

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP MODEL AT INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE SCHOOLS IN THAILAND

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**Abstract:** The main aim of this study was to identify principal leadership responsibilities to develop principal leadership model at International Baccalaureate schools in Thailand. Transformational and instructional leadership approaches along with both qualitative and quantitative elements from the research were used to create the model. The data was gathered from 145 teachers from IB authorized international schools in quantitative approach and three principals were interviewed in qualitative approach. The results from the average mean showed that there is significant difference between current and desirable practices of principals at IB schools. Thirteen responsibilities out of twenty one responsibilities were significantly different. The data from the interview method were analyzed by constant comparative method and the findings revealed four leadership dimensions along with four domains. They were mentioned as factors for student academic achievement by Marzano (2005). Results of this study confirmed the findings from the literature that student academic achievement is the result of great leadership by responsible principal.

**Keywords:** Principal Leadership Model, International Baccalaureate Schools in Thailand, Transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Twenty One Responsibilities of Principal

### Introduction

Rapid changes brought by the socio-economic development around the globe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has required educational institutions and its leaders to take initiative to change and benefit the educational system (Pont et al., 2008). Fullan (2002) argues that the larger the scale of sustainable educational reform agenda, the severe is the need for strong leadership. The principal is held responsible and accountable for student academic achievement and demand on principal leadership increased as a result of increase in expectations from students' performance. As the world is becoming one big dream for the students' future, an international curriculum and a common entrance exam was the core idea for establishing IB organization. From the last twenty years, International Baccalaureate (hereinafter "IB") programs offered by the public and private schools around the world has increased tremendously and currently 144 countries are offering the curriculum to more than 1,073,000 students

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in approximately 3,510 schools (The IBO, 2013). Four programs are offered by IBO to the learners. Primary Years Program (PYP) is offered to learners from three to twelve years, the Middle Years Program (MYP) is offered to learners from eleven to sixteen years, and the Diploma Program (DP) and the Career-related Certificate program are offered to learners from sixteen to nineteen years old.

On the basis of empirical research, this study used the literature on the principals' practices, characteristics, competencies, behaviors, and roles as transformational and instructional leaders to develop a definition of principal leadership responsibilities.

### **Research Objectives**

There are five objectives for the research:

1. To determine the current practices of the twenty one leadership responsibilities of principals as perceived by the teachers at IB schools in Thailand.
2. To determine the most desirable practices of the twenty one leadership responsibilities practiced by principals as perceived by teachers at IB schools in Thailand.
3. To ascertain the difference between current and desirable practices of the twenty one leadership responsibilities practiced by principals at IB schools in Thailand.
4. To explore the dimensions of leadership responsibilities practiced by principals at IB schools in Thailand.
5. To develop a model of principal leadership at IB schools in Thailand.

### **Literature Review**

The review of literature in this study was divided into three sections. First section discussed about international education, international schools in Thailand, International Baccalaureate overview and IB program in international schools of Thailand under the heading international schools context. The extensive research on international education describing the origin of international schools and the growth of schools in different parts of the world were explained. Section two discussed transformational leadership theory, instructional leadership theory, twenty one responsibilities of the school leader by Marzano (2005), transactional leadership theory, total quality management, servant leadership theory, and situational leadership theory. The final section related research concluded the literature on twenty one responsibilities by Marzano (2005) to develop principal leadership at schools and to the correlation of it with student achievement.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study has been developed based on four significant conceptions: international and IB school context, transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and principal leadership responsibilities.

### **Method/Procedure**

Mixed methodology method using combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to achieve the objectives in this study. The qualitative approach

consisted literature review, and interviews of principals from IB schools. To interpret the data from the interview of principals, the constant comparative method being the one of grounded theory approach was used. In quantitative approach, a questionnaire was used to survey the population to explore the current and most desired practices of twenty one leadership responsibilities practiced by principals for implementing IB program in international schools of Thailand. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the difference between current and desirable practices of principal leadership responsibilities.

#### *Population and Sample*

In Thailand there are 19 IB authorized schools (The IBO, 2013). The participants for this research consisted two groups of people. Group one included 318 IB teachers from all 19 international Schools who have been trained to teach IB subjects in any of the four IB programs authorized by The International Baccalaureate Organization (The IBO, 2013). Group two consisted principals from all 19 IB authorized international schools in Thailand. Sample size was determined from the given population by Yamane (1967) verification table.

#### *Research Instruments*

Two research instruments were used in this study. In quantitative approach, “Statements Assessing the Principals Leadership Responsibilities”, an instrument was self-developed by the researcher based on the twenty one leadership responsibilities. In the qualitative approach, an open ended questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on the twenty one responsibilities of principal leadership by Marzano (2005) and was approved by the five experts.

#### *Content Validity and Reliability*

For the content validity of the questionnaire and open ended interview questions, a group of five experts were asked to review the questionnaire items as researcher adapted the questionnaire and changed some parts of the questionnaire. The criteria set for educational leadership experts were minimum 10 years of experience in educational organizations, at least 2 years worked as leader or head in any areas in school settings, and minimum Master’s degree in education. Validity of questionnaire was tested using *Index of Congruence (IOC) method* (developed by Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977).

For reliability of the instruments, a pilot testing was conducted on 60 teachers from two IB schools. These 60 teachers were not used as samples in the study. The Cronbach’s Alpha was computed at .931.

#### *Data Collection*

For the research objectives 1, 2, and 3, data collection was by a questionnaire. The survey was conducted by distributing questionnaires for two months, April and May, 2013. For the research objective 4, data collection by literature review and interviews were the source of information. Principals from three prestigious IB authorized international schools were contacted and requested for appointment to conduct the interview.

### *Data Analysis*

For objective 1-3, paired Samples t-test analysis were used to calculate arithmetic mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) to determine the current practices and desirable practices of twenty one leadership responsibilities by principals as perceived by the teachers for implementing IB program in international schools of Thailand. Difference between the current practices mean and desirable practices mean (Mean Difference) was also presented along with t and p-value. In order to verify the mean and standard deviation, an interpretation criterion for this study is as follows.

Mean Score	1.00-1.50	Always (Very High)
Mean Score	1.51-2.50	Frequently (High)
Mean Score	2.51-3.50	Occasionally (Moderate)
Mean Score	3.51-4.50	Seldom (Low)
Mean Score	4.51-5.00	Never (Very Low)

For the objective 4, qualitative method was used to analyze the data gathered by literature review and interviews. The data were analyzed by constant comparative approach. In open coding method, researcher compared and grouped the data because of their connectivity. Information's were developed into categories. In axial coding system, researcher interconnected the categories and reduced the data. A point of saturation was reached after constant comparison. Selective coding from axial coding's resulted in four dimensions of principal leadership which were regarded as core categories. This process is done by choosing the core categories and connecting them to other categories through validation. Because of limitations in the study, for the trustworthiness, triangulation technique was utilized. With completion of all levels in constant comparative method, researcher developed the model from the dimensions emerged.

### **Findings/Results**

The demographic information of teachers was measured by frequencies and percentages from the statistical tool used. 61.1 % of the respondents were male and 38.9 % were female. The age group 31-40 and 51-60 had the same number of respondents, 25%. The age groups 60+ had 19.4% respondents while age group 41-50 had 18.1% of the respondents. The age group 18-30 had the least number of respondents as 12.5%. 32% number of respondents had bachelor's degree, 47.2% number of respondents had master's degree and 20.8% had doctorate degree. None of them indicated having any other degree. 30.6% of respondents' had 26+ years of teaching experience, 22.2% of the respondents had 6-10 years of teaching experience, 13.9% of the respondents had either 11-15 years of teaching experience or 16-20 years of teaching experience. 8.3% of the respondents had 0-5 years of teaching experience. 12.5% of the respondents were Thai citizens and 87.5% were Non-Thai citizens. For objectives 1-3, the results from the average mean shows that there is significant difference between thirteen current and desirable practices of principals at IB schools. They are Change Agent, Contingent Rewards, Communication, Culture,

Focus, Input, Intellectual Stimulation, Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Monitoring/Evaluating, Optimizer, Relationships, Situational Awareness, and Visibility. Their mean ranges from 0.76 – 0.92. The result showed that the average mean of current practices of principal leadership responsibility as high (Mean = 2.41) as well as desirable practices are high (Mean = 1.65). Current practices Mean for thirteen leadership responsibilities is higher than the desirable practices, which means, there is a gap in both of the leadership responsibilities. These factors are mentioned in the study of Marzano (2005) as highly correlated with student achievement. The researcher presented this gap to the panel and based on their suggestion, a model of principal leadership at IB schools was developed.

For the objective 4, the findings from the literature revealed eight principal leadership characteristics (Marzano, 2005) as developing shared directions, creating positive school climate, redesigning the organization, developing people, developing partnership, strategic management, improving working conditions and supervising and evaluating instruction.

The findings from the interviews were merged with the findings from the literature reviews to develop the principal leadership dimensions. The findings from the interview were presented as follows.

Dimension 1: Building organizational culture. Leadership responsibilities related to the categories developing shared directions and creating positive school climate were as follows.

1. Developing a shared direction to guide the schools
2. Creating a team spirit and cooperative atmosphere in the school

Dimension 2: Leading indicators of organizational performance. Leadership responsibilities related to the categories redesigning the organization, developing people and developing partnership were as follows.

1. Communicating the goals of the organization
2. Focusing on the strengths and weakness of the staff
3. Developing partnership between, school and community

Dimension 3: Developing strategic leadership and management skills. Leadership responsibilities related to the categories strategic management and improving working conditions were as follows.

1. Establish the relationship between vision, mission, goals, and objectives of the organization
2. Improving physical and psychological working conditions of staff

Dimension 4: Role of leaders in instructional and curricular assessment. Leadership responsibilities related to the categories supervising and evaluating instruction was as follows.

1. Understanding the best practices in curriculum, instruction and assessment

A multi-level pie diagram was designed according to the leadership dimensions and leadership responsibilities found from the findings for the objectives 1-4. The idea of developing the principal leadership at IB schools in Thailand is supported by research conducted earlier by Lee (2012). Their study identified the variety of challenges faced by leaders in international schools in Asia Pacific region including Thailand.

### **Model Validation**

The researcher proposed the model “The Development of Principal Leadership Model at International Baccalaureate Schools in Thailand”. The meeting was held on Monday, October 21, 2013 at 3.30 P.M. in the meeting room of Pan-Asia International School. There were 15 participants from three IB schools in Thailand. The group comprised 12 IB subject teachers, 2 parents of IB students, and 1 IB coordinator. The model approval form was duly signed. The suggestions and comments from the connoisseurs included four aspects as follows.

1. Thirteen responsibilities with the significant gap in mean were thought to be the center of the discussion and the committee suggested that they should be treated as most important variables in developing the principal leadership model at IB schools in Thailand by placing them around the center point.
2. Group suggested that thirteen responsibilities should be arranged according to hierarchy in means around the center point.

This is to distinguish them from each other by their importance and priority.

3. The domains of principal leadership were regarded as important factors and focus group suggested to show them in the model for the general public.
4. The center of the principal leadership development is to achieve the student academic achievement and committee suggested that the center point of the model design should be student academic achievement.

Model was modified according to the suggestions of the connoisseurs in developing principal leadership model at IB schools. The interview data coded were accepted by the committee and they were paraphrased to have a greater relationship with the thirteen responsibilities by Marzano (2005). The final principal leadership model (PLMIB) with eight layers were,

- The first layer or center point illustrates the Student Academic Achievement. Purpose and aim of every educational institute is to achieve student academic achievement. Principal leadership is another factor among school-related factors which impact on student learning (Leithwood, 2004).
- The second layer illustrates Principal Leadership. As mentioned in the study of Marzano (2005), student academic achievement and principal leadership have strong connection. To achieve student academic achievement, principal’s leadership responsibilities are important and these responsibilities can be learned and developed. The objective of this model was to develop strong principal leadership and therefore principal leadership is another important component in the model.
- The third layer explains Thirteen Principal Leadership Responsibilities (R) and they were placed according to hierarchy in means of the responsibilities. The responsibilities with same mean were combined in R1, R5, and R8 as they show that their importance is same as another responsibility. Henceforth the layer illustrates only nine factors out of thirteen responsibilities. The subcategories are as follow:
  - R1 represent contingent rewards and monitoring/evaluating
  - R2 represent involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment
  - R3 represent focus
  - R4 represent communication

- R5 represent change agent and intellectual stimulation
- R6 represent optimizer
- R7 represent culture
- R8 represent relationships, situational awareness and visibility
- R9 represent input
- The fourth layer explains four Principal Leadership Dimensions as follows.
  - Building Organizational Culture
  - Leading Indicators of Organizational Performance
  - Developing Strategic Leadership and Management Skills
  - Role of Leaders in Instructional and Curricular Assessment
- The fifth layer shows eight Principal Leadership Domains as follows.
  - Developing Shared Directions
  - Creating Positive School Climate.
  - Redesigning the organization
  - Developing People
  - Developing Partnership
  - Strategic Management
  - Improving Working Conditions
  - Supervising and Evaluating Instruction

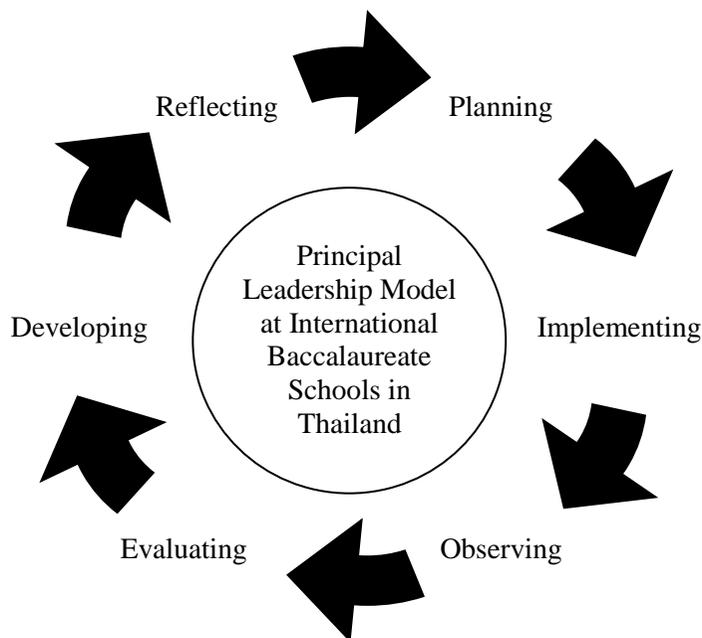
### **Discussion**

The findings from this study were consistent with the finding from different studies conducted by (Bass & Avolio, 2004; Leithwood, 1994; Lee, 2012). IB schools around the world are focusing on overall development of students by offering high quality education and principal has tremendous responsibility to face the challenges in implementing the curriculum (Lee, 2012). There are numerous studies which indicate that developing principal leadership in schools benefit the students and school as a whole. According to Marzano (2005), transformative leadership theory by Burns (1978) was developed in to school leadership by Bass and Avolio (1994) and Leithwood (1994). Instructional leadership theory by Hoy & Hoy (2010) believes that most effective leadership behaviors are important for student achievement.

### **Recommendations**

IB programs are successfully offered by nineteen schools in Thailand along with other international curriculum. More and more schools are offering IB diploma along with school curriculum. Principal plays a major role in implementing new curriculum. He needs to be convinced about the advantages of implementing the IB programs. Literature on principal leadership is revealing that student achievement and success of the school is possible only with effective and influential principal. Being a transformational and instructional leader, principals have more idea about schools instructional methods and the implementation of IB can help students to achieve principal's goals of successful schools.

To implement the model in school organization, based on the proposed ideas, researcher recommends the following action plan.



**Figure 1: The Action Plan of Principal Leadership Model at IB Schools in Thailand**

The action plan of the principal leadership model has six steps and while implementing, the plan requires school management to consider the needs and problems of school members. Action plan in this study is cyclical process as principal leadership and his responsibilities are important in developing school and students and the plan of implantation can start once again once it is through all process. Following is the brief explanation for all the six steps.

**Planning.** Planning refers to the first stage of the development in implementing the model. A thorough understanding of the model is required and a strategic planning is required to reach the goal of developing principal leadership at schools and achieving student academic success. As the research suggested that leadership responsibilities bring student academic success, in this stage these responsibilities have be leant to apply in the school setting.

**Implementing.** Implementing refers to the stage in which plans are executed. The model implementation requires brainstorming by the leader and school. The goal and plans are observed and the process of implementation of the model is conducted. The principal leadership responsibilities are given importance and his roles and responsibilities are determined.

**Observing.** Observing is the third step in implementing the action plan, and refers to the period in which the plans are executed. The time line must be adhered for the success of the implementation and during this period, performance of the leader need to be checked. The adjustments and improvement in the role can be identified.

**Evaluating.** This is the fourth step in implantation of the plan and it refers to the mid assessment of the success of the action plan. There will be small hurdles which need immediate actions from the leader and evaluation of implementing the principal leadership model facilitates that. A revise plan may be necessary and the required resources should be abundant.

**Developing.** This is the fifth step in the action plan and refers to the process of observation and monitoring the progress of the action plan. Every step taken to implement the model has to be checked time to time and contingency plan may minimize the unexpected.

**Reflecting.** This is the final step in the process before the cycle begins once again. Reflection is the integral part of the action plan and proper records of the process will keep the plan concrete. Critical observation is important as they will influence the best practices and improve the teaching and learning.

The model of principal leadership will only succeed once all of the above steps are in place and they can be enhanced by different individual leaders who are effective in leadership.

Additionally, in colleges and universities while training principals as a school leader, special education on principals' responsibilities may be added. The principals can acquire knowledge from the trainings to be an effective school leader. Principal leadership model will be important resources for future leaders in school. The responsibilities of principals will prepare the future leaders for the constant changes occurring in schools. The model developed in the research was based on the perceptions of IB teachers in IB authorized schools in Thailand. Further research could be conducted in all international schools in Thailand and also at Thai schools to understand the perceptions of teachers about their principals' responsibilities.

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