Leadership Of Administrators For Improving Missions Implementation Of Thai Private Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

The purposes of this qualitative research were to present the meaning of leadership, the special characteristics of leaders, leadership communication to follow mission, vision and philosophy of the universities, leadership for management of stakeholder interests, and the results of leadership approach in academic affairs. The research results showed leadership is the ability of leader to motivate and drive the effort of group to reach the set goals and objectives. Leaders have some special characteristics such as exhibition of a high effort level, desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, intelligence and job-relevant knowledge. Leadership communication is important to follow mission, vision and philosophy of Thai universities as it can encourage employees to have a strong organizational commitment and devote their effort to work in the same direction to reach organizational goals. Leadership management can be applied to align the interest of each stakeholder and to achieve maximum value for universities' stakeholders. Leadership approach in academic affairs is considered as an important component to increase the potential for continuing growth and strength of Thai private higher education institutions.

Keywords: Leadership, administrators, mission implementation, higher education institutions.

1. Introduction

For many decades, people have been searching for the key to become more effective leaders. Therefore, leadership skills are necessary for managers to improve the manner in which they present themselves to others. At the same time, individuals with strong leadership characteristics are in high demand by corporations that believe these individuals can bring special assets and success to their organizations. In Thai private universities, leadership of administrators are very much important to the success of the university operation. It is reported that now most Thai private universities are facing the main problem that is a decreasing number of students; each year a number of students have decreased tremendously. The Office of the Higher Education Commission (2018) reported that a number of students in Thai private universities

in the year 2016 were 73,421 and in the year 2017 were 60,828, which decreased from the year 2016 at 17.15 percent. If the administrators of the universities do not revise their roles and change their strategy to increase a number of students, it will lead to the closure of some private universities in the near future. In addition, The Office of Higher Education Policy and Plan (2019) also reported that the quality problem of Thai private university students to access to the labor market is one of the main problems because some graduates have not enough knowledge, skill and competency to work in the companies and compete in the global market. In addition, lecturers in Thai private universities have to improve their ability in conducting research and publishing more research papers in well-accepted journals in order to increase their academic reputation.

Thai universities whether public or private have to fulfill their four missions i.e. teaching, research conduct, academic service, and cultural preservation. Therefore, leadership of the administrators is the key factor leading to achieve these goals. A strong leadership can encourage employees and lecturers from all departments to work with great effort, creative idea, and enthusiasm, which resulted in the increase of the efficiency and effectiveness in teaching and conducting research. In order to build a good relationship between each university and community, the academic service should be provided to the community to strengthen the society and increase social well-being. Thai private universities should help to conserve Thai arts and cultures to create pride and dignity to the new generation (Channuwong et al., 2022; Siripap et al., 2021)

The purposes of the universities are to serve the educational needs of the students in the development of knowledge, skills, and expertise. The administrators of the universities should understand that students tend to be very goal oriented and that they come to the university because they have a deep desire to learn. As a result, most students pursue their studies diligently and enthusiastically. These students develop positive values based upon the knowledge and skills acquired from the classroom, classmates and lecturers.

Therefore, in the age of high competition, the leaders of Thai private universities are required to have a clear vision, and set a direction and strategic plan to move forward the universities to achieve their goals and objectives. They should build a good relationship between each department in the university to increase internal strength. In addition, they should build a connection with other universities and make a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with other organizations to gain more support and collaboration.

2. Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology was employed in this study. The researchers used documentary research methodology to collect data. Data related to the meaning of leadership, the special characteristics of leaders, leadership communication to follow mission, vision, philosophy and value of Thai universities, leadership management of stakeholder interests, the results of leadership approach in academic affairs were collected from researches, articles, books, texts, and electronic sources. After data were collected from the aforementioned sources, the researchers summarized, analyzed, synthesized, wrote the collected data in the form of descriptive analysis.

3. Results

3.1. The Meaning of Leadership

Leadership is the center of group change, group process and activity, which embodies the will of the group and drive the effort of group to reach the set goals and objectives. In addition, leadership can be conceptualized from a personality perspective, which suggests that leadership is a combination of special traits or characteristics such as a physical factor, personality feature or a particular ability that enables the leader to motivate and induce others to accomplish tasks. In this sense, leadership comes from an innate characteristics and personalities that differentiate leaders from non-leaders (Bass, 1990; Burke, 1994; Bryman, 1992; Shadur et al., 1999). Peter (2001) described that leadership is power relationship that exists between leaders and followers. Leaders have power and wield it to affect change in others. Leadership is accepted as an instrument in helping a group of members to achieve their goals and meet their needs. In addition, leadership often transforms followers through vision setting, role modeling, and individualized attention.

The definitions of leadership can be identified as follows: (1) leadership is a process. With regard to leadership as a process, it can be defined that leadership is not a trait or a characteristic that resides within the leader, but it is a transactional event that occurs between the leader and his or her followers. Leadership as a process implies that a leader affects and is affected by followers. It emphasizes that leadership is not a linear, one-way event, but rather, an interactive event. When leadership is defined in this sense, it becomes available to everyone and everyone can become a good leader based on his or her intention and effort. It is not restricted to only the formally designated leader in a group. He or she can learn to become a good leader. (2) leadership involves influence. When we assert that leadership involves influence, we make reference to the fact that the concept of leadership is often focused upon the manner in which the leader affects followers. Influence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without influence, leadership does not exist. We can say that without power to influence the others, leadership cannot happen. (3) leadership occurs within a group context. With regard to the sense that leadership occurs in a group, we make reference to the group context in which leadership takes place. Leadership involves exerting influence over a group of individuals for a common purpose. This can occur in a small task group, a community group, or a large group encompassing an entire organization. And (4) leadership involves goal attainment. Leadership often focuses its attention upon the completion of tasks and the attainment of goals. Leaders direct their energies toward groups of individuals who work together for a common purpose. Therefore, leadership most often occurs in contexts in which individuals are moving toward a final goal. Based on these components, it can be concluded that leadership is a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Peter, 2001; Stephen & Mary, 1996).

3.2. The Special Characteristics of Leaders

Many scholars have been trying to identify the characteristics of leaders. Whether the leadership of those leaders is a process or innate personality. Most leaders have some characteristics that make them different from normal people or non-leaders. Shelly and Edwin (1991) suggested that usually leaders have six traits and characteristics that differentiate them from non-leaders. The aforementioned six traits are as follows: 1. Drive. Leaders exhibit a high effort level. They have a relatively high desire for great achievement; they're ambitious; they have a lot of energy; they're tirelessly persistent in their activities; and they show initiative. 2.

Desire to lead. Leaders have a strong desire to influence and lead others. They demonstrate the willingness to take responsibility. 3. Honesty and integrity. Leaders build trusting relationships between themselves and followers by being truthful and honest and by showing high consistency between word and deed. 4. Self-confidence. Followers look to leaders for an absence of self-doubt. Leaders, therefore, need to show self-confidence in order to convince followers of the rightness of goals and decisions. 5. Intelligence. Leaders need to be intelligent enough to gather, synthesize, and interpret large amounts of information; and, to be able to create visions, solve problems, and make correct decisions. 6. Job-relevant knowledge. Effective leaders have a high degree of knowledge about the company, industry, and technical matters. In-depth knowledge allows leaders to make well-informed decisions and to understand the implications of those decisions.

Currently, Thai universities are facing a new problem that is a decrease in a number of students. The leadership of the university administrators must come to the forefront. They must make every effort to recruit more students order to gain income to cover all expenditures. They must focus upon encouraging a cooperative effort on the part of all of the university's employees to embrace the culture and the values of the university to provide best knowledge and skills to students. Effective leadership must respond to the needs of its followers and must work on behalf of the organization and its people, seeking to serve the best interests of both. Bolman and Deal (1997) and Collins (2001) stated the job of a leader is support and empowerment. Support takes a variety of forms such as letting people know that you are concerned about them, listening to find out about their aspirations and goals, and communicating personal warmth and openness. Leaders empower people through participation

and openness and by making sure that they have the autonomy and the resources that they need to do their jobs well and their jobs done.

3.3. Leadership Communication to Follow Mission, Vision, Philosophy and Value of Thai Universities

Thai universities have to fulfil the four missions set by Thai Higher Education Institution Act B.E.2522 (1979). The aforementioned missions are consisted of the following: (1) Teaching, this mission means that Thai universities have to recruit qualified students to attend the programs they are offering with appropriate numbers, teach and train them in necessary skill and knowledge, and then award the degrees to students to fulfill their requirement for applying for a job or for career advancement. (2) Conducting research, this mission means that Thai universities have to encourage lecturers and students to conduct research in order to develop a new body of knowledge and create innovation for economic and social development. (3) Academic service, this mission means that Thai universities have to provide academic service to the community and society, where the universities are located. This mission can help to create unity and harmony, and build a good relationship between the universities and society. (4) Art and cultural preservation, this mission means that Thai universities have to conserve and preserve Thai arts and cultures for the next generations. This mission can support the society to be proud of Thai national dignity and identity (Channuwong et al, 2022). In this regard, Prasertsak et al. (2020) found that strategic leadership is necessary for Thai private universities to achieve their goals and objectives. Strategic leadership in their study consisted of (1) developing today and tomorrow leader, (2) giving direction, (3) building partnership, (4) strategic thinking and planning, (5) creating corporate spirit, (6) building a good relationship

between each department, and (7) reaching success and achievement.

In reviewing the problem concerning a decreasing number of students, we are confronted with an entirely new dilemma. There are many issues that lead to cause problems in Thai universities. In some universities, the patronage system is pervasive, promotion to higher position is based close relationship between administrators and employees, not based on work performance. Therefore, some university personnel are discouraged to work for the success of the organization. One area that requires scrutiny is the culture of the universities and leadership's communication of the organization's mission, vision, philosophy and values. Thai universities should communicate the culture of the organization to all employees and lecturers and encourage them to have a strong organizational commitment so that they devote themselves to work for organizational success.

According to a literature survey, it is clear that most Thai universities carefully outlined the organization's mission, vision, philosophy, and values: (1) Missions, the missions of Thai universities are to teach students, strengthen students' technical skills and improve competencies to be qualified and meet the needs of global markets, to educate working adults to develop knowledge and skills which will enable them to achieve their personal goals, and to provide leadership and service to their communities. (2) Visions, most visions of Thai universities are to be the leading institutions that can produce qualified students to serve the society and the country. (3) Philosophy, philosophy of Thai universities is to thrive for excellence in academic wisdom, morality and ethics. Therefore, most Thai universities place great emphasis on teaching students to have good wisdom and virtue, and to ensure that

students are proficient communicators, skilled at collaboration, and adept at collecting and using knowledge, skill and experience to improve their career and help to develop the society at large. (4) Values, the values of Thai private universities are focused upon two areas: student achievement and business success. They value ethical practices in both student evaluation and in business conduct. In that regard, the universities hold the following values, for examples, positive student learning outcomes, maximum student learning convenience, student honesty, employee honesty, employee well-being, good business practices, and rigorous faculty standards (Rugmai et al, 2516; Prasertsak et al., 2020)

Most Thai private universities have done an exemplary job of articulating a set of values that can unify their personnel in the pursuit of a single purpose. Administrators must devise a means of communicating these values so that the entire staff begins to feel a sense of ownership in each of them. An organization that communicates well appears to employees to have a supportive environment, which has been shown to improve employee involvement and commitment. A decrease number of students is a threat to the growth and profit of the universities. In order for the private universities to achieve their goals and objectives, they must apply marketing strategies such as offering the needed fields of study, giving scholarship to students and reducing tuition fee. Moreover, they have to develop an employee commitment so that employees will devote their time and effort to work for the universities. Administrators should train managers to educate their employees in their culture and values to ensure that the selection and socialization processes of personnel are in alignment with the values of the private universities, establish traditions and ceremonies to support the culture of the universities and their values, and stablish

evaluation and reward systems to support the universities' values.

The first issue to be addressed involves the education and training of the managers of Thai private universities in communicating the culture and values of the university to new hires and in reinforcing the importance of these values to long-term members of the university staff. In addition, the desired program will ultimately stress the importance of the university's values to the students of the universities and their communities. Initially, the training and education program will be directed toward the managers of the universities. Eventually, these managers will be empowered with the responsibility for training their respective employees in the importance of living by the universities' values. The managers will also assume responsibility for initiating new hires to the culture and values of the universities.

The second issue to be addressed involves the establishment of traditions and ceremonies that will enhance the culture of private universities. These ceremonies and celebrations exist in the academic arm of the Universities. Traditions and ceremonies are symbols of the culture of an organization. In this regard, Bolman and Deal (1997) stated that symbols embody and express an organization's culture – the interwoven pattern of beliefs, values, practices, and artifacts that define for members who they are and how they do things. An organization's character is revealed and communicated most clearly through its symbols.

Social mixers for the staff to mark the beginning of each term or celebratory gatherings to mark the conclusion of a term are examples of ceremonies that can be initiated in an effort to bring a greater sense of identity to the universities. Anything that invokes a sense of belonging within the members of the staff will be of benefit in enhancing the culture of the private universities. Once an individual begins to feel a sense of belonging, a strong commitment to the organization inevitably follows (Steven & Mary, 2000).

Stories of the successes of staff members and students who overcame obstacles in order to realize their goals would certainly help to enhance the culture of private universities. Bolman & Deal (1997) stated that stories are a key medium for communicating corporate myths. They establish and perpetuate tradition. They are recalled and embellished in formal meetings and informal coffee breaks. They convey the value and identity of the organization to insiders and outsiders, thereby building confidence and support.

The final issue that needs to be addressed is the establishment of evaluation and reward systems that support the universities' values. Once the managers have assumed the responsibility for training their staff in the importance of the university's mission, vision, philosophy and values, it would be beneficial to reward them for their efforts. Ultimately, there are two reasons for emphasizing these attributes of the private universities. First, such an emphasis serves to set the private universities apart and to demonstrate the ways in which they are unique. Second, it is hoped that an emphasis upon the culture of the universities will help to increase a number of students. The managers of each department should be rewarded for achieving targets in increasing a number of students. Establishment of a reward system will help to motivate the managers to place special emphasis upon addressing this issue and it will reward them for their success in helping to achieve the stated goals of the universities (Channuwong et al., 2022; Rugmai et al., 2016).

Each organization may have different culture based on attitude, vision, strategy and purpose of that organization. A strong corporate culture would stand to reason that the subordinate units would reflect that higher order culture in their own. Changes in the organization should start from top management. The point of the principle is the importance of setting broad policy and objective that are in concert with the organizational vision and values (Slater, 2003).

3.4. Leadership Management of Stakeholder Interests

There are a number of stakeholders who are affected by a decreasing number of students and economic recession. First of all, the profit of the universities is affected because an income of private universities comes directly from students. When a number of students are decreased, the university income is also decreased. Second, employees and lecturers of private universities are affected because when the universities do not have enough income to continue hiring, some of them may be laid off. Third, the community is affected because people living nearby the universities cannot do business well, which lead to a decrease of their income as well. Fourth, lecturers who are committed to the universities are affected as they have no students to teach, some may be unemployed.

Covey (1996) presented the three roles of a leader: (1) Pathfinding (defining the mission and vision of the organization), (2) Aligning (ensuring that all facets of the organization are working together for a common purpose), and (3) Empowering (unbridling the talents of individuals to fulfill the mission of the organization and to serve the needs of its customers). Of these three roles, aligning is most closely related to the interests of an organization's stakeholders. It consists of ensuring that your organizational structure,

systems, and operational processes all contribute to achieving the mission and vision that meet the needs of customers and other stakeholders.

By aligning all of the elements of the organization, leadership is able to concentrate upon achieving maximum value for all of the organization's stakeholders. Indeed, it is obvious that we cannot maximize the long-term market value of an organization if we ignore or mistreat any important constituency (Beer & Nohria, 2000). We have demonstrated that a decreasing number of students have an adverse effect upon virtually every stakeholder group with an interest in Thai private universities. Administrators have to find ways to increase a number of students and increase commitment to employees and lecturers.

3.5. The Results of Leadership Approach in Academic Affairs

Academic affairs of Thai private higher education institutions are a reflection of the leadership of the Thai universities. Leadership uses a number of "tools" to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization. In analyzing academic affairs, there are keys that reveal the success of the organization. The development of leadership, the use of power, and a willingness to be open and scrutinized are keys to the standard set by academic affairs.

In providing an atmosphere and a strategy for developing leadership, academic affairs of Thai universities are considered as important components to increase the potential for continued growth and strength in the present and future time. In addition to strong leadership cultivation the department of academic affairs has created a sense of community and cohesiveness that permeates the everyday function of the employees. This department culture has been developed through a variety of

techniques. The techniques used have included a system of rewards, team outings and social events, an atmosphere of laughter and fun, and the realization of belonging. This becomes a culture that places great emphasis on creating good atmosphere in the organization and is considered as best practice of leadership approach. In this regard, Peter (2001) confirmed that institutionalizing a leadership-centered culture is the ultimate act of leadership and it can move forward the organization to reach the goals and objectives. In addition, French and Bell (1999) confirmed that the use of power makes it possible to accomplish tasks and achieve goals. The positive face of power is characterized by a socialized need to initiate. The distinction between negative and positive power is the difference between controlling and empowering. The leadership of Academic Affairs must be able to understand the distinction of power and use this influence as a positive force. The expression of the sources of social power is diverse. The five sources, as delineated by French and Bell, for examples, use of reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert power, should be demonstrated in Academic Affairs in order to adjust to the situation and to respond to the employees' needs. Power more than politics directs the department and creates a better environment for change, achievement, and enjoyment of work. Academic Affairs of Thai private universities are the indicators used to analyze the leadership of administrators and employees. The openness of the leadership to allow each member to evaluate the department and the management created an atmosphere of integrity and honesty.

In order to improve the quality standard of academic affairs of the universities, there should be an assessment of questionnaires to evaluate the employees and the leadership of the department. The assessment established information on the opportunities to maximize

preferred behavior, to match job, skills, employee satisfaction. In evaluating this match of job and people, the assessments and consulting company viewed the environment from five perspectives. The five perspectives were leadership (control and influence), environment (morale of workforce and motivation), learning what is done right (as well as what requires improvement), strategic focus, customer orientation, leadership and management, and communications (Covey, 1996).

The strategic focus section of the assessment evaluated mission awareness, vision for the future, innovation, quality policy, and values/ethics. The leadership and management elements established top management involvement in the drive for excellence, visible commitment, roles of managers in process, an ongoing concern for improvement, and the establishment of system/structure for growth and achievement. The function of communications within the workforce was viewed from a morale and rewards/consequence perspective. Bass (1990) stated that the assessments revealed a high job satisfaction, a strong commitment to excellence in the work environment, and strong management and leadership. The unusual cohesiveness and strength of the department is a reflection of focused and flexible leadership.

4. Conclusion and discussion

Leadership is a use of influence to motivate and induce other people to work for reaching the set goals and objectives. Through leadership characteristics, leaders drive the effort of group to accomplish the tasks. Leadership can be defined as a combination of special traits or characteristics such as personalities, physical factors, or particular abilities that differentiate leaders from non-leaders. On the other leadership can also be defined as a process; it is

not a special trait or characteristic that resides within the leader, but it is a transactional event that occurs within his or her followers. Everyone can learn to be a good leader based on his or her intention and effort. Leadership involves influence. By this sense, we evaluate leadership based on his or her influence on the others, and leadership does not exist without that influence. When people work together, they need to have someone to direct, lead, motivate and encourage them work to achieving the group's purpose. Therefore, leadership occurs within a group context. In addition, leadership often focuses on goal attainment. Leaders direct their energies and effort toward groups of people to work together to reach a common goal.

Leaders have some special traits and characteristics such as (1) drive, leaders exhibit a high effort and have high desire for great achievement; (2) desire to lead, leaders always have strong passion to lead and influence the others; (3) honesty and integrity, leaders have good virtue and ethic that can create trust and credibility to the others; (4) self-confidence, leaders have much self-confidence to convince followers to work for achieving the set goals; (5) intelligence, leaders are clever and intelligent enough to analyze situations, solve problems, create vision and strategy and make the correct decisions; (6) job relevant knowledge, leaders have in-depth knowledge and skill related to the jobs they are doing. Currently, Thai private universities are facing a new problem caused by a decreasing number of students. So, the administrators of Thai private universities required to have the aforementioned characteristics to drive the universities for achieving sustainable growth.

Thai private higher education institutions have to fulfill the four missions: Teaching, conducting research, providing academic service, and conserving Thai arts and cultures. Teaching is the main mission for Thai universities. Thai universities have to recruit students, teach and train in the necessary skill and knowledge so that they will have a good job after graduation. Conducting research is also very important for lecturers to gain a new body of knowledge and publish the research papers in well-accepted journals. Academic service can build a good relationship and gain support from the community and society the universities are located. It can help to create harmony and unity between the universities and the community. Conserving Thai art and culture can help Thai people to be proud of the national heritage, tradition and custom. Leaders should be able to communicate and transmit mission, value, vision and philosophy of the universities to employees and lecturers. The values of Thai private universities focus on student achievement and business success.

Leaders should pay attention on stakeholders of the universities. University stakeholders are people who can affect or are affected by the operation of the universities. Stakeholders can be affected by a decreasing number of students, which have direct impact on the income of the universities. Employees and lecturers are affected because when the universities have not enough income due to a decreasing number of students, some may be laid off or unemployed. Finally, the community is also affected because when the universities cannot do business well, people in that community will have low income.

Academic affairs must be able to balance a diverse collection of individuals with a unified common purpose and direction. Even though it is difficult to maintain individuality and strive for team goals and community strength, the leadership of the department should be able to create the balance. The challenge of the department is working with other departments at the campus level that have implemented the

strategy of academic affairs. The results of the leadership approach and style in academic affairs should be a pleasant work environment, an entrepreneurial attitude, an opportunity for personal growth, and a sense of community. The strategy for developing the department of academic affairs is a reflection of the leadership of administrators.

5. Recommendations

1. The administrators of Thai private higher education institutions should apply leadership characteristics to motivate employees and induce them to work for the success of the universities.

2. The administrators of Thai private higher education institutions should support lecturers to conduct research and publish more papers in well-accepted journals in order to create academic reputation of the universities.

3. Since a decreasing number of students are very much important to the sustainable growth of Thai private universities, administrators should apply more marketing strategies such as providing scholarship, and reducing some tuition fees in order to gain a number of students.

4. There should be a quantitative study about leadership of administrators for improving mission implementation of Thai private higher education institutions in order to gain more empirical data.

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