

The Administrator's Views on Critical Skills and Knowledge Affecting School's Education Quality

ทักษะและความรู้ที่จำเป็นตามความเห็นของผู้บริหารที่ส่งผลต่อคุณภาพการศึกษาของสถานศึกษา

Mattana Wangthanomsak (มัทนา วัฒนอมศักดิ์)*

Abstract

The purposes of this research aimed to identify the school administrator's views on necessary skills and knowledge and to determine which of these skills and knowledge have an impact on the school's education quality. The research framework is based on the documentary study concerning the necessary skills and knowledge for basic education school administrator and UNICEF's concept on school's education quality. Five school principals were also interviewed to gather insight information regarding the skills and knowledge for school administrator. The research sample included 379 school administrators of primary and secondary schools under the Office of Basic Education Commission, Thailand. The instruments of the research were a semi-structured interview and a opinionnaire, which was tested for content validity and reliability by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was 0.979; the opinionnaire was then sent to primary and secondary school administrators across the country. The statistics used to analyze the collected data were frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, exploratory factor analysis, stepwise multiple regression analysis, and content analysis. The research findings revealed that the five critical skills for the school administrators comprised talent management skills, social intelligence skills, self-management skills, intellectual and communication skills, technology and information skills. As for the three critical knowledges for school administrator were knowledge in educational administration, knowledge in school administration, and knowledge in curriculum and research. The skills and knowledge for school administrator affected the education quality at .05 level of statistical significance. These skills and knowledge, which have an impact on the school's education quality, were knowledge in educational administration, knowledge in school administration and conceptual and communication skills.

Keywords : school administrator's skills and knowledge, education quality

* ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร. ภาควิชาการบริหารการศึกษา คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

Asst.Prof. Dr. The Department of Educational Administration, Faculty of Education, Silpakorn University

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาทักษะและความรู้ที่จำเป็นตามความเห็นของผู้บริหารสถานศึกษาและเพื่อศึกษาว่าทักษะและความรู้ใดที่ส่งผลต่อคุณภาพการศึกษาของสถานศึกษา โดยกำหนด กรอบแนวคิดของการวิจัยจากการศึกษาเอกสาร งานวิจัยและบทความที่เกี่ยวข้องกับทักษะและความรู้ที่จำเป็นของผู้บริหารสถานศึกษาและคุณภาพการศึกษาตามแนวคิดขององค์กร UNICEF และจากการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก ผู้บริหารสถานศึกษา ตัวอย่างของการวิจัยคือผู้บริหารสถานศึกษาระดับประถมศึกษาและมัธยมศึกษา สังกัดสำนักงานคณะกรรมการการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐาน จำนวน 379 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยคือ แบบสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างและแบบสอบถามความคิดเห็นที่ได้ผ่านการตรวจสอบคุณภาพของเครื่องมือทั้งด้านความตรงเชิงเนื้อหาและความเชื่อมั่นโดยการคำนวณหาค่าสัมประสิทธิ์แอลฟาตามวิธีของครอนบาค ได้ค่าสัมประสิทธิ์แอลฟาเท่ากับ 0.979 หลังจากนั้นแบบสอบถามถูกส่งให้ผู้บริหารสถานศึกษาระดับประถมศึกษาและมัธยมศึกษาทั่วประเทศ นำข้อมูลที่ได้อาวิเคราะห์หาค่าความถี่ ค่าร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ค่าส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน การวิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบเชิงสำรวจ การวิเคราะห์การถดถอยพหุคูณแบบขั้นตอนและการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ทักษะที่จำเป็นของผู้บริหารสถานศึกษาประกอบด้วยทักษะการบริหารคน ทักษะทางสังคม ทักษะการบริหารตนเอง ทักษะการคิดและการสื่อสาร และทักษะด้านเทคโนโลยีสารสนเทศ ส่วนความรู้ที่จำเป็นของผู้บริหารสถานศึกษาได้แก่ความรู้ในการบริหารการศึกษา ความรู้ในการบริหารสถานศึกษา และความรู้ด้าน หลักสูตรและการวิจัย โดยพบว่า ทักษะและความรู้ของผู้บริหารส่งผลต่อคุณภาพการศึกษาของสถานศึกษา โดยภาพรวมอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 และพบว่า ทักษะและความรู้ที่จำเป็นของผู้บริหารที่ส่งผลต่อคุณภาพการศึกษาของสถานศึกษาโดยภาพรวมได้แก่ ความรู้ในการบริหารการศึกษา ความรู้ในการบริหารสถานศึกษา ทักษะการคิดและการสื่อสาร

คำสำคัญ : ทักษะและความรู้ของผู้บริหารสถานศึกษา คุณภาพการศึกษา

Introduction

Education is the fundamental key for development and growth of the society since human capital is the heart of the development of every organization, every society and every nation. Moreover, government officials and partners also agree to the impacts of education on economic development and on improving people's quality of life. Even though education is widely recognized as a major tool to human development as it helps equip people with the knowledge and skills they need to improve their lives, but according to the UNICEF (2000), the quality of education that the children receive today is still a major concern. The success of education system relies on many factors such as curriculum quality, student quality, administration process, the relationship between school and community; but the most important factor is the quality of the school personnel due to the fact that the school administrators and teachers work closely with the students and have great impacts on the students' learning. According to the criteria set by

the Bureau of Teacher Education Personnel Development, the Teachers Council of Thailand, the Office of the Teacher Civil Service, and Educational Personnel Commission require that all educational personnel must acquire knowledge and skills necessary to perform their tasks effectively, including possessing leadership traits, personality, and behavior suitable for being an effective school administrator (Wangthanomsak, 2012).

However, researches revealed that some school administrators still lack certain qualifications such as self-confidence, interest and knowledge in academic affair administration, visionary and ethical leadership, creativity, and administrative tactics (Runjareon, 2002), technological and management proficiency, judgment skills, human skills, flexibility and adaptability skills, administrative experiences, public relations skills, beside the aforementioned; some school administrators are inactive, resist changes, and pay little attention to students achievement and teachers performance (The Office of Education Commission of Thailand, 2000). These problems, along with inequity in education, lead to low quality education, which consequently bring about less competitive ability (Pongpanit, 2009). The follow-up study on education reform also revealed that there are still problems that need to be fixed such as student quality, school quality, teacher professional development, unequal opportunities in education, and inadequate educational resources (Office of The Education Council, 2009). Furthermore, educational personnel viewed that the education system in Thailand is facing some major issues such as ineffective implementation of educational policy, unmotivated school personnel, student's low achievement, including inappropriate characteristics of students. Considering the above information, the school administrators play an important role in shaping the education quality of the school, which interests the researcher to examine the critical skills and knowledge for school administrators, which have impacts on school's education quality. Therefore, the purposes of this research were to identify the school administrator's views on critical skills and knowledge for school administrator and to determine which of those critical skills and knowledge have an impact on the school's education quality.

Theories and Literature Reviews

This section briefly reviews recent thinking on necessary skills and knowledge for school administrator and also the literatures related to the education quality.

Self-management skills: the ability to take responsibility for one's own actions and life direction, to plan and to set goals and successfully achieve them. Since a school administrator is in a position to greatly influence others, it is necessary for a school administrator to

possess the self-management skills, which include the ability to be a role model and set good example (Kouzes and Posner, 1997; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005), the ability to clearly understand work procedures and its requirements (Katz, 1955; Dubrin, 2009), the ability to be an ethical leader (the Office of the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Education Thailand, 2001; Cuella and Giles, 2012), the ability to manage time effectively (Ekundayo and Kolawole, 2013; Akomolafe, 2005), and being motivated and enthusiastic (Stogdill, 1981).

Talent management skills: the ability to ensure the smooth operation of the school (Katz, 1955); which include a wide range of essential organizational skills such as planning skills, organizing skills, staffing skills (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983) leading skills, motivating skills (Katz, 1955; Mumford et al, 2000), delegating skills, managing conflict and changes skills, ability to preside at meetings, ability to allocate resources, and establish positive organizational culture (Mumford et al, 2000; Teachers Council of Thailand, 2006; Robinson et al, 2008; Dubrin, 2009; Oluwadare, 2011, Plaipetch, 2014)

The social intelligence skills: one of the most important skills since it is the ability related to working with other people (Katz, 1955); including the ability to collaborate, interact and communicate well with others, the ability to establish the networking, cooperation and teamwork, and also the ability to understand others (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983). It is important for a school leader to be able to establish a good working relationship with co-workers, school personnel, parents and the community. The human skills also include the characteristics such as cooperative, empathy, respect self and others, and being aware of one's own perspective on issues and situations, and also being aware of the perspective of others (Zaccaro et al, 2000, Sanohpin, 2014).

The intellectual and communication skills: the ability to understand the relationship or the interrelatedness of the subunits and see the big picture, the ability to understand and analyze data systematically and rationally, the ability to oversee the project and its operation, the ability to foresee the possible threats and also the opportunities (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983), the ability to plan, establish goals and envision the vision, the ability to communicate in foreign language, and the ability to supervise and provide guidance (Humphrey and Stokes, 2000; Dubrin, 2009).

The technology and information skills: the ability to have access to the necessary information sources, the ability to handle office technology and work related equipment (Dubrin, 2009), the ability to be aware of one's own strength and weaknesses, and the ability to maximize one's strength and develop the weaknesses (Goleman, 2011).

Knowledge is the awareness or understanding of a matter or a subject, which is acquired through education and experience by perceiving, discovering and learning. The knowledge that the school administrator viewed as important is the knowledge in educational administration, which includes the subjects of one's own and other personnel's job description, learning organization, participative management, job motivation, emotional intelligence, conflict management, human relations in administration, education related laws and regulations, education plan and policy, educational assurance, educational administration principles, educational resources management (Bottoms and O'Neil, 2001)

Knowledge in school administration: the knowledge related to the administration of the school; since the school principal's job is working closely with teachers, students, their parents, the community and also the government; this knowledge will help prepare them to better work with various group of people. This knowledge includes the subjects of adult's learning principles, student affairs management, school plant, its contexts and surroundings, public relations management, learning and teaching standards, changing trends in relations to school administration, and strategic planning (Bottoms and O'Neil, 2001; Hayes et al, 2003).

Knowledge in curriculum and research: the matters of curriculum development and implementation, educational research design and statistics, learning measurement and evaluation, supervision and monitoring, and child-centered instruction (Bottoms and O'Neil, 2001).

UNICEF reviewed the research literatures related to quality in education and summed up the concept the quality education includes: 1) quality learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities, 2) quality environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities, 3) quality content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, and peace, 4) quality processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities, and 5) quality outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society (UNICEF, 2000; Murphy, 2013).

Methods

The research framework was based on the documentary study from journals, researches, and experts' interviews concerning critical skills and knowledge for school administrators and the UNICEF's concept on school's education quality. This section briefly describes the research procedure, sample, and data management and analysis.

The research was conducted following these steps.

Phase I: Preliminary preparation: exploring research idea, identifying the research problems, developing the research questions, studying background information, and developing research framework.

Phase II: Research implementation: reviewing the existing researches and related literatures, developing an open-ended interview, defining the research population and sample, conducting the interview with experts in the area, developing the opinionnaire, testing for the content validity and reliability, collecting the data, analyzing and interpreting the collected data.

Phase III: Presentation of the research findings and recommendations. The results are reviewed, summarized, and presented in a manner related to the research questions.

Research population

The populations of this study were 28,335 primary and secondary school administrators under the Office of Basic Education Commission, Thailand. The number of the sample group, based on the studies by Krejcie and Morgan (1970: 607-610) regarding the sample size for research activities was 379. The stratified random sampling was used to obtain a random sample, by dividing the population into four regions (northern, northeastern, western/central/eastern, and southern region) and each region was divided into the schools under the office of primary educational service area and the office of secondary educational service area. A simple random sampling was then conducted within each stratum.

Data collection

The study used semi-structured interviews to elicit information about the skills and knowledge that are essential to school administrators in order to perform their tasks effectively. Five school principals were interviewed. The collected data was synthesized along with the documentary study to develop the opinionnaire regarding critical skills and knowledge for school administrator. The opinionnaire was developed, tested for content validity and internal consistency of the scale (reliability). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was

calculated and found at 0.979. The opinionnaire was then sent to 379 school administrators across the country; which were the sample group of the study.

The opinionnaire consisted of three parts: 1) the questions concerning general information of the respondent; 2) the questions concerning critical skills and knowledge for school administrator, and 3) the questions concerning the school's education quality. The questions in part 1 used a checklist form and questions in part 2 and 3 were constructed using the 5-point Likert's rating scale with categories "very important / excellent," "important / very good," "moderately important / good," "of little important / fair," and "unimportant / poor." The 312 opinionnaires were received back, which represented the response rate of 82.33%.

Data management and analysis

After the five experts were interviewed, all data were recorded, organized and analyzed using content analysis. The purpose of the interview was to identify the necessary skills and knowledge for the school administrator to perform their tasks effectively. The data from interviews and the document study were used to develop the opinionnaire. After the opinionnaires were returned, the data was then examined, recorded, and analyzed by analysis software program. The descriptive and inferential statistics were used as the tools of evaluation of the data analysis. Frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, exploratory factor analysis, and stepwise multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data according to the respective objectives of the research. Tables were used to summarize and display the research findings.

Research findings

This section describes school administrators' views on the critical skills and knowledge for school administrators, and then identify; which of these skills and knowledge have an impact on the school's education quality. After adequacy and sample size, testing the reliability population matrix; the data was then subjected to factor analysis using principal component analysis, with varimax rotation. Five skill components were found with eigenvalue greater than 1.00 and cumulatively explained 67.350% of the variation in the data set. Five skill components; according to the school administrator; were talent management skills, social intelligence skills, self-management skills, intellectual and communication skills, and technology and information skills. The components of the necessary skills, based on the school administrator's point of views after exploratory factor analysis, are shown in table 1.

Table 1 : Necessary skills for the basic education school administrator

Skills components	eigenvalues	cumulative %	No of variables	Factor loading
Talent management skills	6.895	21.533	12	.563 - .775
Social intelligence skills	4.755	36.392	5	.625 - .699
Self-management skills	3.813	48.308	5	.542 - .624
Intellectual and communication skills	3.790	60.090	7	.514 - .666
Technology and information skills	2.323	67.350	3	.475 - .760

Three knowledge components with eigenvalue greater 1.00 were extracted and explained 65.705% of the variation in the data set. Three knowledge components; according to the school administrators; were knowledge in educational administration, knowledge in school administration, and knowledge in curriculum and research. The components of the necessary knowledge, based on the school administrator's point of view after exploratory factor analysis, are shown in table 2.

Table 2 : Necessary knowledge for the basic education school administrator

knowledge components	eigenvalues	cumulative %	No of variables	Factor loading
Knowledge in educational administration	8.375	29.910	14	.549 - .786
Knowledge in school administration	5.823	50.706	8	.528 - .730
Knowledge in curriculum and research	4.200	65.705	6	.496 - .789

The school's education quality, in general, was found at a high level. When considering each aspect individually, the quality process had the highest mean score followed by quality learners, quality learning environment, quality content, and quality outcomes.

Stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data set. The results from the study revealed that the first prediction model accounted for approximately 47% of variance of school's education quality in general (Y_{tot}). The three components sufficient to predict school's education quality in general were knowledge in educational administration (K1), intellectual and communication skills (S4), and knowledge in school administration (K2). The next prediction model accounted for approximately 39% of the variance of school's quality

learners (Y1). Four components sufficient to predict school's quality learners and included in the model were knowledge in school administration (K2), intellectual and communication skills (S4), technology and information skills (S5), and social intelligence skills (S2). The next prediction model accounted for approximately 36% of variance of school's quality learning environment (Y2). Three components predicted school's quality learning environment and included in this equation were knowledge in educational administration (K1), knowledge in school administration (K2), and intellectual and communication skills (S4).

The next prediction model accounted for approximately 44% of variance of school's quality content (Y3). Three components predicted school's quality content and included in this equation were knowledge in educational administration (K1), intellectual and communication skills (S4), and knowledge in school administration (K2). The next prediction model accounted for approximately 40% of variance of School's quality process (Y4). Three components predicted school's quality process and included in this equation were intellectual and communication skills (S4), knowledge in school administration (K2), and knowledge in educational administration (K1). The last prediction model accounted for approximately 30% of variance of school's quality outcome (Y5). Two components sufficient to predict the school's quality outcome and included in this equation were knowledge in educational administration (K1) and intellectual and communication skills (S4).

The aforementioned skills and knowledge have impacts on different aspect of education quality and they can be summed up as shown in figure I.

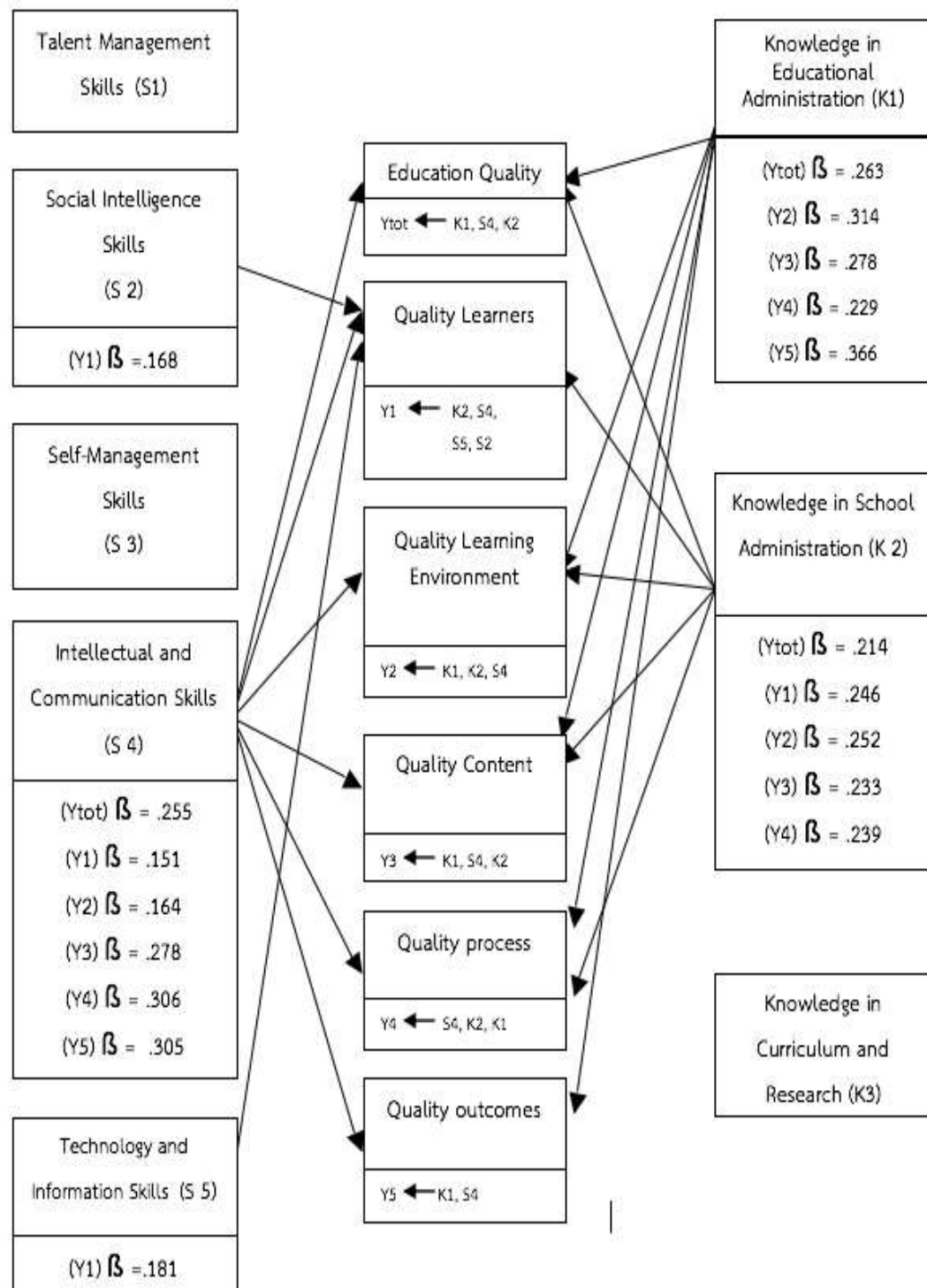


Figure 1 : The necessary skills and knowledge affecting the school's education quality

Discussion and Implications

The analysis of the data collected from the interviews and the opinionnaire concerning critical skills and knowledge for school administrator to perform their task effectively revealed three important findings.

The first finding was that the school administrator perceives that the necessary skills are self-management skills, talent management skills, social intelligence skills, intellectual and communication skills, and technology and information skills. The self-management skills include being responsible and enthusiastic, having self-awareness, personal integrity, time management ability, work commitment, including technical skills. These are all the keys for a person to take charge of his or her life and also the keys to be in charge in the organization. This finding provides evidence for Bedard's (2005) view that school administrator needs to be self-confident, responsible, have personal integrity, also being a role-model for other school personnel. Not only the school administrator is perceived as the most important person in the school, he or she is also expected by parents, and other stakeholders to be the responsible one to lead the school to reach the goals of quality education. This finding shows that the school administrators are well aware of what is expected of them, the reason why this skill is found to be the most essential for school administrators. The skill that school administrator found second most essential is the talent management skills, which include the ability to preside at the meetings, delegate assignments, develop and motivate school personnel, manage changes, create good organizational culture, allocate resources efficiently and ability to serve others. This finding shows that school administrator needs to be able to handle the school's daily routine tasks such as meeting, paperwork, staff organizing; and the school administrator also needs to create good working environment and atmosphere (Pensuriya, 2006). The next essential skill is the social intelligence skills, which include the ability to create collaboration and partnership, interact and connect well with others (writing, speaking, listening, and reading), and the ability to understand people. It is generally accepted that one of the essential skill for manager of any organization is the social intelligence skills. As we also know that the school must have good relationship with their community, hence it is important for the school principal to be the leader to close the gap between school and community and to create collaboration and partnership (Office of the Basic Education Commission, Thailand, 2006). The next most important skill for the school administrator is the intellectual and communication skills, which include the ability to see the big picture, to understand the information and analyze the information, ability to plan and visualize organizational threats and opportunities, ability to communicate with other people in Thai language and foreign

language; as Humphrey and Stokes (2000) mentioned in their writing that leaders of any organization need to have the conceptual skills and communication skills. Especially now that Southeast Asian nations are trying to form up the ASEAN community to promote regional peace, stability, and active collaboration. It is necessary that school must adapt to this demand and language is one of the major key in building collaboration. The technology and information skills include the ability to access and gather the necessary information, ability to utilize the equipment and technology, and the ability to self-evaluate. This finding partly supports the concept of Dubrin (2009) and Thessin and Clayton (2013) regarding the necessary skills for managers and along with the concept of the skills necessary for school administrators proposed by National Association of Secondary School Principal (2002).

The second finding is that the important knowledge for school administrator are knowledge in educational administration, knowledge in school administration, and knowledge in curriculum and research. The knowledge in educational administration includes knowledge and understanding in job description, learning organization, participative management, job motivation, conflict management, human relations in administration, laws and regulations, educational policy, educational assurance, and educational administration principles. The knowledge in school administration includes student affair management, educational context, public relations principles, educational standards, change management, social changes, and strategic planning. The knowledge in curriculum and research includes school curriculum, research design and methodology, learning assessment, supervision, and student-centered instruction. This finding provides evidence for the requirements of school administrators according to the Ministry of Education and also the Teachers Council of Thailand (2006) that school administrator must possess the aforementioned knowledge.

The third finding is that knowledge in educational administration, knowledge in school administration, and conceptual and communication skills have an impact on the school's education quality. These skills and knowledge include the ability to see the big picture, understand the information and analyze the information, plan and visualize organizational threats and opportunities, communicate with others in Thai and foreign language, knowledge and understanding in job description, learning organization principles, participative management principles, job motivation, conflict management, human relations in administration, laws and regulations, educational policy, educational assurance, and educational administration principles, student affair management, educational context, public relations principles, educational standards, social changes, change management, and strategic planning. This supports the research finding of Siraboonyapak (2005) that the skills and

knowledge of the administrators have impact on school effectiveness and also agrees with the findings of Pensuriya (2006), Chavalitthada (2007), and Ratsamikaew (2008). This research finding agrees with the findings of many researches. The research findings of Munkalakiri (2008) from the studying of 354 school administrators and school personnel found that school administrator's knowledge and skills have great impact on school effectiveness. This finding also aligns with the finding of Ratnoy (2009), which shows that administrator's conceptual and thinking skill and knowledge in school administration have impact on school quality. The finding of Suriyo (2011), Kaha (2001), Nantaprecha (2012), Tongsawat (2014) also reveals that administrator's leadership including skills and knowledge have impact on school's effectiveness. There are other research findings that confirm the same result that school administrator's skills and knowledge have an impact on school's effectiveness such as Noureen (2003), Mortimer (2003), Bedard (2005), Williams (2010) and Thessin and Clayton (2013).

Implication

The findings suggest the school administrator should focus more on developing the conceptual or thinking skills since it is one of the variable that has an impact on school's quality. Developing the conceptual and communication skills can be done by being active learner, eager to learn new things and learn to look at things from different perspectives and practicing critical thinking skills such as observing, surveying, questioning, analyzing and reasoning. The school administrator should focus more on developing his/her communication skills both in Thai and foreign language since Thailand is now moving toward ASEAN Community, which requires better communication and collaboration between organizations and countries. This can be done via practicing reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Since school administrator plays an important role in shaping how school is going to be, it is necessary for school administrator to be a role model in continuous learning, and self-development by participating in various training or other learning activities, and at the same time, encouraging other school personnel to attend the professional development activities. As for the future study, there are still more potential variables/factors that probably have great impacts on school's education quality, since these skills and knowledge of the basic education school administrator could be accountable for only 47% of the school's education quality, which means that further study could be conducted to find out these missing variables/factors.

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