

# Development of a Spiritual Leadership Training Courses for Religious in Preparing to Be Educational Administrators in Thailand

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## Abstract

The objectives of this study were to: 1) construct a training course of spiritual leadership for those preparing to become administrators in Catholic schools in Thailand; 2) implement and utilize the training course, and 3) analyze, evaluate and enhance the training course. The sample used in this research was 32 young participants who were preparing themselves to be the administrators of Catholic schools in Thailand. The research steps were: 1) the requirement assessment, 2) training course development, 3) the training course experiment, and 4) training course optimization. This is a research and development project. The methodologies used in this study were the cognitive and attitude test, semi-structured interviews and the suitability evaluation form of the training course. The findings of this study can be summarized as follows: 1) The training course in spiritual leadership to prepare administrators of Catholic schools in Thailand consists of five modules: 1. Towards a theory of spiritual leadership, 2. Vision, 3. Altruistic love, 4. Faith and hope, and 5. Example of success; 2) the results of the experiment revealed that after completing the training course, the religious participants who had prepared themselves to be Catholic school administrators in Thailand got higher scores on cognitive and attitude tests, with total scores in the evaluation reaching 4.76 (the highest level); 3) the training course was improved by extending the training session from two days to three days, and conducting a bilingual PowerPoint presentation.

**Keywords:** spiritual leadership, religious, preparing to be the catholic school administrator, catholic school

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the world has changed rapidly in several respects, such as social and cultural structures, ideas, beliefs, faith and innovation. Every organization has had to face new challenges in different ways and these challenges have become more intense by the day, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a global impact on everything, including the environment, the economy, society, politics, culture, value, information, technology and education.

Today's society places greater emphasis on human spirituality, because human beings are valuable as human resources and are the primary drivers of organizational efficiency. Hence, more spiritual studies have been conducted over the past twenty years. In 2006, Fry proposed a spiritual leadership theory which consisted of three key components: Vision, Altruistic love, and Hope/Faith. These three variables were stated to be the characteristics, behaviors and processes of leaders who had faith in virtue and ethics, and could serve as role models for others by bringing love and altruism, and encouraging people to focus on their own self-worth and value to others.

Spiritual leadership can be applied to the changing situations of both organizations and the world, especially since world society had been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Admad et al., 2021). As a result, spiritual leadership has been researched in numerous dimensions, including education (Evalyna & Wibawa, 2020; Nurabadi et al., 2021; Usman et al., 2021), business (Wang et al., 2019; Hunsaker & Jeong, 2020; Cho, 2021; Widyanti et al., 2021), the industrial area (Torkamani, 2015; Nafei, 2017; Wang et al., 2021), public health/nursing (Rosa & Ancok, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2021), religion (Nwadike, 2015) and the community (Junaedi & Waruwu, 2020). Moreover, despite the fact that the world is in crisis, spiritual leadership can positively affect the innovative behaviors of people in an organization (Widyanti et al., 2021).

In addition, the concept of spiritual leadership was consistent with Thailand's education council's pronouncement in 2019, which determined the spiritual competence of school administrators to be in line with the Catholic

education management approach, which stated that spiritual leadership was at the heart of Catholic schools (Moore, 2018), focused on educational development along with the mind (Dicastery for Education, 2013), promoted spiritual development and the awakening of administrators, teachers and students, and clearly identified the unique identity of Catholic education in terms of spiritual focus (Catholic Education Council of Thailand, 2013). The overview of Catholic education management was to encourage both spiritual and academic growth. Students were expected to improve spiritual and academic talents, as well as their vision, ethics and moral ideals (Wisit, 2000), which were all included in the characteristics of spiritual leadership.

The results of spiritual leadership studies in the context of education found that spiritual leadership had a positive impact on educators as a whole. Thus, instructors who were devoted to their duties had a good relationship with their school (Phra, 2021; Evalyna & Wibawa, 2020; Prasetyo, 2019 ; Malone & Fry, 2003), showed no boredom, and were happy to dedicate themselves physically, mentally and spiritually (Sheikh et al., 2019; Kaya, 2015; Krishnakumar et al., 2015; Su-Chao & Ming-Shing, 2007). In addition, students and their overall academic progress also benefited from spiritual leadership (Özgenel & Ankaralıoğlu, 2020; Karadağ et al., 2019).

The concept of spiritual leadership was said to be consistent with the nature of religious life, because most people in society expect religious to be spiritual, moral and ethical role models (Plante, 1996). However, in reality, not every religious has spiritual leadership (Hyatt, 2012). Thailand, there are 38 religious congregations of both men and women. These 38 religious congregations include 14 brother congregations and 24 sister congregations. Although every congregation has different missions depending on the ultimate goal of the congregation's founder, one common mission for all congregations is education enhancement. In other words, each congregation has a duty to send its members to be the administrators of education institutes.

According to recent studies on religious congregations, it is revealed that religious are conventionally selected to hold the position of administrators of educational institutions by the provincial superiors of each congregation without preparation. This has made the administration of educational institutes inefficient. Although there are educational qualifying measures as prescribed by the Ministry of Education, there is still a lack of spiritual preparation in this process, and there is no evidence to show that a training course for religious in school administration exists. This has negatively affected the quality of Catholic school management. As both a religious and an education institute administrator, the researcher would like to develop a spiritual training course for religious who would be selected as the administrators of education institutes in Thailand, in order to prepare the religious spiritually to manage Catholic schools in Thailand efficiently and successfully, in accordance with the intention and identity of Catholic education in Thailand.

## 2. The Objectives of This Research

The study of 'Development of a Spiritual Leadership Training Courses for Religious in Preparing to Be Educational Administrators in Thailand' has three objectives:

- 1) To construct a spiritual leadership training course for participants who are selected to be the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand.
- 2) To examine a spiritual leadership training course for participants who are selected to be the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand.
- 3) To improve the spiritual leadership training course for participants who are selected to be the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand.

## 3. Methodology

There were four steps for this research and development study as follows:

*Step 1: Requirement assessment of the training course.*

In this step, the researcher assessed the training requirements of participants by conducting semi-structured interviews with five qualified priests, including the president of the women's association of major religious superiors in Thailand, the president of the men's association of major religious superiors in Thailand, and three male religious who had held the position of education institute administrator for more than five years.

*Step 2: The development of a spiritual leadership training course for participants who were selected to be the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand.*

The researcher developed a spiritual leadership training course for participants preparing to become administrators in schools in Thailand, as follows:

- A. Designing a training course by combining the data obtained from step 1 with the study of the relevant studies

to create a training course. It took around two days to conclude all five modules: spiritual leadership knowledge, vision, altruistic love, hope/faith and an example of success. The aims of the training course were 1) to acknowledge participants about spiritual leadership, 2) to promote a good attitude towards spiritual leadership, and 3) to allow participants to apply spiritual leadership attributes and characteristics in school administration.

- B. A review of the focus group training was done by a panel of seven specialists, including five priests and two academicians.

*Step 3: Testing a spiritual leadership training course for participants who were selected to be the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand.*

In this step, the researcher carried out a trial of the spiritual leadership training course for religious participants. This session had 32 participants, who participated on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2021. The research framework used in this study was ‘Group Pretest-Posttest Design’. The mean, standard deviation, and paired-samples t test were used to evaluate and analyze their knowledge of and attitude towards spiritual leadership before and after the program.

*Step 4: Enhancing a spiritual leadership training course for participants who were selected to be the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand.*

To finish this stage, the researcher used the assessment data from the training course trial to make the session more thorough and successful.

#### 4. Results

The results of the research were as follows:

- A. The result of the development of a spiritual leadership training course for participants who had to prepare to become the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand.

The three curriculum contents were 1) vision, 2) altruistic love, and 3) beliefs/faith. The curriculum also contained five modules: 1) knowledge of spiritual leadership, 2) vision, 3) altruistic love, 4) hope/faith, and 5) example of success. The training session took two days. Pre-training and post-training evaluations included a cognition test with 20 questions, a spiritual leadership attitude exam with 21 questions, and a curriculum compatibility questionnaire with 11 questions.

- B. Results of the trial of a spiritual leadership training course for participants who had to prepare to become the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand.

As the researcher had conducted a trial of the spiritual leadership training course via a ‘Zoom Meeting’ (since the COVID-19 pandemic restricted the activities and research methods) with 32 participants from 11 religious congregations on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2021, there were 895 more participants (including both male and female religious, Buddhist monks, lecturers, students, businessmen, and lawyers). However, this study only focuses on 32 target participants.

The comparative cognitive and attitude results for the spiritual leadership of participants who had to prepare to become the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand revealed that the cognitive scores of the participants after training were substantially different from before the training, at the significant level of 0.05. Moreover, after the training session, the individuals had greater knowledge than before the training, with a score of 4.60, while the attitude scores before and after the training period were different at the significant level of 0.05 with the participants receiving 0.24 higher scores than before the training, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of cognitive and attitude results before and after training

Measurement		$\bar{x}$	S.D.	t	Sig
Cognitive	Before training	12.25	4.87	4.34**	0.00
	After training	16.84	2.86		
Attitude	Before training	4.63	.20	4.10**	0.00
	After training	4.87	.34		

Note. \*\* P > .01.

The appropriateness results from the questionnaire of the spiritual leadership training course for participants who

had to prepare to become the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand indicated that the overall picture of this training session was in the very suitable and satisfied level ( $\bar{x} = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 0.23$ ). As the researcher looked through each item, it was revealed that the speaker's appropriateness got the highest score ( $\bar{x} = 4.97$ ,  $SD = 0.18$ ), whereas the time schedule of each module had the lowest score ( $\bar{x} = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ).

The improvement of the spiritual leadership training course for participants who had to prepare to become the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand, as shown in Table 2.

According to the demonstration of the training course in step 3, the researcher gathered data to enhance and improve the course as follows:

- 1) The researcher extended the duration of the training course from two days to three days, increased the module time period from two hours to three hours, and added more group activities since this would help the participants to digest the provided contents, and exchange the experiences from different learning sources, as lessons in spiritual leadership are quite new and suitable for Thailand's educational community.
- 2) A multi-language PowerPoint presentation that included both Thai and English versions was created, so that there was no need to find a translator to make the presentation continue smoothly. This also helped the lecture provided by foreign language speakers to end on time.

Table 2. The spiritual leadership training course for participants who had to prepare to become the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand

Date & Time	Module/Activity	Detail of the Session	Tool/Media
Day 1			
8.00 am. - 8.30 am.	Registration		
8.30 am. - 9.00 am.	Testing before a training session	Pretest	- Examination - Attitude Scale
9.00 am. - 12.00 pm.	Module 1 Knowledge of Spiritual Leadership	- Lecture/reflect/comment/ discuss the modules and activities - Divide participants into small groups to share their experiences about Module 1	
1.00 pm. - 4.00 pm.	Module 2 Vision	- Lecture/reflect/comment/ discuss the modules and activities - Divide participants into small groups to share their experiences of Module 2	Assessment Form
4.00 pm. - 5.00 pm.	Module 2-1 Summarizing Activity		Evaluation Form
Day 2			
8.30 am. - 9.00 am.	Pray/Content Review		
9.00 am. - 12.00 pm.	Module 3 Altruistic love	- Lecture/reflect/comment/ discuss the modules and activities - Divide participants into small groups to share their experiences of Module 3	
1.00 pm. - 4.00 pm.	Module 4 Hope/Faith	- Lecture/reflect/comment/discuss the modules and activities - Divide participants into small groups to share their experiences of Module 4	Evaluation Form
4.30 pm. - 5.00 pm.	Module 3-4 Summarizing Activity		
Day 3			
8.30 am. - 9.00 am.	Pray/Content Review		
9.00 am. - 12.00 pm.	Module 5 Example of Success	Divide participants into groups to do activities of "Future School", and share their experiences	"Future School" Questionnaire
1.00 pm. - 2.00 pm.	- Certificate Award Ceremony - Recording - Closing Ceremony	Posttest	- Examination - Attitude Scale - Training Session Satisfaction Questionnaire

## 5. Discussion

From the study of the development of a spiritual leadership training course for participants who had to prepare to become the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand, the topics that the researcher would like to discuss are as follows:

There were five modules in the spiritual leadership training program for participants who had to prepare to become the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand. All of the modules were acceptable for the religious life, according to Religion (2011)'s notion which proposed that religious were those who sacrifice their own happiness for the good of others. The religious was said to be trained and shaped through religion-related activities. However, in reality, Hyatt (2012) stated that not all religious displayed spiritual leadership, since they were human beings. If a religious participated in this training program, he or she would be acknowledged, understood and he in turn will be aware, what will help him or her to build spiritual leadership. This was considered the essential characteristic of the role model for educational institute administrators, which was the same morality, compassion, selflessness, hope and faith as Plante (1996) had proposed as the types of religious leadership that most people expected of their spiritual and ethical leader. Furthermore, there was no evidence showing that there was a spiritual leadership training course for participants who had to prepare to become the administrators of educational institutes in Thailand.

### 1st Module: The knowledge of spiritual leadership

Due to the lack of a thorough understanding of spiritual leadership, it was necessary to build on the basic knowledge mentioned for most religious. It was really important and essential for today's school administrators to be knowledgeable, talented and moral, as stated by Smith and Rayment (2007) who proposed that future professional educational leader development was required to improve spiritual leadership. In addition, Fry (2006) also suggested that spiritual leadership was a model for the development of transformative organizations, positive organizational development, and efficient practice enhancement that focused on morality, strength and a deep commitment from people in the organization. This also corresponded to the concept posited by Phra (2021) towards the spiritual leadership that was popular in today's society because of its subtlety, which is similar to the 3-dimensional religious lessons (self-management, people management and job management) that support and increase the efficiency of 21<sup>st</sup> century educational management in different directions, such as morality, strength and the commitment of people in an organization.

### 2nd Module: Vision

A leader's image and vision were thought to be connected from the past to the present. An administrator with vision, based on the concept proposed by Fry (2006), was stated to be able to visualize the future of managers and members of the organization, encourage people's hope and faith, and define the objectives related to the mission's values and beliefs. By having clear vision, all members would be motivated to be interested, engaged, focused, determined and committed to the organization. Thus, living standards, organization. Thus, progressions and achievements of living standards, organization and society were improved in every dimension. The mentioned statement was consistent with the study by Rosa and Ancok (2020), which stated that spiritual leadership positively affected emotional connection and the feeling of belonging to the group which led directly to an employee's dedication. The result of visionary spiritual leadership theory has united the people in the organization to become committed, focused on creating a creative and efficient masterpiece, and happy in their work, as shown in the study by Cho (2021), where spiritual leadership could maintain spirituality in the workplace, which in turn had a positive impact on employees' job satisfaction and led to fewer days off work.

### 3rd Module: Altruistic love

Altruistic love is a characteristic believed to be part of the nature of religious. In other words, religious are those who give up their earthly lives in order to take three vows (precepts of purity, precepts of obedience and precepts of poverty), gathered together in a group under one of the denominations to dedicate themselves to serving the Church according to the beliefs of the founders. Moreover, religious are dedicated to God's service by performing acts of kindness towards their fellow man without expecting anything in return. This statement complies with the concept of altruistic love in leadership theory proposed by Fry (2006), which mentions that altruistic love puts the other first, and wants to see the happiness and success of others without expecting anything in return. This statement also corresponds to the study by Wang et al. (2021) where spiritual leadership positively affects the unity and emotional connection of the employee. This also complies with the research of Damar and Eskiler (2017) where the characteristics of spiritual leadership consist of being honest, steady, gentle, and fair to subordinates. These characteristics cause subordinates to work successfully and efficiently. The study by Isebor (2018) also showed a similar result: that spiritual leadership encouraged employees to be happy, compassionate and altruistic,

leading to more efficient operations.

#### 4th Module: Hope/Faith

When talking about hope, faith and the religious, these are considered the natural characteristics of a religious, because a religious is a person who chooses to live in the religious life, develop a connection with God and carry out missions to help other human beings with dedication and faith. Additionally, society respects the religious life and uses the basis of religious faith and belief daily, if the mentioned characteristics and expectations are combined with the knowledge and experience derived from the hope/faith module in the spiritual leadership theory proposed by Fry (2006), which states that hope is the desire to fulfill, and faith is the confirmation of hope. Thus, a person needs both hope and faith. Faith arises from a feeling of conviction. Spiritual leadership's hope/faith is expressed in patience, diligence, doing what it is necessary to do, adhering to one's sense of purpose and anticipating favorable outcomes. As a consequence, individuals in a company can establish affection, ties and faith, and be willing to work together to expand and upgrade the organization with innovative breakthroughs. According to the research of Samul (2020), building and keeping people working for a business for as long as is feasible is linked to developing spiritual leadership. Moreover, the study by Wang et al. (2019) revealed that employees' effectiveness in information sharing and innovation development is favorably connected with spiritual leadership.

#### 5th Module: Example of Success

Since spiritual leadership is a fresh and abstract concept, although religious who attended the training course might have had knowledge regarding this matter, they might not have a deep understanding and knowledge. Hence, they might not be able to apply this concept effectively. If the module of an example of success was added to the course, this would give participants a clear picture after sharing successful experiences with other individuals and lecturers. As a result, the principles of spiritual leadership could be utilized in educational institutions efficiently, as stated in the study by Nafei (2017) who suggested that a manager with spiritual leadership would not only make employees work happily, full of commitment, but would also create a good atmosphere in the organization that could improve performance. Hence, this helped the members to build good relationships with each other, and reduce bullying behavior in the organization. As an example in the educational scenario, spiritual leadership was positively correlated with teachers' committed behavior. It did not cause boredom during work (Sheikh et al., 2019). Moreover, spiritual leadership directly affected the performance of teachers, and indirectly impacted students through the performance of teachers (Nurabadi et al., 2021).

The interesting points of this study's results were as follows:

Cognitive and Attitude - Participants scored higher in the cognitive and attitude categories of spiritual leadership after the training than before. This was due to the course being designed based on the concept of training taken from Biech (2015) and the theory of spiritual leadership taken from Fry (2006). The course also emphasized several different processes and activities, such as lectures, discussion, giving feedback, professional technology (using YouTube videos and other media), and using professional speakers. Regarding the experts who were selected to give lectures in this training course, they are accepted and famous in Thai educational circles. There were Thai and non-Thai instructors who were well-versed in spiritual leadership and the Catholic educational context. Each instructor was well-prepared. They held meetings and prepared everything for this event. Hence, the consistency and unity of the lectures were excellent. Furthermore, the instructors also added application and ways to utilize lessons in every module. Therefore, the trainees gained more knowledge, understanding and a clearer picture of spiritual leadership. It was also presented in the studies of Chaowarit (2007), Cheddanaï and Chayapim (2015) that, for the same reasons, participants improved their knowledge and attitude towards spiritual leadership during the training. This assertion was also made in a study by Sumrit et al. (2015), who found that directors who attended the training had a more positive attitude thereafter, while Siriwan (2016) found that the results of attitude assessments after training were better than before training.

## 6. Recommendations from the Research Results

The research findings revealed that, since spiritual leadership is a new and abstract concept, and there were small group activities, experience sharing sessions, discussions, cognition activities, if the training course includes too many participants, there will not be enough time cover every single detail of the lessons. Additionally, participants will benefit less from the small group activities provided. Therefore, the training course organizer should limit the number of participants to 40.

Based on the outcomes of the demonstrations conducted to assess the curriculum's applicability, the overall score was ranked to be in high level. Furthermore, as the researcher considered each item individually, the suitability of the instructors was ranked as the highest average score. This may show that the instructors played an important role

in the training management. Thus, it is necessary for the training session organizer to seek those who are knowledgeable, competent, professional, acceptable, well-known in Thai educational circles, fluent in English, and who understand Thai Catholic school management. If the instructor possesses the previously specified traits, the contents will be provided in a clear and concise manner, both motivating and inspiring, and can be implemented in both ordinary lives and institutional administration.

From the demonstration of a spiritual leadership training course via the Zoom Meeting system, if the learners, as well as those in charge of the training, lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to train using these approaches, there would be several constraints and hurdles for the training session. Hence, training managers should prepare guidelines for everyone on how to use the Zoom Meeting technology. In addition, to avoid technological interruption, training organizers should recruit experts with expertise and experience with Zoom training, as well as coordinators.

In every scenario including crisis, spiritual leadership training course for participants aiming to become institutional administrators in Thailand are deemed acceptable. In a regular situation, this training course could contribute in an organization's strengthening and success, similar to the immunization against illnesses. This is considered as a development to increase the organization's quality of life, so that people may work joyfully, meaningfully and confidently. As a result, the organization can make progress towards its objectives successfully and effectively, due to the high-quality of work. In the same manner, if the training course was conducted during a crisis which caused most people in the education industry to despair (particularly when educational institutions were under pressure to keep running during the pandemic), it will help participants to be motivated to continue managing their work effectively. In other words, it is a way of strengthening their morale from inside, giving an optimistic point of view, encouraging them to overcome obstacles with a vision that is full of hope/faith, and motivating them to seek altruistic love.

The spiritual training course for religious individuals who will become Catholic school administrators in Thailand corresponded to Catholic school identity in the spiritual dimension. Therefore, the association of major religious superiors in Thailand, along with Thailand's Catholic Education Council and other religious organizations, should utilize and extend this training course.

## 7. Recommendations for Future Research

From the findings of this research, the researcher would like to propose the suggestion for the further study as follows:

- 1) The study should be conducted on the development of a spiritual leadership training course for individuals at all levels that are related to the education institute such as the school director, lecturer, officer, and staff inside the institute.
- 2) The research should target other fields of occupation such as business, politics, laws, and Buddhist monks.

## 8. Limitations

The present study is only limited to the religious who are preparing to be educational administrators in Thailand. The development of this training course might be applicable for the lay people or other countries only by changing the research contexts and participants. Therefore, there are still many things to be developed and further untaken due to this limitation.

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