INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS FOR THAILAND 4.0

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Abstract - "Stability, Prosperity, and Sustainability" is the vision of Thai nation development based on the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. The process upon Thailand 4.0 policy is an economic model that aims to unlock the country from several economic challenges resulting from past economic development models. To correspond to the transition to a "4.0" digital economy and to achieve the nation vision, Thailand needs dedicated and competent educational personnel who can drive the crucial factors for developing the country. The significant mechanism is education which is the powerful instrument to step out of the trap of middle-income countries and develop the quality of human resources in the competitive world. Education in Thailand 4.0 policy must be accelerated through the reform of children learning. Unavoidably, the innovative leadership of school principals, with a new kind of ideas and ways to create new things along with new ways that are beneficial for schools are all the vital issues that need to be addressed.

Keywords - Innovative Leadership, School Principals, Thailand 4.0

I. INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, the technology advancement and innovation should be contributed to global changes in many aspects including not only the economy but also the society in order for developing the country to be more competitive amid globalization. Thailand has provided priority to increase the competitiveness of both national and international level. However, there are still the significant issues that continue to hinder the country's development such as a lack of continuity, diversity of strategic plans and development plans, the budget allocation and modular, and so on. Those issues and trends have led to the formulation of "National Strategy for 20 years (2560-2579 BE)" [1], which integrates and links between the national strategy and the National Economic and Social Development Plan No. 12.

All of these plans and strategies need to be completed in order to achieve the vision of "Thailand, a nation of Stability, Prosperity, and Sustainability, is a developed nation according to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy", which conceived and developed by His MajestyKing BhumibolAdulyadej of Thailand over 60 years of tireless development work to improve the lives of the Thai people and bring them a genuine and lasting happiness, or to achieve as the slogan of "Stability, Prosperity, Sustainability" Thailand 4.0. The aim of The National Economic and Social Development Plan is to unlock the country from several economic challenges resulting from past economic development. These challenges include "a middle income trap", "an inequality trap", and "an imbalanced trap". And yet the need for changes is urgent. To achieve the transition to a "4.0" digital economy, Thailand needs dedicated and competent educational personnel with effective competency that can drive the crucial mechanisms for developing the country.

According to Thailand 4.0, education is the powerful mechanism to step out of the trap of middle-income countries. Education is not only preparing or providing knowledge for people but humanizing people by instilling them with the habit of learning, morality, analytical skills, and the ability to live with others as well. These are the requirements of citizens in the 21st century. In addition, Thailand 4.0 also puts an emphasis on modernizing and developing Thailand to have higher revenue and prosperity in order to escape from the middle-income trap by means of using the innovation-based concepts and trading internationally for national development [2].

Education in Thailand 4.0 policy must be expedited through the learning reform for children, such as the development of English language skills, the promotion of the teaching and learning of mathematics and science [2]. Likewise, the concept of the feature set of the new generation with the CCPR is essential to provide young people in Thailand to think and create something innovative with the C: Critical Mind, C: Creative Mind, P: Productive Mind, R: Responsible Mind [3]. Thosefeatures are the main key to communicate with the international community and they will be performed as the link with human and social dynamics change of pace into 21st century and into Thailand 4.0 competitiveness in the long term. To solve the crisis, and to enhance sustainability in developing country, it is widely accepted that educational personnel in schools need to be supported and strengthened with ideas and ways to create new things and new ways that benefit the schools. Last but not least, to accomplish this, innovative leadership in school principals is principally required.

II. CONCEPTS OF INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP

2.1 The Meanings of Innovative Leadership

Enhancing innovation in the organization is the indispensable task of the leaders in a new era. The new leaders require innovative leadership, which represents an expression of leaders' characteristics with initiative and clear mission responsibility. The reflection of the performance assessment has highlighted serious works, positive relationship between the qualified personnel, and trust within the organization. Besides, this assessment has demonstrated that the features of the creative process of innovation happening in the context of the organization include innovation and leadership role for creative innovation. The features of the effective innovative leadership also involve the ability to access complex problems or opportunities and to find ways to implement the innovation which is new or never happened before. Leaders who have innovative leadership must also have innovative intelligence to respond and resolve the variety of situations [4], [5], [6].

2.2 The Significance of Innovative Leadership

Top management leaders can reinforce the innovation in the organization. The leaders who have innovative leadership can enhance innovations which produce added value to the organization and the nation. With the innovations, positive impact on the empowerment of the competition for the organization and the country has continued in the long run [7]. Reference [8] has studied the importance of leadership and innovation to the organization. It is revealed that the significant feature of innovative leadership is to encourage people to generate the initiatives to do something new and to have good practices. It can be reflected in the performance assessment entirely and clearly. Additionally, innovative leadership contributes a focus on common goals or performances of people in the organization. Finally, a good relationship within the group and trust each other in the workplaces should also be encouraged.

A research [9] has also placed an emphasis on the importance of innovative leadership in terms of management. In this view, it is suggested that innovative leadership should be able to determine the direction of the strategically oriented organization for the advantage in terms of competition and output quality. People in the organization get clear communication processes and procedures and hence can gain deeper insights into the creative purposes that can be performed to achieve the goals. More importantly, the key leaders who have innovative leadership are recommended to have the capacity to create a corporate culture with the focus on innovation.

III. INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

The principals have taken the key leadership role in schools and also have significant influencing role on contributing school success. Innovative ideas are derived from a function of the mind and behaviors, both of which are actively required to change the status quo and regularly take smart risks to make it happen [10]. Gaining better insights into the features of schools that are regarded as innovative and successful factor, school leader characteristics and behaviors are the primary focus of the changing dynamics of 21st century schools. Reference [11] has proposed the significance of leadership and has emphasized that "The more complex society gets, the more sophisticated leadership must become, complexity means changes but specifically it means rapidly occurring, unpredictable, non-linear change. Moreover the pace of change is ever increasing. This is the leader's dilemma".

School principals are as the key to school management success. Their vital task is to serve as a mission to achieve the educational goals and also as a point of policy and practices to accomplish school success. School leaders need to manage learning effectively. Research [12] indicates that factors of learning management in the 21st Century comprises 1) learning management through curriculum development, enhancing classroom management, and supporting learning resources; 2) creating a society of learning through creating learning environment and atmosphere, creating network for learning enhancement, creating a professional learning community (PLC) and building relationships both inside and outside school; 3) teacher development through promoting training to learn, having both traditional and online training, developing supervision system by mentoring and coaching, supporting self-development, and developing classroom research work; and 4) learning evaluation system development with the focus on authentic assessment by means of using various methods and measurable tools with student involvement. This assessment also encourages the feedback results for all parties involved, including students, teachers, administrators and parents. The interesting model of innovative leaders [10] has proposed the five perspectives of innovative leaders which were: 1) a growth perspective – adopting an inquiry learning approach to school leadership in order to deepen understanding and continually pushing the boundaries of what is possible for themselves, the school and its community; 2) a collaborative perspective – working collaboratively across the school, system and possibly global communities to connect, engage with, learn from and have an influence on others; 3) a business perspective – implementing a vision, strategic direction and business principles across the school and to compete with others, if necessary to obtain

advantages for the school; 4) a change activist perspective – understanding changes as a continually evolving process and taking responsibility to actively engage with and lead others in school improvement processes; and 5) a moral purpose perspective – being driven by a strong personal sense of what is right and using this to shape their effective innovative leadership in their schools.

Those factors affect effective learning management which requires professional innovative school leaders. Thus, in a new era of school reform, school leaders in the 21st Century need a new way of looking and need to have the innovative ability to discover new approaches for educational development. It is widely accepted that school principals with innovative leadership can create added value for products and services creatively along with the implementation process of innovative context-driven innovation. To lead to the changes embodied in 21st Century skills and create the kinds of learning environments that will enable learners to be more self-directed major shifts in school principal's current practices such as innovative, flexible, collaborative and personalized responses which are required for creating new paradigms of education [13] should be supported.

IV. INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP FOR THAI SCHOOL LEADERS

Innovative organizations as well as schools are almost always led by innovative leaders. It is absolutely essential to develop school leader's leadership competencies of innovation. A competency model of leadership and innovation has defined the concept of innovative leadership competencies, which include 10 aspects. They involve learning, team leading, motivation and degree of enthusiasm, administration and authorization, communication, interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, engagement and ownership, the creativity and imagination, the unique role, power and politics, the vision and mission formulation, and external context understanding [14]. Reference [15] has also indicated that innovative leadership competency comprises boundary spanning, risk taking, visionary, leveraging opportunity, adaptation, coordination of information flow, and facilitation. Furthermore, reference [16] has suggested that innovative leadership competencies which school leaders could apply to create innovation concerning with fostering a culture of innovation, eliminating barriers to innovation, encouraging and supporting personnel, fostering adequate resources, determining appropriate workloads, providing the freedom of thought to the personnel, creating innovative works that are challenging, and building teamwork and collaboration.

In Thailand, few studies have demonstrated the innovative leadership competency for Thai school principals. A research [17] has found that the use of innovative leadership in management can be applied in educational administration. In particular, innovative leadership in school direction setting can propose a clear target and strategy formation which can be developed through educational goals. Thai school principals should not only focus and push for the cultural creation within schools. This aims to recognize the value of innovation but also creating an atmosphere and environment in the workplaces that are conducive to the creative process of education. Corresponding with a research, the study about a structural model of innovative leadership affecting the professional learning community in Thai schools [18] has revealed that the innovative leadership aspects from respondents' perceptions were at high level in shared vision, followed by supportive structure and encouragement and shared leadership respectively. Considering the first three orders, it was found that the highest level was strategic management, creative thinking, and creation of learning environment. Likewise, the study of factors of innovation leadership for basic Thai school administrators has shown that they consist of 4 factors; internal personality factor, external personality factor, operation factor, and relationship factor [19].

It is noticeable that study or research in relation to innovative leadership in Thai education has been limitedly interested or conducted. During the period of major changes, Thai Education system have been influenced by many factors which encourage dramatic transformations across the economy, society, politics, and especially culture. One of the major factors concerning about the innovative leadership of school principals in Thailand is culture. It is considered that culture is viewed as not only impacts on behavioral norms and social ethics of Thai people but also deeper insights into organizational management including educational administration [20], [21]. Thai society is manipulated by two closely interrelated variables, status and seniority, which are all related to the Power Distance of Hofstede's. Status includes age, birth, family background, and physical appearance, education and position in work as well as rank and title. In terms of seniority, it includes another dimension of status evaluation which involves age, grade and civil service grading [22]. Both status and seniority are the ways of describing the inequalities among Thai people. Hierarchical and bureaucratic structures, which are ingrained in Thai society for a long time, have importantly shaped organizations including people behaviors. That is to say, the behaviors of people have appeared in an unusually high deference from the people who are in lower or junior status towards the ones who are in higher or senior status [23]. Additionally, the concept that fosters an easy-going feeling about Thai's lives which are called sabai and mai pen rai (Thai), well

known translated as “comfortable” and “never mind” in English. Flexibility and abhorrence of rigidity in Thai social life are the distinctive characteristics with a high degree of tolerance of deviation from norms [22]. It can be seen that bureaucracies and centralized decision making and other characteristics of Thai culture are still significant factors, which have a strong impact on principal’s innovative leadership such as behaviors of less powerful people should be dependent on the more powerful ones. This kind of hierarchy reflects the existential inequality between “higher-ups” and “lower-downs” where subordinates expect to be told what to do while the ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat or “paternalistic” or other culture characteristics such as an easy-going feeling or flexibility and abhorrence of rigidity in Thai social life. At the same time, it also indicates that some of Thais’ characteristics, for example gentleness, delightfulness, complaisance, simplicity and the appearance of compromise will contribute a progress in participating activities [24] including working collaboratively with others [10], engagement and ownership [14], encouraging and supporting personnel and building teamwork and collaboration [16], which are the distinctive behaviors of school leaders’ leadership competencies of innovation.

V. DEVELOPING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS COMPETENCY FOR THAILAND 4.0

The issues of competency development and factors influencing capability development for school principals for innovation have been discussed worldwide. A study has demonstrated that developing successful and innovative principals is not about designing programs on the basis of best practice since it does not always provide opportunities for success. Rather, it is about “the analysis of what innovative principals are doing, how they are doing it and why” [25]. The significant ways for developing innovative principals are self-management that will be developed by recognizing the self-awareness and self-discipline and development through education, experience and mentoring [26]. Another important guidelines that are specific to the development of innovative leadership of school administrators are: 1) leading to learn: as part of the process of developing its innovative ideas in the mind with the focus on the concepts / new way of working and being ready to learn in various ways; 2) leading to think: to share their learning with other agencies, to create ideas and new ways of working and have strategic thinking that can analyze the strengths and development needs of the schools as well as chances and difficulties to formulate strategic educational planning; 3) leading to change: to drive education plans or new strategies which can bring changes to schools. Positive changes are derived from positive attitudes towards all staff through collaboration with the creative communications. Moreover, principals have taken a significant role to convince and negotiate their staff so that all staff can gain more insights into the shifts that will happen to have a positive impact on the exchange of personnel. For example, teachers learn to solve problems and how to manage a class. The change is part of creating a culture of innovation to education; and 4) leading to innovation: to provide personnel to realize the benefits of these changes that promote learning such as innovative technologies, online resources media which contribute to innovative teaching [27]. Habit of learning, morality, analytical skills, and the ability to live with others which are the main characteristics of citizens in the 21st century are the requirement of the innovative school leaders who lead the effective learning reform through school management. The requirement of enhancing the professionalism of school principals are crucial supportive provisions for learning reform through Thailand 4.0 policy needs. To become an effective school leaders in Thailand, a strong emphasis is placed on innovative school leadership in operating within the shifting of the balance of conservative and innovative values. Furthermore, it is recommended that “the critical analysis of what innovative principals are doing, how they are doing it and why” is conducted. As a result, its consequences have revealed that the innovative school leaders should train their staff through leading to learn themselves, leading to think strategically, leading to bring changes to schools, and leading to innovate ways of learning that benefit the schools.

CONCLUSION

Thailand 4.0 policy emphasizes the promotion of teaching and innovation-focused industries. The significant mechanism of Thailand 4.0 policy is education which is the powerful instrument to escape from middle-income countries’ traps and develop the quality of human resources in the competitive world. Educational institutions, particularly schools, need to have a creative ways to provide the children with new effective teaching and learning methods in order for protecting those children from unfavorablesituations. More importantly, it is recommended that school principals should have innovative leadership for leading education development through innovative ways of learning and strengthening students to survive in the chaotic world as well as equipping their students with the skills necessary for employment.

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