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## The effect of leadership styles on professional learning community

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### Abstract

The main aim of this study was to investigate the effect of school administrators' leadership styles on professional learning community in those schools under jurisdiction of the Office of Secondary Educational Service Area 27, Thailand. A total of 3,012 samples consisted of school administrators and teachers were selected from a population of 27,459. A survey quantitative method was employed using questionnaire which was constructed by researchers as an instrument to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics like frequency, percentage, mean score, standard deviation, correlation Pearson Product Moment Coefficient and stepwise multiple regression analysis. The results of the study indicated that all five leadership styles of school administrator were at high level particularly supportive leadership style. However reward and punishment leadership style was found to be the most unpopular leadership style. On the other hand, all the aspects of professional learning community were found to be at high level too. The highest mean score was learning enhancement and information technology whereas the lowest mean score was team empowerment. Implementation of professional learning community was significantly affected by three types of leadership style at significant level of 0.01. The significant predictors of professional learning community were reward and punishment, directive, and charismatic leadership styles. The multiple regression coefficient was 0.836 and the predictive power was 69.9 per cent. Finally, this paper also provided recommendations and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Leadership style; professional learning community

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## 1. Introduction

Education is an essential factor to construct progress that would lead to capacity development of a country. Therefore educational management is an important issue in order to ensure the development of the country so that it will keep it up with the changing world. The current situation is changing rapidly from time to time particularly the effect from academic and technological progress to Thailand education and educational management. Consequently, sustainable development of education development in Thailand education need to be highly emphasized to ensure education has been managed to produce knowledgeable human capital in order to remain compatible at the global level (Office of the National Education Commission, 2002).

Under the strategic plan for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Decade of Educational Reform (2009-2018), the Thai government has been taken significant steps to highly emphasize the importance on the quality of life-long learning among Thai people. There are three main goals set to be achieved, namely quality development, educational standard and learning among Thai people as well as increment in educational opportunity, quality and equality. School based management has been promoted to encourage holistic participation from the society and community in educational administration and management. Teachers' participation is believed would be a strong foundation to improve the quality of education which in line with the standard and the changing of the society. This is because human resource would be able to develop by promoting a comprehensive and substantial professional learning community (Sparks, 2002).

## 2. Statement of problem

Professional learning community is a collective working society which required teachers' involvement in the process of learning and experiencing professional development together systematically and continuously. This approach would make teachers be able to reach optional capacity as well as the change of their role from 'teacher' to be 'coach' or 'learning facilitator' and have to work collaboratively (Panich, 2012). Therefore these practices correspond to teachers' learning hours as emphasized in a comparative study in Japan. However these practices was found to be taken up teachers' teaching hours, teachers' resting time as well as the time teachers need to spend for meeting and consulting with their colleagues.

According to the specification of the 1999 National Education Act (Ministry of Education, 2003), it is the school administrators' responsibility to develop, promote, and enhance teachers' abilities and capabilities as learners in school which is an important institute for human development in order to maintain competitiveness. Teacher is a key factor in educational reform as well as students' development. Therefore teacher collaboration to form internal and external networking is the essential source to formulate professional learning community. Subsequently, one of the major components of professional learning community construction is the vital role of school administrator in transferring policy into concrete implementation. To what extent the school administrators are able to guide and support the teachers to be aware of the importance of professional learning community is questionable.

Besides, the other key factor for successful administration is the capacity of school administrators in establishing mechanic or procedure in order to promote incentive for collaboration, satisfaction in performing tasks and activities to the set plan accordingly is another issue (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). Therefore leadership style is a structure and needs of the administrators to motivate teachers to perform effectively in various situations. Leadership style covered not only leadership behavior directly but also concerning about their trait as efficiency leaders who produce successful work for the group outcomes and work performance (Howell & Costley, 2001).

### **3. Operational definition**

This section explains the definition of the two main research variables used in this study, namely school administrators' leadership styles and professional learning community. In this study school administrators' leadership styles refers to the five styles of administrative behavior which are implemented in school administration. They are participative, supportive, directive, reward and punishment, and charismatic leadership styles. These leadership styles are measured by utilizing school teachers' perceptions on the practice of the five leadership styles by their administrator meanwhile school administrators are requested to check on their own practice on the five different leadership styles. Both groups of respondent are using a five-point rating scale questionnaire.

On the other hand, professional learning community refers to teachers' collectivistic practice to promote their professional development and further improve their students' quality development. Professional learning community encompassed four components, namely shared vision, team empowerment, learning and professional development, and learning enhancement and information technology. All the four components are measured from the perspective of school administrators and teachers using five-point rating scale questionnaire.

### **4. Significance of the study**

The Office of Secondary Educational Service Area 27 is chosen due to it is one of the organizations that aware of the importance of professional learning community. This office always views teachers as a key factor of educational reform and quality improvement of learners' development. Teacher development is being promoted through collaborative learning or professional learning community. This occasion was observed and identified by the research report which was found that teachers who have the opportunities to exchange knowledge instead of working on their own ways to produce students with higher learning achievement (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

School administrators as organizational leaders should support teacher development by coordinating their work in new paradigm of learning organization under their appropriate leadership style. Utilizing the right leadership style would be able to encourage and build awareness for teachers to form a team and work collaboratively. The findings of this study would provide sufficient information to develop appropriate leadership styles among the school administrators. It is also anticipated that the outcomes of this study would be useful for leadership development as well as increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of professional learning community in the future.

## 5. Conceptual framework

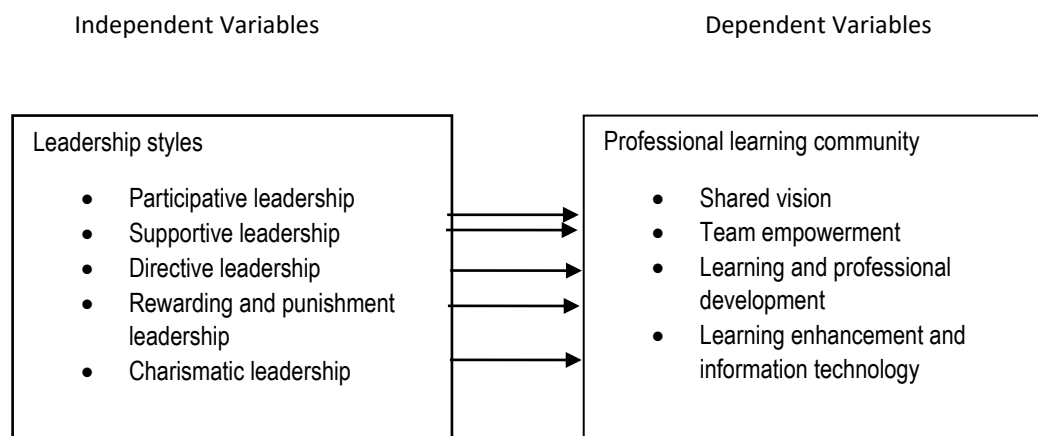


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

Above is the research framework synthesized by researchers. The studied variables were comprised of independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are the five leadership styles for educational administrators including: (i) participative; (ii) supportive; (iii) directive; (iv) rewarding and punishment, and (v) charismatic leadership styles. The dependent variable is professional learning community that consisted of shared vision, team empowerment, learning and professional development, and learning enhancement and information technology.

## 6. Research objectives

The main aim of this study is to investigate the effect of administrators' leadership style on teachers' professional learning communities under the Office of Secondary Educational Service Area 27, Thailand. The following are the specific objectives of this study:

- To identify the practice level of each leadership style from the perspectives of school administrators and teachers.
- To identify the practice level of school teachers and the support level from the school administrators on professional learning community
- To examine the relationship between school administrators' leadership styles and professional learning community practice of teachers.
- To examine the effect of school administrators' leadership styles on professional learning community practice of teachers

## 7. Research methodology

This study used a survey design which focuses on collecting quantitative data and utilizing a questionnaire as an instrument to collect data. For this study, the sampling method used is stratified sampling based on school size and positions of administrators and teachers. The sample size was determined by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table. This method is a probability sampling procedure, in which sub-samples are selected from the identified group or subgroups within different strata, which

is more or less equal in some characteristics. In addition, this method was chosen to assure that the sample will exactly reflect the population on the basis of criterion or criteria used for stratification (Zikmund, 2003). A total of 459 samples comprised of 118 school administrators and 341 teachers were proportionally selected from a population of 3,012 including 162 school administrators and 2,850 teachers respectively from 60 schools under the Office of Secondary Educational Service Area 27.

The survey questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A of the questionnaire was intended to gather information regarding demographic factors of the respondents which included information pertaining to their personal background such as gender, age and academic educational level, position ranking, school size, and working experience. Section B of the questionnaire was specifically designed to gauge the frequency of leadership style practice at their workplace. In this section, respondents were asked to rate their administrators in terms of the five leadership styles practiced by their school administrators whereas the school administrators were required to respond to statements regarding to their own leadership style practice. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics like frequency, percentage, mean score, standard deviation, correlation Pearson Product Moment Coefficient and stepwise multiple regression analysis.

## 8. Findings

### 8.1. Practice level of each aspect of school administrators' leadership style from the perspectives of school administrators and teachers

Table 1 shows the mean scores of the practice level of leadership styles from two groups of respondent. As indicated in Table 1, the mean scores for the five of leadership styles ranged from 4.05 to 4.27. All the five leadership styles were highly practiced by school administrators. However the mean score from the perspectives of school administrators are higher compared to the mean scores from the perspectives of teachers. The highest practice level was supportive leadership (mean = 4.27, *SD* = 0.57). The next highest mean score was participative leadership (mean = 4.23, *SD* = 0.59). This is followed by directive leadership ( mean = 4.15, *SD* = 0.60) and charismatic leadership (mean = 4.13, *SD* = 0.62). The lowest mean score was rewarding and punishment leadership (mean = 4.05, *SD* = 0.63). The overall perception toward the leadership styles of educational administrators in schools, under the Office of Secondary Educational Service Area 27 is at high level (mean = 4.17, *SD* = 0.55).

**Table 1. Practice level of leadership styles**

Leadership styles	Adminis- trator Mean	Teacher Mean	Total Mean
Participative	4.56	4.12	4.23
Supportive	4.61	4.15	4.27
Directive	4.49	4.04	4.15
Rewarding and punishment	4.37	3.93	4.05
Charismatic	4.45	4.02	4.13
Total	4.49	4.05	4.17

### 8.2. Practice level of professional learning community

Table 2 presents the mean scores for the four components of professional learning community of teachers. As shown in Table 2, the mean scores ranged from 4.06 to 4.19. This shows that, the most frequently implemented professional learning community of teachers was learning enhancement and information technology (mean = 4.19, *SD* = 0.57). This is followed by shared vision (mean = 4.17, *SD* = 0.59) as well as learning and professional development (mean = 4.08, *SD* = 0.64). The professional learning community component that least frequently implemented by teachers was team empowerment (mean = 4.06, *SD* = 0.64). Therefore, based on Table 2, it can be concluded that school administrators were highly support the implementation of professional learning community compared to teachers’ perceptions on their own practices. In actual situation, all the respondents either administrators or teachers were implementing highly all the four components of professional learning community.

**Table 2. Practice level of professional learning community**

Professional learning community	Principal	Teacher	Total
	Mean	Mean	Mean
Shared vision	4.39	4.09	4.17
Team empowerment	4.33	3.97	4.06
Learning and professional development	4.34	4.00	4.08
Learning enhancement and information technology	4.42	4.11	4.19
Total	4.37	4.04	4.13

### 8.3. Correlation between each leadership style and professional learning community

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation coefficient between the five styles of leadership and professional learning community. Based on De Vaus’ s (2002) interpretation of correlation coefficients in Table 3, the correlation results between the five styles of leadership and professional learning community showed a significant relationship ( $p < 0.01$ ), with strength of association varying from substantial to very strong and positive.

As indicated in Table 4, professional learning community was significant, positive and very strongly correlated with rewarding and punishment leadership ( $r = 0.792$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), directive leadership ( $r = 0.783$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), charismatic leadership ( $r = 0.782$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and supportive leadership ( $r = 0.712$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, it was substantial to very strong correlated with participative leadership ( $r = 0.693$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that, to a great extent, an increase in the rewarding and punishment leadership, directive leadership, charismatic leadership and supportive leadership is associated with an increase in the level of professional learning community; and to a substantial to very strong extent, an improvement in participative leadership is associated with an increase in the professional learning community.

**Table 3. Designation strength of association based on size of correlation coefficients.**

Strength of association	Negative	Positive
Low to moderate	-0.29 till -0.10	0.10 till 0.29
Moderate to substantial	-0.49 till -0.30	0.30 till 0.49
Substantial to very strong	-0.69 till -0.50	0.50 till 0.69
Very strong	-0.89 till -0.70	0.70 till 0.89
Near perfect	-0.99 till -0.90	0.90 till 0.99
Perfect relationship	-1.00	1.00

**Table 4. Correlation coefficient between leadership styles and professional learning community.**

Variables	Professional learning community
Participative leadership	0.693**
Supportive leadership	0.712**
Directive leadership	0.783**
Rewarding and punishment leadership	0.792**
Charismatic leadership	0.782**

#### **8.4. Significant predictor for professional learning community**

To identify the significant predictor for professional learning community, a stepwise regression analysis was carried out. In this analysis, the five leadership styles were treated as predictor variables while professional learning community was treated as the dependent variable. The purpose of estimating this regression equation was to identify the leadership styles that have significant impact on professional learning community that is the leadership styles which constitute the predictors for professional learning community.

In this analysis, the size of the standardized coefficient ( $\beta$ ) directly indicates the importance of these predictors relative to one another. In the context, rewarding and punishment leadership ( $\beta = 0.321$ ) was the most important predictor, followed by directive leadership ( $\beta = 0.294$ ), and charismatic leadership ( $\beta = 0.275$ ), in that order. As shown in Table 5, the summary statistics of the estimated regression equation show the variables for which the coefficients are statistically significant.

The estimated regression equation was significant at 0.01 ( $p < 0.01$ ), implying that all the three predictor variables (rewarding and punishment, directive, and charismatic leadership styles) that have an impact on professional learning community; thereby qualifying these to be the predictors for the latter. In brief, these three variables have a linear relationship with professional learning community. The adjusted  $R^2$  being 0.628 in Table 5 shows that the impact of rewarding and punishment leadership was 62.8 percent, directive leadership was 5.9 percent, and charismatic leadership was 1.9 percent. In conclusion, the three variables account for 69.9 percent of variation in the dependent variable. The following multivariate linear regression model shows the relationship between the predictor variables on the dependent variable.

**Table 5. Multiple regression of leadership styles and professional learning community.**

Variables	$\beta$	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Change of R <sup>2</sup>
Rewarding and punishment leadership (X <sub>4</sub> )	0.321	0.628	-
Directive leadership (X <sub>3</sub> )	0.294	0.680	0.059
Charismatic leadership (X <sub>5</sub> )	0.275	0.699	0.019

In conclusion, the three variables account for 69.9 percent of variation in the dependent variable. The following multivariate linear regression model shows the relationship between the predictor variables on the dependent variable.

$$\text{Unstandardized score: } \hat{Y} = 0.789 + 0.288(X_4) + 0.275(X_3) + 0.249(X_5)$$

$$\text{Standardized score: } \hat{Y} = 0.321(X_4) + 0.294(X_3) + 0.275(X_5)$$

## 9. Discussion

Results from the study indicated that supportive leadership was highly implemented by school administrators with the highest mean score. This result implies that school administrators are friendly, easy going with teachers as well as they are easily approached. School administrators also provided welfare to support teachers' work performance. School administrators have showed empathy and understanding in teachers' problems. All teachers also received equal supports which corresponding to Northouse's view (2012). Northouse have pointed out that supportive leadership has similar behavior as human relationship oriented or considerate manner. This finding supported Northouse's definition on supportive leadership which consisted of the following behavior as friendliness and easy to approach, express concerned for well-being and basic needs of the teachers. Therefore school administrators should practice supportive behavior in order to create satisfaction on their subordinates' work performance. Supportive leader would treat every subordinate with respect and equally.

Learning resource enhancement and information technology was found to be the highly implemented by teachers while practicing professional learning community. This may be due to the schools are called for the capital to improve and develop learning resources. Subsequently school administrators would support, update and keep up the changes in that particular area. School administrators organized meeting and gave orientation to teachers that related to the implementation of information technology in teaching as well as self-development, and how to plan the use of information technology systematically. All these approaches would assist teachers to improve their knowledge and ability in teaching effectively. This result is consistent with Panich's (2012) findings. Panich stated that teachers should develop themselves in professional learning community before being able to develop their students continuously and creatively under the changing society of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This can be accomplished by developing learning resources and supporting the use of information technology in teacher profession development.

In addition, results of this study showed that all the five leadership styles had either 'very strong' or 'substantial to very strong' relationship with professional learning community. This finding was found to be in accordance to Seesakote and Ariratana's (2014) findings. Seesakote and Ariratana found that all the organizational climate were positively correlated with professional learning community of teachers under Khon Kaen Municipality at significant level as 0.01. The association strengths ranged from 'substantial to very strong' to 'very strong' except organizational structure. Furthermore



Seesakote and Ariratana's finding indicated that value and behavior, working performing standard, risk, and environment had positive relationships to professional learning community.

There are three leadership styles namely rewarding and punishment, directive and charismatic leadership styles were found to have predictive power to the professional learning community. These three significant predictors were significantly contributed 69.9 percent variance of professional learning community at the significant level of 0.01. This showed that the three leadership styles were vital importance to professional learning community of teachers. Therefore school administrators should consider these three leadership styles with predictive power and integrate them for the effectiveness of their school administration.

The three leadership styles have predictive power of 0.699 which is significantly at 0.01. Therefore the three leadership styles are able to predict the outcomes of professional learning community, with reward and punishment, directive and charismatic leadership styles are affecting on professional learning community. Since reward and punishment leadership style is having highest predictor power and contributing the formation of professional learning community so school administrators should consider this leadership style.

This is corresponded to Jogulu's (2010) findings. Jogulu pointed out that directive leadership would receive more acceptance and creation of satisfaction, favorable as well as having collectivistic force among the large group member (4-5 people and more). Directive leadership is suitable for larger organization. This is because leader could guide larger group of people, make them understand the roles and duties clearly.

On top of that, findings of this study indicated that reward and punishment leadership style was the most significant predictor for professional learning community had coefficient predictive power of 62.8 percent. This finding corresponds to Seesakote and Ariratana's (2014) findings. Seesakote and Ariratana's study indicated that there were three significant predictors such as performance standards, values and behaviors, and organizational structure had positive impacts on professional learning community as high as 68.0 percent.

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