readiness. International students arrive motivated yet unprepared for the daily work of adjustment; administrators endorse AI adoption yet doubt their institutions can deliver it; ageing consumers embrace digital life yet the housing and services around them lag behind. In each case a genuine appetite for change runs ahead of the capacity to absorb it, and in each the productive response is the same — deliberate, staged support rather than either enthusiasm or resistance.

A second thread is pervasive digital mediation. The learning management system of the second pillar, the social-media platforms through which older Thais stay connected, and the online information environment in which students choose programmes and even meals are versions of one phenomenon. Digital tools now sit between people and the institutions that serve them, which means that questions of access, literacy, and trust cut across education, consumption, and community rather than belonging to any single domain.

Underlying both is demography. The ageing that reshapes Thailand's housing and consumer markets is the same force that thins domestic university enrolments and drives the internationalisation of the first pillar; the digital fluency that transforms older adults' social lives is continuous with the technological adoption that preoccupies the second. Read this way, the issue's apparently disparate subjects — a Chinese student's language anxiety, an administrator's caution about AI, an older couple's move to active-ageing housing, a postgraduate's convenience diet — are facets of a single social transformation in which education is both agent and object.

There is, running beneath all three pillars, an economic logic that this journal's business orientation brings into focus. Higher education is among Thailand's more promising service exports, and its expansion is financed in significant part by international tuition; the adoption of educational technology is a capital and management decision as much as a pedagogical one; and the ageing society that thins domestic enrolments simultaneously creates the silver-economy markets into which universities can teach and research. Education, technology, and demography are bound together not only by social meaning but by money, and treating them as a single strategic problem is as much a matter of institutional finance as of educational philosophy.

For educators, the implication is that student support, technological investment, and community engagement should be designed together rather than commissioned as separate projects; a service-learning programme that also builds AI literacy and eases cross-cultural adjustment does more than three initiatives pursued in parallel. For policymakers, the internationalisation of higher education, the governance of educational technology, and the response to an ageing society are not three portfolios but one, and coherence among them is the real prize. For social scientists, the issue argues for studying education and community as a coupled system, since the most interesting questions — like the most stubborn problems — live in the connections rather than in the categories.

Concluding Remarks

The contributions to this issue can be read singly, and each rewards that reading. They can also be read together, as this editorial has urged, as evidence that internationalisation, technology, and social change in contemporary Thailand form a single, tightly woven fabric. Seen from the educational hub at their centre, the migrating student, the cautious administrator, the connected retiree, and the time-pressed postgraduate are not unrelated subjects but

neighbours in the same transformation. The journal offers this volume to educators, policymakers, and social scientists in that spirit — as an invitation to think across the boundaries that ordinarily keep these conversations apart, and to attend to the connections on which effective, humane, and sustainable change depends.

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