#### บทความวิจัย

## Leadership Practice for Islamic Schools in Thailand หลักปฏิบัติของผู้นำสำหรับโรงเรียนเอกชนสอนศาสนาอิสลามในประเทศไทย

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### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มุ่งเน้นที่จะศึกษาหลักปฏิบัติของผู้นำสำหรับโรงเรียนเอกชนสอนศาสนาอิสลามใน ประเทศไทย ซึ่งคำถามเพื่อการวิจัยในครั้งนี้คือ "หลักปฏิบัติของผู้นำสำหรับผู้บริหารโรงเรียน เอกชนสอนศาสนาอิสลามในประเทศไทยประกอบด้วยองค์ประกอบสำคัญอะไรบ้าง?" จุดประสงค์ ของการทำวิจัยครั้งมีทั้งหมด 4 ข้อ ได้แก่ 1. เพื่อศึกษาองค์ประกอบด้านภาวะผู้นำในมุมมองของ ศาสนาอิสลาม 2. เพื่อศึกษาองค์ประกอบด้านภาวะผู้นำจากทฤษฎีของนักวิชาการจากโลกตะวันตก 3. เพื่อสำรวจการปฏิบัติหน้าที่ของผู้นำในผู้บริหารของโรงเรียนเอกชนสอนศาสนาอิสลามที่มี ประสิทธิภาพที่สุดในประเทศไทย 4. เพื่อสำรวจการปฏิบัติหน้าที่ของผู้นำในผู้บริหารของโรงเรียน เอกชนสอนศาสนาอิสลามในประเทศไทยโดยทั่วไป การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยแบบผสมระหว่างการ วิจัยเชิงคุณภาพและเชิงปริมาณ เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยคือ แบบสอบถามการปฏิบัติหน้าที่ของผู้นำ (leadership practice inventory) โดย Saleh (2005) ซึ่งถูกส่งไปยังผู้อำนวยการโรงเรียนเอกชน สอนศาสนาอิสลามทั่วประเทศไทยทั้งหมด 297 ชุด และมีผู้ตอบกลับมาทั้งหมด 209 ชุด วิเคราะห์ ข้อมูลด้วยโปรแกรมคอมพิวเตอร์ใช้ค่าสถิติร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน (standard deviation) และสัมประสิทธิ์ของการแปรผัน (coefficient of variation) ผลการวิจัยพบว่า องค์ประกอบสำคัญของหลักปฏิบัติของผู้นำที่สำคัญสำหรับโรงเรียนเอกชนสอนศาสนาอิสลามใน ประเทศไทยประกอบด้วย 10 องค์ประกอบ ได้แก่ ปฏิบัติตนถูกต้องตามหลักการอิสลาม บรรยากาศ ที่ดีในโรงเรียน บริหารเป็นและเป็นผู้นำที่ดี สร้างความสัมพันธ์อันดีกับนักเรียน สร้างความสัมพันธ์ที่ ้ ดีกับชุมชน พร้อมทดลองทำสิ่งใหม่ ๆ จุดประกายวิสัยทัศน์ร่วม เปิดโอกาสให้ผู้อื่นแสดงความสามารถ ทำตัวให้เป็นแบบอย่าง และสร้างกำลังใจให้ผู้อื่น

**คำสำคัญ**: หลักปฏิบัติของผู้นำ โรงเรียนเอกชนสอนศาสนาอิสลาม ผู้นำของโรงเรียนเอกชนสอน ศาสนาอิสลาม

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#### **Abstract**

This research focuses on examining the key components of leadership practice for Islamic schools in Thailand. A proper leadership practice for Islamic school leaders should be developed as the school leader plays a key role in the school's success and the improvement of the students' achievement. In order to gain and maintain a high quality of school performance, a leadership practice for Islamic schools must involve the integration of Islamic values and principles in leadership with the educational theories of leadership from Western perspectives. Hence, theories and concepts of leadership from Islamic as well as Western perspectives should be taken into full consideration

The primary inquiry motivating this research is to identify the components of lead ership practice for Islamic school leaders in Thailand. The objectives of research are 1) to study the dimensions of educational leadership from an Islamic perspective, 2) to study the dimensions of educational leadership from a Western perspective, 3) to determine the dimensions of leadership found in the most prominent and effective Islamic schools in Thailand, and 4) to ascertain the dimensions of leadership being practiced by most Islamic school leaders in Thailand.

In this research, leadership practice inventory questionnaires were distributed to all 297 Islamic school directors in Thailand, and 209 completed questionnaires were used in the analysis of data by using Statistic Package. The collected data were interpreted and analyzed to identify the best leadership practice for Islamic schools in Thailand. The results showed that leadership practices for Islamic schools in Thailand comprises ten dimensions of leadership which are Observing Islamic Value System, Building a Positive Culture, Managing and leading, Relating with students, Relating with Community, Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, Encouraging the Heart.

**Keywords**: leadership practice, Islamic private school, Islamic school leaders



#### Introduction

Islamic schools in Thailand were originated from Pondok schools using Pondok Curriculum and offering only Islamic and Arabic subjects. Pondok schools open for everyone regardless of age, gender, and family background to learn Islamic studies with a Toh-Kru (a Muslim religious teacher) or Sheikh. Usually the Toh-Kru is the owner, teacher and also the administrator of the school (Suthasart 1976). Therefore, after the transformational process, the school directors of Islamic schools were Toh-Krus or their descendants.

Encyclopedia of Southern culture, Prince of Songkla University (1986) stated that Pondok system originally came from Egypt and spread to Asia. It started firstly in Malaysia, and then spread to the southern part of Thailand, initially in Pattani Province during the period of Ayudhya. The locations of Pondok schools belong to Toh-Kru or sometimes they are donated by the people of the community. Each Pondok school is often named after the place where it is located; some Pondoks are named after the name of Toh-Krus. There is no concrete curriculum or evaluation in Pondok system. The core subjects teaching in the school are as follows: Quranic Studies, Interpretation of Quran, Islamic Laws, Islamic Historical Studies, and Arabic Language. There is no tuition fee; however, parents donate some money to pay for the school expenses.

The transformational process from Pondok schools to Islamic schools started from 1958 during the period of Field Marshal Salit Thanarat. His government generated educational development projects in all parts of Thailand; consequently, the Pondok Schools were one of their targets to be developed. A committee was appointed to study the problems and proposed areas for growth. As a result, the specific growth areas for Pondok schools were addressed including the four main areas (Institute of Asian Studies, 2005) as follows:

- 1. Being registered with Ministry of Education
- 2. Improving the school buildings and locations
- 3. Developing their learning method and curriculum
- 4. Arranging students' evaluation and reporting to Ministry of Education

Islamic Schools in Thailand has been raised in number since the day that Thai government promoted the establishment of Islamic Private Schools to replace

Pondok schools with the purpose of enhancing their efficiency and quality (Uma, Vanitsuppavong and Churngchow, 2009). As a result, the school curriculum has been changed from offering solely religious education to integrating non-Quran subjects such as science and math, as well as the teaching of foreign languages such as Arabic language and English language into the curriculum which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Presently, there are 297 Islamic private schools in Thailand which 80% of those schools are located in the southern part (Ministry of Education, 2005). These schools provide their service to 148,465 students which are about 7.6% out of the total number of students (1,952,474 students) of academic year 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2006).

It has been found that a school director's poor performance causes many of the problems in school administration and can lead to failures in student achievement. Research at Rajapat Yala University (2006) indicates that students in Islamic schools place lower on national standardized tests than others due to their poor management system, curriculum and instruction. Noticeably, school leaders

have been found to lack leadership skills.

Educational leadership is considered the crucial factor for moving schools toward excellence. Saleh (2005, p. 16) states that "A positive and healthy leadership in any educational organization is crucial in creating a successful educational system" Many scholars agree and conclude that the effectiveness and efficiency of school leaders contribute to the school's success. Hence, the role of an effective school leader is vital to the achievement of the school (Gunter, 2001; Macbeath, 1998; Parkay and Hall, 1992; Ubben and Hughes, 1997).

Reflecting the importance of the previously mentioned key role of a quality educational leader in influencing school quality and student achievement, this research focuses on identifying effective leadership practices for Islamic school leaders in Thailand. Because of the unique history and background of Islamic schools in Thailand, the development of appropriate educational leadership practices needs to be carefully considered. Effective leadership practice in Islamic schools blends Islamic values and principles into the leadership practices and behaviors.



Building on these Islamic foundations, Western perspectives on educational leadership theory can work in tandem with Islamic values in establishing and retaining high educational standards. Theories and concepts from Islamic and Western perspectives should be taken into full consideration. Effective school leaders strive to advance the quality of the educational system as well as student achievement. As their role is crucial in the success of a school, proper leadership practice for Islamic school leaders should be developed to enhance school quality and student learning.

#### Scope of the Study

This research focuses on Islamic schools in Thailand, which are accredited by the Ministry of Education of Thailand as Islamic Private Schools. These types of the schools are mostly located in the southern parts of Thailand; however, there are some schools in other parts of the country such as in Bangkok, Petchaburi, and Nonthaburi.

The top ten Islamic schools in which more than 44% of their Mathayom 3 students achieved national test scores in 5 core subjects equal or higher than the mean scores for the academic year 2010 were

considered as the most effective Islamic schools in Thailand.

#### **Research Methodology**

This research is a mix of qualitative and quantitative research designs and aims to identify leadership practice that is appropriate to Islamic schools in Thailand. This process is divided into two phases as follows:

#### Phase 1: Documentary Research

In order to explore educational leadership in both Western and Islamic Perspectives and to identify the major components of leadership practices for Islamic school leaders. Leadership theories and research from both Islamic perspective and Western viewpoint acquired from related documents were reviewed and summarized as reported in the Literature Review. These documents comprised Ministry of Education documents, journals and books concerning leadership theories and research found at Assumption Library (Hua-mark Campus) and Kasetsart University Library. Moreover, books and dissertation concerning Islamic principles and perspective on leadership including the Holy Quran: English translation was found at Islamic Center library (Islamic Center of Thailand).

# Phase 2: Collecting and Analyzing Data (Questionnaire, Data Collection, and Analysis)

The population and samples of this research were all school directors of Islamic schools in Thailand. According to the statistic data of Ministry of Education 2011, there were 297 Islamic Schools in Thailand. Therefore, the researcher examined 297 school directors of all Islamic schools.

This research used the questionnaire developed by Saleh (2005), The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI-Self), to collect data from Islamic School leaders in Thailand. The LPI was originally developed by Kouzes & Posner (1987). Saleh (2005) adapted and made some changes in this questionnaire to be more appropriate for the Islamic schools setting.

The questionnaire was translated into Thai version by a certified translator with two more experts (1 English instructor and 1 Islamic school administrator) involved in checking and validating the translated questionnaire to ensure its quality. The questionnaires were sent to each Islamic School leaders by post during October to November 2011. The returned questionnaires from 209 Islamic school directors (70% of the research population) were participated in the data collection.

The analysis of the data was operated through Statistic Package used by Assumption University of Thailand to obtain descriptive statistics including Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Coefficient of Variation.

#### **Research Findings**

The results have been concluded into two phases:

# Phase 1: Documentary research from Islamic perspective and Western theories on effective school leadership.

The major findings of objectives 1 and 2 resulting from literature reviews are summarized in Table 1.



Table 1 Summary of Leadership Theories

Trans- formational Leadership	Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership	Ten Leadership Dimensions	Islamic Leadership Principles	Fundamentals of Islamic Educational Leadership
Individual Influence		Observing the Islamic Value System	Leadership in Islam is embedded in the belief and willing submission to Allah (the creator). Its core is on serving Allah     Effective Islamic leaders should possess some leadership qualities	- Respectfulness
Individualized Consideration		Building a Positive Culture	4. Leaders have a vital role in creating and upholding the culture of their organization	- Building a Positive Environment
		Managing and Leading	7. Leaders need to provide room for constructive criticism	- Shura (Mutual Consultation) - Training of the Organizationis Members
		Relating to Students		
		Relating to the Community		
Intellectual Stimulation	Challenging the Process	Challenging the Process	8. Leaders should be able to initiate, guide, and control change in order to accomplish the objectives	
Inspiration Motivation	Inspiring Shared Vision	Inspiring a Shared Vision	3. Leaders need to communicate their vision to others in order to generate strong commitment to serve as a support to attain the desired goals	
Intellectual Stimulation	Enabling Others to Act	Enabling Others to Act	6. Leaders should sustain the harmony and cooperation among followers and the momentum of their development	- Authority - Freedom
Individual Influence	Modeling the Way	Modeling the Way	Leaders should stipulate a vision or directions to their organization	- Clarity of Mission and Vision
Inspiration Motivation	Encouraging the Heart	Encouraging the Heart	5. Leaders have an important role in sustaining the organization over the long-term	- Motivation and Encouragement

From Table 1, some major points can be summarized. Firstly, it is shown clearly that Western theories and Islamic Perspective on Leadership are interrelated in a way that they both emphasize the importance of relationship between the leader and their followers. Both sides also highlight the empowerment of individuals and the mutual consultation of the team members. Secondly, Ten Leadership Dimensions is appropriate to use to assess the practices of leaders in Islamic school as they are appropriate to Islamic schools context and also integrate both point of views on leadership from Western theories and Islamic perspective. Therefore, ten leadership practice dimensions could well represent the ideal leadership practice from both points of view. The Definitions of these 10 leadership dimensions as proposed by Saleh (2005) are as follows:

#### 1. Observing Islamic Value System

Sincerity, Faithfulness, Working for the sake of Allah, Commitment to spiritual activities and faith program, Concern for Islamic values and morals in leadership and instilling, reminding the staff of the importance and rightness of their aims, etc.

#### 2. Building a Positive Culture

Creating an open climate at the school in line with Islamic values, Being concerned about teachers' morale, Striving to build a feeling of belonging (Islamic brotherhood) among teachers, Providing advice for those who seek and Designing of social programs in line with professional development of the teachers.

#### 3. Managing and leading

Building group culture in line with Islamic tradition, Involving teachers in the formulation of school plans and policies, Allowing free and open discussion and exchanges of views, Practicing consultation and deliberation in meeting, etc.

#### 4. Relating with students

Building parents-child relationships with the students, Taking care to encourage holistic student development (academically, morally, socially and psychologically), and Rewarding students' achievement to encourage them to be serious in their studies.

#### 5. Relating with Community

Putting great importance on teacher parent council, Interacting with other schools particularly, and Working to get the school to become a community center in district.



#### 6. Challenging the Process

Seeking out challenging opportunities, Looking for innovative ways that improve the school and experimenting and taking risks with new approaches even if there is a chance of failure.

#### 7. Inspiring a Shared Vision

Describing to others the kind of future to be created, Sharing dreams of the future with teachers and Showing others that long-term future interest can be realized by enlisting in a common vision.

#### 8. Enabling Others to Act

Giving teachers the discretion to make their own decisions, Creating an atmosphere of mutual trust in the projects to be led and Getting others to feel sense of ownership for the projects they work on.

#### 9. Modeling the Way

Having clarity in their philosophy at the school, Practicing the values he or she espouses and Spending time and energy making certain that teachers adhere to the values that have been agreed on.

#### 10. Encouraging the Heart

Looking for ways to celebrate accomplishments, Praising teachers for a job well done and Giving members appreciation and support for their contributions.

### Phase 2: Collecting and analyzing data from questionnaire.

A summary of the research finding of objectives 3 and 4 are as follows:

The research sample ended up with 209 Islamic school directors included the top ten schools. This can be said that 70% of the Islamic school directors in Thailand participated in this research. The majority of the leaders, 81.1 percent, were male while 18.1 percent were female, with most of them being in secondary schools. They represented a mixture of ages and educational levels. It could be noted that the majority of the leaders, 62.9 percent, had more than 6 years of experience as a school director.

As there was one dimension, Inspiring a shared vision, found to have CV greater than 20% which implied the poor agreement among the respondents and the poor confidence about the result, this dimension was discarded. Therefore, only nine dimensions with satisfactory CV were used in the findings of school in general data.



**Table 2** A Comparison between the Leadership Practices of Islamic School Directors in the Most Effective Schools and those in Other General Islamic Schools

Item	The most effective schools N=10	Interpretation	Schools in general N=209	Interpretation
Modeling the way	4.66	Very Frequently	4.06	Fairly often
Inspiring a shared vision	4.61	Very Frequently	N/A	N/A
Observing Islamic value system	4.54	Very Frequently	4.21	Fairly often
Encouraging the heart	4.52	Very Frequently	3.92	Fairly often
Relating with students	4.42	Fairly often	4.01	Fairly often
Managing and leading	4.38	Fairly often	4.07	Fairly often
Enabling others to act	4.33	Fairly often	3.88	Fairly often
Building a positive culture	4.21	Fairly often	3.88	Fairly often
Relating with community	4.14	Fairly often	3.89	Fairly often
Challenging the process	4.09	Fairly often	3.84	Fairly often

According to table 2, it was found that the leaders of the most effective Islamic schools practiced all ten leadership dimensions fairly often or very frequently, with average means of 4.09 - 4.66. On the other hand, Islamic school leaders, in general, exercised leadership practices fairly often in all dimensions, with average means of 3.84 - 4.21. Apparently, the data also showed that the top ten school leaders exercised leadership practices at a higher rate in all ten dimensions than those of school leaders in general.

Therefore, it can be concluded that all ten leadership dimensions that represent the ideal leadership practice for Islamic school leaders as a result of phase one were practiced among the group of Islamic school directors at the most effective schools, and that all of the ten dimensions of the leaders were significant and had an effect on student achievement.



#### Discussion

Islamic schools were inaugurated and have been officially supported by the government since 1965. There has been almost 50 years of educational development; however, school quality and student academic acheivement in Islamic schools have still been lower than others. The reasons behind the slower pace of development might be as Intarak, Chusuwan, Panagaseng, and Wongmontha (2010) mentioned that problems in Islamic schools affecting student learning, progress and achievements were curriculum, academic management, teaching methods, teacher deficiency, and incompetent teachers.

In regard to curriculum, it shows that the students are required to learn 16 subjects from the Thai basic education curriculum and also Islamic education curriculum. Hence, the students in this type of school are required to study more than other students for 8 subjects, or 200 hours more in a year. The curriculum utilized in Islamic schools might need to be revisited to improve its applicability and appropriateness in order to improve student academic achievement.

The failure in educational management leading to lower achievement of students in Islamic schools can be exemplified by the research findings that demonstrated Islamic school leaders in general mostly exercised leadership practices at lower rates. Moreover, the findings also showed that almost all leaders had been working as school directors at the same school from the start; however, such extended work experience at single schools did not help them very much improve their leadership performance. Wae-u-seng and colleagues (2009) suggest that the output of the educational management should be revisited in order to enhance quality education of the schools.

Problems in the areas of teaching methods and incompetent teachers also appeared in the research findings. Encouraging the heart (average means 3.92), managing and leading (average means 4.07), and enabling others to act (average means 3.88) which all deal with the professional development of teachers have been exercised, in general, by Islamic school leaders at a low rate. Reasonably, without the aforementioned practices, it will surely result in poor teachers' performance.

#### **Recommendations for Practices**

A leadership practice for Islamic school leaders could serve as significant guidelines that are applicable with the uniqueness of Islamic schools and could also enhance the leadersip performance of Islamic school leaders in Thailand. This research provides preliminary guidlines of leadership practices to develop the quality of school work that can lead to improvemnts in school quality and student achievement.

Recommendations are divided into three categories. These categories comprise the Ministry of Education in Thailand, Islamic school leaders, and teachers.

# Recommendations for Ministry of Education in Thailand

- It is strongly recommended that the Ministry of Education or leadership institutions should adopt the list of leadership practices to train Islamic school leaders in seminars, workshops and conferences organized regularly.
- Islamic Curriculum should be carfully inspected to be more appropriate for students who study in Islamic schools and promote their academic acheivement.

## Recommendations for Islamic school leaders

- Leadership practice indicators could serve as guidelines in creating the job description for school directors and it can also be considered as criteria of the appraisal process or self assessment for the Islamic school directors.
- It is recommended that school leaders should improve their communication skills as it is a vital factor in building a good relationship with teachers, parents, students, and the community.

#### **Recommendations for teachers**

- Teachers should be more active, capable to express their own opinions, and be responsible for any project assigned by the leader.
- It is recommneded that teachers should be life long learners and be ready for any new challenge.

#### **Recommendations for Further Research**

- It is recommened that future research should be conducted on a professional development model for teachers in Islamic schools as they play an important role in supporting the development process of the school.



- It would be beneficial to further conduct similar research in other countries where Islamic schools exists. This will lead to a broader view about the current situation by integrating different factors from other societies.
- It would be advantageous to conduct a comparative study between leaders who are located in the South and in other parts of Thailand in order to determine the different factors that can have an impact on their leadership performance and school effectiveness.

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