LEADERSHIP SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP TO IMPROVE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: Thai higher education is facing difficulties and challenges to perform effectively. Leadership skills among university leaders are a barrier to improve the organizational effectiveness. This research was guided by theoretical frameworks that were most relevant to leadership skills and organizational effectiveness. This research focused on finding the most appropriate leadership skills for top executives in higher education institutions that affect the organization effectiveness by using Public Sector Management Award (PMQA) as an assessment model. The results showed 10 leadership skills that affect the organizational effectiveness including: inspiring the shared vision; challenging staff in establishing a set of goals to implement the shared vision; crafting the initiative with staff to achieve goals; enabling staff to implement the plan; providing budget and allocating resources to support the plan; coaching (encouraging the heart) the leadership teams; modeling key processes to manage change and solve problems; constructing collaborative network (facilitating) among all stakeholders; maintaining performance expectations; and recognizing and rewarding staff.

Introduction

Komolmas (1999) emphasized that Thailand is facing difficulties and challenges to educational leadership for managing scare resources with efficiency and effectiveness. Michael (1995); Prangpatanpon (1996); Pounder (1999) Boonprasert, Tantanadecha, Polsarum, and Yeager (2008), identified similar challenges of the situation of Thai higher education and other higher education institutions worldwide. Over the past two decades, these institutions have come under pressure to perform effectively and face the difficulty to meet the requirements of the changing society.

The systems of quality assurance such as Public Sector Management Award (PMQA) made it necessary for higher education institutions to adjust their leadership and to systematically manage by using the designed practices in order to gain more efficiency. Nevertheless, as cited by Robert (2003), adopting these designed practices to the academic world alone did not help because unqualified educational leaders who lacked appropriate leadership skills had an impact on poor effectiveness. Longenecker and Fink (2005); Vitásková A.and Jukl, J. (2005); and Preedeedilok, K. (2007), furthermore, agreed that the serious lack of leadership skills among university leaders was a barrier to improve the organizational effectiveness.

Therefore, to overcome the pressure of higher educational leadership for improving organizational effectiveness, the development of leadership skills for educational leaders which directly affected the organizational effectiveness in higher education was needed to guide top management of higher education institutions in enhancing their leadership skills.

Objectives and Scope of the Study

Research objectives were to explore the possible leadership skills of the effective leaders in high performance higher education institutions and to identify major components, to assess actual performance of leadership skills, to assess the organizational effectiveness, and to determine the relationship between major components and organizational effectiveness.

Higher education executive administrators, including: chairman, vice chairman, member of the university council, president, vice president, assistant to the president, dean, vice dean, and director, who worked at Khon Kaen University were assessed.

Literature Review

This research was guided by theoretical frameworks that were most relevant to leadership skills and organizational effectiveness.

Leadership Skills:

Leadership skills have been universally recognized as a key ingredient (Adair & Adair, 2007). According to Owen (2007), leadership skills are tacit skills: know-how more than knows-what. They need to be learned, not taught. In this research, leadership skills are the skills to drive the process of persuading and motivating others to achieve shared goals together.

Level of Skills Required for Typical Leadership and Managerial Positions

Smith (2003) showed that as an individual climbed the organization's hierarchical ladder, moving from first line supervisor to middle manager, onto administrator to organizational executive, differing levels of leadership skills and managerial skills were required at each new level. Some levels required more leadership skills; others required more managerial skills. According to the scope of this study, the research aimed to study only at the top executive level that developed the organization's vision and passed it onto the administrators to develop organizational policies which would achieve that vision. At this level, communication, motivation, and problem-solving were the skills most required for executives (Smith, 2003).

Review of Leadership Skills since 1985

Leadership Development National Excellence Collaborative (2001) searched several databases reviewing leadership skills on collaborative leadership. This search covered 1985 to the present. The research also tracked in

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the same root of leadership as this research, beginning with "Great Man Theory" and the behavioral theories of leadership including: the University of Iowa Studies; the Ohio State University Studies; the University of Michigan Studies, Theory X and Y Studies. This research also included theories like: Blake and Mouton's Management Grid; the contingency or situational school including Fiedler's contingency school; the Hersey-Blanchard Model of Leadership; Schmidt's Leadership Continuum; Adair's Action-Centered Leadership Model; "Leaders and Followers", including servant leadership; and transactional and transformational leadership. The research concluded that most executives were unprepared to meet the leadership skills demanded in today's sophisticated marketplace.

As cited in the Leadership Development National Excellence Collaborative (2001); Yukl, Wall and Lepsinger (1990) listed 11 needed skills of executives, that were: informing; consulting and delegating; planning and organizing; problem solving; clarifying roles and objectives; monitoring operations and environment; motivating; recognizing and rewarding; supporting and mentoring; managing conflict and team building; and networking.

Research done by Kouzes and Posner (1990) showed that effective leaders must have 5 leadership skills (competencies) which are challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart. Donalley and Kezsbom (1994), moreover, collected survey data from 283 leaders to discern common effective leadership skills needed in organizations. They found 8 leadership skills which are: analytical, collaborative, communication, entrepreneurial, initiative, integrative, interpersonal, and managerial.

Another concept of leadership by Blake and McCanse (1991) described leadership in two dimensions called the "Leadership Grid" which related to concern for people and concern for the "Bottom line". Furthermore, the Healthcare Forum conducted a national study to identify skills to bridge leadership gaps for 21st century healthcare organizations. Those 4 leadership skills were master change, systems thinking, shared vision, and continuous quality improvement. Five more leadership skills in general were concluded in the Leadership Development National Excellence Collaborative (2001) as building vision, managing change, collaborating, facilitating skills (Team/ Groups Leadership Skills), and managing skills. Bland, et al. (1999) identified 4 leadership skills which are communication skills, building relationships, developing a shared vision and inclusion, and recognizing crisis as opportunity.

Nickel (1989), additionally, pointed out that while the most important management skills include delegation, decision-making, concentration, negotiation, and use of time; vision, people orientation, and being a winner were the core of enhancing leadership skills. In more details, Hickman and Silva as cited in Nickel

(1989), gave an excellent description of the visionary leader who is searching for ideas, concepts, and ways of thinking until a clear vision crystallizes; articulating the vision into an easy-to-grasp philosophy that integrates strategic directions and cultural values; motivating company employees at all levels in the organization, attempting to understand their concerns and the impact the vision had on them; acting in a warm, supportive, expressive way, always communicating that "We're all in this together, like a family."; translating the vision into a reason for being for each employee by continually relating the vision to individual cares, concerns, and work; concentrating on the major strengths within the organization that would insure the success of the vision; remaining at the center of the action, positioned as prime shaper of the vision; looking for ways to improve, to augment, or to further develop the corporate vision by carefully observing changes inside and outside the organization; and measuring the ultimate success of the organization in terms of its ability to fulfill the vision.

In addition, research done by the Center for Creative Leadership (2007) showed the emerging trends important to current and future leaders which were examined by 1,131 global leaders. The results signified a belief that future leadership skills would need to emphasize building teams and relationships, collaboration, and change management.

Leadership Skills for Educators

Rosenblum (1994) provided 11 key leadership skills of leaders who were Jewish educators. These include: defining vision and setting goals; defining one's own role and the roles of others; managing change; managing lay-professional relations; managing staff; staying "close to the customer" who are parents and students; working with other managing relationships with other professionals; managing day-to-day operations; managing oneself; managing space; and managing funds.

Moreover, Leithwood and Jantzi (1997); Lucas and Valentine (2002); and Valentine (2001) as cited in Richter (2006), showed that a current focus of significance in the research has been transformational leadership which is centered on the concept of leaders engaging and encouraging organizational members to become active and committed participants in evaluating and improving their school culture through shared decision-making and developing school-based solutions to challenges, including accepting ownership for student success. The capacities and responsibilities for leadership were shared among organizational members, thus potentially increasing the cohesion of staff members towards improving a set of common and specifically identified school goals.

Seven dimensions of leadership (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, as cited in Richter, 2006) were identified through transformational leaders who were: developing a school vision; establishing goals to realize the vision; developing a collaborative decision-making structure; symbolizing good professional practice; providing individualized support; providing intellectual stimulation;

and holding high performance expectations. Moreover, (as cited in Richter, 2006), Hallinger and Heck (1998) and Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) reviewed empirical research from 1980-1995 to support that transformational leadership had a direct positive effect on teacher satisfaction and an indirect positive effect on student achievement. Specific skills demonstrated to be effective were: establishing a clear school mission; maintaining high performance expectations; gaining staff consensus; fostering cooperation and shared decision-making; and coordinating school goals with curriculum.

Organizational Effectiveness

The researcher highlighted the definition of organizational effectiveness mostly based on the definition of Daft and Lane (2008), which states that organizational effectiveness is the degree of achievement of each designed component that relates to the organizational goals. Subsequently, the researcher aimed to explore the organizational effectiveness more deeply in Total Quality Management (TQM) which most relate to the definition defined. Kanji (2002) summarized the key principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), the concept of Edward Deming (1981), Joseph M.Juran (1986), Philip Crosby (1979), Kaoru Ishikawa (1985), Garvin (1988), Feigenbaum (1991), and Genichi Taguchi (1988). These key principles are: starting at top management; requiring total employee involvement; focusing on the customer; needing strategic planning; focusing on the systems approach to management; requiring ongoing education and training of employees; focusing on teamwork; focusing on continuous improvement; respecting employees and their knowledge; focusing on process improvement; requiring statistical way of thinking and the use of statistical methods; focusing on prevention rather than detection; requiring mutually beneficial supplier relationships; focusing on performance measures that were consistent with the goals of the institution; focusing on product and service quality design; focusing on substantial culture change; focusing on the factual approach to decision-making; requiring self-assessment efforts as control mechanism to determine results; focusing on fast response, providing standardization; and focusing on partnership development.

With the purpose of assessing organizational effectiveness, there were a number of great TQM (excellence) models that institutions could use, including the Deming Application Prize, first awarded in 1951; followed by the United States' Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) in 1988. The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) followed in 1992 with the European Quality Award (EQA); SAEF followed in 2000 with the ISO quality management standards. In Thailand, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) was adapted as the Thailand Quality Award. Then, the government, namely, the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission, further developed the Public Sector Management Quality Award (PMQA) to promote the concept of TQM throughout the public sector in Thailand. This research focused on the MBNQA, TQA, and PMQA as it was the goal of higher education institutions in Thailand.

According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST] (2009), the MBNQA program was conceived in 1987. The Baldrige Award was given to organizations which outstood in seven areas, including: leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; workforce focus; process management; and the results which were the same criteria of TQA and PMQA of Thailand.

Method

In the first stage, documentary research recommended leadership skills as developed by using a five-step procedure applied from Richter (2006), in order to explore the possible leadership skills of the effective leaders in high performance higher education institutions and to identify major components. In step one, leadership theories and leadership skills acquired from textbooks, research, journals, dissertations, and the internet were reviewed and summarized. Leadership skills identified through the literature as being most representative were cross-referenced in step two. In step three, the identified leadership skills were categorized into two categories which are Key Leadership Skills since 1985 ('Great Man Theory' through Transformational Theory) and Key Leadership Skills for Educators. In step four, a minimum criterion of identifying leadership skills were developed, so that each leadership skill had to be identified at least three times. In step five, leadership skills were modified so that they were stated in appropriate meaning and terminology.

In the second stage, the process of guideline development, the researcher redesigned the questionnaire based on the Principal Leadership Skills Questionnaire developed by Richter (2006), in order to assess the actual performance of leadership skills of higher education executive administrators and the importance of each leadership skills that affect PMQA. Subsequently, the researcher used an approved final score of milestone-type key performance indicators for public sector management quality award (PMQA) of the sample to assess the organizational effectiveness together with PMQA Criteria Translation of Self-Assessment Report. Then, additionally, the researcher determined the relationships between actual performance in 2008 and the organizational effectiveness.

The validity of the questionnaire was first validated by 3 experts and also tested for reliability, resulting in a reliability coefficient of .962. Moreover, Khon Kaen University was the higher education institution to be assessed. The total number of sample was 138 people. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 14.0, MS Excel 1007, and Minitab15 Statistical English were used as instruments to analyze descriptive analysis, Chi-Square test, and Co-relation Coefficient.

Results

In first stage, the 12 leadership skills were defined as: inspiring the shared vision; challenging staff in establishing a set of goals to implement the shared vision; crafting the initiative with staff to achieve goals; enabling staff to implement the plan; providing budget and allocating resources to support the plan; coaching (encouraging the heart) the leadership teams; consulting and communicating staff on important issues; modeling key processes to manage change and solve problems; constructing collaborative network (facilitating) among all stakeholders; maintaining performance expectations; encouraging staff to continuously improve the plan; and recognizing and rewarding staff.

In second stage, there were 78 (56.52%) respondents who answered the questionnaire. Results of actual performance in leadership skills in 2008 were recoded into two groups. One is the top 2 boxes and another is the bottom 3 boxes. Top 2 boxes represents an effective leader who believed that "often" and "always" were most closely matched to his or her actual performance in 2008. Whereas the bottom 3 boxes represents an ineffective leader who believed that "never", "seldom", and "about half the time" were most closely matched to his or her actual performance in 2008. At least 91% of the sample self-evaluated themselves as effective leaders in all leadership skills (12 leadership skills) during the year 2008.

The results were further analyzed to discover relationships between actual performance of leadership skills and socio-demographic data, such as, years of working, years of position, amount of sub-ordinates, years involve in PMQA, gender, degree, and position using Pearson's chi-square test which showed that only the amount of years in current position had no association with actual performance of leadership skills.

Khon Kaen University received 5.00 score on PMQA which was the highest score compared to all higher education institutions that enrolled in the program of PMQA in the fiscal year 2008. It could be implied that Khon Kaen University was an effective higher education institution. Therefore, the questionnaire was used to determine the importance of each leadership skill that affects the PMQA overall score in fiscal year 2008. At least 98.7% of the sample assessed the importance of all leadership skills (12 leadership skills) to affect the PMQA overall score.

To define the relationships between actual performance of each leadership skill and the importance of each leadership skill, consulting and communicating to staff on important issues together with encouraging staff to continuously improve the plan had no relationship with actual performance of leadership skills.

Conclusion

Skills that affect the organizational effectiveness from the research can be divided into two groups. The first group including: inspiring the shared vision; challenging staff in establishing a set of goals to implement the shared vision; and coaching (Encouraging the heart) the leadership teams are the three leadership skills that are most correlated with organizational effectiveness. According to Owen (2007), leadership skills were tacit skills: know-how more than knows-what. They need to be learned, not taught. Higher educational leaders should be enrolled in the Action-Learning-Project (ALP) program in order to learn how to improve these three important skills.

Moreover, the other 7 leadership skills must be developed in a program along the way. These include: crafting the initiative with staff to achieve goals; enabling staff to implement the plan; providing budget and allocating resources to support the plan; modeling key processes to manage change and solve problems; constructing collaborative network (Facilitating) among all stakeholders; maintaining performance expectations; and recognizing and rewarding staff.

As PMQA and TQA use the same assessment model to assess organizational effectiveness, moreover, 10 leadership skills should be as a guideline for not only to develop top executives in higher education institutions but also top executives in all kinds of organization as well.

Nevertheless, since this research focused merely on the top executives at Khon Kaen University; future research should be expanded to other higher education institutions in Thailand, and other organizations by using these 10 leadership skills.

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