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A CAUSAL MODEL OF ADMINISTRATIVE FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS: QUALITATIVE EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were to develop the causal model of administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools and to analyze the key administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools. This study employed a mixed-method research design comprising a qualitative data analysis of literature review on the administrative factors affecting

educational quality, efficiency, and effectiveness followed by in-depth interviews and a quantitative data analysis of the extensive empirical survey. The sample for the interviews was 30 purposive participants which were 6 administrators, 18 teachers of selective schools, and 6 policymakers at the administrative level. The qualitative data analysis of the interviews confirmed the factors in the conceptual framework and provided the key behavioral definition to be used to create the questionnaire. Later, the quantitative data analysis will continue by using descriptive analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and SEM Analysis. The most significant key theme emerging from the results is the key administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools: 1) Transformational Leadership 2) School Culture Strength 3) Resource Management Quality and 4) Learning Management Quality, which could be the preliminary evidence suggesting how to accomplish educational quality in vocational schools in Thailand.

Keywords

Administrative Factors, Educational Quality, Vocational Schools, Leadership, School Culture, Resource, Learning, Thailand

1. Introduction

Thailand is now implementing the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan, 2017-2021, which has been worked out in accordance with the 20-year national strategy, 2017-2036, which is intended to help the country to achieve sustainable development. The 20-year national strategy consists of six areas, six primary strategies, and four supporting strategies. The six areas include (1) Security, (2) Competitiveness enhancement, (3) Human resource development, (4) Social equality, (5) Green growth, and (6) Rebalancing and public sector development (Office of the National Economic Development Board, 2017). Thus, the vocational education comes into play as an important role to support the National Economic and Social Development Plan in helping Thailand escape the middle-income trap (Thailand Development Research Institute, 2012). But not only Thailand has experienced a shortage of both skilled and unskilled labor for many years, the quality of vocational education in Thailand has also been criticized in a broad array of issues including graduate characteristic, teaching and learning methods, teachers, vocational standards, cooperation, government support, school management and value of studying vocational education (Duangnapha Mokkaranurak, 2011). As a result, educational quality of vocational schools has been brought into focus and become an apparently

insolvable problem that obstructs economic and social development. To ensure the quality of vocational education, the quality assurance is inevitably necessary and important.

2. Background of the study

The concept of quality has been contemplated throughout history and continues to be a topic of discussion in the education field. A search for definition of quality yielded inconsistent results. (Muller & Funnell, 1991). In addition, there are only a few pieces of research on the administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools in Thailand, therefore theory and literature reviews in this study are significant because the expected review result can widen our understanding about administrative factors that play important role in predicting educational quality, efficiency, and effectiveness.

For vocational education, the standards represent the stakeholder expectation and also the criteria for Internal Quality Assessment (IQA), which include the dimensions of moral and ethical standards, competency-based curriculum, modern management, professional network, academic service, innovation, entrepreneurship, professional qualifications, occupational Standard, citizenship, school-based management, learning community, leadership, activity and sufficiency economy. To improve educational quality to the satisfactory and legitimate direction, each vocational school has to establish a system corresponding to the vocational education standards and ensuring the continuing process of quality assurance. The idea is for each and every school to develop their own system concerning the collaboration between school management, Internal Quality Assessment (IQA), and External Quality Assessment (EQA).

There are many administrative factors involved in the system. If we can prioritize those factors, it could be possible for the school administrators to concentrate on a particular factor. According to the result of EQA Phase 2 and ongoing EQA Phase 3, there are 21 vocational schools in Thailand that have been recognized and have maintained the results at a “Very Good” quality level (the total score of the overall assessment range from 90.01 to 100.00) from both EQA Phase 2 and 3.

It is expected that the study of a causal model of administrative factors affecting educational quality based on their experience in developing and maintaining educational quality along with the survey result from 402 vocational schools that participated in EQA Phase 3, will

provide preliminary evidence suggesting how to accomplish educational quality in vocational schools in Thailand.

3. Research Questions

This study focused on the following research questions:

- 1) What is the causal model of administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools?
- 2) What are the key administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools?

4. Purposes of the study

This study is an enquiry into the administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools. The purposes of the study are:

- 1) To develop the causal model of administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools.
- 2) To analyze the key administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools.

5. Conceptual Framework

5.1 Administrative Factors Affecting Educational Quality

The conceptual framework of the study of a causal model of administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools is based on the theory and literature review on the administrative factors affecting educational quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. There are specific factors that the researchers have agreed upon (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004; United Nations Educational, 2005; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005; Hoy, Tarter & Hoy, 2006; The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012; Amrung Jantawanich, 2004; Nonglak Viratchai, 1999; Patcharin Wongjan, 2003; Sittipong Phumpakdhi, 2007) and then grouped into 4 key factors in this study.

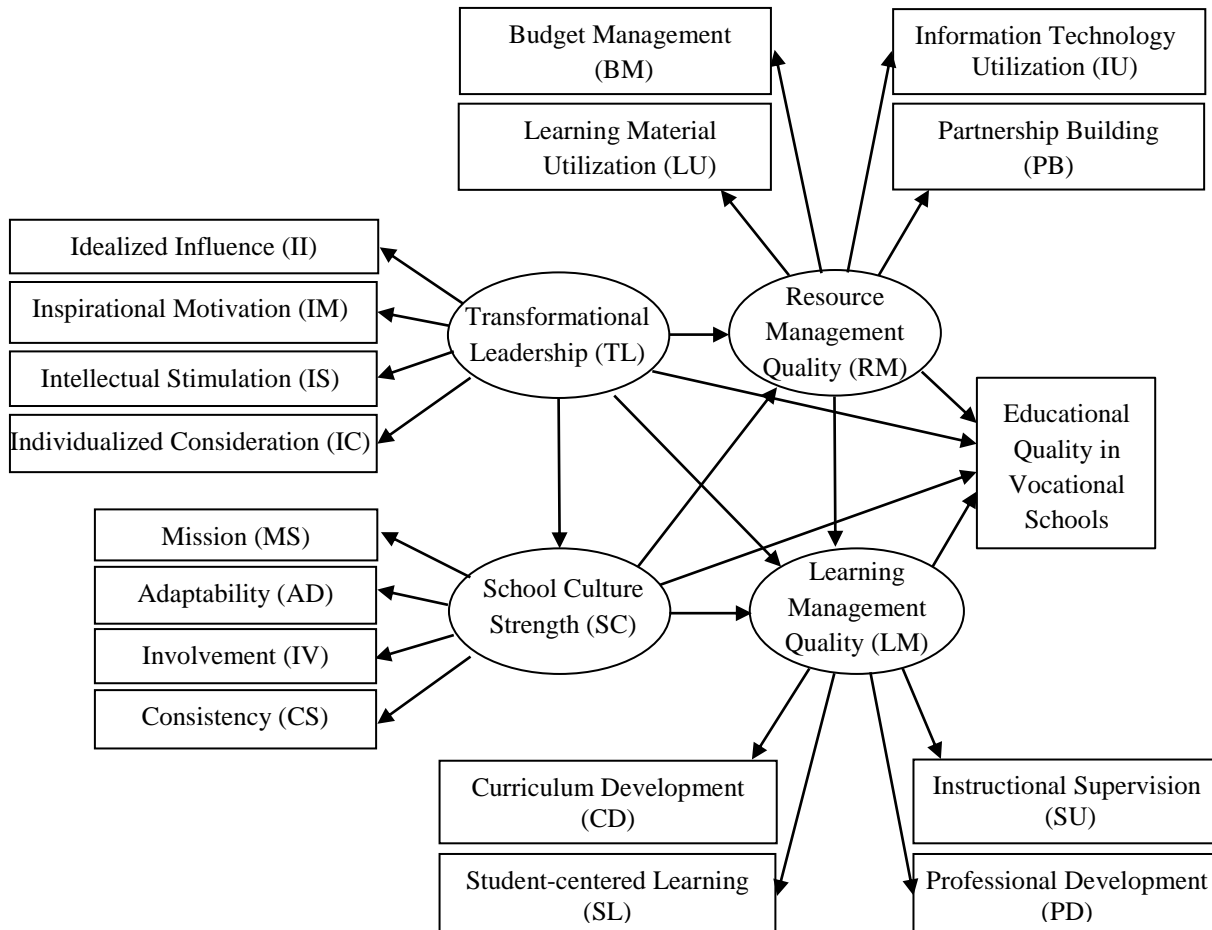


Figure 1: *Conceptual framework of administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools*

5.1.1 Transformational Leadership

Leaders in improved school districts are described as dynamic, united in purpose, involved, visible in schools, and interested in instruction. Leaders provide encouragement, recognition, and support for improving student learning. The ethical and moral nature of effective leadership is demonstrated when leaders move beyond talking about the belief that students can learn to taking concrete action to change instruction so students do learn (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004).

A considerable amount of empirical research has been completed since Burns (1978) published his seminal work introducing the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership, supporting the utility of the distinction. Changes in the marketplace and workforce over the two decades have resulted in the need for leaders to become more transformational and less transactional if they were to remain effective. Leaders were encouraged to empower their followers by developing them into highly involved individuals and teams focused on quality, service, cost-effectiveness, and quantity of output of production. Teams of educated professionals became commonplace. Increasingly, professionals saw themselves as colleagues rather than in superior-subordinate relationships. Transformational leadership, which fosters autonomy and challenging work, became increasingly important to followers' job satisfaction (Bass, 1999).

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that moves the follower beyond immediate self-interests, elevates the follower's level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for achievement, self-actualization, and the well-being of others, the organization, and society. For Bass (1999), transformational leaders display behaviours through idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration. Idealized influence and inspirational leadership indicate that a leader envisions a desirable future, articulates how to reach, sets high standards of performance and shows determination and confidence. Intellectual stimulation involves arousing, changing followers' awareness of problems, motivating followers to become more innovative and creative. Individualized consideration describes a leader that pays attention to the needs of followers and coaches them to reach goals that help both the associates and the organization.

According to the theory and literature review in Thailand's context, vision, academic competency and internal institute quality assurance are also important to promote educational quality (Surajet Chaiphanpong, 2006; Samrit Kangpheng, 2008; Sittipong Phumpakdhi, 2007). Moreover, Sahin (2004) concluded, in the study of the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles of school principals and school culture, that according to the school principals, there is a positive relationship between the transformational leadership and the dimensions of co-operative culture; educational development and the social-educational culture aspects of the school culture. And according to the teachers, there is a positive relationship between the transformational leadership and the overall concept and dimensions of the school.

Therefore, the conceptual framework of this study includes 4 components of transformational leadership which are 1) Idealized Influence (II) 2) Inspirational Motivation (IM) 3) Intellectual Stimulation (IS) 4) Individualized Consideration (IC)

5.1.2 School Culture Strength

The word “culture” describes a set of common values, attitudes, beliefs and norms, some of which are explicit and some of which are not. It has long been observed that an organization’s success can be attributed to its culture. Peters and Waterman, in their 1982 classic *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies*, found that “Without exception, the dominance and coherence of culture are proved to be an essential quality of the excellent companies,” they wrote. “Moreover, the stronger the culture and the more it was directed toward the marketplace, the less need was there for policy manuals, organization charts, or detailed procedures and rules.” With many such observations, they established an inevitable link between a company’s culture and the way it was organized and managed (Brown, 2004)

In practical terms, educators speak of their school’s culture when they explain to newcomers “the way we do things around here.” (Stolp & Smith, 1995). It can be noticed from functionalist perspective that school culture serves of the following functions to schools (Smircich, 1983; Cheng, 1993; Burrello & Reitzug, 1993; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Tsang, 2009)

- (1) Conveying a sense of identity for school members;
- (2) Facilitating the generation of school commitment;
- (3) Enhancing social system stability;
- (4) Serving as a sense-making device that can guide and shape the behaviour and performance of school members;
- (5) Creating a boundary-defining function and distinguishing among organizations;
- (6) Binding the organization together;
- (7) Providing appropriate standards for behaviours; and
- (8) Serving as a soft control system to organizational members.

In their book *Building an Intentional School Culture: Excellence in Academics and Character*, Elbot and Fulton (2008) remind us of Harvard educator Roland Barth (2002)’s wise observation: “A school’s culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can ever have.” Considering in Thai context, Malee Khuankhanueng (2002) found that the

school culture had a large effect on practical roles. Also, evidence from many studies showed that school culture and school effectiveness were positively related. (Stoll & Fink, 1996; Fyans & Maehr, 1990; Sawian Senngam, 2009; Suwanit Surasung, 2011)

Moreover, according to Cunningham and Gresso (1993) and Deal and Kennedy (1999), they defined effective school cultures as those that accomplished achievements through a collective vision. “All schools have cultures; strong or weak, functional or dysfunctional. Successful schools seem to have strong and functional cultures aligned with a vision of excellence in schooling....strong, functional cultures must be nourished, nurtured and supported through the correlates of cultural development” (Mitchell & Yates, 2002). Since strong culture means that there is agreement with internalized values of the school or organization, it provides cohesiveness for individual and group effective performance, and helps to reinforce the organization’s strategies. However, it is difficult to change strong cultures. To be effective, school leaders need to nurture and build on the cultural norms that contribute to growth. A strong culture is essential for the impetus of school improvement or change efforts (Saphier & King, 1985; Mitchell & Yates, 2002).

The identified instruments mirror the varied and complex nature that is characteristics of the organizational culture field and no single instrument can be considered as ideal for exploring the culture. The appropriateness of an instrument is dependent on multiple factors including the research context and question(s), the underlying aim, and the resources available. For this study, the Denison Organizational Culture Model (Denison, 1990) which provides a comprehensive, yet easy to interpret guide for organizational change and to describe the characteristics of high-performance business culture, was considered as a conceptual framework to study school culture. The Denison Organizational Culture Model illustrates four essential traits of all organizations: 1) Mission 2) Adaptability 3) Involvement 4) Consistency.

5.1.3 Resource Management Quality

Resource management is the efficient deployment and allocation of an organization's resources when and where they are needed. The need for better educational resource management is a concern for all schools. Having an efficient resource management is a significant key component as required by Thailand’s National Education Act (ONEC, 1999).

There may be variation in the definition of school resources. According to the literature reviews from both international and Thai context, there is a relatively homogeneous provision of school resources affecting educational quality which includes

1) Budget Management (BM): Schools should continue to seek cooperation and provision of funding to improve teaching and learning. (Samrit Kangpheng, 2008) by planning, allocating and monitoring systematically (Patcharin Wongjan, 2003)

2) Learning Material Utilization (LU): Effective teaching and learning require wide and equitable availability of learning materials (UNE, 2005; Patcharin Wongjan, 2003; Samrit Kangpheng, 2008; Duangnapha Mokkaranurak, 2011; Surajet Chaiphanpong, 2006).

3) Information Technology Utilization (IU): Data for decision making is a powerful educational reform tool. (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004) Schools should have an implementation plan for hardware and software, an innovation strategy, and an organizational structure, including human resources issues such as teacher training and technical support staff and also an evaluation system (Samrit Kangpheng, 2008).

4) Partnership Building (PB): Appropriate and effective collaboration and teaming of school-community partnerships are seen as key factors to both school and community development. Partnerships should be considered as connections between schools and community resources involving use of school or neighbourhood facilities and equipment; sharing other resources; collaborative fundraising; volunteer assistance; mentoring and training from professionals and others with special expertise; information sharing and dissemination; networking; shared responsibility; expanding opportunities for internships (Patcharin Wongjan, 2003; Surajet Chaiphanpong, 2006; Samrit Kangpheng, 2008; Duangnapha Mokkaranurak, 2011).

Therefore, the conceptual framework of this study includes 4 components of resource management quality which are 1) Budget Management (BM) 2) Learning Material Utilization (LU) 3) Information technology Utilization (IU) and 4) Partnership Building (PB).

However, school resources are limited and often insufficient. Sufficient resources are necessary if the education of acceptable quality is to be attained, and that well-implemented increases in resources are an important means of improving educational quality in developing countries (UNE, 2005). Where educators have good ideas about matching resources with needs, they often lack the flexibility to use resources in those effective ways. The bottom line is that

education resources need to be redesigned to support student performance. To get there, a more effective approach to resource management is needed.

5.1.4 Learning Management Quality

Learning management means the design and implementation of pedagogical strategies that achieve learning outcomes. That is, in the balance between and emphasis on curriculum development and pedagogy. At the heart of the learning management concept is the notion of 'design with intended outcomes'. In this sense 'learning management' emphasizes the 'learn-ing' rather than the 'learn-er', so that the learner actually achieves something. Drawing on the metaphor of design, Learning management can be characterized as an artful arrangement of materials and circumstances into a planned form; a goal-directed problem-solving activity devised by a learning manager the teacher construct in a knowledge and creative economy to benefit the learning of all learners (Lynch & Smith, 2006).

Based on the theory and literature review on the learning management, There are specific factors that the researchers have agreed upon (Patcharin Wongjan, 2003; Shannon & Bylsma, 2004; UNE, 2005; OECD, 2005; Samrit Kangpheng, 2008; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012) which are:

1) Curriculum Development (CD): curriculum development is defined as planned, purposeful, progressive, and systematic process in order to create positive improvements in the educational system. The most influential model in the field of curriculum development is Tyler's model (Tyler, 1949). The model provides a framework of 4 stages to develop a curriculum. First, setting the objective, it involves the identification and establishment of goals. Second, learning experience and contents, it is about what educational experiences can be provided toward the attainment of these goals. Third, it is the establishment of the managerial techniques to assist in the implementation of the identified process. And last, it includes constant evaluation and re-evaluation of the validity of the identified goals, processes and managerial techniques (Stansbury & Huenecke, 1973). The key processes include planning the curriculum, implementing the curriculum to meet academic standards and setting the evaluation that consistent with the goals. Ideally, those who are affected by curriculum should be involved in the process of planning and then in the process of implementation and evaluation (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

2) Student-centred Learning (SL): student-centred learning is an instructional approach in which students influence the content, activities, materials, and pace of learning. The instructor

provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another, and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively. This approach includes such techniques as substituting active learning experiences for lectures, assigning open-ended problems and problems requiring critical or creative thinking that cannot be solved by following text examples, involving students in simulations and role-plays, and using self-paced and/or cooperative (team-based) learning. Properly implemented student-centered learning can lead to increased motivation to learn, greater retention of knowledge, deeper understanding, and more positive attitudes towards the subject being taught (Collins & O'Brien, 2003).

3) Instructional Supervision (SU): Effective instructional supervision involves raising student achievement and creating valuable educational opportunities for students with formal and informal class observation to monitor, evaluate and provide feedback the instruction. This can be achieved by the supervisor clearly defining goals for the teachers and facilitating opportunities for the teachers to learn.

4) Professional Development (PD): Manpower of schools should focus on professional staff, lowering turnover and retaining the talent and knowledge held by their workforce (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004; Surajet Chaiphanpong, 2006; Nonglak Viratchai, 1999). Professional development may be used in reference to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. Professional development refers to teaching administrators and professionals the skills needed for both present and future positions by fulfilling their potential by learning new skills and developing their abilities to the fullest. The three basic steps are assessment, training, and evaluation (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

The achievement of learning management quality requires optimum school functionality and stable schools. In other words, the environment of the schools must provide a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning (Stansbury & Huenecke, 1973).

5.2 Educational Quality in Vocational School (EQ)

In this study, we focus on the educational quality in vocational schools in term of the efficiency and effectiveness of educational administration that conformance the curriculum purpose, desired characteristic, the vocational education standards, and stakeholder expectation referring to the external quality assurance. Thus, the total score of the overall picture from EQA

Phase 3 will be represented the educational quality of each vocational schools in the data analysis.

6. Methodology

In order to achieve the research purposes within the context and culture of Thailand, a mixed-method research design comprising a literature review on the administrative factors affecting educational quality, efficiency and effectiveness followed by in-depth interviews and an extensive empirical survey was implemented.

The conceptual framework of the study was constructed from the theory and literature reviews on the administrative factors affecting educational quality, efficiency, and effectiveness. Then, the open-ended questions for the interview were created, based on the conceptual framework and determined its content validity by obtaining the item-objective congruence (IOC) value for each question from 3 qualified experts. The sample for qualitative study was 30 purposive participants. These purposive participants were an administrator and 3 teachers of 6 selective schools that have been recognized at the “Very Good” quality level from both EQA Phase 2 and 3 and also 6 policymakers, were chosen according to the position of authority and the professional experience in educational policy. The qualitative analysis of the interviews was used to confirm the factors in the conceptual framework and provided the key behavioural definition to be used to create the questionnaire. The content validity of instrument was determined by 5 qualified experts and the questionnaire reliability was determined by Cronbach's alpha. For further quantitative study, a sample for the survey selected by purposive sampling consisted of 2,412 participants, which was the combination of 1 administrator and 5 teachers from 402 vocational schools completed the accreditation process of the External Quality Assessment Phase 3(ONESQA on 16 March 2013), from the total of 850 vocational schools in 2013 (Office of the vocational education commission on 11 March 2013 and the office of the private education commission on 5 April 2013). Then, the data analysis will continue by using descriptive analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and SEM Analysis.

7. Findings

This section revealed the findings that were highlighted mainly part of the first research purpose based on the data collection taken from the literature review and in-depth interviews. It

explained what were the key administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools? And what was the key behavioural definition of each factor?

The qualitative analysis of the interviews confirmed the key administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools in the conceptual framework and also provided the key behavioural definition for further study.

7.1 Transformational Leadership (TL)

School administrators in improved educational quality in vocational schools are described as a role model with commendable respect from staff. Those administrators display a sense of confidence in their values and beliefs, as well as encourage the positive attitude towards vocational education. They also build team confidence in academic and quality assurance. Some participants; administrators, teachers, and policymakers, expressed:

“Administrators must be a role model.” (Nara, teacher)

“They must have uncompromising ideal to do their best for students.” (Junya, teacher)

“They must consider the moral and ethical consequences of the decision and do their best to achieve their goals.” (Prawit, administrator)

“They have an important role in presenting the image of vocational education and assure the parents to encourage their children to vocational schools, by promoting school through community service activities, skill competition activities, and alumni network.” (Kanya, policymaker)

Many participants paid attention to the inspiration to change. They thought it was important for school administrators to talk optimistically about what need to be accomplished. School administrators dedicate themselves and encourage staff to complete the task and achieve the goal. Those administrators also use a variety of incentives to motivate staff toward the goal. Two administrators said:

“We need to be rational and positive thinking. When assigning the tasks, we should explain the reasons to staff so they do not work with resistance. We need to encourage each other.” (Adul, administrator)

“They need to maintain good morale. It was not about the money, it can be just a talk. Asking how thing’s going when we worked.” (Prawit, administrator)

Furthermore, school administrators should give staff a sense of autonomy to work to achieve the goal and seek differing perspectives when solving problems. They also should lead through consultation and encouragement to staff to solve the problem. They confirmed:

“They must be open-minded, listen to us and give freedom to determine what he or she does at work and how.” (Yothin, policymaker)

“They should not intervene and give staff autonomy to work. But the staff themselves must also be highly responsible to the job.” (Thanya, teacher)

“There is a talk or small group meeting before beginning a meeting or brainstorming. It allows all parties to understand, to take part in finding solutions and not just do as they were ordered to do.” (Chalit, administrator)

“They always give advice and encourage staff to solve problems” (Jinda, teacher)

Most of the policymakers emphasized that school administrators must spend time with staff and take good care of staff. From their experiences in visiting successful vocational schools, those administrators knew and empathized with each of their staff members. They also consider an individual as having different abilities and aspiration when assigning a task, as two confirmed:

“According to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s royal speech about national development, we must understand, consciously realize and then lead to the ultimate goal of development. So we must know the problems, know the people, and know the context, before initiating developing for more effective and more efficient results.” (Padet, policymaker)

“As administrators, we must consider an individual as having different abilities and aspiration when assigning a task. We must put the right man to the right job otherwise it would be difficult to succeed.” (Adul, administrator)

Among staff as well, they respected each other. Some teachers said:

“Here we are together like family like brothers or sisters. We forgive each other when things go wrong and also separate work and personal issue.” (Benja, teacher)

“Everyone gives respect to others.” (Chalit, administrator)

In conclusion, from the interviews, transformational leadership is defined as having administrators who behave as a role model with commendable respect from staff. Those administrators display senses of confidence in their values and beliefs, as well as encourage a positive attitude towards vocational education. They also build team confidence in academic and

quality assurance, talk optimistically and dedicate themselves. Moreover, they encourage staff to complete the task and achieve the goal, by using a variety of incentives to motivate and give staff a sense of autonomy to work and seek differing perspectives when solving problems. Besides they take good care of staff, treat staff with respect and also consider an individual as having different abilities and aspiration when assigning a task.

7.2 School Culture Strength (SC)

School's culture can be noticed from a variety of functions to schools. Effective school culture accomplished achievements through a collective vision. In term of factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools, some policymakers insisted that schools must have vision and mission in a consistent direction, and shares common understanding of mission among stakeholders. One claimed:

“If school administrator, teachers and students share common understanding of mission, it assures that everyone will carry out duties and responsibilities to accomplish the same goal” (Padet, policymaker)

Agreeing with the above, two administrators expressed:

“Mission represents the practical implementation of school vision.” (Pakorn, Administrator)

“As a school, the key mission is to provide the good education for students. They must graduate with knowledge, skills, and the right attitude. Our staff must know that they are part of the mechanism to accomplish the mission.” (Adul, administrator)

Moreover, many administrators and teachers commented that everyone in the school must do their best to carry out duties and responsibilities to accomplish the mission. They said:

“Everyone has duties. We must do our best.” (Kitti, administrator)

“We planned ahead of time together, so we knew our duties and responsibilities and we helped each other willingly. No pressure.” (Phanit, teacher)

To be effective, school administrators also need to nurture and build on the cultural norms that promote adaptability. School with a process to analyze their current situation and be responsive to change is the key. One policymaker said:

“We need to know our situation, current environment, competitiveness and compared with others leading schools. By doing so, we can improve the school educational quality.” (Kanya, policymaker)

Besides the environment and competitiveness, the school administrator should pay attention to the needs of students and enterprises, and also learns from the past experience and encourage staff to embrace the change. Some administrators and policymakers recommended:

“When our students applied for the internship, we asked them to write down their competencies, such as language and leadership, because these competencies are significant in employers’ viewpoint.” (Prawit, administrator)

“Career guidance is important. We should encourage students to pursue their study based on their interests and aptitudes. Some students do not have a clear goal and they come for nothing. This makes it difficult to improve quality.” (Rungpop, policymaker)

“Research and Development process is important. We must learn from our experience and continuously improve ourselves.” (Padet, policymaker)

Also because a strong culture is essential for the impetus of school improvement or change efforts, schools must have staffs that love school and have organizational engagement. Its staffs should work as a team and share their responsibility and pride in success. The school should empower stakeholders to participate in the decision affecting the school’s operation. As some participants expressed:

“School should promote organizational engagement. Staff will give of their best each day and committed to their job. Otherwise, they might not contribute as much to reach organizational success.” (Wiroj, policymaker)

“If we work as a team when someone resigns there will be another member in the team who will take responsible for that task. We have the successor and our work continues.” (Adul, administrator)

“When we reach remarkable achievement, we share our pride.” (Chalit, administrator)

“School use participative management. We have a lot of meetings. Everyone is involved.” (Nongnuch, administrator)

In addition, it is necessary to sustain a preferable culture which can be achieved through a systematic operation plan, a monitor system to maintain consistently workflow, have staffs that have a clear agreement and adhere to the shared core values. Besides it requires staff to work with regard to the continuation of work and impact on jobs. As many policymakers, administrators and teachers confirmed this statement and described:

“Everybody work systematically. We have school calendar and monitoring process.”
(Kitti, administrator)

“When there are conflicts, I will try to fix it as soon as possible, so it will not affect the work.” (Chalit, administrator)

“We must have a quality routine. Everyone work according to the plan, do, check and action process. This will help maintain educational quality.” (Rungpop, policymaker)

In conclusion, from the interviews, school culture strength is defined as school’s characteristics that a school defines vision and mission in a consistent direction, and shares common understanding of mission among stakeholders. Schools must have a systematic operation plan, workflow monitor system, and environmental analysis. Also, having staffs that do their best, share the same core values and have organizational engagement are the attribute of strong school culture.

7.3 Resource Management Quality (RM)

As the need for better educational resource management is a concern for all schools, budget management needs to be consistent with the workload and maximizes the use of budget. The school also should have various financial sources and verifiable monitoring system. Many participants confirmed this statement and said:

“School has allocated budget according to the workload, project, and activities, to make sure that we can succeed all goals.” (Prawit, administrator)

“Budget must be used for maximum benefit.” (Kitti, administrator)

“Part of our budget comes from the outside, the local community, local enterprises even school board’s member schools grant some support.” (Rada, teacher)

“The management launched a policy to utilize our building and facilities as examination center or training center to generate extra income. We have the marketing campaign to offer the services. It can be profitable to help to manage school budget.” (Pakorn, administrator)

The next crucial resource for vocational schools is learning material, which refers to a spectrum of educational materials that teachers use in the classroom to support specific learning objectives. So schools should have a process to select learning materials consistent to the curriculum objectives and modern technology. These materials can really help to introduce new concepts to students. Therefore having adequate learning materials, supporting students and

teachers to use learning materials in class and having evaluation system, is fundamental. Some explained:

“All classrooms are equipped with a projector screen or TV and internet connection in the classroom.” (Chakkrit, administrator)

“To meet vocational education quality, schools need to provide students with adequate and proper learning materials. So the students will have a chance to practice on real equipment and be ready to work.” (Padet, policymaker)

“Instead of investing on industrial standard equipment ourselves which requires a lot of money, vocational schools should cooperate with the enterprises and offer a dual vocation training program (DVT).” (Adul, administrator)

The rapid advancement of information technology has the capacity to affect the quality and efficiency of education in many ways. Schools should utilize information technology in teaching and learning as well as in school administration. Staff members should be assigned to be accountable for an information technology system. Agreeing with the above, they expressed:

“Our school has developed our own information technology application to meet our requirement.” (Kitti, administrator)

“We use information technology in many aspects such as teaching, accounting, financial management and other school administration and we can access to that information via the internet.” (Pakorn, administrator)

“Having administrators who have expertise in information technology is an important part to keep school’s information technology developing.” (Thantip, teacher)

Finally, partnerships are seen as key factors to both school and community development. Schools should build the network and strengthen partnership through the variety of activities with parents, alumni, enterprises and communities. Many participants expressed:

“School has developed partnerships with enterprises to manage DTV programs together.” (Kitti, administrator)

“Alumni have contributed their professional experience and help to expand school network, sometimes, they also gave the donation to support the school.” (Rungpop, policymaker)

“We have educational partnerships with universities on continuing professional development and consultancy.” (Nongnuch, administrator)

“We should establish the cooperation in all sectors of both internally and internationally in term of exchanging students or teachers.” (Padet, policymaker)

In conclusion, from the interviews, resource management quality is defined as school’s characteristics that a school has the budget plan that is consistent with the workload and maximizes the use of budget, along with having various financial sources and verifiable monitoring system. A school should have adequate learning materials, consistent with the curriculum objectives, modern technology, as well as supporting students and teachers to use learning materials in class. In term of information technology system, schools must utilize information technology system in many ways. Finally, schools should build a network and strengthen partnership through a variety of activities with parents, alumni, enterprises and communities.

7.4 Learning Management Quality (LM)

Learning management can be characterized as a complex arrangement of activities to benefit the learning of students. It all started with the curriculum. To develop curriculum schools should consider the needs of students and enterprises and allow stakeholders to participate in curriculum development as well as implement authentic assessment with various types of assessment that consistent with professional standards. Many participants agreed with the key behavioural definitions as they expressed:

“School offered short courses according to the needs of students to enhance their skills in their field of study, English communication, and presentation, etc.” (Rada, teacher)

“Administrators fully supported the complete model of DVT program, so the enterprise can benefit from the tax deduction.” (Kitti, administrator)

“After three years, all stakeholders will evaluate the curriculum together. There could be a change of subject in the curriculum to meet the needs of enterprises.” (Prawit, administrator)

“School reinforced the authentic assessment. Students’ competencies must meet the professional standards.” (Nattha, administrator)

Next, pedagogy was mentioned and as student-centered learning is a concept inspired by these movements and the methods of critical pedagogy, it became the key element for educational quality. Everyone agreed and suggested that we should focus on hands-on experience through various learning activities based on the potential of students and desirable characteristics. They said:

“Teachers must let students practice repeatedly, the students learn so-called “By hand” become “By head” and then qualified to do “By heart”. (Kitti, administrator)

“Teachers should know each student and employ different approaches to maximize their potentials.” (Kwanta, teacher)

“Teachers should have high expectation in students. Teachers need to change the teaching and learning approaches to suit the learning style of each student.” (Kanya, policymaker)

Moreover, it is important to have an instructional supervision system on a regular basis and utilizes the results of instructional supervision in developing learning and teaching. As some participants expressed:

“School has instructional supervision system and use the results as a part of staff performance evaluation.” (Nattha, administrator)

“Administrators realize the importance of instructional supervision and conduct instructional supervision several times per semester.” (Prawit, administrator)

In addition, administrators and teachers require the professional development for fulfilling their need, workload, and their potential needed for the future position. Schools should provide access to professional development activities and motivates staff to develop themselves on a regular basis, as well as an adequate welfare arrangement for maintaining personnel and a fair performance evaluation system. They explained:

“School conducted a survey for staffs’ needs and created a development plan for teachers and non-teaching staff. School also sponsored for external training courses.” (Benja, teacher)

“School motivates staff to develop themselves on a regular basis.” (Nattha, Chalit, Kitti, administrators)

“Administrators must provide an adequate budget for the professional development in accordance with the school development.” (Nattha, administrator)

“Turnover is an obstacle to school development. Administrators must find ways to maintain their staff.” (Kanya, policymaker)

In conclusion, from the interviews, learning management quality is defined as school’s characteristics that a school has participative curriculum development plan based on the needs of students and enterprises. Also that the school implements student-centered learning, authentic assessment consisting with professional standards, instructional supervision on the regular basis

and provides professional development, as well as adequate welfare arrangement and fair performance evaluation system.

8. Discussion

According to the findings, there were several administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools. The first key factor is leadership, especially transformational leadership which was a dimension of leadership proposed by Bass (1999). Moreover, school culture strength is another key factor. According to Saphier and King (1985) and Mitchell and Yates (2002), a strong culture is essential for the impetus of school improvement or to change efforts. From the findings, participants' perspectives supported that school culture strength is an important characteristic that drives accomplishment of vocational schools. Resource management quality is also a significant key component as required by Thailand's National Education Act (ONEC, 1999). Due to limited school resources, a more effective approach to resource management is needed. It corresponds with suggestions of all 3 groups of participants, as they suggested that many approaches are able to cope with resource limitation. The last factor is learning management quality. There are conclusive perspectives among policy makers, administrators, and teachers that learning management quality is a substantive factor that benefits student learning. In Thai culture, strong leaders are viewed as possessing "Baramee", which defined as respect, love, loyalty, and sacrifice among others (Komin, 1999), can influence the direction of the group and also viewed as having the moral authority and truth in educational management (Hallinger, 1998, cited in Chongcharoen, 2008). According to the findings, "Baramee" was implied in all administrative factors' behavioural definition as to treat staff with respect, to build on the cultural norms, to build the network and strengthen partnership and to find ways to maintain their staff. These 4 administrative factors are not only highly significant for strengthening the educational quality of vocational schools, but also important for developing more insight about their roles in the causal model of administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools. In addition, since there are only a few pieces of researches on the administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools in Thailand and none of them used the score result of the overall picture from EQA Phase 3 to represent the educational quality of each vocational school in quantitative data analysis, this study might show a new aspect of how to utilize the external quality assurance result of ONESQA.

9. Conclusion

This paper presents the findings of the qualitative analysis of the key administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools, which is a part of the mixed method study of the causal model of administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools. The interview data from the experts, according to their National quality assessment result confirmed the validity of factors, 1) Transformation leadership, 2) School culture strength, 3) Resource management quality and, 4) Learning management quality, in the conceptual framework. The findings also provided the key behavioural definitions, to be used to develop the questionnaire for further quantitative data analysis to study a causal model of administrative factors affecting educational quality in vocational schools in Thailand.

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