
Needs and Feasibility of Academic Leadership Program for Secondary School Administrators

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Abstract

This research aimed to find out the needs regarding the academic leadership of secondary school administrators, and to develop a program to enhance the academic leadership of these administrators. Mixed-methods approach was employed through utilizing questionnaires, interviews, and evaluation forms as research instruments. The sample consisted of 308 school administrators and teachers under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office of Phetchabun, Thailand. They were selected through stratified random sampling to find out needs. Additionally, 5 experts were purposively selected as key informants to validate the program. Data were collected from questionnaires and interviews were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentage, mean, and standard deviation, while qualitative data were subjected to content analysis. The findings revealed that the current state of academic leadership was at a moderate level overall, whereas the desired state was at a high level. The priority need for enhancing academic leadership, ranked from highest to lowest, were as follows promoting a learning-conducive environment, teacher development, mission formulation, and instructional supervision. The academic leadership program comprised 5 key components: principles, objectives, content, development methods, and assessment and evaluation. The overall feasibility of the program was rated at the highest level.

Keywords: Academic Leadership, Administrative Education, School Leadership, Teacher Education

1. Introduction

Under the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan, Thailand has made significant progress in addressing overall poverty. However, this does not fully explain the dynamics of poverty or whether individuals have successfully escaped it. A key contributing factor is the unequal distribution of economic benefits, which has left many individuals trapped in chronic poverty. Additionally, the economic downturn caused by the pandemic has led to an increase in the number of people living in poverty. Disparities in access to education, technology, infrastructure, and public services have further exacerbated the issue.

The 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan was formulated with a clear direction and objectives for national development. Its primary goal is to transform Thailand into a progressive society with a sustainable value-based economy. One of the most significant and persistent challenges for the country has been the development of high-quality human capital. This issue is rooted in an educational system that has consistently yielded low learning outcomes. According to a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which assesses the competencies of 15-year-old students worldwide in mathematics, science, and reading, 59.5% of Thai students failed to meet basic proficiency standards, while only 0.18% scored above the standard benchmark (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2022).

For Thailand to achieve long-term stability, prosperity, and sustainability, it is crucial to strengthen its existing human capital. This requires preparing individuals for the rapidly evolving world of the 21st century, where learning skills are paramount. The development of individuals with lifelong learning abilities and self-improvement skills is essential for maintaining a high quality of life. This aligns with the National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999), which emphasizes education as a tool for cultivating Thai citizens to be knowledgeable, competent, and of high moral character. It ensures that learners of all ages receive a quality education that aligns with their potential, equipping them with the necessary competencies and skills for 21st-century living. School administrators, teachers, and educational personnel must be continuous learners, keeping pace with technological advancements while demonstrating professional competence, ethical standards, and a strong sense of professional identity. They must be capable of implementing active learning strategies and establishing assessment and evaluation systems that promote student learning. These systems should be flexible, diverse, and tailored to students' interests and aptitudes, ultimately contributing to sustainable development (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2022).

Academic leadership is a critical role for school principals, focusing on teaching and classroom activities (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985: 221-224; Davis & Thomas, 1989: 21). Dimmock & Walker (2005) highlighted that school administrators must demonstrate academic leadership to ensure student academic progress. The role of the school administrator is to foster collaboration among teachers, ensuring an effective learning environment. As key figures responsible for education management, school administrators must possess comprehensive knowledge of school administration, particularly regarding its scope and responsibilities. Their role is crucial, as they work closely with teachers and students. In addition to having vision, ethical standards, and administrative skills, school administrators must also exhibit strong academic leadership (Office of the Public Sector Development Commission, 2010:13). To gain cooperation, administrators must exhibit appropriate leadership behaviors, uniting teachers to conduct teaching and learning activities that successfully achieve school goals. Administrators must work alongside teachers, motivate them, provide guidance, and facilitate collaboration using high-quality techniques. This will enhance the efficiency of academic administration within schools.

Academic leadership significantly influences teaching quality and the effectiveness of educational institutions. Based on the discussion above, academic leadership is essential for all school administrators. It must be developed to enhance both their knowledge and management skills, ultimately improving academic performance within schools. This study aimed to find out the needs regarding the academic leadership of secondary school administrators, and to develop a program to enhance the academic leadership of these administrators. The significance of this study can be guaranteed the suitability of academic leadership guidelines. It also can be implemented in the school practices and strengthening academic leadership will drive educational institutions toward higher quality standards and ensure students achieve optimal learning outcomes.

2. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research approach by using questionnaires, interviews, and evaluations. These can be incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The study procedures are as follows:

2.1. Phase I: Analysis

The study focuses on school administrators and teachers working in schools under the Phetchabun Secondary Educational Service Area Office, covering 39 schools with a total of 1,424 individuals. The informants consisted of school administrators and teachers under the Phetchabun Secondary Educational Service Area Office, Thailand. The sample size was determined by stratified random sampling, categorizing schools into 3 sizes. Each stratum sample size was calculated and selected using simple random sampling in 39 school administrators and 269 teachers. Key Informants for interviewing consisted of administrators from best-practice model schools, recognized for their strong academic leadership. They were selected through purposive sampling, totaling 3 school administrators who met the predetermined criteria.

The research instruments consisted of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections:

Section 1: General information of the respondents, including position, work experience, educational level, and other checklist-type questions.

Section 2: Questions related to the current and desired conditions for the development of a program to enhance the academic leadership of school administrators under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office, Phetchabun. This section utilized a 5-point Likert scale.

The instrument quality assessment process involved presenting the questionnaire to the research advisor for review. The revised questionnaire was then submitted to 5 experts to verify content validity and the index of congruence, which yielded an average IOC of 1.00. A pilot study was conducted with 30 non-sample respondents, and the item discrimination power was analyzed using the Item-Total Correlation method. The discrimination values ranged from 0.36 to 0.73 for the current condition questionnaire and from 0.42 to 0.85 for the desired condition questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient method. The reliability coefficient was 0.94 for the current condition questionnaire and 0.96 for the desired condition questionnaire, both statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The finalized questionnaire was distributed to the sample group of 308 participants via an online platform. A structured interview was developed with questions covering methods for enhancing academic leadership among school administrators. The interview questions were reviewed by the research advisor for accuracy and appropriate language use.

Data were collected using two sources. Primary data: Information obtained from interviews with key informants and questionnaire responses from the sample group. Secondary data: Information gathered from document research, including books, academic papers, research studies, and other relevant literature. Then data were analyzed by using the $PNI_{modified}$ formula to determine the prioritization of academic leadership needs for school administrators under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office, Phetchabun. Qualitative data from structured interviews were analyzed to gain insights into academic leadership development among school administrators.

2.2. Phase II: Feasibility of the Program

Informants was a group of 5 experts to assess the appropriateness of the academic leadership enhancement program. The panel includes: One academic expert specializing in educational administration, holding a doctoral degree, and with an academic instructor. Four educational administrators or school leaders, with at least a master's degree and a professional rank of at least senior teacher.

Program evaluation form was use for finding out its feasibility. The program evaluation form consisted of two sections: Section 1: Information about the experts evaluating the program. Section 2: Expert opinions on the categorization of components for enhancing academic leadership among school administrators. Program was evaluated, the feasibility and appropriateness of the academic leadership enhancement program were assessed based on expert evaluations. Descriptive statistical analysis, including percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

3. Results and Discussion

The academic leadership enhancement program for school administrators under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office, Phetchabun. The research findings identified the current and desired conditions, as well as the needs for academic leadership among school administrators (Table 1).

Table 1. Needs for Academic Leadership among School Administrators

Componentsof a cademicleadership	C urrentcondition			Desirablecondition			$PNI_{modified}$	Sequenc e of needs
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level		
1. Mission determination	2.52	0.81	Moderate	4.45	0.41	High	0.76	3
2. Promoting a learning atmosphere	2.44	0.69	Low	4.48	0.50	High	0.83	1
3. Teaching supervision	2.70	0.71	Moderate	4.48	0.48	High	0.65	4
4. Teacher development	2.50	0.71	Low	4.57	0.48	Highest	0.82	2
Mean score	2.54	0.73	Moderate	4.49	0.46	High		

The current condition of academic leadership among school administrators, on average, is at a moderate level. When analyzed by specific aspects, it found that mission setting and supervision of teaching are at a moderate level, but promotion of a learning environment and teacher development are at a low level. The desired state of academic leadership among school administrators is generally at a high level. When analyzed by specific aspects, it found that mission setting, promotion of a learning environment, and supervision of teaching are at a high level. Teacher development is at the highest level. When ranking the level of necessity from highest to lowest, the priorities are as follows: promotion of a learning environment ($PNI_{modified}$: 0.83), teacher development ($PNI_{modified}$: 0.82), mission setting ($PNI_{modified}$: 0.76), and supervision of teaching ($PNI_{modified}$: 0.65) in the following. Then, developing an academic leadership program for school administrators indicated that the $PNI_{modified}$ index of the current and desired states of academic leadership among school administrators under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office, Phetchabun helped identify the most critical and necessary aspects among the four components. These aspects were then used to develop an interview framework.

This study will be critically discussed using several fundamental ideas and frameworks from the field of educational administration, including systems theory, transformational leadership theory, and instructional leadership theory, among others. Hallinger & Murphy (1985) claim that instructional leadership stresses the principal's main responsibility in enhancing student learning results and the classroom environment. The results of the study showed that instructional supervision and teacher

development had high desired condition ratings. This exposes a notable leadership vacuum in terms of endorsing instructional strategies and enabling ongoing professional development among educators.

When giving tasks like curriculum control, student progress monitoring, and teacher supervision top priority, the suggested enhancement program fits the instructional leadership paradigm. The instructional leadership model also connects with the emphasis on creating a learning environment as it emphasizes the need to build a school environment fit for learning (Lambrecht et al., 2022; Munna, 2023). Transformational leadership in education is defined by Leithwood & Jantzi (2000) as a paradigm whereby leaders inspire and encourage teachers to surpass conventional expectations. The emphasis of the research on mission determination and fostering a learning environment mirrors transformational leadership methods (Kanhao et al., 2024). While the ideal circumstances were high, the present conditions for mission determination were recorded as moderate. This implies that although school officials know roughly what their aims and goals are, they lack the visionary leadership and motivating drive required to raise these activities to transforming proportions.

The research findings from interviews were used to design a program for enhancing academic leadership among school administrators under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office, Phetchabun. The summary of the key development strategies used in the program design is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Key Development Strategies Used in the Program Design

Interview topics	Summary of findings
1. Program components	1. Principles 2. Objectives 3. Content 4. Formats and development methods 5. Assessment and evaluation
2. Development concept	Learning based on the 70:20:10 model: - 70% Learning and development from experience - 20% Learning and development through others - 10% Learning and development from courses or development programs
3. Development methods	1. Learning through real work experience 2. Job study 3. Training
4. Duration	50 hours
5. Assessment and evaluation	1. Pre-, while, and post-development evaluation 2. Satisfaction assessment of the participants

Both theoretical foundations in educational leadership and administration and qualitative data gathered via interviews, the program presents a complete approach anchored in acknowledged models and best practices. Frame it within pertinent theories of leadership, models of professional development, and ideas of instructional leadership. Emphasizing inspiring and encouraging followers to surpass expectations via vision and personal influence, the program conforms with Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

The 70:20:10 model shows that the goal is to improve leadership skills through hands-on learning. This helps school leaders feel more confident in their abilities and think about their own practice. This is in line with the focus of transformational leadership on personalized care and intellectual stimulation. The model recognizes that defining academic goals, running curricula, and encouraging professional development among teachers depend critically on school administrators.

The program's basic theoretical foundation is the 70:20:10 model for learning and development, which holds that 70% of learning occurs from on-the-job experiences, 20% from interactions with people (mentoring, coaching), and 10% from formal coursework and training (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000; Day et al., 2021; Kulachit & Nuangchalerm, 2022). This method highlights the need for experiential learning and the application of information to practical problems. The framework of the program guarantees that managers are actively using fresh information and skills within their educational environments in addition to acquiring theoretical materials.

The 50-hour length of the program and its emphasis on pre-, during, and post-development assessment mirror best practices in programs for leadership development. Studies in educational administration (Leithwood et al., 2006) underline that effective leadership development must be continuous, reflective, and evaluative. The evaluation systems suggested in the curriculum guarantee ongoing feedback, which is necessary for both personal and professional development in leadership roles (Kadel, 2023).

Also, the way that participant satisfaction is measured fits with both formative and summative evaluation theories. This makes sure that comments from participants help the program get better all the time. The implementation of the draft program aimed at enhancing the academic leadership of school administrators, 5 experts were involved in the evaluation process, as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. The Appropriateness Level of the Academic Leadership Program for School Administrators

Assessment list	Appropriateness		
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Principles			
1 . 1 Clarity of principles	5.00	0.00	Highest
1 . 2 Importance of the principle	4.80	0.45	Highest
1 . 3 Application	4.60	0.55	Highest
2. Objectives			
2 . 1 To strengthen the academic leadership of school administrators.	5.00	0.00	Highest

2 . 2Coverage of leadership elements of school administrators	5.00	0.00	Highest
3. Contents			
3.1 Consistent with program objectives	4.80	0.45	Highest
3 . 2Arrangement of content in accordance with the composition	4.60	0.55	Highest
3 . 3Content and duration	5.00	0.00	Highest
3.4 Module 1 Enhancing the learning environment	5.00	0.00	Highest
3 . 5Module 2 Teacher development	5.00	0.00	Highest
3 . 6Module 3 Mission determination	4.40	0.55	Highest
3 . 7Module 4 Teaching supervision	4.60	0.55	Highest
4. Development methods			
4 . 1Learning from practical work	5.00	0.00	Highest
4 . 2Field study	5.00	0.00	Highest
4 . 3Training	5.00	0.00	Highest
5. Measurement and evaluation			
5 . 1Assessment before, during, and after development	5.00	0.00	Highest
5 . 2Assessment of satisfaction of development recipients	5.00	0.00	Highest
Overall	4.87	0.26	Highest

From Table 3, it showed that the components of the academic leadership enhancement program for school administrators under the Secondary Educational Service Area Office of Phetchabun include: (1) principles, (2) objectives, (3) content, (4) development methods, and (5) assessment and evaluation. Overall, the program is deemed highly appropriate for enhancing the academic leadership of school administrators in this jurisdiction.

The program's focus on modules meant to enhance school administrators' academic leadership. Effective school leaders, according to this essential instructional leadership theory, are those who can set clear goals, track and offer comments on teaching strategies, and guarantee a learning atmosphere fit for Bass & Avolio (1994) contends that leaders inspire and drive their subordinates to surpass conventional expectations of them. The program's emphasis on teacher development and mission determination points to a dedication to creating a common vision and increasing professional capacity—two fundamental elements of transformational leadership. Investing in professional development helps transformational leaders to guarantee that instructors are not only compliant but also dedicated to continuous progress. They also help the staff to be in line with shared goals.

Spillane et al. (2004) assert that a company should distribute leadership among several individuals rather than focusing it on a single individual. The thorough courses of this program inspire managers to not only grow personally but also help instructors to become leaders. The curriculum acknowledges that leadership activities and duties may be distributed to enhance organizational performance by supporting cooperative professional practices. This method guarantees sustainability in leadership styles and motivates group ownership of projects aimed at improving schools.

The support the creation of an inclusive school environment and help define the vision of the institution. These are traits of transformational leadership in which the principal of the school acts as a catalyst for change and role model. Systems theory sees schools as open systems interacting with their surroundings, Lunenburg (2011) notes. This research mostly relies on the Secondary Educational Service Area Office, as it influences the internal operations of the school by means of its external surroundings. The process of program design considers requirements analysis, comments from stakeholders, and the present leadership level. As Davies & Davies (2006) define strategic leadership, it is long-term thinking, matching resources with objectives, and emphasizing sustainable growth inside of schools. The component of the study that directly relates to strategic leadership is mission determination, as school managers are supposed to properly develop and transmit the strategic direction of the institution.

Kotter (1996) states the eight-step change leadership approach provides a useful lens to scrutinize the proposed improvement initiative. Through methodically spotting the gaps and developing a customized program, the researchers match their work with the best standards for change management. Nonetheless, effective application will need constant assessment and change in educational leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992). The academic leadership enhancement program seems to create a sense of urgency, vision, and the ability for others to act on the vision. Such programs can play a significant role in educational administration by fostering a culture of continuous improvement and instructional leadership, thereby ensuring schools remain adaptable and effective in a rapidly changing educational environment. The assessment component, which includes before, during, and after development evaluations and satisfaction assessments, helps to consolidate improvements and institutionalize new leadership practices.

The management of educational institutions, regardless of type, is often assessed based on academic performance. Therefore, academic administration plays a central role in the operation of educational institutions and is crucial for achieving educational objectives. School administrators must actively support academic activities and empower teachers in their instructional roles. They must have vision and innovative ideas for educational development, while teachers must be aware of and collaborate in academic development efforts. They should effectively implement the school's educational philosophy through various programs and apply their knowledge efficiently.

Academic work is the core of an educational institution. The quality of a school is primarily determined by its academic endeavors, while other functions serve to support the quality of academic administration. Therefore, studying and improving academic work to achieve high effectiveness is essential. Academic leadership is a key factor influencing student learning, involving goal setting, mission planning, curriculum and instructional management, teacher development, fostering a positive learning environment and culture, and educational supervision. Academic leadership stems from transformational leadership, where school administrators play a crucial role in fostering teacher collaboration to enhance student learning.

4. Conclusion

The current academic leadership level of school administrators is moderate level which indicating a need for further development. The desired state is at a high level, suggesting that administrators are keen to enhance their academic leadership skills. The most critical areas requiring development are: (1) promoting a learning environment, (2) teacher development, (3) mission setting, and (4) instructional supervision. Therefore, school administrators should be trained in all four areas to improve the overall academic leadership in schools. The academic leadership enhancement program was rated as highly appropriate. This paper's presentation of the academic leadership enhancement program combines numerous fundamental ideas in educational administration to provide a balanced, evidence-based method of leadership development. The study emphasizes transformational and instructional leadership, experiential learning using the 70:20:10 approach, and methodical evaluation techniques, the curriculum shows a fit with modern leadership development models. Its all-encompassing framework guarantees that school officials possess the required skills to properly spearhead efforts for academic development, therefore promoting an atmosphere of ongoing professional growth and school-wide progress. Therefore, administrators in similar contexts may adopt and adapt this program for personnel development within their respective institutions.

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