

The 21st-Century Professional Leadership Standards of Secondary School Administrators in Nakhon Nayok, Thailand

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Abstract

The 21st Century has brought a lot of challenges in developing the professional leadership characteristics of school leaders. Their roles are no longer limited in implementing educational policies and objectives but have become responsible for raising the generations and qualifying them in a rapidly changing era. However, in Thailand, it was observed that there were Thai principals and school leaders who were not adequately trained for school leadership.

This descriptive research surveyed the profile of the school administrators of secondary schools in Nakhon Nayok, Thailand as well as their level of practice of the 21st-Century professional leadership standards. A questionnaire checklist adapted from the frameworks of Kelly Lambert (2001) and The Wallace Foundation (2013) was used to gather data.

Data analysis showed that the school administrators are females, with master's degrees, 55 years and older, and have few years of administrative experience. Further, they highly practiced the different 21st-century professional leadership standards; however, these were not influenced by their profile. Lastly, it was found out that there were no significant differences in the level of practice of the different 21st-century professional leadership standards as indicated by the profile indicators of the school administrators.

Keywords: cultural, human resource, instructional, managerial, professional leadership standards, school administrators, strategic

1. Introduction

The 21st century has brought heightened expectations and mounting demands for school administrators particularly those working in the multicultural environment of international schools in the global context (Yusoff, Manaf, & Halim, 2009). According to a study conducted by Think Strategic (2001), 21st-century school leaders face the challenging task of molding the minds of young learners positively, think strategically about the school goals to achieve them, and consistently hold group members to high standards of performance.

One kind of leadership that has constantly been pressured to deliver are school principals whose roles are no longer limited in implementing educational policies and objectives but have become responsible for raising the generations and qualifying them in a rapid changing era. However, there no specific leadership styles and strategies identified to be more effective than other strategies. It all depends on the learning environment, the school administrators' personality, experience and training, social and economic context, technology, and others.

Professional standards for principals have been developed, and benchmarking and comparison are at the heart of the new performance assessment (Møller, 2009). Leadership standards are particularly important in decision making. After a decision is made, an organization faces the problem of implementation on how to get things done in timely and effective way. Implementation is concerned with leadership standards on how leader influences behaviour, changes the course of event, and overcomes resistance. They are crucial in implementing decisions successfully and affect the methods of teaching of teachers, administrators and the decision-making process in the management of the school. On the other hand, school improvement is greatly affected by leadership standards for administrators to contribute greatly to the direction that schools take in achieving their goals.

It has been observed in Thailand that there were Thai school administrators who were inadequately trained for school leadership. This resulted to poor performance due to lack of strategies in management and knowledge to govern an organization which negatively affects education in particular and national development in general. In the context of Nakhon Nayok, observation revealed that some administrators who still used traditional approaches of leadership which were no longer in sync with dynamic educational demands of the present. And due to the demands of globalization, The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) integration and technology advancement in education, school administrators need to develop the desired 21st Century professional leadership standards which prompted the researcher in conducting the study.

2. Methods and Materials

This was a descriptive research which surveyed the level of practice of the 21st-century professional leadership standards among secondary school administrators from selected secondary schools in Nakhon Nayok, Thailand. The 100 school administrators consisted of the directors, assistant directors, headmasters, assistant headmaster, principals and department heads.

Utilizing a questionnaire checklist adapted from the frameworks of Kelly Lambert (2001) and The Wallace Foundation (2013), determined the demographic profile of the respondents which included age, gender, educational attainment and years of experience. This questionnaire was translated into Thai and being tested for face validity and reliability through Cronbach Alpha. On the other hand, the 21st-century professional leadership standards included strategic, instructional, cultural, human resource, and managerial.

3. Results

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

The school administrators of selected secondary schools of Nakhon Nayok, Thailand are females, with master's degrees, aged 55 years and older and with 5 to 10 years of administrative experience. This implies that women school administrators in the secondary schools in Nakhon Nayok, Thailand has broken traditional male dominance in leadership, however, Barbuto, Fritz, Matkin and Marx (2007) found out that gender produced a small direct effect on leadership behaviors. Moreover, the school administrators possessing post-baccalaureate degrees ushers better leadership performance as Reyes (2018) cited that their advanced knowledge gives them greater in-depth and analytical knowledge and that educational attainment positively predicts managerial performance. Having a few years of administrative experience could have resulted in the inadequacy of necessary leadership skills since work experience provides tacit, practical knowledge less frequently provided by formal education (Reyes, 2018).

3.2 Level of Practice of 21st Century Professional Leadership Standards

The table below illustrates that the school administrators perceived that they have a high level of practice in the different strands of professional leadership standards with an overall mean of 4.03. Specifically, they perceived that they have a high level of practice in strategic leadership with a mean of 4.10. Being a strategic leader, one fills the gap between the need for new possibilities and the need for practicality by providing a prescriptive set of habits and Elenkov, Judge and Wright (2005) found out that strategic leadership behaviors have a strong positive relationship with executive influence. On the other hand, the school administrators perceived that they have a high level of practice in cultural leadership. This kind of leadership is needed in organizations with diverse populations because this is about developing the relationships leaders need to progress in their careers, through the creation of professional networks, mentoring programs and collaborative projects.

3.3 Relationship Between the Profile of the School Administrators and Their Level of Practice of the 21st Century Professional Leadership Standards

Data analysis using spearman rho found out that the level of practice of 21st-century professional leadership standards by the school administrators is independent of their age, gender, educational attainment and years of experience. Data analysis showed that the school administrators are females, with master's degrees, 55 years and older, and have few years of administrative experience. This negated the findings of Selvarajah, Meyer and Donovan (2013) that age and gender were demonstrated as key differentiating factors in the perceptions of Thai managers with regards to the demonstration of the professional leadership standards. Moreover, these findings disagreed with Taylor (1998) when he found out that gender, age, and education predicted a significant magnitude of team effectiveness.

3.4 Differences Among the 21st-Century Professional Leadership Standards of School Administrators when Grouped According to Their Profile

Analysis of variance showed that there were no statistically significant differences between and among the different levels of practice of strategic, instructional, cultural, human resource and managerial leadership when grouped according to age, gender, educational attainment, and administrative experience.

Table 1. Level of practice of 21st-century professional leadership standards

21st Century Professional Leadership Standards	Mean	sd	Description
1) Strategic Leadership	4.10	0.680	High
2) Instructional Leadership	4.08	0.742	High
3) Cultural Leadership	3.96	0.820	High
4) Human Resource Leadership	4.01	0.847	High
5) Managerial Leadership	3.98	0.777	High
Overall Mean	4.03	0.773	High

Note. Scale: 4.50 to 5.00 means Very High; 3.50 to 4.49 signifies High; 2.50 to 3.49 interprets Moderate; 1.50 to 2.49 means Low; and lastly, 1.00 to 1.49 for Very Low.

4. Discussion

This study was conducted among school administrators of secondary schools in Nakhon Nayok, Thailand. Demographically, they are females, possessed post-baccalaureate degrees, in their late adulthood, and have few years of administrative experience. The school administrators indicated that they highly practiced the different 21st-century professional leadership standards along cultural, institutional, strategic, human resource and managerial, however, further analysis showed that this was not influenced by their profile. It was also found out that their level of practice of the various 21st-century professional standards did not significantly differ when grouped according to their profile.

Based on the results of this study, the school administrators of the secondary schools can be encouraged to pursue post-baccalaureate courses related to school leadership and administration. Also, a mentorship program for younger prospective school administrators can be considered to bring a younger breed of academic leaders. Leadership practices of school administrators from other parts of Thailand can also be considered. Lastly, other demographic characteristics of school administrators can be included in future researches as well as other dimensions of school administration.

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