
An Innovative Leadership Program for Educational Opportunity Expansion School Administrators

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Abstract

This research aimed to 1) study the current conditions, desired conditions, and necessary needs for enhancing innovative leadership of school administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools of Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7, and 2) create a program to enhance innovative leadership of those school administrators. The research was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 was to study the current conditions, desired conditions, and necessary needs for enhancing innovative leadership of school administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools. The sample consisted of 302 participants, including school administrators and teachers. The data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using percentage, mean, standard deviation, and modified priority needs index (PNI). Phase 2 was to create and assess a program to enhance innovative leadership of those school administrators. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 3 school administrators recognized as the best practice examples and analyzed the data using content analysis. The study found that the current condition was at a moderate level, while the desired condition was at the highest level. The most necessary need for enhancement was collaboration and teamwork. The program had 5 key elements including the principle, objective, contents, methods, and evaluations. The contents consisted of 5 modules: Module 1 - Innovation Vision, Module 2 - Innovation Personnel Development, Module 3 - Innovation Thought Leadership, Module 4 – Participation and Teamwork, and Module 5 - Innovative Creativity. Experts rated the program's suitability and feasibility at the highest level, confirming its potential for effective implementation.

Keywords: Program, Innovative Leadership, Opportunity Expansion School, Administration Education

1. Introduction

The Ministry of Education of Thailand has demonstrated a firm commitment to fulfilling its core mission in accordance

with the Master Plan under the 20-Year National Strategy (2018–2037). As the principal organization responsible for driving all sub-plans under Strategic Issue 12 on Learning Development and Sub-Plan 3 under Strategic Issue 11 on Lifelong Human Capacity Development. The Ministry also upholds the Revised National Education Reform Plan and implementing both cores, the reform of learning processes and the development of human potential across all stages of life, and urgent policies, the preparation of Thai citizens for the 21st century and the recognition of the diversity of multiple human intelligences. (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Managing educational institutions to achieve objectives effectively and respond to government policies aimed at preparing Thais for the 21st century and addressing future development needs requires both personnel and management within the institution. The management responsibilities in educational institutions are divided into four areas and all area must work together, especially through the use of innovative management practices. These include innovations in curriculum, teaching and learning, teaching media, evaluation, and management. Educational administrators, who are key personnel and professional leaders of the institution, need to possess innovative leadership qualities to promote the drive for a system of work through innovation and to use digital technology as a primary mechanism in operations. (Ministry of Education, 2022).

School administrators require advanced leadership competencies along with efficient supervision of work and personnel within the organization. This is crucial due to the rapid and constant changes in organizational management, leading to a demand for executives with strong leadership abilities. A good executive must have leadership qualities that are appropriate for the dynamic times. Educational administrators must be able to use their skills to persuade, motivate, and stimulate personnel through various methods, aiming to change their work behavior and encourage creative thinking, new operational approaches, or modern innovations that are beneficial to the organization and educational institution. Particularly, innovative leadership can guide the organization to success. For executives to have innovative leadership, several key components are necessary, including diverse activities and leader behaviors that reflect new innovative outcomes. (Chongcharoen, 2019)

Innovative leadership is an important and necessary form of leadership as it can drive educational institutions to achieve their set goals amidst societal changes. The innovative leadership of administrators can strategically direct the organization towards innovative strategies to enhance competitive quality and improve productivity quality. This is achieved by encouraging organizational personnel to collaborate and work together, fostering mutual trust, understanding realistic and creative goals, and being able to work towards achieving the organization's vision, ultimately creating an organizational culture of innovation (Loader, 2016).

The swift and significant progress of innovation has resulted in a lack of innovative leadership capabilities among administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools within Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7, this study aims to design a leadership enhancement program to develop their capacity to lead with innovation in line with national educational reform policies.

2. Research Methodology

This research used a mixed-methods approach, conducted in two phases as follows:

2.1. Phase One

To study the current conditions, desired conditions, and necessary needs for enhancing innovative leadership of school administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools of Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7.

2.1.1. Population and Sample

The population consisted of 1,340 participants, including school administrators and teachers from opportunity expansion schools under the Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7.

The sample consisted of 302 participants including school administrators and teachers from opportunity expansion schools under the same area. It was determined using Krejcie & Morgan Formula (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970), stratified random sampling categorized by school size, small, medium, and large. Within each stratum, simple random sampling was conducted based on school size to select the sample as specified.

2.1.2. Research Instruments

The questionnaire consisted of 2 sections. Part 1 consisted of general information about educational level, position, and school size, presented in the form of a checklist. Part 2 was a questionnaire concerning the current and desired conditions of innovative leadership among administrators of opportunity expansion schools under the Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7 by using a five-point rating scale based on Likert's concept.

2.1.3. Instrument Quality Assessment and Data Collection

The criteria and procedures for constructing a rating scale questionnaire were thoroughly examined. Based on this understanding, the research conceptual framework was used as a foundation for drafting the questionnaire items. The drafted questionnaire was submitted to the thesis advisor for a thorough review to identify and rectify any flaws or ambiguities in the question items.

The revised questionnaire was submitted to five experts to assess the content validity using the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) method. The IOC values ranged between 0.60 to 1.00 were acceptable.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested to 30 school administrators and teachers, who were a non-sample group. The discrimination values for the current condition ranged from 0.58 to 0.923, and for the desired condition from 0.656 to 0.959. All 45 items met the quality criteria.

The overall reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) were 0.984 for the current condition questionnaire and 0.991 for the desired condition questionnaire, both statistically significant at the .05 level.

Data were collected from 302 sample participants using both in-person distribution and Google Forms.

The Necessary needs assessment was performed by comparing the current and desired conditions. The Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) was calculated to identify and rank the priority elements for improvement.

2.1.4. Data Analysis and Statistical Methods Used in the Study

A Microsoft Excel was used to evaluate the quality of the research instruments and to perform data analysis. This included the calculation of the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and the Priority Needs Index Modified (PNI_{modified}).

2.2. Phase Two

To create and assess a program to enhance innovative leadership among administrators of opportunity expansion schools under the Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7.

2.2.1. Population and Sample

The interview participants were chosen from three school administrators recognized as the best practice examples in innovative leadership using purposive sampling technique.

The suitability and feasibility of the program were assessed by 5 experts. These experts were selected using purposive sampling based on specific qualifications.

2.2.2. Instruments

The semi-structured interview was designed to gather information on the enhancement of innovative leadership program for educational opportunity expansion school administrators.

The interview questions were reviewed for accuracy and appropriateness with an advisor before being used in interviews with administrators. It consisted of 2 sections. Section 1 consisted of general information of the interviewees. Section 2 consisted of opinions about enhancing innovative leadership for school administrators.

The assessment form consisted of two sections. Section 1 was general information about the assessor. Section 2 was the assessment of suitability and feasibility of the program.

While the interviews provided qualitative insights, the subsequent program assessment employed quantitative methods to evaluate its suitability and feasibility.

2.2.3. Instrument Quality Assessment and Data Collection

The interviewees recognized as the best practice were selected using the criteria as follows:

1) A school administrator with demonstrated achievements in innovation, whose school or personnel has received the OBEC Awards from the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in the category of Innovation and Technology for Teaching and Learning.

2) A school administrator who had implemented administrative innovations that had led to the school and students receiving awards at the educational service area or national level.

2.2.4. Data Analysis and Statistical Methods Used in the Study

The assessment of suitability and feasibility of the program data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, which included percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

3. Ethical Approval

This research application has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects, Mahasarakham University, Thailand. (Approval number: 138-027/2025). All participants gave informed consent, and their privacy rights were strictly observed. The data are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding number.

4. Research Findings

The researcher conducted the data analysis in two phases as follows:

Phrase One: The results of the study on the current conditions, desired conditions, and necessary needs for enhancing innovative leadership of school administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools of Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7.

The research findings revealed the current conditions, desired conditions, and the necessary needs for enhancing innovative leadership of school administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools of Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7. The results are presented in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, Priority Needs Index Modified (PNI_{modified}), and Ranking of Priority Needs for Enhancing Innovative Leadership of School Administrators in Educational Opportunity Expansion Schools of Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7

Component of innovative leadership	Current Conditions			Desired Conditions			PNI _{modified}	Priority Ranking
	\bar{x}	S. D.	Level	\bar{x}	S. D.	Level		
1. Innovative Vision	2.91	0.81	Moderate	4.79	0.41	Highest	0.646	2
2. Innovation personnel development	2.95	0.77	Moderate	4.83	0.44	Highest	0.637	3
3. Innovation Thought Leadership	3.01	0.79	Moderate	4.77	0.47	Highest	0.585	4
4. Participation and Teamwork	2.87	0.77	Moderate	4.78	0.47	Highest	0.666	1
5. Innovative Creativity	3.05	0.85	Moderate	4.79	0.45	Highest	0.570	5
Total	2.96	0.80	Moderate	4.79	0.45	Highest		

According to Table 1, the current conditions of innovative leadership of school administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools of Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7 were found to be at a moderate level ($\bar{x} = 2.96$). When considering each component individually, all were also at a moderate level. The component with the highest mean score was innovation thought leadership ($\bar{x} = 3.01$), followed by Innovative Creativity ($\bar{x} = 3.05$), innovation personnel development ($\bar{x} = 2.95$), Innovation Thought Leadership ($\bar{x} = 2.91$), and Participation and Teamwork ($\bar{x} = 2.87$).

The desired conditions of innovative leadership of school administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools of Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7 were found to be at highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.79$). When considering each component individually, all were also at highest level. The component with the highest mean score Innovation personnel development ($\bar{x} = 4.83$), followed by Innovative Vision, and Innovative Creativity ($\bar{x} = 4.79$), Participation and Teamwork ($\bar{x} = 4.78$), and Innovation Thought Leadership ($\bar{x} = 4.77$).

The Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) shows that all components scored above the threshold of 0.3. This indicates that all components require enhancement. The component with the highest level of need is participation and teamwork (PNI_{modified} = 0.666), followed by innovation vision (PNI_{modified} = 0.647), innovation personnel development (PNI_{modified} = 0.637), innovative thought leadership (PNI_{modified} = 0.585), and innovative creativity (PNI_{modified} = 0.570).

This study will be critically discussed using several fundamental ideas and frameworks from the field of educational administration, including systems theory, and innovative leadership theory. Horth & Buchner (2014) claimed that innovative leadership refers to the work behavior of individuals who are capable of introducing new ideas and unconventional practices to lead an organization through challenging transformations or to solve existing problems. This is achieved through a foundation of collaboration and collective effort for the benefit of the organization. Sharma (2008) defined innovative leadership as a process of exerting influence to motivate collaborators to work together, thereby facilitating change. The emphasis is on flexible management of both tasks and personnel in alignment to achieve the vision and maintain competitiveness. Administrators manage by focusing on vision, mission, building trust, communicating awareness to drive change, managing risks, and developing employees' skills to enhance their expertise.

From the result that the current conditions were assessed at moderate level while the desired conditions were assessed at the highest level. This indicates that the most critical desirable behavior of innovative leadership of school administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools of Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7 is participation and teamwork. The emphasis on participation and teamwork aligns with Fullan's (2011) advocacy for collaborative practices in system-wide innovation. According to Fullan, school administrators with innovative leadership play a crucial role in fostering a shared vision and promoting systemic change by leveraging collaboration to improve teaching and learning. This perspective is reinforced by Horth and Buchner (2014), who view innovative leadership as a behavior rooted in collective effort, where individuals lead transformation through unconventional thinking and group engagement. Similarly, Sharma (2008) highlights that innovation in leadership arises from the ability to influence and motivate collaborators, managing both tasks and people flexibly to achieve organizational goals. Thus, all three scholars underscore that participation and teamwork are not only essential for innovation but also central to sustaining change and building institutional capacity. Therefore, school administrators should prioritize and further develop this aspect by fostering motivation and positive relationships among personnel through equitable benefit-sharing. This includes recognition of achievements, rewarding, and promoting development opportunities, which in turn cultivates trust and organizational commitment. As a result, all personnel are willing and united in driving the organization's goals with dedication and enthusiasm.

Phrase Two: The Creation and Assessment of a Program to Enhance Innovative Leadership Among Administrators of Opportunity Expansion Schools Under the Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7

The Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) was analyzed from the current and desired conditions of innovative leadership. Key components with significant needs were identified across five dimensions. These issues were used to construct an interview protocol, the findings of which were employed in developing the program to enhance innovative leadership of school

administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools of Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7.

The interview was conducted with three key informants, comprising school administrators recognized for their best practices in innovative leadership. The results were synthesized and are presented in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2. The Summary of Key Issues Identified for the Program

Interview Topics	Summary of findings
1. Program Components	1. Principle 2. Objective 3. Contents 4. Methods 5. Evaluations
2. Development concept	Learning Based on the 70:20:10 Model 1. 70% of learning occurred through experiential learning, involving hands-on practice and learning-by-doing. 2. 20% of learning resulted from social learning through interaction, discussion, and collaboration with others. 3. 10% of learning derived from formal learning through structured content such as lectures, readings, and training materials.
3. Development Methods	1. On-the-Job Learning 2. Educational Study Visit 3. Training Program
4. Duration	150 hours
5. Assessment and Evaluation	1. Pre-, during-, and post-development evaluation 2. Evaluation of Participant Satisfaction with the Program

Both theoretical foundations in innovative leadership and qualitative data gathered via interviews, the program presents a comprehensive approach grounded in established models and best practices. Framed within pertinent theories of innovative leadership, models of professional development, and ideas of innovative leadership.

School administrators with innovative leadership are those who foster shared vision, encourage systemic change, and drive improvements in teaching and learning through collaborative practices and strategic use of innovation (Fullan, 2011). The emphasis on innovative leadership aligns with Fullan’s (2011) advocacy for collaborative practices in system-wide innovation.

The 70:20:10 framework outlines a model for learning and development, emphasizing that 70% of learning comes from on-the-job experiences, 20% from interactions with others, and 10% from formal educational events. This model suggests that effective learning and development programs should consider a mix of informal and formal learning opportunities (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1996).

The duration of this innovative leadership program decided within the interviewing from the best practices. The duration of training programs varies depending on the training objectives, content complexity, audience needs, and delivery methods (Noe, 2017). The allocation of time must be appropriate according to the components with the highest priority needs. Since each module requires different amounts of time, the researcher can allocate a total of 150 hours for this program.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Suitability and Feasibility Level of the Program for Enhancing School Administrators in Educational Opportunity Expansion Schools of Nakhon Ratchasima Primary Educational Service Area Office 7

Program Components	Suitability			Feasibility		
	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
1. Principles						
1 . 1Importance of Principles	4.60	0.49	Highest	4.80	0.40	Highest
1 . 2Clarity of Principles	4.20	0.40	High	4.60	0.49	Highest
2. Objectives						

Program Components	Suitability			Feasibility		
	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
2 . 1 To enhance the innovative leadership of administrators in opportunity expansion schools.	5.00	0.00	Highest	5.00	0.00	Highest
2 . 2 The comprehensiveness of the components of innovative leadership among administrators of opportunity expansion schools.	4.80	0.40	Highest	5.00	0.00	Highest
3. Content						
3 . 1 Consistent with the program objectives.	4.60	0.49	Highest	4.80	0.40	Highest
3 . 2 The content arrangement corresponds to the defined components.	4.60	0.49	Highest	4.80	0.40	Highest
3 . 3 Content and duration	4.40	0.49	High	4.80	0.40	Highest
3 . 4 Module 1 Innovation Vision	4.60	0.49	Highest	4.80	0.40	Highest
3 . 5 Module 2 Innovation Personnel Development	4.40	0.49	High	4.80	0.40	Highest
3 . 6 Module 3 Innovation Thought Leadership	4.40	0.49	High	4.80	0.40	Highest
3 . 7 Module 4 Participation and Teamwork	4.40	0.49	High	4.80	0.40	Highest
3 . 8 Module 5 Innovative Creativity	4.40	0.49	High	4.80	0.40	Highest
4. Methods						
4 . 1 Module 1 Innovation Vision	4.40	0.49	High	4.80	0.40	Highest
4 . 2 Module 2 Innovation Personnel Development	4.60	0.49	Highest	4.80	0.40	Highest
4 . 3 Module 3 Innovation Thought Leadership	4.40	0.49	High	4.80	0.40	Highest
4 . 4 Module 4 Participation and Teamwork	4.60	0.49	Highest	4.80	0.40	Highest
4 . 5 Module 5 Innovative Creativity	4.40	0.49	High	4.60	0.49	Highest
5. Evaluation						
5 . 1 Pre-, during-, and post-development evaluation	4.60	0.49	Highest	4.80	0.40	Highest
5 . 2 Evaluation of Participant Satisfaction with the Program	4.80	0.40	Highest	4.80	0.40	Highest
Total	4.54	0.45	Highest	4.80	0.37	Highest

According to Table 3, Five experts assessed the innovative leadership development program for administrators on an item-by-item basis. The results showed that the suitability of the program received mean scores ranging from 4.20 to 5.00, indicating that the program is highly appropriate. Additionally, the feasibility of the program was rated with mean scores between 4.60 and 5.00, demonstrating that the program is highly feasible for implementation. This is consistent with the study conducted by Toemvithi & Sariwat (2024), who Developed a Program to Strengthen Innovative Leadership of School Administrators under the Chaiyaphum Primary Educational Service Area Office 2. The program comprised the following components: principles, objectives, activity content, development processes and methods, and assessment and evaluation. The evaluation results indicated that both the appropriateness and feasibility of the program were rated at the highest level.

5. Conclusion

The study found that the current condition of innovative leadership among school administrators in educational opportunity expansion schools was at a moderate level, while the desired condition was rated at the highest level. Based on the Priority Needs Index, the most critical areas requiring development were participation and teamwork, innovative vision, innovation personnel development, innovation thought leadership, and innovative creativity. In response, a professional development program was designed comprising five modules aligned with these priority needs. The program addressed core leadership competencies through clearly defined principles, objectives, content, delivery methods, and evaluation strategies. Expert evaluations confirmed the program's high suitability and feasibility for practical implementation. These findings highlight the importance of targeted, evidence-based leadership development in fostering innovation within schools and offer a replicable model for similar educational contexts.

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