The effect of strategic leadership factors of administrators on school effectiveness under the Office of Maha Sarakham Primary Educational Service Area 3

Thanomwan Prasertcharoensuk a, *, Keow Ngang Tang b

a Department of Educational Administration, Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand
b International College, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand

A B S T R A C T

The main aim of this paper was to examine the effect of strategic leadership factors of administrators on school effectiveness under the Office of Maha Sarakham Primary Educational Service Area 3. The designed research survey was utilized to investigate the strategic leadership behavior of administrators and school effectiveness, followed by comparing both key variables in terms of school size. Further exploration was carried out to validate the goodness-of-fit of a structural equation model of the strategic leadership factors of administrators affecting school effectiveness. Finally, the direct, indirect, and total effect of strategic leadership factors affecting school effectiveness were identified. In total, 510 samples comprised of administrators and teachers were selected as respondents. The research instrument was a 5-point rating scale questionnaire. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The results revealed that administrators showed a high level of strategic leadership behavior in their administration but the overall school effectiveness was at the moderate level. In addition, the findings also indicated that all the comparisons of either the strategic leadership of administrators or school effectiveness were significantly different according to school size, respectively. Furthermore, a structural equation model of strategic leadership factors affecting school effectiveness was fitted. Finally, the direct effect, indirect effect, and overall effect of the administrators’ strategic leadership had no significant impact on school effectiveness at the .05 level.

Introduction

Amidst globalization which consists of complexity and diversity from the revolution of information technology, education is a great cause of rapid change in society (Deeboonmee & Ariratana, 2014). Human and social capital is a source of sustainable competitive advantage for organizations and, therefore, should be carefully nurtured and developed (Mahdi & Almasfir, 2014). Thus, manpower development is an important factor in educational administration because manpower is the most valuable resource of the nation. Nevertheless the quality of human resources is very much dependent upon educational effectiveness (Deeboonmee & Ariratana, 2014).

According to Section 6 of the Thai National Education Act 1999, the objective and principle of educational management is to ensure Thai people become perfect human beings in terms of their physical, mental, intellectual aspects, knowledge, ethics, morality, and culture so that they can live with others happily (Ministry of Education, 2007).
Consequently, strategic leaders are able to provide the vision and direction for organizational growth and success. To successfully deal with change, administrators need the skills and tools for both strategy formulation and implementation. Managing change and ambiguity requires strategic leaders who are able to provide a sense of direction thus building ownership and alignment within to implement change.

School effectiveness research has highlighted the administrator’s role in the turnaround of ineffective or failing schools (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Schmidt-Davis & Bottoms, 2011; Wallace Foundation, 2011). Sammons and Bakkum (2011) highlighted strong claims about school leadership according to a major review for the National College of School Leadership such as: (1) school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an impact on student learning; (2) almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of elementary leadership practices, and (3) the ways in which leaders apply these elementary leadership practices—not the practices themselves—demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work.

A recent study showed the importance of a model of leadership practice that promotes an orderly and constructive behavioral climate, positive learner motivation, and a learning culture that predicts positive changes in student behavior and attendances as intermediate outcomes that themselves promote improvement in attainment (Sammons, Gu, Say, & Ko, 2011, p. 97). Specifically, that the leader’s strategic leadership style would lead to the organizational effectiveness is an argument that cannot be denied. Therefore to be goal-oriented administrators, they had to re-evaluate the goal as well as the values of the school organization to be successfully implemented, and empower the teachers as practitioners to apply creative thinking to their work as well (Prasertsri, 2008). This has been supported by Sanattana (2005) who stated that strategic leadership was the process for determining the direction, constructing the alternatives, and putting into practice. This strategic leadership theory underlines the findings from the follow up of the changing situation of both external and internal environmental factors of the organization, anticipation for the long term future, and strategic development motivated by a desirable future but not based on one’s luck.

Statement of Problem

The problems faced with schools under the jurisdiction of the Office of Maha Sarakham Primary Educational Services Area 3, were low level O-NET scores in the 2012 academic year. The average score of Pratomsuksa 6 was lower than the National Average Score in seven Learning Substances except in Health Education and Physical Education. The average value for Matayomsuksa 3 was lower than the national score in every Learning Substance. Furthermore, from the third round of external quality assessment in the 2012 budget year, of the 37 schools assessed, only 29 schools or 78.38 percent were certified as meeting the Educational Standard and eight schools or 21.62 percent were not certified. In addition, the results of competition in National Student Art and Craft failed to accomplish any goal (Office of Maha Sarakham Primary Educational Service Area 3, 2012).

Consequently, the Office of Maha Sarakham Primary Educational Service Area 3 has implemented various strategies to promote quality and effectiveness of the school administrators. These strategies aimed to encourage the administrators to develop themselves and change their administrative management so it would adapt to the change in educational reform. Administrators have to be conscious that they are the ones who implement policy. The important issue for the current administrators is that they have to change their management strategy as well as their leadership style (Jooste & Fourie, 2009). With all of these characteristics, administrators should be able to move their organizations toward the specified goals effectively and efficiently (Department of Academic, 2003).

With these situations and problems, researchers are interested to explore the administrators’ strategic leadership and how it is impacting school effectiveness. The findings of this study would serve as key information for the improvement of strategic leadership that in turn will provide skills development to administrators under the Office of Maha Sarakham Primary Educational Service Area 3, Thailand.

Literature Review

The strategic leadership process is viewed as the set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation, implementation, and control of plans designed to achieve an organization’s vision, mission, strategy, and strategic objectives within the administrative environment in which it operates (Pearce & Robinson, 2007, p. 3). Strategic leadership is defined as the leader’s ability to anticipate, envision, and maintain flexibility and to empower others to create strategic change as necessary (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2007, p. 375).

Strategic leadership is multifunctional, involving managing through teachers, and helps schools cope with change that seems to be increasing exponentially in today’s globalized educational environment (Huey, 1994, pp. 42–50). Strategic leaders mainly need to identify the best, easy way to approach problems when they occur (Cole, 2004). Factors that affect strategic leadership may vary according to the profession and activities which have to be followed by administrators who need to foster the development of personal competencies throughout a school (Switzer, 2008). The good strategy and interpersonal skills needed by top management are equally necessary across the school to provide a stimulating and rewarding work environment, and to develop the flexibility needed to cope with changing circumstances (Willcoxson, 2000).

According to Jooste and Fourie (2009), several identifiable actions characterize strategic leadership that positively contributes to effective strategy execution, namely: determining strategic direction, establishing balanced organizational controls, effectively managing the organization’s resource portfolio, sustaining an effective organizational culture, and emphasizing ethical practices. Belias and Koustelios (2014) studied the impact of leadership and change management strategy on organizational
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