

BEST LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THAILAND

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Abstract: This study focused on the following objectives, to analyze the expected ideal leadership practices of school directors that lead to effectiveness of educational quality assurance in public schools; to identify the “best leadership practices” of school directors who achieved effectiveness of educational quality assurance in outstanding public schools in Thailand; to find the current leadership practices of the directors of the public schools in Thailand; and to develop and validate the “best leadership practices” for the effectiveness of educational quality assurance in public schools in Thailand. The mixed methods of research methodology have been applied in data collections and data analysis. The main methods were the literature review, the interview of six public school leaders of the most effective schools in Thailand, the use of the questionnaire with 205 public school leaders, and focus group method was used for developing and validating the “best leadership practices” for the effectiveness of educational quality assurance in public schools in Thailand. The findings for research objective 1 were the result of the excessive review of literature about the best practices of the school directors which leads to the effectiveness of the school and the success of every student comprising; Visionary Leadership, Unity of Purpose, Learning Community, Instructional Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development, Organizational Management, Assessment, Reflection, Collaboration, Diversity, Inquiry, and Professionalism. The findings for research objective 2 were the list of “leadership practices” of school leaders who achieved effectiveness of educational quality assurance was summed from the results of the common points of five schools out of 6 schools representing 6 regions which were qualitatively analyzed. The findings for research objective 3 were the list of the “current leadership practices” of the leaders of the public schools in Thailand. The findings for research objective 4 were the “best leadership practices” for the effectiveness of educational quality assurance in public schools which consisted of; an educational leader promotes the success of every student and achieves ONESQA Standards by; developing and communicating a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders, nurturing and sustaining instructional program and culture conducive to student learning and staff professional growth, ensuring management of organization, operation, and resources for safe and effective learning

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environment, collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources, acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner, understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Keywords: Best Leadership Practices, Effectiveness of Educational Quality Assurance.

Introduction

The effectiveness of educational system of every country is a prerequisite for sustainable development of their economies and improvement of the life qualities of their nations which made educational reform the main talk of most of the countries all over the world in the last two decades (Carnoy, 2003). East Asian regimes also were determined to improve the quality of their educational system to ensure effective and competitive economies in the world market (Hallinger, 2010). Thailand has decided to increase the opportunities of free basic education to 100 percent by 2010 (Hallinger, 2004).

A sort of belief has evolved among the Thai officials that the key for the success in achieving high quality education across the nation lies on the shoulders of school directors (Hallinger and Bryant, 2013). Thailand is determined to improve the quality of educational system and bring the expected results by continuously increasing the budget allocated for education to become 4 % of the GDP of the country in 2009, but due to the lack of understanding and commitment among the bureaucrats the results of students on Ordinary National Educational Test (O- NET) 2011, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2007 continue to be disappointing for the policy makers even though Thai schools are equipped with modern teaching tools and the high school students have access to internet and computers (World Bank, 2012).

Regardless of all the educational reform efforts which were invested in the past to improve the educational quality in many countries, yet schools continue to struggle because the school directors lack skills and knowledge to overcome the problems they encounter in this century (Levine, 2005). In other words, the school directors could not improve the educational quality in their schools in a way to provide all the pupils with an opportunity to excel academically and be able to maintain respected life and job and contribute into building a community that believes in democracy and mutual respect among all the components of the community (Green, 2009).

Therefore, it is necessary to identify the leadership best practices for school directors in public sector to achieve the effectiveness of educational quality assurance in public schools according to the national education standards and in congruence with ONESQA regulations and improve the students' achievements which will lead to effective improvement of the economy of the country and hence contribute to uplifting of life quality of the nation.

Objectives

The objectives of this research are: 1) to analyze the expected ideal leadership practices of school directors that lead to Effectiveness of Educational Quality Assurance in public schools. 2) to identify the "best leadership practices" of school

directors in outstanding public schools in Thailand. 3) to find the current leadership practices of the directors of the public schools in Thailand. 4) to develop and validate the “best leadership practices” for the Effectiveness of Educational Quality Assurance in public schools in Thailand.

Literature Review

Thai government pays great emphases on promoting and developing quality education delivered to its nation and increasing opportunities for the nation to gain access for good education to improve life quality of the nation, create a new generation of lifelong learners, critical thinkers who coexist in harmony and are able to judge rationally.

Formal Education

Formal education is conditionally delivered within the school and covers all levels of education from pre- school to high school and it is bound with specific period of time, curricula and their goals, means and appraisal of delivery and of achievement. Formal education can be provided by both private and public sectors. Formal education services comprise four types: Early Year Education, Basic Education, Vocational and Technical Education, and Higher Education. (OBEC, 2009).

Basic Education

Basic education provision is under the jurisdiction of the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC). Basic education duration is free for all the 12 years and compulsory for 9 years, it is divided into three levels; primary level (Prathom 1- 6), lower secondary level (Mathayom 1-3) and high secondary level (Mathayom 4-6 (BIC, 2008). Enrolment percentage of the students was over 90% at lower secondary level and 60% in the upper secondary level in 2010 (UNESCO, 2011).

Non-Formal Education

The Office of the Non-formal and Informal Education is providing the people who are not able to join regular schools for some reasons with opportunity to continue their education, these include all ages of all segments of the population, it can be provided by both public and private sectors (BIC, 2008).

Informal Education

Under this type of education, the people learn according to their own pace and their own choices by their own efforts. It is provided by libraries, museums, science centers and mass media and is provided in the form of community learning networks. It emphasizes on utilization of local experiences, wisdom, traditions, and folklores.

Challenges of Basic Education

The quality of basic education provision is still a serious concern, irrespective of the high percentage of students’ enrollment and the high investment from the government in teachers’ training and financial support. The poor quality is reflected in the poor achievements of Thai students in both national and international tests. Scarcity of trained teachers in Science, math and English language, besides the shortage of

funding per student in rural areas is another challenge for the basic education in Thailand (UNESCO, 2011).

Educational Standards and Quality Assurance

The ministry of education has created national educational standards system such as main features of the curriculum, expected school wide learning results and methods of curriculum delivery. Each educational institution has to take two primary measures; 1- Determine standards for their educational programs based on the national educational standards. 2- Set up internal quality assurance system for their own institution (OEC, 2008). Chapter 6 of the 1999 national educational act on education quality and assurance instigated the establishment of the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) in 2000.

ONESQA has identified 18 standards for basic education in Thailand divided into 4 major criteria; A- Standards of Learner Quality; Standard 1: Learners should have virtues, morality and desirable values. 2: Learners should be conscious of environmental preservation and development. 3: Learners should have a working skill, love to work, be able to work with others and have a good attitude toward honest occupations. 4: Learners should have abilities to think analytically and synthetically and own a good sense of judgment; be creative and thoughtful; and have a vision. 5: Learners should have necessary knowledge and skills as prescribed by curricula. 6: Learners should have a skill for self-learning and love to learn and self-develop continuously. 7: Learners should have healthy habits, and good physical and mental health. 8: Learners should have a sense of aesthetics and disposition for art, music and sport. B- Standards of Instruction; 9: Teachers should have virtues, morality, degrees /knowledge and competence relevant to their responsibilities; maintain steady self-development; and be able to get along with communities. A sufficient number of teachers should be available. 10: Teachers should have an ability to manage effective teaching-learning, especially learner-centered instruction. C- Standards of Educational Administration and Management; 11: Administrators should have virtues, morality, leadership and competence in educational administration and management. 12: Educational institutions should have organizational and structural arrangement, administrative systems and organizational development that are holistic and systematic. 13: Educational institutions should have educational administration and management with school-based indicators. 14: Educational institutions should have learner-centered curricular and learning process. 15: Educational institutions should have diverse activities to promote learners' qualities. 16: Educational institutions should have environmental arrangements and services that promote learners to naturally develop to the best of their potentiality. D- Standards of Learning Community Development; 17: Educational institutions should provide support and use local learning resources and wisdom. 18: Educational institutions should cooperate with families, religious organizations, academic institutions and public and private organizations to develop learning paths in communities (ONEC, 2003).

ONESQA has designed two parts of quality assurance structure; internal quality assurance part and external quality assurance part to fulfill the requirement of 1999 national educational act. As shown in figure 1.

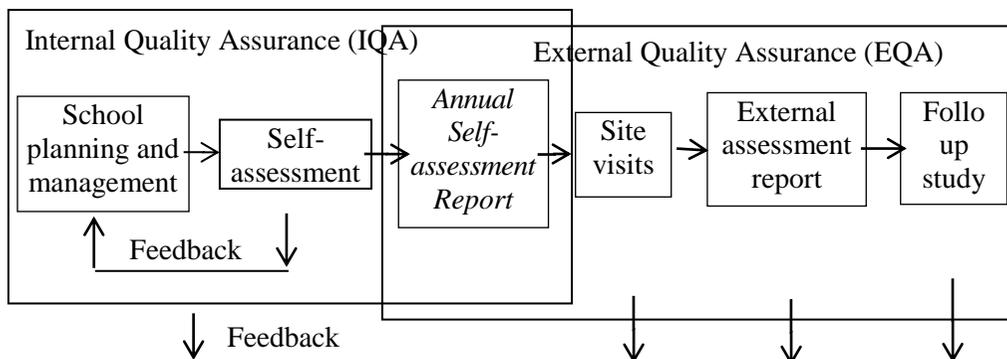


Figure 1: ONESQA Quality Assurance Framework (Pitiyanuwat, 2007)

School Leadership

Obviously, the purpose of any school with its curriculum, programs, plans, policies and functions should be towards enabling the students' success (green, 2010).

School leadership is the most important factor influencing the students' learning after the teacher's influence in the classroom. School leadership is responsible for creating the school environment and school culture conducive for learning and teaching, which directly affects the teachers' motivations, effectiveness and their attitude towards the school, thereby improving the students' success and the school results (OECD, 2001).

The nature of the school leaders' role in most of the countries around the world is undergoing radical changes due to the increased expectations in the rapidly changing world situations which require high competitiveness from students to support their economies. The movement of the twenty first century has defined the school leader as visionary "chief learning officer" who is able to communicate and cooperate with all stakeholders to manage the learning process to suite all the learners' needs (Green, 2010). Towards the end of last century, the principals continued to be the focus of every reform attempt with more expectations and responsibilities towards developing their schools' performance by transforming their functioning into instructional leadership. (Bolam, 1997). This was sensed in the professional training programs produced in late 1990s to develop and prepare the school principals to do their tasks efficiently (Hallinger, P. 2003). The main features of instructional leadership are; Prioritizing, Students' academic achievement, Research awareness, Orientation of syllabus content, Delivery, valuation and criteria of curriculum, Alignment the pedagogical process, studying information, and Creating learning organization environment (NAESP, 2001).

In the past quarter century of studying the pedagogical leadership, Instructional and Transformational models have prevailed. Instructional leadership prototype dominated all the researches related to schools' development since the beginning till the end of the 1980s (Hallinger and Murphy, 1986). In the beginning of 1990s, the focus of the researchers started to move towards transformational leadership as a result of continuous efforts to reform educational system in various countries. Teachers' empowerment, participative leadership and learning organization were the

fashion of the day. Transformational leadership prototype was the most model referred to among all the new leadership fads of the day (Silins and Mulford, 2002).

Transformational leadership in education means teachers' empowerment, participative leadership which gives the teachers the opportunity to participate in strategic planning, needs assessment, SWOT analysis, curriculum designing, planning and enrichment, revisiting the organization vision, mission and objectives and contribute to all over improvement program (Bolin, 1989). The results of the researches in educational leadership have revealed that instructional and transformational leadership constructs are mainly effective in leading the schools. Even though they are clearly different in some aspects; the similarities and the intersections are more evident in the two models and both have been recommended as the best construct for school leadership (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

The Six Standards for School Directors of the 21st Century

Levine, (2005) believes that the school leaders of today are unable to handle the problems they are facing in the 21st century which meant that they failed in their quest to provide all the students with opportunities to. For the school leaders to be effective in performing their duties towards achieving the ambitions of their countries in the 21st century, their functions must be governed by new standards (Green, 2010).

For this purpose the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium in the United States of America has advanced six standards with functions for the school principal of the 21st century as follows; An educational leader promotes the success of every student by: 1- Developing and communicating a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders, 2- Nurturing and sustaining instructional program and school culture conducive to student learning and staff professional growth, 3- Ensuring management of organization, operation, and resources for safe and effective learning environment, 4- Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources, 5- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner, 6- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context (ISLLC, 2008). It is very essential to notice the main land mark of the six standards for the school directors is the stress upon promoting the success of every student not some students or majority of the students but every student. Green (2010) has concluded that it is imperative for school directors to be involved with and use best practices related to the 13 competencies of the effective educational leadership to improve their schools as follows; 1-Visionary Leadership, 2- Unity of Purpose, 3- Learning Community, 4- Instructional Leadership, 5- Curriculum and Instruction, 6- Professional Development, 7-Organizational Management, 8- Assessment, 9- Reflection, 10- Collaboration, 11- Diversity, 12- Inquiry, and 13- Professionalism.

Conceptual Framework

This study mainly focuses on identifying and developing the best leadership practices for the effectiveness of educational quality assurance in public schools in Thailand.

(See Figure 2 on the next page)

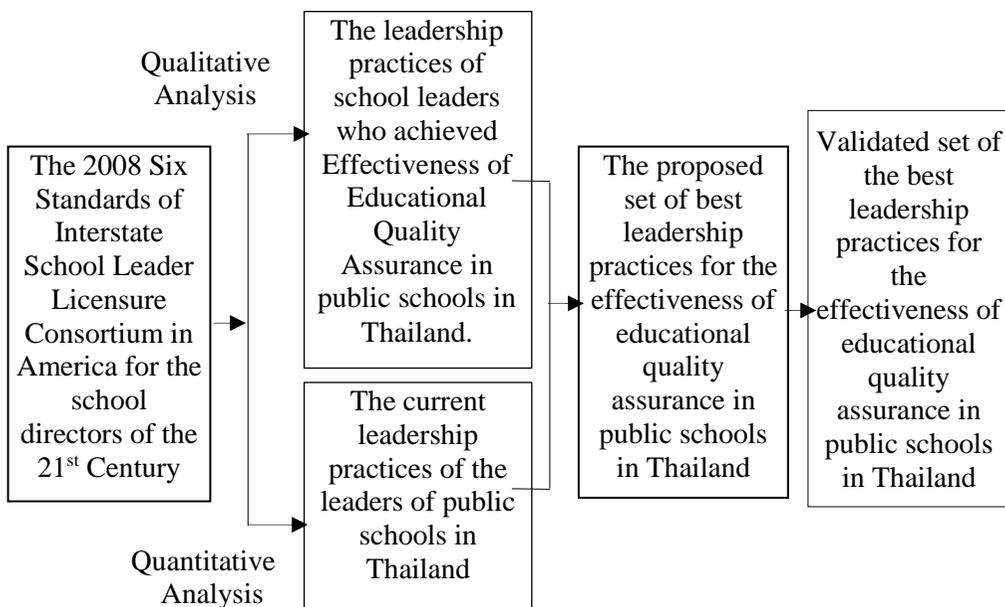


Figure 2: The Conceptual Framework of This Study

Method/Procedure

In order to identify the best leadership practices for the effectiveness of educational quality assurance in public schools in Thailand the researcher used three phases.

Phase 1, in first this phase qualitative method was used, based on purposive method the researcher has identified six outstanding extra big size public schools representing the six regions of Thailand and interviewed their directors and management committees based on the six ISLLC standards (ISLLC, 2008) and their functions, the common points among 5 schools were considered as the “best leadership practices” of school directors in outstanding public schools in Thailand and also formed the questionnaire as the main research tool for collecting data from all extra big public schools in Thailand.

Phase 2, The questionnaire consisted 58 items covering the six standards of ISLLC and the data was collected from 205 Very Large Size Public High schools in Thailand. The sample was all the very large public schools. The questionnaire content validity was conducted by using the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) form using the judgment of five experts of Ph. D. holders in Education. The IOC value for each item was more than the desirable value 0.5. Also, a reliability test was conducted on the questionnaire with ten big public schools chosen randomly, 2 schools from each region during August 2014. These schools were excluded from the main study. The data in the returned questionnaires were analyzed with a statistics tool; Cronbach’s coefficient was used to measure the internal consistency of the where it was above 0.80.

The data in the returned questionnaires (N= 205) were imported into statistics package for statistical analysis to determine the mean value and standard deviation value for every item and then the Coefficient Variance (C. V.) for every item, all items with C.V. values over 0.18 were excluded due to inconsistency among

respondents in these items (Waiyakarn, 2015). The set of leadership practices of the leaders of the public schools in Thailand which became the best leadership practices for the effectiveness of educational quality assurance after they were by focus group method.

Phase 3, for this purpose focus group method was used where ten public school directors and an expert of educational quality assurance from the ministry of education were involved. The validation form was distributed to them along with documents of the summary of the research. The researcher collected the validation forms from them and synthesized their comments and modified the findings of the research accordingly. Then the final shape of the best leadership practices for Public schools in Thailand in a form of a model was produced.

Findings / Research

The final findings of the research were concluded in a form groups of best practices, each group is related to one of the six standards for the 21st century school directors (ISLLC, 2008) as follows;

First standard; “An educational leader promotes the success of every student and achieve ONESQA standard by developing and communicating a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders”

- 1- The school director will develop the school vision and mission by the participation of all the stakeholders taking into consideration the vision of OBEC and are revisited every 3-5 years for continuous development.
- 2- The school director will communicate the school vision and mission to the stakeholders by displaying them in classrooms, walkways, corridors and all the open places of the school and by school newsletter.
- 3- The school director will ensure that SWOT analysis and need assessment are conducted when the vision and mission are developed to identify new goals for the school strategic plan.
- 4- The school director ensures that all departments and school faculty inculcate the vision and mission of the school in their plans to achieve the learning goals of every student.
- 5- The school director ensures that every department creates its own strategic plan for 3-5 years and the departments’ plans collectively constitute the school strategic plan.
- 6- The school director ensures that the academic department analyzes the results of students in school tests and O-NET every year and put higher goals for next year.
- 7- The school director ensures that Deming’ cycle (PDCA) is actively used to evaluate the school programs and monitor the progress of school plan every semester.

Second standard; “An educational leader promotes the Success of every student and achieve ONESQA standard by nurturing and sustaining instructional program and school culture conducive to student learning and staff professional growth”

- 1- The school director will assign senior teacher mentor for each new teacher to coach him/her.

- 2- The school director will assign a curriculum development committee from qualified senior teachers and heads of departments.
- 3- The school director will ensure that the school curriculum is continuously developed based on the questions of O –NET and PISA tests, the recommendations of ONESQA visiting team and the expectations of parents and the local community.
- 4- The school director will arrange to offer the students various academic programs in his school such as English Program, Math- Science – English program, Math- Science, Art – Language program, and Art- Math program according to the abilities and interests of the students.
- 5- The school director will ensure that subject teachers help every student to set goals to improve their learning results at the beginning of every semester and coach them to achieve their goals.
- 6- The school director will officiate weekly departmental meeting and monthly teachers’ meeting to improve the learning of every student by tailoring personalized intervention methods.
- 7- The school director will arrange academic day and invite many universities to exhibit their different faculties to help students decide on their careers.
- 8- The school director will apply fair assessment system; 60-80% is counted for accumulative student work and 20- 40% for tests.
- 9- The school director will ensure that students’ assessment results are used for improving instruction to enhance the learning of every student by arranging extra tutoring and re teaching for weak students and students who fail to meet the bench mark.
- 10- The school director will arrange professional training workshops for all teachers twice a semester based on individual needs to develop their instructional and leadership capacity.
- 11- The school director will ensure that every student learns the required hours for each subject as prescribe by Ministry of Education and in case learning is suspended for any reason, he ensures that teachers will substitute by teaching in holidays or after school hours.
- 12- The school director will ensure that every student has access to the subject teacher, advisor teacher and homeroom teacher any time they need help.
- 13- The school director will conduct parents’ and students’ satisfaction survey every semester to evaluate the impact of the instructional program.

Third standard; “An educational leader promotes the Success of every student and achieve ONESQA standard by ensuring management of organization, operation, and resources for safe and effective learning environment”

- 1- The school director will ensure that the school has job description, recruitment policies and standards for every teaching or non-teaching position.
- 2- The school director will enact a fair and comprehensive appraisal system for all the school staff with standardized assessment forms filled by the management, the staff themselves and their colleagues.
- 3- The school director will mobilize all financial resources to recruit enough qualified human resources for all positions and buy adequate IT equipment.

- 4- The school director will establish healthy relationship with local businesses and communities by inviting them to attend school events and offering the school facilities for their meetings and workshops to ensure their financial support.
- 5- The school director will established parents- teachers association, parents' network and old students association to mobilize financial support.
- 6- The school director will provide all students with accident and life insurance policies and offer scholarships for the poor ones.
- 7- The school director will offer every staff with social security insurance program and will establish teachers' fund to alleviate their financial problems.
- 8- The school director will distribute power to his deputies and will ensure that head of departments distribute power to their respective deputies and will offer all deputies with annual trainings to improve their leadership skills.
- 9- The school director will develop the capacity of distributed leadership by giving equal opportunities for every teacher to manage an event or a project once every semester.
- 10- The school director will ensure that decision making process is thorough and transparent and all deputies of school director and heads of departments are involved in the process.
- 11- The school director will ensure that teachers are available for their students even after school time by phones and e mails and every advisor teacher has to conduct home visits to every student's home once every semester.
- 12- The school director will arrange for students and their teachers to be connected with on- line program to facilitate the learning of every student always.

Fourth standard; “and educational leader promotes the success of every student and achieve ONESQA by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources”

- 1- The school director will conduct annual surveys of stakeholders' opinions by questionnaire to explore their needs and expectations and improve the educational environment inside the school.
- 2- The school director will facilitate to hold cultural events, folk tales exhibitions to promote the diverse culture and languages of local natives and tribes and appreciate local wisdom based on self-sufficiency economy.
- 3- The school director will keep the parents informed about their children and school activities through letters, phone calls, SMS and e mails.
- 4- The school director will address all parents meeting once every semester and inform them about the latest developments of the school and national policies.
- 5- The school director will ensure that homeroom teachers invite the parents of each student to the school minimum twice a year to discuss the students' achievements and solve their problems.
- 6- The school director will arrange to send the students to participate in the arrangements of local cultural events such as the Candle festival and City Pillar festival etc.

Fifth standard; “an educational leader promotes the success of every student and achieve ONESQA by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner”

- 1- The school director will ensure every student’s academic and social success by creating internal quality assurance system.
- 2- The school director will get feedback about the satisfaction of all stakeholders towards his performance every semester and improves his performance accordingly.
- 3- The school director will arrange for students’ council election every year and the leaders of the students will lead different students’ activities.
- 4- The school director will ensure that the decisions are made by the voice of the majority in all levels of school management.
- 5- The school director will make his decisions strictly according to the rules and regulations of the school and with the participation of all concerned parties.
- 6- The school director will ensure that students’ opinions and complaints are obtained every semester through feedback boxes and questionnaires, these opinions will be classified and forwarded for sections in charge to take actions.

Sixth standard; “an educational leader promotes the success of every student and achieve ONESQA by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context”

- 1- The school director will actively attend all the meetings of authorities at local, district, provincial, regional and national levels to detect emerging trends and initiatives and improve the school plans.
- 2- The school director will strive to keep the school politically neutral and to keep the students and the community above the political conflicts to minimize social and economic problems.

Discussion

According to the literature, the bulk of research conducted internationally emphasize that the school directors should identify and be involved in the set of best leadership practices based on standards to be able to deliver the best students’ achievements results and fulfill the expectation of the stakeholders including the policy makers.

This research was an attempt to affiliate the practices of school directors with international standards developed by ISLLC on 2008 for the 21st Century school directors due to continuous demands in the United States of America to hold school directors accountable for the achievement of every student enrolled in their schools. The researcher has identified a set of best leadership practices which can help the directors of public high schools in Thailand to achieve effectiveness of educational quality assurance which yields to the success of every student and achieving the standards of ONESQA.

Recommendations

The best leadership practices for the effectiveness of educational quality assurance in public schools in Thailand are the first set of best leadership practices developed in Thailand aimed at providing the school directors of public sector with a research-

based tool to improve their performances and enable them to improve the achievement of every student. The findings of this study are a very precious gift to Thai ministry of education. They would be able to introduce an unprecedented set of leadership practices for public school directors which could be considered a milestone on the path of educational reform in Thailand. They will be very effective in contributing to create real results in reforming the educational system in Thailand and raising the educational quality level to a satisfactory point.

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