

# Developing a Program to Strengthen Academic Leadership of Primary School Administrators in Northeast of Thailand

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## Abstract

This research aimed: 1) to investigate components and indicators of academic leadership of primary school administrators; 2) to explore existing situation and desirable situation, and assessment the needs to enhance academic leadership of primary school administrators; and 3) to develop a program to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators. Mixed methods research was employed which divided into three phases. The 1<sup>st</sup> phase was investigation of components and indicators of academic leadership of primary school administrators and verify by 7 experts. The 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. phase was exploration of existing situation and desirable situation of academic leadership of primary school administrators. The samples were 750 primary school administrators and teachers in Northeast of Thailand, obtained through stratified random sampling technique. The 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. phase was developing a program to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators and evaluate the program by 9 experts. The research instruments were the components and indicators evaluation form, an existing and desirable situation questionnaire, the structured interview form, and a program evaluation form. Statistics used were mean, standard deviation, and the modified priority needs index. The research results were: 1) The academic leadership of the primary school administrators comprised of 5 components and 26 indicators; 2) The existing situation of academic leadership of primary school administrators was at a high level, desirable situation was at the highest level, and the needs to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators were ranked from high to low was visionary, supervision of learning management, teacher professional development, curriculum and learning management, and learning atmosphere and culture development, respectively; and 3) The developed program to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators comprised 5 main parts; 1) program rationale, 2) program objectives, 3) content consists of 5 modules and 25 sub-modules, 4) development methods and activities were self-study, training, and knowledge exchanging and practicing, and 5) program evaluation.

**Keywords:** program, academic leadership, primary school administrator

## 1. Introduction

The dynamics of the 21st century world cause challenges for Thailand in terms of external pressures such as changes in the global economic and contexts due to the digital revolution, the fourth industrial revolution, and the sustainable development goals 2030. In addition, Thailand is encountering the impacts of the ASEAN community, needs for skilled manpower required in the 21st century, and various problems in the education system. So, Thailand has to reform its education system to be the main mechanism for driving the country. The key vision under the present education reform is that all the Thai people shall be provided with quality education and lifelong learning and live happily in line with the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy and changes in the VUCA world. The main aim of this education reform is to improve the quality of the Thai people to have knowledge, characteristics, and learning skills that enable them to develop potential and to learn throughout their lives (Office of the Education Council Secretariat, 2017).

Educational institutions have a primary duty to develop the quality of learners. Administrators also play a significant role as leaders with academic leadership to motivate and support teachers to perform their tasks with the best of their abilities. Administrators must be so visionary that they can define or create a picture of success for their schools in the future. They should be able to communicate with colleagues to understand their visions in the same direction (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2009). Hoy and Miskel (2005) pointed out that

the effectiveness of school management is indicated by student learning achievements and the ability to equip students with positive attitudes. The role of school administrators is immensely important for the quality of education. They play a role in making decisions on various actions. They guide teachers and educational personnel, especially in teaching and learning management which requires leaders with academic knowledge. In this regard, school administrators with certain academic leadership can improve, develop, and promote academic affairs for better results. They must create facilities that enable teachers to improve the quality of teaching which can eventually affect the quality of students (Chatakarn, 2009).

School administrators' academic leadership is so essential in the education reform that it focuses on a systematic approach to make changes in schools (Elmore, 2000). School administrators must foster and develop teachers' teaching practices. This will also enhance students' learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). In line with Huber (2006), school administrators with desirable academic leadership are important in providing resources that enhance teachers' learning management. They prioritize students' learning, develop a school culture that fosters academic excellence, continuously monitor curriculum implementation, instruction, and evaluation, and pay attention to professional development.

Most Thai primary school administrators, however, do not reflect their own academic leadership to upgrade the quality of education to meet required standards. Most of them have academic leadership in the aspect of setting school missions and promoting learning atmosphere rather than curriculum management. In comparison, after the education reform, it has been found that the overall academic leadership of Thai primary school administrators has remained unchanged (Office of the Education Council Secretariat, 2017). Therefore, it is essential to equip school administrators with academic leadership aiming at the efficiency of school management and achievement of desired quality of students. An appropriate type of innovation to do so is running a leadership development program. This type of program helps increase school administrators' academic leadership. For the above-mentioned reasons, this research was conducted to develop a program to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators. The results of this program can be applied by agencies related to school administrator development to further develop their academic leadership.

## 2. Research Objectives

The Method section describes in detail how the study was conducted, including conceptual and operational definitions of the variables used in the study. Different types of studies will rely on different methodologies; however, a complete description of the methods used enables the reader to evaluate the appropriateness of your methods and the reliability and the validity of your results. It also permits experienced investigators to replicate the study. If your manuscript is an update of an ongoing or earlier study and the method has been published in detail elsewhere, you may refer the reader to that source and simply give a brief synopsis of the method in this section.

- 1) To investigate components and indicators of academic leadership of primary school administrators.
- 2) To explore existing situations, desirable situations, and assessment the needs to enhance academic leadership of primary school administrators.
- 3) To develop a program to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators.

## 3. Research Methodology

The research design was mixed methods research which divided into three phases, each phase consists of procedures, informants or population and samples, research instrument, and data analysis as follows:

Phase 1: The investigation of components and indicators of academic leadership of primary school administrators.

### 1) Procedures

1.1) An analysis and synthesis of components and indicators of academic leadership of primary school administrators.

1.2) An evaluation to find appropriateness of the components and indicators of academic leadership of primary school administrators by experts.

### 2) Informants

The informants were 7 experts who were experienced and keen on academic leadership of primary school administrators.

3) Research instrument was a components and indicators evaluation form.

### 4) Data analysis

Data were analyzed by mean and standard deviation. The mean range was interpreted by using the following criteria.

Mean range	Level of appropriateness
4.51-5.00	Highest
3.51-4.50	High
2.51-3.50	Moderate
1.51-2.50	Low
1.00-1.50	Lowest

Phase 2: The exploration of existing situations and desirable situations of academic leadership of primary school administrators.

#### 1) Procedures

1.1) The results from the evaluation of components and indicators of academic leadership of the primary school administrators in Phase 1 were applied to constructing an existing and desirable situation questionnaire.

1.2) The data were collected from 750 primary school administrators and teachers and analyzed to find an existing desirable situation of academic leadership of primary school administrators. Also, the needs to develop academic leadership of primary school administrators were analyzed through the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNImodified).

#### 2) Population and samples

2.1) The population were primary school administrators and teachers who worked at 12,328 schools under the primary educational service area offices in northeastern Thailand.

2.2) The samples included 750 primary school administrators and teachers in schools under the primary educational service area offices in Northeast. The sample size was determined by comparing the total population to the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which divided into 375 school administrators and 375 primary school teachers. The samples were randomized through multi-stage random sampling.

#### 3) Research instrument

The research instrument was an existing situation and desirable situation questionnaire in the form of a 5 rating scales with the reliability of 0.974 of existing situation part, and 0.974 for the desirable situation part.

#### 4) Data analysis

4.1) The existing situation and the desirable situation of academic leadership of primary school administrators were analyzed through mean, standard deviation.

4.2) The needs assessment to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators was analyzed through the Modified Priority Needs Index (Wongwanich, 2015).

Phase 3: The development of a program to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators.

#### 1) Procedures

1.1) Three cases of school administrators with outstanding academic leadership were conducted by in-depth interview.

1.2) A program to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators was drafted using the data gained from the in-depth interview of outstanding school administrators and from the review of related literature on academic leadership development.

1.3) The drafted program was then evaluated through connoisseurship.

#### 2) The informants

The informants in this phase included 9 experts divided into three groups: group 1 with 3 directors of the primary educational service area offices; group 2 with 3 scholars from higher education institutions; and group 3 with 3 primary school principals.

#### 3) The research instruments

The research instruments were a structured interview form, a connoisseurship take-note form, and a program evaluation form which evaluated the propriety, the feasibility, and the utility of the developed program to

strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators.

#### 4) Data analysis

4.1) The data collected from the three cases of school administrators with outstanding academic leadership were analyzed by drawing a conclusion from the in-depth interview and then presented in narrative form.

4.2) The developed program was analyzed the propriety, feasibility and utility by average mean and standard deviation. The mean range was interpreted in following criteria.

Mean range	Level of propriety/feasibility/utility
4.51-5.00	Highest
3.51-4.50	High
2.51-3.50	Moderate
1.51-2.50	Low
1.00-1.50	Lowest

## 4. Results

The academic leadership of primary school administrators consisted of 5 components and 26 indicators which are presented in detail as follows:

Visionary has 4 indicators: clear vision creation and academic excellence commitment; communication of visions to teachers, staff, and stakeholders; vision implementation; supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of vision implementation.

Teacher professional development has 5 indicators: teacher professional development planning based on the necessity and needs of teachers; support for teacher professional development in accordance with school goals; promotion of teacher professional advancement; collaboration with teachers for teacher professional development; provision of materials, equipment, media, and academic knowledge sources for teachers.

Curriculum and learning management has 6 indicators: curriculum development; learning plan and unit development; learning management process development; measurement and evaluation development; monitoring and inspection of student progress; promotion of media, technology, and learning resources.

Learning atmosphere and culture development has 6 indicators: safe environment arrangement appropriate for learning any times; academic atmosphere creation; encouragement for teachers and students; specification of goals for higher learning standards; time management for teaching and learning quality; good teacher-student-community relationship.

Supervision of learning management has 5 indicators: arrangement of academic affair supervision and learning management systems; supervision with a focus on learning goals of students; supervision for teacher professional development; supervision reflection; implementation of supervision results to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The overall existing situation of academic leadership and in each aspect was at a high level. The overall desirable situation of academic leadership and in each aspect was at the highest level (the details as shown in Table 1). The needs assessment to develop academic leadership of primary school administrators ranked from high to low was visionary, supervision of learning management, teacher professional development, curriculum and learning management, and learning atmosphere and culture development respectively (the details as shown in Table 2).

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of the existing situation and the desirable situation of academic leadership of primary school administrators

Aspect	Academic leadership of primary school administrators	Existing situation			Desirable situation		
		$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
1	Visionary	3.89	0.42	High	4.68	0.37	Highest
2	Teacher professional development	3.91	0.40	High	4.61	0.36	Highest
3	Curriculum and learning management	3.93	0.41	High	4.62	0.32	Highest
4	Learning atmosphere and culture development	3.95	0.40	High	4.61	0.32	Highest
5	Supervision of learning management	3.95	0.40	High	4.65	0.34	Highest
Totally		3.93	0.37	High	4.63	0.28	Highest

Table 2. Mean of the desirable situation (I) and the existing situation (D), the modified priority needs index ( $PNI_{\text{modified}}$ ), and order of needs

Academic leadership of primary school administrators	I	D	$PNI_{\text{modified}} = (I-D)/D$	Order of needs
Visionary	4.68	3.89	0.20	1
Teacher professional development	4.61	3.91	0.18	3
Curriculum and learning management	4.62	3.93	0.18	4
Learning atmosphere and culture development	4.61	3.95	0.17	5
Supervision of learning management	4.65	3.95	0.18	2

The program to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators contained 732 hours which were divided into 3 phases: training, practicing, and knowledge sharing and evaluation. The evaluation revealed that the propriety, the feasibility, and the utilities of the program were at the highest level in all the three evaluation standards, as shown in Figure 1.

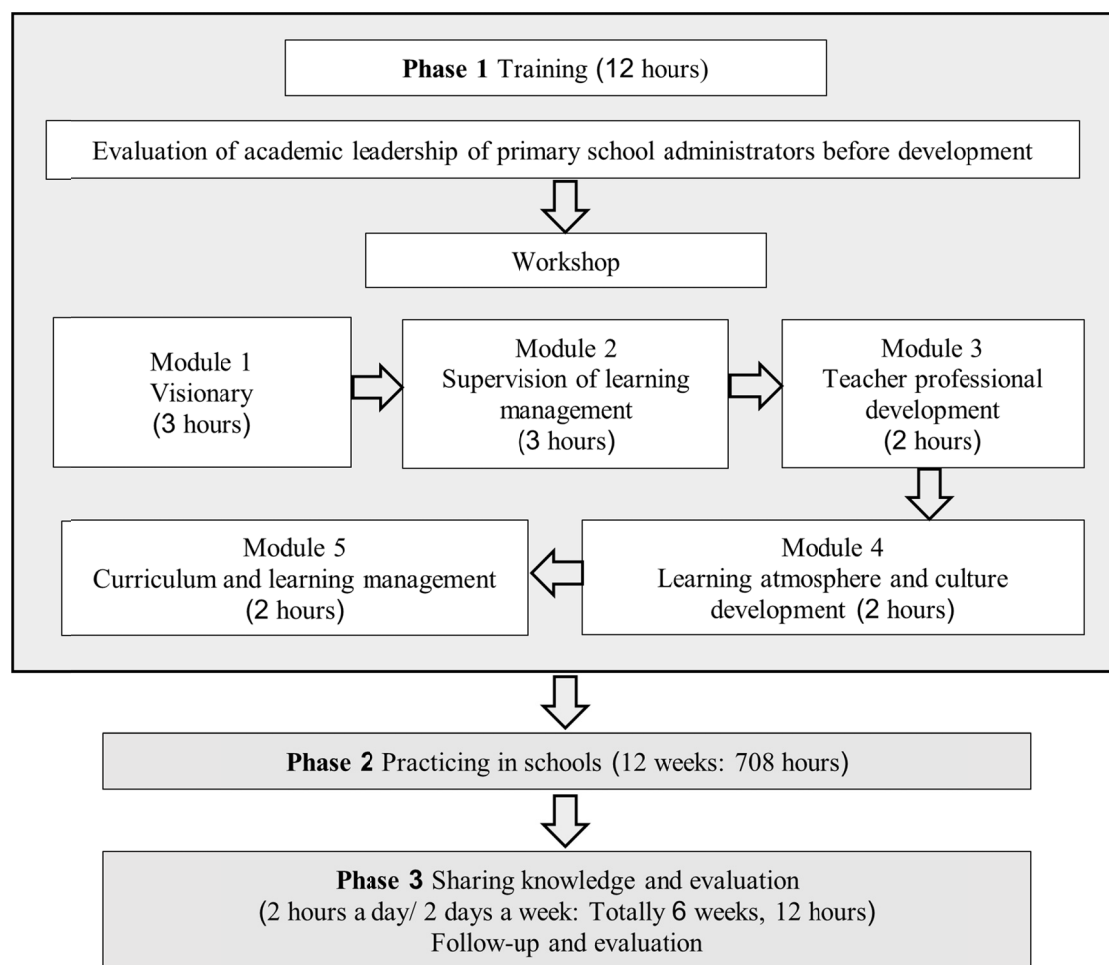


Figure 1. The program to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators

## 5. Discussion

The research results on the development of a program to strengthen academic leadership of primary school administrators are discussed as follows:

The academic leadership of primary school administrators consisted of 5 components and 26 indicators; visionary (4 indicators), teacher professional development (5 indicators), curriculum and learning management (6 indicators), learning atmosphere and culture development (6 indicators), and supervision of learning management (5 indicators). All the components are rated at the highest level.

This finding may be because academic leadership of school administrators directly affects school efficiency and effectiveness. School administrators are responsible for the whole administration of the school and monitoring the teaching quality of teachers. School administrators influence the effectiveness of the school performance (Hoy & Hoy, 2002). This major finding of the research is consistent with Satiaporn, Deepu, and Tanok (2016) who conclude from their research that desirable academic leadership of school administrators contains 5 components: development, support and promotion of personnel/visions, missions, and goals of the school/creation of a good atmosphere and learning resources/ curriculum and learning management/ measurement and evaluation of educational management. This major finding of the research is also in accordance with Krug (1992) who stated that effective academic leadership behaviors are included in five components: mission specification, curriculum and teaching management, teaching supervision, student progress monitoring, and promotion of an academic atmosphere.

The overall existing situation of academic leadership and its separate aspects are rated at a high level. The component with the lowest average mean is visionary. The overall desirable situation of academic leadership and its separated aspects are rated at the highest level. The component with the highest average mean is visionary. The characteristics found in the visionary component include clear vision creation and academic excellence commitment/ communication of visions to teachers, staff, and stakeholders/ vision implementation/ supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of vision implementation. Therefore, development of academic leadership of primary school administrators should emphasize on the visionary component as it is rated as the lowest aspect. Such development should provide content, activities, media/learning resources, and more time for self- development. However, the component with the highest mean in the overall desirable situation of academic leadership of primary school administrators is visionary. The characteristics found in the visionary component include clear vision creation and academic excellence commitment/ communication of visions to teachers, staff, and stakeholders/vision implementation/ supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of vision implementation. The components with the lowest means in the overall desirable situation of academic leadership of primary school administrators are teacher professional development (5 indicators) and learning atmosphere and culture development (6 indicators).

The developed program to enhance academic leadership of primary school administrators comprised 5 main parts: 1) rationale, 2) objectives, 3) content, 4) development methods and activities, and 5) evaluation. The program included 5 types of methods and activities designed to enhance academic leadership of primary school administrators such as 1) self-learning, 2) workshop, 3) brainstorming, 4) knowledge sharing, and 5) knowledge formulation. The key content was included in 5 modules: Module 1 Visionary, Module 2 Teacher Professional Development, Module 3 Curriculum and Learning Management, Module 4 Learning Atmosphere and Culture Development, and Module 5 Supervision of Learning Management. The evaluation of the program revealed that the propriety, the feasibility, and the utility of the program were at the highest level.

These results of the program development may be because the development of the program to enhance academic leadership of primary school administrators was done in a multi-stage procedure. The development relied on data collected from various sources and instruments namely the review of related literatures, the synthesis of components and indicators of academic leadership, the study of existing situation of academic leadership and needs for academic leadership development, the multi-case study of 3 schools where the school administrators demonstrated excellent academic leadership, and connoisseurship. As a result, the propriety, the feasibility, and the utility of the program were at the highest level. This finding is in accordance with the research by Khakhlong (2014) on the development of a service-oriented leadership enhancement program for administrators of basic education institutions. The program consisted of six components: introduction, objectives, content and activities, media/learning resources, and measurement and evaluation. The content scope of the program covered 4 modules. The development duration was 73 hours.

The development model emphasized self-knowledge creation, learning together by doing group activities, and learning by actual practicing. A comprehensive assessment was done through self-assessment and assessment by others. The participants were assessed by deputy school directors and head teachers of the academic affair division. This comprehensive assessment was conducted before development, during development, and after development.

This finding of the present research is consistent with a study of Chatchawapan, Julsuwan, and Srisa-ard (2016) on the development of a program to enhance strategic leadership of secondary school administrators. It was found in the previous study that the program to enhance strategic leadership of secondary school administrators had the following elements: program principles, program objectives, and program content. The content of the program consisted of three modules: Module 1 Principles of Strategic Leadership, Module 2 Attributes of

Strategic Leadership, and Module 3 Skills of Strategic Leadership. The development activities of the program contained 3 parts in the development process: Part 1 Seminars and Self-training Tasks, Part 2 Learning by Working with Others, and Part 3 Learning through Work. The development procedure was designed to complete in duration of 180 hours.

This finding of the present research was in accord with Phayothorn (2017) who did a study on the development of an effective team leadership program for high school administrators. The study found that the effective team leadership enhancement program for high school administrators was consisted of 1) Introduction, 2) Objectives, 3) Development Models (3 phases; Phase 1 Preparation for Development, Phase 2 Actual Practice on Site, Phase 3 Follow-up), 4) Content of the Program, 5) Program Structure, 6) Learning Activities, 7) Leadership Enhancement Methods (self-study, workshops, brainstorming, exchange of knowledge, summary of knowledge, learning by actual practicing, and mentoring, 8) Media/Learning Resources, and 9) Measurement and Evaluation (3 phases; pre-development, during-development, post-development).

In line with Pakika, Tesaputa, and Sri-ampai (2017) who did a study on the development of a creative leadership promotion program for school administrators, they unveiled that the developed program was consisted of principles, objectives, content, development activities, and measurement and evaluation. It included 4 modules: Imagination, Flexibility, Vision, and Trust.

Additionally, this finding of the present research accorded with a study by Puysuwan and Ratanopatsuwanlee (2017) on the development of a program to enhance academic leadership of school administrators under the Office of Secondary Education Service Area 26 (Mahasarakham). The program for enhancing academic leadership of school administrators consisted of the following elements: principles, objectives, content, development methods, and evaluation. In order to provide the school administrators with certain academic leadership, the content design of the program focused on the content suggested by the priority needs index. The components based on the top priority needs index were incorporated into the program design such as mission specification, learning atmosphere promotion, and curriculum and teaching management. The development methods were workshop and training. The results of the program evaluation by experts revealed that the appropriateness of the academic leadership enhancement program of school administrators under the Office of Secondary Education Service Area 26 (Mahasarakham) was at a high level.

## 6. Recommendation

### 6.1 For Implementation

- 1) Primary education service area offices should raise awareness of the development of academic leadership among primary school administrators. This should be set as an important policy.
- 2) The overall existing situation of academic leadership and its separate aspects are rated at a high level. The component with the lowest average mean is visionary. Therefore, development of academic leadership of primary school administrators should emphasize on the visionary component as it is rated as the lowest aspect.
- 3) To implement the program, a clear study and understanding should be made to achieve the key content of the program. In so doing, the objectives set out in the program can be fully achieved.
- 4) Office of the Basic Education Commission or agencies involved with the development of academic leadership of primary school administrators can apply the program to develop school administrators.

### 6.2 For Further Research

- 1) A next study should be conducted on the development of academic leadership indicators that reflect the 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership of elementary school administrators.
- 2) Visions of primary school administrators should be developed as well as academic leadership skills for effective vision enhancement.
- 3) Qualitative research on academic leadership of outstanding primary school administrators should be conducted. This can create a body of knowledge for further use and research in the development of academic leadership of elementary school administrators at a higher level.

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### Informed consent

Obtained.



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**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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