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## Strengthening Program in Academic Leadership of Primary School Administrators: A Modified Priority Needs Index Study

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### Abstract

Academic leadership establishes a link between academic achievement and school improvement. This research aims to 1) study the current conditions, desirable conditions, and needs regarding academic leadership among primary school administrators, and 2) develop a strengthening program in academic leadership for primary administrators. The study was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 involved studying the current conditions, desired conditions, and needs for enhancing academic leadership among school administrators. The sample consisted of 414 participants, including 117 school administrators and 297 teachers from schools under the Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2. The research instrument was a rating scale questionnaire. Phase 2 focused on developing an academic leadership enhancement program and evaluating its appropriateness and feasibility. The research instrument used in this phase was a program evaluation form. The data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, as well as the modified Priority Needs Index. The results indicated that the current condition of academic leadership among school administrators, evaluated across four aspects, was at a moderate level. Meanwhile, the desired condition of academic leadership was rated at the highest level overall, with the highest average in the aspect of mission formulation. The needs assessment showed that the areas requiring the most development, in descending order, were instructional supervision, mission formulation, curriculum management, and promoting a teaching and learning atmosphere. The program to strengthen academic leadership for primary school administrators consisted of 6 components: principles, goals, objectives, content, learning process, and evaluation. The program content was divided into 4 modules: mission formulation, promoting a teaching and learning atmosphere, instructional supervision, and curriculum management.

**Keywords:** Academic Leadership, Primary School, School Administrators, Strengthening Program

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## 1. Introduction

Change evolves naturally over time, but which direction it will take depends on the status and conditions of those things. These factors can help us anticipate future developments and navigate the complexities of change more effectively. The important thing is that the change must be in a constructive way. Information technology, science, and technological progress have advanced significantly in recent times (Eang et al., 2024). Such progress is crucial for transforming both people's lives and the development of economic and social systems (Peet, 2024). Therefore, countries in the world focus on human resource development by adhering to education as a contributing factor in creating people with knowledge. Knowledgeable individuals can drive innovation and foster a culture of continuous improvement, which is essential for addressing the challenges of the modern world. By investing in education and training, nations can ensure that their workforce is equipped with the skills needed to thrive in an ever-evolving landscape. Education must possess excellent qualities, promote health, and foster a positive mindset. With globalization, nations must learn and adapt to rapid technological change and prepare for its challenges (Moore et al., 2012; Fowler, Jr., 2013).

Therefore, school administrators in academic leadership roles must act as leaders of learning. Be professional and able to manage work efficiently and effectively throughout the organisation. This involves fostering a collaborative environment that encourages both staff and students to engage in continuous improvement (Forman et al., 2021; Chinoperekweyi et al., 2022). By prioritising innovative teaching methods and supporting professional development, they can significantly enhance the educational experience for everyone involved. Atmosphere that fosters participation, connects the current situation to the future vision, and aims to develop personnel's capacity to perform their work effectively in order to achieve common goals. Such an approach requires a commitment to continuous professional development and an understanding of the diverse needs of both staff and students. By prioritising collaboration and open communication, administrators can ensure that everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute to the school's mission (Banwo et al., 2022; Nadeem, 2024). School administrators' academic leadership plays a crucial role in driving academic management within schools (Gallos & Bolman, 2021; Warren, 2021). This impacts the development of teacher quality and the professional growth of educational personnel in educational institutions. This results in improved learner quality, enabling them to achieve higher academic success. If the administrator has good academic leadership, it will indicate or express the ability to manage the educational institution and achieve its goals.

The Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service, which oversees a total of 167 schools in Area 2, has studied, analyzed, and evaluated its potential. The schools need to implement the objectives in order to achieve them. To effectively meet these goals, the office plans to provide enhanced training for educators and improve resources for students. They aim to promote innovative teaching methods and better learning outcomes by fostering a collaborative environment among schools. This assessment includes evaluating the strengths of the internal environment that support the mission of the Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2, as well as identifying weaknesses that hinder its successful implementation. According to the analysis, there are weaknesses in quality. Teachers and educational personnel lack an attitude of self-development and academic leadership, and students' academic achievement does not meet the set goals, especially in the five main learning content groups. They also lack important learning skills, including critical thinking skills.

The Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2 could use this potential assessment as a chance to boost the execution of its mission. This assessment could help identify areas for improvement and ensure that educational standards are met across the region. The implementing targeted strategies, the office can enhance the quality of education for all students. This affects the complexity of management and the teaching and learning process that the country can develop to progress and compete with other countries in society. However, the National Educational Testing Institute's National Education Quality Assessment results support this claim. The Public Organization has analyzed the average score of the O-Net exam in all grades and the proportion of students who need to improve their courses, with the average score of 4 subjects lower than the average national score of the subject. Teachers and educational personnel lack an attitude of self-development and academic leadership, resulting in most schools having moderate academic quality, which is lower than the national average. To address these shortcomings, it is essential to implement targeted professional development programs for teachers, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

The current education management in educational institutions has not been successful. Schools are still unable to provide education that meets the needs of learners. Community, society, and nation in accordance with national educational standards that aim to develop learners to be complete human beings in body, mind, and intellect; good people; disciplined; proud of the nation; and able to master according to their aptitudes. This shortfall highlights the urgent need for reform in educational practices and curricula. By fostering a more inclusive and responsive environment. It can empower students to thrive and contribute meaningfully to society. The school administrator bears the responsibility of providing education to the family (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021; Culdaz, 2024). The school administrator, as the highest leader of the school, must be a person with a relatively high level of academic leadership to be able to develop academic work, which is the core of school management (Kutthalaeng & Nuangchalerm, 2025). This is crucial for the future development of high-quality education.

From the importance mentioned above, this is interested in studying the academic leadership of school administrators. The quality of education aims to ensure that learners meet the academic standards set by the Education Act. However, at present, it has not been able to achieve good results due to many factors that affect the management of educational institutions. Administrators have a high capacity to manage education effectively. Therefore, the researchers have studied the academic leadership of school administrators. The Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2 is based on a conceptual

framework derived from synthesising research ideas related to the academic leadership of school administrators. This research aims to 1) study the current conditions, desirable conditions, and needs regarding academic leadership among primary school administrators, and 2) develop a strengthening program in academic leadership for primary administrators.

## 2. Method

The sample group includes school administrators and teachers affiliated with the Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2, consisting of 117 school administrators. There are a total of 414 individuals involved. The group of information providers in the interview includes school administrators or acting administrators. The director of the educational institution and the teachers who have effective educational management practices for the educational institution have received the honourable mention award from the parent agency and external agencies. A total of 5 data providers from 3 schools were selected using the purposive sampling method. These individuals were chosen for their expertise and the positive impact they have demonstrated within their respective institutions. Their insights are expected to contribute significantly to understanding effective educational practices and enhancing overall school management strategies.

Highly qualified individuals to evaluate the academic leadership development program of Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2 educational administrators by selective sampling. There are 5 qualified professors who are lecturers who perform duties related to education administration, doctoral degrees, and academic positions not lower than assistant professors. 2 people are education administrators; 2 are school administrators with educational qualifications not lower than a master's degree; and 3 have a degree with not less than special expertise. This selection ensures a diverse range of perspectives and expertise, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of educational leadership challenges. The program aims to foster collaboration among these professionals, enhancing their skills and ultimately benefiting the educational landscape in the region.

Research tools included the questionnaire, which consists of Part 1: General information about the respondents, including their position, work experience, education level, etc. Part 2 consists of a questionnaire that assesses both the current and desirable conditions of academic leadership. The process of determining the quality of the tool is to propose the questionnaire to the advisor and then submit the revised questionnaire to five experts to assess the accuracy of the content and the IOC compliance index, and the IOC value is found to be between 0.80 and 1.00, and the tool is used on 30 non-sample populations. It is valued at 0.93 on the desirable condition questionnaire. The analysis results for determining the reliability value, using the alpha coefficient according to the Cronbach method, showed a confidence value of .730 for the current condition questionnaire and a confidence value of .576 for the desirable condition questionnaire, with statistical significance at the level of .05. This finding suggests that while the current condition questionnaire demonstrates acceptable reliability, the desirable condition questionnaire may need further refinement to enhance its consistency. Consequently, additional testing and possible revisions could improve its overall effectiveness in measuring the intended variables.

The interview form is a structured interview with questions covering how to strengthen the academic leadership of school administrators. The advisor is consulted to confirm the precision and suitability of the language used. Evaluation of the academic leadership enhancement program of educational administrators, which consists of 2 parts: information from qualified persons and opinions of qualified persons on the classification of elements of academic leadership enhancement of educational administrators. This dual approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the program. Ultimately, the insights gathered will inform strategies for ongoing development and support of academic leaders in educational settings.

Data collection and analysis can be explained as primary data being data obtained from interviews with data providers and questionnaires with samples, and secondary data being data obtained from document research, such as books, textbooks, academic papers, related research, etc. Then, analysing data from questionnaires and analysing the ranking of essential needs using the PNI<sub>modified</sub>. The analysis of data focusses on enhancing the academic leadership skills of school administrators. Data from the evaluation of the suitability and practicality of the school administrators' academic leadership enhancement program is analysed. Statistics used in the research include descriptive statistical programs consisting of percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

## 3. Findings

The Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2 is affiliated with a program that enhances academic leadership for school administrators. The study reveals the present state, ideal circumstances, and essential requirements for the academic leadership of school administrators. The results show that the current condition The ideal circumstances and essential requirements for school administrators' academic leadership exist. The finding indicates a significant gap between the existing capabilities and the ideal standards expected in educational leadership. Consequently, targeted training and development initiatives are essential to bridge this divide and foster effective leadership practices within schools (Table 1).

**Table 1. Current and Desirable Conditions for Strengthening the Academic Leadership of School Administrators**

Academic leadership	Current condition			Desirable condition		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	Level	$\bar{x}$	SD	Level
1. Mission determination	2.55	0.61	Moderate	4.65	0.47	Highest

2. Promotion of teaching and learning atmosphere	2.60	0.48	Moderate	4.55	0.50	Highest
3. Teaching supervision	2.42	0.57	Low	4.47	0.50	High
4. Curriculum management	2.54	0.56	Moderate	4.58	0.50	Highest

School administrators affiliated with the Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2 generally have a moderate level of academic leadership. The study suggests that school administrators need to enhance their academic leadership skills. This development can be achieved through targeted professional training and collaborative initiatives that encourage innovative teaching practices. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, these administrators can enhance their effectiveness and positively impact student outcomes. As for the desirable condition of academic leadership among school administrators affiliated with the Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2, the overall level is the highest. It shows that school administrators have a need to develop academic leadership. On average, school administrators have the highest need for academic leadership. Therefore, the school administrators are affiliated with the Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2, so it should be focused on the school administrators to focus on determining the mission of the school by the cooperation of all parties in the education management of the school to operate the school efficiently and successfully. Table 1 shows that 'Teaching Supervision' received the lowest current condition score ( $M = 2.42$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ), indicating a particular need for capacity-building in instructional monitoring and feedback.

School administrators affiliated with the Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2 are developing a program to strengthen their academic leadership. The results showed the  $PNI_{\text{modified}}$  value of the current condition and desirable condition of the academic leadership of the school administrators. The findings indicated a significant gap between these two conditions, suggesting areas for improvement in leadership practices. Consequently, targeted training and support initiatives will be essential to enhance the effectiveness of school administrators in fostering academic excellence. It found that the important issues and needs from the four elements were created into an interview form to use the information obtained in the development of the academic leadership enhancement program of school administrators. By interviewing 5 school administrators, we identified those who exemplify best practices in their roles.

**Table 2.  $Pni_{\text{modified}}$  and Need Assessment**

Academic leadership	D	I	$PNI_{\text{modified}}$	Sequence of requirements
1. Mission determination	2.55	4.65	0.82	2
2. Promotion of teaching and learning atmosphere	2.60	4.55	0.75	4
3. Teaching supervision	2.42	4.47	0.85	1
4. Curriculum management	2.54	4.58	0.80	3
Average	2.53	4.56		

The analysis of the development approaches for designing a program to enhance academic leadership among school administrators in the Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2 reveals several critical elements that align with contemporary professional development practices. The core elements of the proposed program—principles, objectives, goals, knowledge content, learning process, and evaluation—demonstrate a comprehensive framework that ensures clarity and alignment with leadership competencies. These elements emphasise not only the theoretical foundation but also the practical implementation of leadership capabilities, ensuring that participants gain relevant and applicable skills.

A key conceptual foundation for the program is the adoption of the 70:20:10 learning model, which is widely recognised in adult learning and leadership development. This model breaks down learning into 70% from experience (on-the-job learning), 20% from others (peer collaboration, mentoring), and 10% from formal education (training and courses). This approach reflects a constructivist perspective, emphasising experiential learning as the most effective mode of leadership development and supporting literature suggesting that school leadership is best cultivated through reflective practice and real-world applications (Eraut, 2004).

The 70:20:10 learning model serves as a conceptual foundation for employee development programs by emphasising the distribution of learning experiences. This model posits that 70% of learning occurs through on-the-job experiences, 20% through social interactions, and 10% through formal education. This approach encourages organisations to create environments that foster experiential learning and peer collaboration, which are essentials for skill enhancement and adaptability in the workplace. The prioritising these elements, schools can better equip their workforce to respond to challenges and innovate effectively. Additionally, incorporating feedback mechanisms can further enhance the learning process, ensuring that teachers continuously refine their skills and knowledge. By promoting a culture of continuous improvement and open communication, organisations can cultivate a more dynamic and responsive workforce. This not only leads to individual growth but also drives overall organisational success in an ever-evolving market landscape.

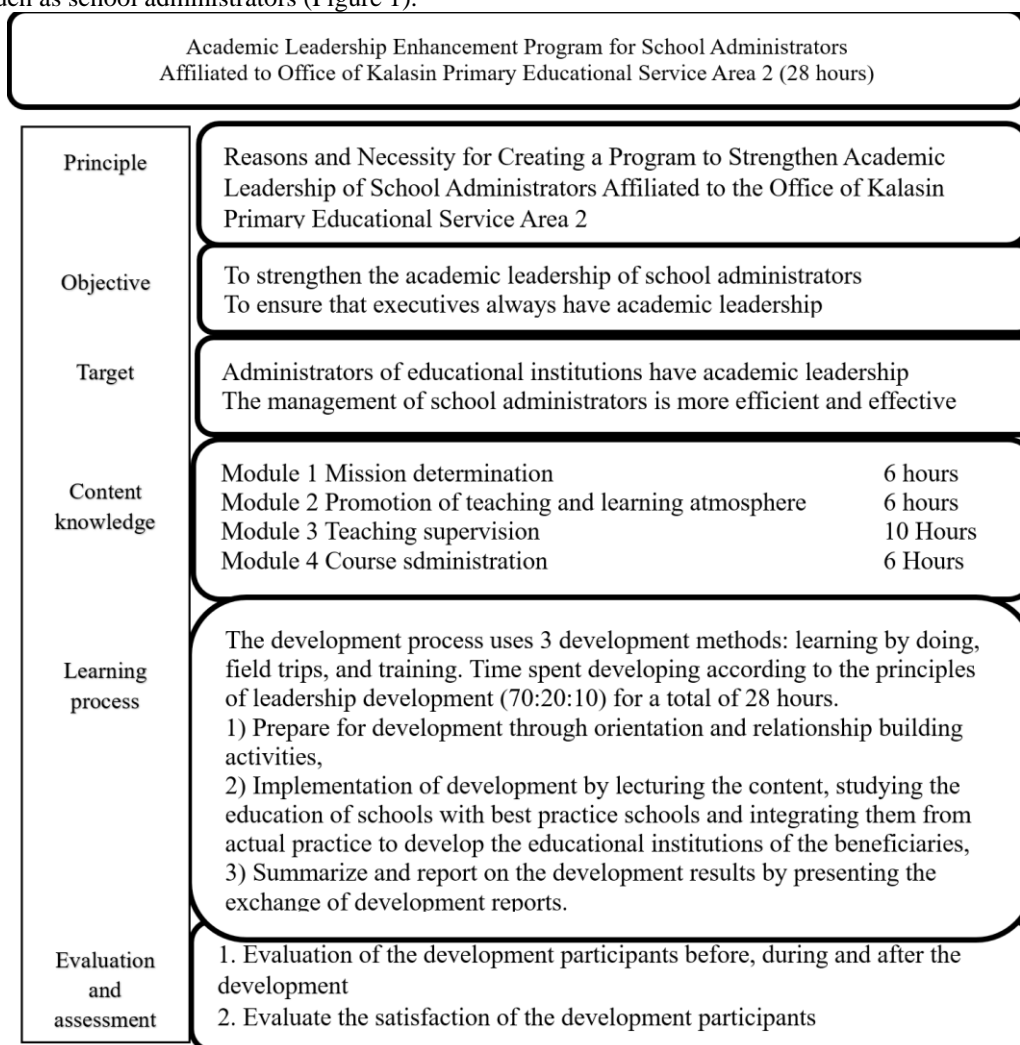
Experiential learning (70%): Teachers develop the majority of their skills through direct, hands-on experience rather than passive instruction. This approach emphasises learning by doing, where individuals engage in real-world tasks, make decisions, and reflect on outcomes. Organisations can enhance experiential learning by designing structured opportunities such as simulations, stretch assignments, cross-functional projects, and on-the-job problem-solving scenarios. By fostering an environment that encourages experimentation and critical thinking, employees not only acquire technical competencies but also adaptability, resilience, and innovation.

Social learning (20%): learning is inherently social, with a significant portion of professional development occurring through interactions with colleagues, mentors, and leaders. Observing others, receiving feedback, and engaging in collaborative discussions help employees refine their skills and gain new perspectives. Organisations can amplify social learning by implementing mentorship programs, peer coaching, communities of practice, and team-based projects. These initiatives not only accelerate knowledge transfer but also strengthen workplace relationships, foster a culture of continuous improvement, and enhance overall team cohesion.

Formal learning (10%), while structured training—such as workshops, e-learning courses, and certifications—remains a foundational component of professional development, its impact is maximised when integrated with experiential and social learning. Formal learning provides essential theoretical frameworks and standardised knowledge, but without practical application and peer interaction, retention and real-world applicability may be limited. A blended approach, where training is complemented by hands-on practice and collaborative learning, ensures a more holistic and effective development strategy (Rustam et al., 2024).

Effective implementation requires clear communication of the model's principles across all organisational levels. Many organisations struggle with ensuring that all employees understand and engage with the model. Successful adoption necessitates adequate resources and leadership support to create a conducive learning environment (Nyukorong, 2016). Conversely, some critics argue that the 70:20:10 model may oversimplify the complexities of learning in diverse organisational contexts, potentially overlooking the unique needs of different roles and industries. This perspective suggests that a more tailored approach to learning and development may be necessary to address specific organisational challenges and employees' needs (Brinkerhoff et al., 2018).

The use of training sessions, field trips, and orientation meetings reflects a diversified learning strategy. Training provides structured knowledge delivery, while field trips offer contextual and experiential learning. Orientated meetings facilitate dialogue and reflection. This variety addresses different learning styles and reinforces content through multiple modalities. The proposed development program is set to run for 28 hours, which is considered adequate for short-term intensive professional development initiatives. It ensures focused engagement without overwhelming participants and is suitable for working professionals such as school administrators (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Academic Leadership Strengthening Program for Primary School Administrators**

The inclusion of assessment before, during, and after the development process, along with satisfaction evaluation, demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and accountability. This aligns with Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Evaluation Model (1994), particularly the first two levels: reaction and learning. The analysis demonstrates the strategic structure, theoretical grounding, and methodological diversity of the academic leadership development program. By integrating the 70:20:10 model, employing varied instructional methods, and including robust evaluation mechanisms, the program design reflects best practices in leadership development literature. This ensures that the program is not only relevant to the context of Kalasin but also scalable and adaptable for broader educational leadership initiatives. From the drafting of the program to strengthen the academic leadership of school administrators (Table 3).

**Table 3. Feasibility of the Academic Leadership Strengthening Program of Primary School Administrators**

Program	Suitability			Possibility		
	$\bar{x}$	SD	Interpretation	$\bar{x}$	SD	Interpretation
<b>1. Program Principles</b>						
1.1 Importance of the principle	3.80	1.10	High	4.00	1.22	High
1.2 Clarity of principles	3.80	1.10	High	3.60	0.89	High
1.3 Application of the principles	4.20	0.84	High	4.00	1.00	High
<b>2. Objectives</b>						
2.1 To strengthen the academic leadership of school administrators	5.00	0.00	Highest	4.80	0.45	Highest
2.2 To ensure that administrators always have academic leadership	4.80	0.45	Highest	4.40	0.55	High
<b>3. Goals</b>						
3.1 Administrators of educational institutions have academic leadership	4.20	0.45	High	4.80	0.45	Highest
3.2 The management of school administrators is more efficient and effective	4.40	0.55	High	4.60	0.55	Highest
<b>4. Knowledge Content</b>						
4.1 Consistent with program objectives	4.40	0.55	High	4.80	0.45	Highest
4.2 Arrangement of content in accordance with the elements	4.40	0.55	High	4.80	0.45	Highest
4.3 Content and duration	5.00	0.00	Highest	4.80	0.45	Highest
4.4 Module 1 Mission determination	4.40	0.55	High	4.80	0.45	Highest
4.5 Module 2 Promotion of teaching and learning environment	4.40	0.55	High	4.80	0.45	Highest
4.6 Module 3 Teaching supervision	4.40	0.55	High	4.40	0.55	High
4.7 Module 4 Curriculum administration	4.40	0.55	High	4.80	0.45	Highest
<b>5. Learning process</b>						
5.1 Training	4.40	0.55	High	4.80	0.45	Highest
5.2 Site visit	5.00	0.00	Highest	4.80	0.45	Highest
5.3 Workshop	4.20	0.45	High	4.40	0.55	High
<b>6. Measurement and Evaluation</b>						
6.1 Evaluation before, during and after development	5.00	0.00	Highest	4.80	0.45	Highest
6.2 Evaluation of Participant Satisfaction	5.00	0.00	Highest	4.80	0.45	Highest
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.48</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>4.58</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>Highest</b>

Table 3 presents the feasibility analysis of the academic leadership strengthening program for primary school administrators in two dimensions: suitability and possibility. The findings are based on evaluations of program components using a 5-point Likert scale. The overall mean score for suitability was 4.48 (SD = 0.46), interpreted as high, while the overall mean for possibility was 4.58 (SD = 0.56), interpreted as highest. The results affirm that the proposed academic leadership strengthening program is both highly suitable and highly possible to implement. High mean scores across all components-particularly in the areas of program objectives, content relevance, and evaluation procedures-demonstrate strong stakeholder confidence in the program's design and potential for impact. This confidence bodes well for the initiative's future, suggesting that stakeholders are eager to engage with and invest in its success. As the program moves forward, ongoing assessment and feedback will be crucial to ensure its objectives are met and to adapt to any emerging challenges.

The exceptionally high ratings for objectives (e.g., M = 5.00) and content modules suggest that the program is perceived as practically aligned with the real needs of school administrators. Furthermore, the relatively low standard deviations demonstrate

consistency and consensus among the evaluators. This positive reception underscores the importance of fostering collaboration among stakeholders to enhance the program's impact (Culduz, 2024). Continuous improvement through iterative feedback will not only solidify its effectiveness but also encourage further innovation in educational leadership practices. Especially noteworthy is the unanimous agreement (SD = 0.00) in several items (e.g., site visit, satisfaction evaluation), indicating critical components that could serve as core success factors for program implementation.

These insights can inform policymakers, educational leaders, and curriculum developers seeking to institutionalise leadership development programs in the primary education sector (Champarat & Nuangchalerm, 2025). Such collaborative efforts are essential for fostering an environment that nurtures both professional growth and student achievement (Smeplass, 2025). By leveraging these findings, stakeholders can create tailored strategies that not only address current challenges but also anticipate future needs within the educational landscape.

#### 4. Conclusion

The current condition of academic leadership among school administrators is generally moderate, while the desirable condition is at the highest level. The priority needs, in descending order, are teaching supervision, mission determination, curriculum management, and the promotion of a teaching and learning environment.

The Academic Leadership Strengthening Program, developed for school administrators under the Office of Kalasin Primary Educational Service Area 2, addresses these needs through four core elements—mission setting, teaching atmosphere promotion, teaching supervision, and curriculum management—delivered in four modules over 28 hours. Guided by the 70:20:10 development model, the program employs training, field trips, and workshops to blend theory with practical application.

This integrated approach ensures administrators gain not only conceptual knowledge but also hands-on strategies for immediate implementation in their schools. Future research should explore how similar leadership programs can be adapted to other domains, such as digital transformation or community engagement, to foster holistic educational leadership. By expanding the scope of such initiatives, educational systems can better equip school leaders to drive sustainable improvement and positive student outcomes.

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