

Variables Affecting the Servant Leadership of Educational Institute Administrators Under the Primary Educational Service Area Office

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Abstract

The research reported here involved primary school administrators ($n = 42$) under the Primary Education Service Area Offices for the provinces of Buriram, Chaiyaphum, Khon Kaen, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Surin in the lower northeastern region of Thailand during the 2016 academic year. It was found that:

- 1) The educational administrators displayed a “very high” level of servant leadership, which differed slightly among the administrators.
- 2) The variable that directly influenced administrators’ servant leadership was achievement motivation, which accounted for 65.30 percent of the variance ($p < .01$ level); and
- 3) The administrators’ servant leadership was indirectly influenced by their practices according to the four sublime states of mind: Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity and Learning Motivation, acting through their achievement motivation.

Their work responsibilities directly influenced their practices, according to the four sublime states of mind and learning motivation.

Keywords: *Servant leadership, primary educational administrators*

Introduction

Economic and social changes, technological advancement, and globalization mean that countries face higher levels of competition. In order to cope with these changes, there is an urgent need to recognize and develop human resources. In order to meet these needs, it is necessary to improve the quality of students’ educational experiences. This is true in many countries, including Thailand. Good quality education enables the country to become visible on the world stage in the era of globalization. However, the low quality of Thailand’s education has been a problem at all educational levels. This is reflected in low achievement scores in science, mathematics and English language subjects, as well as unsatisfactory levels and skills in the area of critical thinking (Martin, Gregory, & Stemler, 2000). Although knowledge and educational opportunities are improving, the quality of Thai education remains in need of substantial reform. Failure to address the shortcomings will affect all Thai people adversely. This critical situation is an important reason for seeking to improve the quality of educational experiences (Sinlarat, Teerapijit, & Chaodamrong, 2010).

Administrators play a significant role in guiding institutions to implement educational changes successfully according to the Government’s educational reform guidelines. They should possess good competency, knowledge, ability, ethics, and morals. In order to manage and administer an educational institute, administrators need to possess good knowledge and understanding about the guidelines for educational reform and educational quality assurance. In addition, they need to be competent educational managers, possess knowledge and understanding in the art of developing learner-centered curricula that facilitate classroom research, and be able to make the school a true learning organization.

Administrators also need to have leadership skills, especially servant and academic leadership skills (servant leadership means service for teachers, students, and the parents), to enhance educational administration and management (Roonjoraen, 2010). This is consistent with the concept provided by PhraBrahmagunabhorn (2010) and Boonruangrut (2013). They claimed that to succeed in administering Thai education, according to the guidelines for educational reform, administrators must be competent, knowledgeable, and capable of carrying out their work based on the practice of the four sublime states of mind. These consist of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and

equanimity as the model for good self-practice, as well as knowledge and understanding of educational reform guidelines and a Buddhism-based leadership method.

Greenleaf (2002) has suggested that the success of an organization is based on the result of the servant leadership of its administrators. However, it is hypothesized here that four variables affect the characteristics displayed by leaders. These are administrators' achievement motivation (AAM: the wish to do something successfully), administrators' learning motivation (ALM: the need to improve knowledge for career development), administrators' work responsibility (AWR: competency to work more efficiently), and administrators' practice of the four sublime state of mind (APM: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity). Servant leadership is a philosophy and set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations, and ultimately creates a more just and caring world. The administrators should not focus on competition, but make decisions on a group basis, putting more emphasis on the perceived values of their colleagues. They will be more interested in developing their colleagues' potential as the important basis of practice.

Literature Review

A number of relevant papers on servant leadership in the Thai context were reviewed. Mekkayai (2007) sought to develop a servant leadership training curriculum for student leaders at Kasetsart University. This study demonstrated that individuals can be trained successfully to adopt a servant leadership approach to challenging administrative issues.

Servant leadership is composed of 10 factors; conceptualization, stewardship, persuasion, foresight, listening, healing, commitment to the growth of people, building community, empathy and awareness (Chaiyapheuk, 2007). Lengpanich's (2011) research found four factors, which consisted of credibility, creativity, vision, and integrity of primary school administrators. Servant leadership, team work, and organizational citizenship behavior together provide a reasonable explanation of the results of managers' job performances (Ruenthai, 2008).

Servant leadership and the spirituality shown in organizations has a positive effect on managers' job performances (Meemheuy, 2010). Nithananon (2014) studied the relationship between servant leadership and job performance of teacher coordinators connected with the World Morality Revival Project, a project seeking to make the world a better place. The result was commitment to personnel development, followed by that of community establishment, and then listening. Phongpanphaengpanga (2014) considered servant leadership for educational institution administrators in the lower Northeastern region of Thailand. The research findings indicated that exercising moral authority, having a service personality, giving priority to serving others, being compassionate collaborators, using foresight, being systems thinkers, and being skilled communicators were essential factors.

Learning the secrets of servant leadership is essential for administrators who manage and train educational personnel. There is no "silver bullet" for being a good leader. But if there was, maybe it would be first serving the people around you. As servant leadership influences organizational management and educational management development, this researcher was interested in investigating factors which influence the levels of servant leadership of educational institute administrators who work under the Primary Educational Service Area Office.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were:

- 1) To investigate the level of servant leadership of educational institute administrators under the Primary Educational Service Area Office.
- 2) To investigate variables affecting the level of servant leadership of educational institute administrators under the Primary Educational Service Area Office.

Methodology

The population chosen came from among the educational institutes' administrators under the Primary Educational Service Area Offices.

Sixty administrators were chosen from primary schools in Buriram, Chaiyaphum, Khon Kaen, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Surin provinces in northeastern Thailand. This was done on the proportional probability to size (PPS) sampling method according to the number of students in each school (Sudman, 1976). This gave a good distribution of samples from the target area. Returns came from 42 administrators, representing 70% of educational institutes' administrators under the Primary Educational Service Area Offices in the 2016 academic year.

In order to increase the validity and reliability of data, four people were selected to measure the variables for each school administrator. These four people consisted of a school administrator, one head of department, and two teachers selected by random numbers taken from a table. The data from the four people were averaged to give a mean score for each variable and for each school administrator.

Research Variables

The dependent variable was the administrators' servant leadership (ASL). The independent variables were the administrators' achievement motivation (AAM), practice of the four sublime states of mind (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity – APM), learning motivation (ALM), work responsibility (AWR), and their self-development (ASD).

Research Tools

The tool used for measuring the dependent variable was the administrators' servant leadership questionnaire, which consisted of 10 items with five rating levels (very low, low, moderate, high, and very high). The questionnaire had discrimination power of between 0.600 and 0.800, and a reliability score of 0.822.

Tools for measuring independent variables consisted of the following:

- 1) An administrators' self-development questionnaire, consisting of 17 items with a five-point rating scale, having discrimination power from 0.500-0.790 and reliability of 0.930;
- 2) An administrators' learning motivation questionnaire, containing 24 items with a five-point rating scale, having discrimination power from 0.911-0.919 and reliability of 0.919;
- 3) An administrators' achievement motivation questionnaire, containing 24 items with five-point rating scale, having discrimination power from 0.800- 1.000 and reliability of 0.920;
- 4) An administrators' work responsibility questionnaire, containing 22 items with a five-point rating scale, having discrimination power from 0.200-0.659 and reliability of 0.939; and
- 5) A questionnaire on administrators' practice of the four sublime states of mind (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity) containing four response items, having discrimination power from 0.950- 0.960 and reliability of 0.950.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by means, standard deviations, coefficients of variation (CV) for each dependent and independent variable, simple correlation, beta weight of independent variable on the dependent variable, squared multiple correlation, and path analysis (PAL), using the appropriate software.

Results

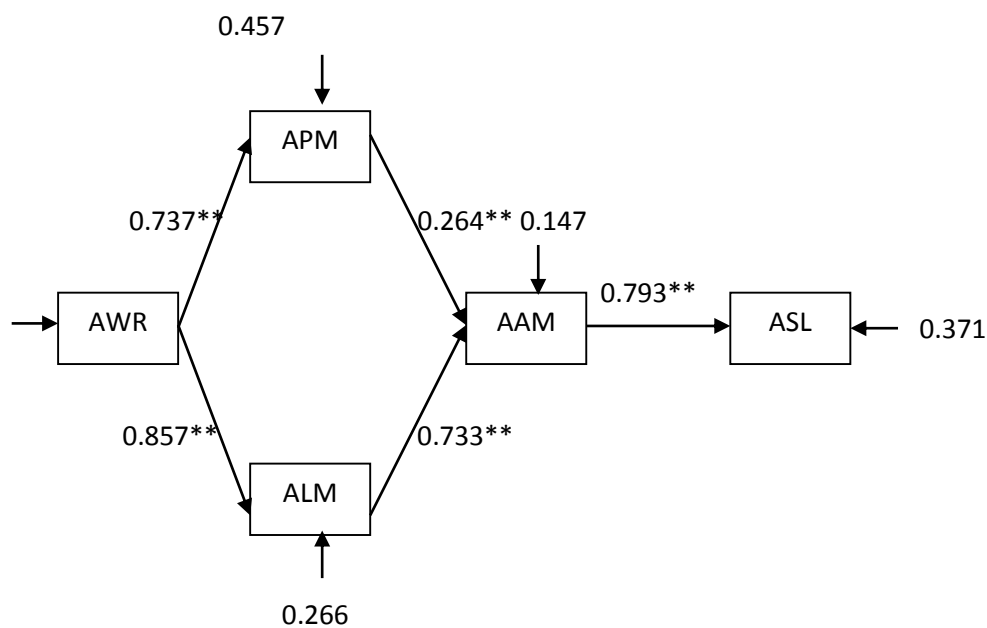
Table 1 shows levels of the relationships found between administrators' servant leadership, and five independent variables.

Table 1. Levels of the Administrators' Servant Leadership (Dependent Variable) as Influenced by Five Independent Variables.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	C.V.
Administrators' Servant Leadership (ASL)	42	4.410	0.317	7.188
Administrators' Self-development (ASD)	42	3.895	0.388	9.961
Administrators' Learning Motivation (ALM)	42	4.364	0.341	7.814
Administrators' Achievement Motivation (AAM)	42	4.348	0.334	7.682
Administrators' Work Responsibility (AWR)	42	4.419	0.300	6.789
Administrators' Practice of the Four Sublime States of Mind (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, Equanimity – APM)	42	4.537	0.368	8.111

Educational institute administrators reported high levels of servant leadership ($\bar{X} = 4.410$), with slight differences among individual respondents (C.V. = 7.188). Similar results were also obtained for their self-development ($\bar{X} = 3.895$; C.V. = 9.961), learning motivation ($\bar{X} = 4.364$; C.V. = 7.814), and achievement motivation ($\bar{X} = 4.348$; C.V. = 7.682). The administrators rated their level of work responsibility as high ($\bar{X} = 4.419$; C.V. = 6.789), along with their practice of the Four sublime states of mind (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity) ($\bar{X} = 4.537$; C.V. = 8.111).

Figure 1 shows a model constructed after path analysis detailing the influences, in term of β weight, contributing to administrators' servant leadership (ASL).



Chi-Square = 8.54, df = 5, P-value = 0.12867, RMSEA = 0.090; ** $p < 0.01$

Figure 1. Model of the Variables Affecting the Administrators' Servant Leadership

Details of the analytical data are given in Table 2. This Table shows the goodness of fit (R^2) of the data to the model. The β values given in Figure 1 are again shown for completeness. It should also be noted that the RMSEA score was 0.09, which is higher than the usual cutoff level, and so is a limitation of this model.

Table 2. Variables Affecting Administrators' Servant Leadership

Variables	R ²	β
Administrators' Servant Leadership (ASL)	0.629	
Administrators' Achievement Motivation (AAM)		0.793**
Level of Administrators' Achievement Motivation (AAM)	0.853	
Administrators' Practice of the Four Sublime states of mind (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, Equanimity – APM)		0.264**
Administrators' Learning Motivation (ALM)		0.733**
Level of Administrators' Practice of Four Sublime States of Mind (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, Equanimity – APM)	0.543	
Administrators' Work Responsibility (AWR)		0.737**
Level of Administrators' Learning Motivation (ALM)	0.734	
Administrators' Work Responsibility (AWR)		0.857**

Legend: ** $p < 0.01$

The analysis of multiple correlation and beta weight (β) revealed that the administrators' achievement motivation ($\beta = 1.021$) was the only variable that significantly influenced their servant leadership at the $\alpha = 0.01$ significance level, accounting for 65.30 percent of the variance.

The most important variable affecting the administrators' servant leadership was their achievement motivation, which accounted for 62.90 percent of the variance. The variables affecting administrators' achievement motivation were their practice of the four sublime states of mind (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity), and their learning motivation, which accounted for 85.30 percent of the variance. The variable affecting administrators' practice of the four sublime states of mind (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity) was their accounted for 54.30 percent of the variance. The variable affecting administrators' learning motivation was their work responsibility, which accounted for 73.40 percent of the variance.

The results of analyses to determine the direct and indirect effect size of the independent variables on administrators' servant leadership are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Direct/Indirect Size Effect of Independent Variables and Administrators' Servant Leadership

Independent Variables	Levels of Administrators' Servant Leadership Effect Size		
	Direct	Indirect	Total
Administrators' Achievement Motivation (AAM)	0.793	-	0.793
Administrators' Learning Motivation (ALM)	-	0.582	0.582
Administrators' Work Responsibility (AWR)	-	0.653	0.653
Administrators' Practice of Four Sublime States of Mind (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, Equanimity – APM)	-	0.210	0.210

The levels of administrators' servant leadership was directly influenced by their achievement motivation. It was also indirectly influenced by their learning motivation through their achievement motivation, while their work responsibility was influenced by their practice of the four sublime states of mind and their learning motivation.

The direct and indirect effect size of these variables on administrators' achievement motivation are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Direct/Indirect Size Effect of Independent Variables and Administrators' Achievement Motivation

Independent Variables	Levels of Administrators' Servant Leadership Effect Size		
	Direct	Indirect	Total
Administrators' Learning Motivation	0.733	-	0.733
Administrators' Practice of the Four Sublime States of Mind (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, Equanimity)	0.264	-	0.264
Administrators' Work Responsibility	-	0.823	0.823

The level of administrators' achievement motivation was directly influenced by their learning motivation and their practice of the four sublime states of mind. The level of administrators' achievement motivation was indirectly influenced by their work responsibility through their practice of the four sublime states of mind, along with their learning motivation.

Discussion

The research results show that educational institute administrators in the region surveyed viewed their servant leadership at the 'high' level, with slight variation among administrators. This may be due to their roles and duties. Professional standards require that all school administrators perform regular academic activities related to professional development for their educational administration, aiming at developing educational personnel, learners, and communities. Therefore, administrators with achievement motivation are those working with purpose, willing to reach their goals with enthusiasm despite the troubles and obstacles. These administrators attempted to find ways to solve problems by using their ability to be successful. This resulted in their servant leadership being at the 'high' level. The results are consistent with those of Chaiyapheuk (2007), Meemheuy (2008), Lengpanich (2011), Nithananon (2014) and Phongpanphaengpanga (2014) who studied administrators' servant leadership and found that the servant leadership of the educational institute's administrators they studied was at a 'high' level.

The pathway analysis results revealed the following.

- 1) Administrators' achievement motivation was the variable that explained 62.90 percent of the variance of their servant leadership. Practice of the four sublime states of mind (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity) and administrators' learning motivation did not directly influence servant leadership, but indirectly did so through the administrators' achievement motivation. Administrators' achievement motivation did not have a direct influence on their servant leadership, but indirectly influenced it through their practice of the four sublime states of mind, and their learning motivation driven by their achievement motivation.
- 2) Administrators' achievement motivation was accounted for by their learning motivation and their practice of the four sublime states, which explained 85.30 percent of the variance. Administrators' work responsibility did not have a direct influence on the level of their achievement motivation, but indirectly influenced achievement motivation through their practice of the four sublime states of mind and their learning motivation.
- 3) Administrators' work responsibility was the variable that best accounted for their practice of the four sublime states of mind, explaining 54.30 percent of the variance. The variable accounting for administrators' learning motivation was their work responsibility, explaining 73.40 percent of the variance observed. This is because achievement motivation is an important factor that helps administrators to perform activities towards goals and solve problems appropriately. This also motivates administrators to work according to good standards, which is the highest goal for assessing a person's ability level (Singh, Granville & Dicka, 2002).

The reason why administrators' practice of the four sublime states of mind and their learning motivation influenced their achievement motivation may be that people with learning motivation always desire to learn new things. They are also curious and alert to new things. As a result, these

people become achievement motivated and perform duties to succeed at their highest level of efficiency, which assures that the schools they work for will be successful because of their ability and efficiency.

The results of this study are consistent with those of Innok (2013), who found that administrators' achievement motivation directly influenced their academic leadership, similarly to administrators' servant leadership. The reason why administrators' practice of the four sublime states of mind influenced their servant leadership was that administrators who had the four sublime states of mind (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity) are usually kind and willing to help other people.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Policy Makers

The study showed that achievement motivation directly and indirectly influenced the level of servant leadership by educational administrators. Therefore, administrators of the Ministry of Education and the Office of Basic Educational Service Area should promote achievement motivation by educational institute administrators in order to develop their servant leadership, which will improve educational achievement of basic education.

Recommendations for Practice

Top-level administrators should encourage educational administrators' to enroll in training that will provide motivation for higher achievement. This should be done in order to develop servant leadership that will enhance their teachers' teaching quality, leading to better student learning achievements.

Recommendations for Research

Courses should be developed to enhance administrators' achievement motivation, as it has been found to be a critical variable effecting their servant leadership, which could further improve the educational quality in schools.

About the Author

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