

The effect of administrators' servant leadership on the excellence of Catholic school

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Abstract

The research was aimed to study the effect of school administrators' servant leadership on the excellence of Catholic Schools under Nakhon Rarchasima Diocese. A total of 326 respondents consisting 61 school administrators and 265 teachers were involved in this study. A quantitative survey design using questionnaire as an instrument was utilized in this study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistic used in this study were frequency, percentage, mean score and standard deviation whereas inferential statistic used were Pearson correlation coefficient and Stepwise multiple regression analysis. The findings of the study revealed that both the independent and dependent variables were at high level. In short, school administrators were not only highly implemented servant leadership and its components but also the level of excellence was at high level. The excellence level of Catholic schools was significantly affected by three components of school administrators' servant leadership at significant level of 0.05. The significant predictors of the school excellence level were community establishment, trust, love, and having vision components of servant leadership. The coefficient relative rate of multiple regression analysis was 0.651 and coefficient prediction was 41.60 percent. Finally, this paper also provided recommendation and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Servant leadership; school administrators; school excellence; Catholic schools

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1. Introduction

In educational reformation, there are various important issues related to educational system and learning situation which need urgency to be developed in order to keep up with the New Global movements. These New Global movements were including development of Thai citizen, teacher, school and learning resources as well as management (Kasemsiri & Chayapim, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative for school administrators to modify their target goals to drive for their school excellence. This is to ensure the school administrators and teachers are having their capacities to gain knowledge, understand and develop their school systematically in accordance to the school mission. In addition, school administrators have to gear their human resource development directly for the absolute mankind and develop students to be good citizen with intelligence, happiness, and capability as the major administrative goal (Runcharoen, 2007).

According to Srinsicharirat (2002), Jesus Christ's principles which focusing on development of educated, loving, caring, and moving to excellence mankind are the administrative approaches utilized by Catholic schools. The main aim of Catholic schools is to take care and inculcate students so that they would become an absolute mankind physically, intellectually, and spiritually according to the Scripture. The major aim of Catholic school is to produce students who are able to live in harmonious, have integrity and manage their lives intellectually. Subsequently, the main expectation of Catholic schools is to train students to be truthful and searching for truth, able to distinguish between good and bad, true and false, and giving right value to surrounding matters. In addition, students would have gratitude to God and people who provide kindness and benefits to them, and express appreciation for kindness bestowed.

Servant leadership emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and sharing of power in decision making. Servant and leader have been brought together to create the paradoxical idea of servant leadership (Spears, 2004). According to Spears (2004), servant leadership is a long-term, transformational approach to life and work. In essence, a way of being that has the potential for creating positive change throughout our society. A particularly strength of servant leadership is that it encourages everyone to actively seek opportunities to both serve and lead others, thereby setting up the potential for raising the quality of life throughout society.

There has been outbreak of interest in recent years surrounding a theory of servant leadership and its components that make up the construct (Vondey, 2010). Servant leadership has become a theory of moral (Graham, 1991) and ethical (Sausser, 2005) leadership that focuses on follower development, community building, authentic leadership, and shared leadership (Sendjaya, Sarros & Santora, 2008). A central tenet of servant leadership theory is to place followers' interests above one's own (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Servant leadership behavior creates a pervasive positive social context that in turn positively affects subordinates' work attitudes and behaviors. Servant leaders provides situational response-producing stimulus from which their subordinates interpret and understand their environment (Takeuchi, Chen & Lepak, 2009) thus influencing subordinates' attitudes and behaviors in form of organizational citizenship behavior for the individual.

2. Problem statement

Since Thailand Catholic Association (2014) emphasized on the uniqueness of Catholic students such as they should have sufficiency concept, salty-net, intelligent, and skillful in management, school administrators were called to play their major role in the developmental process. In short, school administrators need to have knowledge and understanding on administrative technique, broad vision, ability to set strategic goal in order to perform administrative tasks concretely and successfully (Prapapan, 2013). Therefore servant leadership may be a suitable leadership style to match the requirement because servant leadership is one of the leadership styles which promotes team work, builds collective community, and shares decision making. However empirical research on the relationship between servant leadership and school excellence are still limited in Thailand thus required more research being conducted to explore in depth on servant leadership style relates to school excellence particularly in Catholic schools of Thailand.

The development of quality educational administration in Catholic school is crucial and necessarily. It is imperative to investigate the effect of servant leadership on the excellence of Catholic schools because the findings derived from this study would be essential data base for school administrators to develop and adjust their leadership style further direct to excellence and efficiency of the future Catholic schools.

3. Aim of the Research

The following are the main objectives of this study:

- a) To identify the perception level of servant leadership by school administrators and teachers.
- b) To identify the excellence level of Catholic schools.
- c) To study the relationship between servant leadership and the school excellence of Catholic schools.
- d) To investigate the predictors of the excellence of Catholic schools.

4. Method

The research population was comprised of 61 school administrators and 821 teachers from 61 Catholic schools under Nakhon Ratchasima diocese in the year of 2014, given a total of 882. Only 326 teachers were selected by utilizing sample size determined by Krejcie and Morgan's Sample Size Table whereas all the 61 school administrators were included without sampling.

The instrument used in this research was a set of questionnaire consisted of 97 items including 6 items of demographic information, 52 items related to servant leadership, and 38 items regarding excellence of Catholic Schools. Section A of the questionnaire was intended to gather information regarding demographic factors of the respondents which included information pertaining to their personal background such as gender, age, position, working experience, level of education and their schools. Section B of the instrument was related to servant leadership. Specifically, there are nine servant leadership components namely 6 items of loving, 5 items of having vision, 6 items of pay earnest attention to personnel development, 4 items of services, 6 items of trust, 6 items of empowerment, 6 items of generous, 7 items of submissive, and 6 items of community establishment. Section C of the instrument was used to gauge the school excellence level. However, school excellence consisted of five key outcomes. They are 9 items of quality of learners, 8 items of educational management, 6 items of knowledge-based society establishment, 6 items of school identity, and 9 items of measures of supporting. A five-point Likert scale was used in Section B and C.

This questionnaire was then sent to a panel of experts for comments and feedbacks. The panel of experts was selected using the criteria based on their expertise in the areas of leadership and research evaluation as well as holding administrative position such as principals or supervisory officers for validation purpose. From the feedbacks returned by the panel, some modifications were made to the original instrument.

Pilot testing of the instrument was carried out from 6 principals and 24 teachers who were not the samples of the actual study. They were chosen as their structure and population are the same as the actual study. To improve the quality of the items in the instrument, they were also asked to give suggestions and comments on the items in the instrument. Revision was made based on the suggestions and feedback. It could be concluded that the instruments were reliable and good to use as the Cronbach alpha value indicated that all the research variables had higher Cronbach alpha value ranged from 0.96 to 0.99. Hence this instrument is considered to be highly reliable.

Descriptive statistic including mean and standard deviation were utilized in this study. Furthermore, inferential statistic like Pearson's correlation coefficients used to explain the relationship between the administrators' servant leadership and school excellence of Catholic Schools. Finally stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to determine the effect of administrators' servant leadership on school excellence of Catholic Schools.

5. Conceptual framework

The variables in this study are elucidated in Figure 1. The variables include servant leadership implemented by Catholic school administrators and the excellence of Catholic schools. The servant leadership refers to behavior management services to fulfill the needs of teachers such as utilization of moral authority to encourage cooperation, trust and delegation of tasks to teachers as well as contribution to achieve the organizational goals. These compositions are comprised of nine components namely loving, having vision, pay earnest attention to personnel development, services, trust, empowerment, generous, submissive, and community establishment.

Loving refers to the behavior of administrator who respect the value and dignity of human love, show kindness to the generosity to all teachers. In addition, administrator also provides assistance and share with teachers without expecting something in return. Forgiveness and reconciliation with teachers, resolve conflict by negotiation, and encourage teachers to work and live happily would be those principles of loving. Having vision refers to the behavior of administrator while managing change. Administrator encourages staff and stakeholders to involve in defining school vision, plan comprehensively to determine the clear future result, use a variety of methods to ensure teachers understand, committed, and take the responsibility to achieve the vision. Paying earnest attention to personnel development refers to the behavior of administrator who recognizes the importance of human resource development. Administrator assigns challenging tasks, develops teachers' competence, and prepares budget to support teacher potential development. Additionally, administrator allocates necessary resources and committed to promote the participation of different personnel for their professional development. Services component represents the behavior of administrator who provides hospitality and friendliness as well as contributes to the reliability and trust. Services which are provided by administrators such as advising knowledge to ensure teachers understand their tasks and managing equality and justice to the needs of teachers. Trust represents the behavior of administrator who has a good attitude, confidence with the staff's abilities to achieve reliable performance that affecting the school quality. Administrator allows staff to perform their tasks independently without much controlling.

Transformation and changes are occurred regularly between and within those teachers under sincere atmosphere. Empowerment refers to the behavior of administrator while he or she assigns tasks which are matching to teachers' abilities and aptitude. Empowerment is a motivational concept that aimed at enabling teachers and encouraging personal development through fostering a pro-active, self-confident attitude among teachers as well as giving them a sense of personal power. Generous refers to administrator who is able to behave executive openness. Administrator who can understand of one's strong and weak points as well as daring to admit that one is not reliable and does make mistakes. Administrator is truly supporting teachers without hoping for return. Submissive refers to the behavior of administrator who incline or ready to submit or yield to the authority of another. In other word, administrator consults and gives feedback with courtesy, respects the resolution of the majority, and the abilities to control emotions.

Finally community establishment refers to social responsibility, loyalty and team work that represent a feeling of identification with and sense of obligation to a common good. School excellence refers to the schools are committed to the pursuit of excellence and the provision of high quality educational opportunities to each and every student. This in turn facilitates the consistent improvement of student outcomes and the narrowing of achievement gaps between students. In other word, school excellence in this study is referred as Catholic schools in their pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of the key elements of high quality practice across the three domains of learning, teaching, and leading.

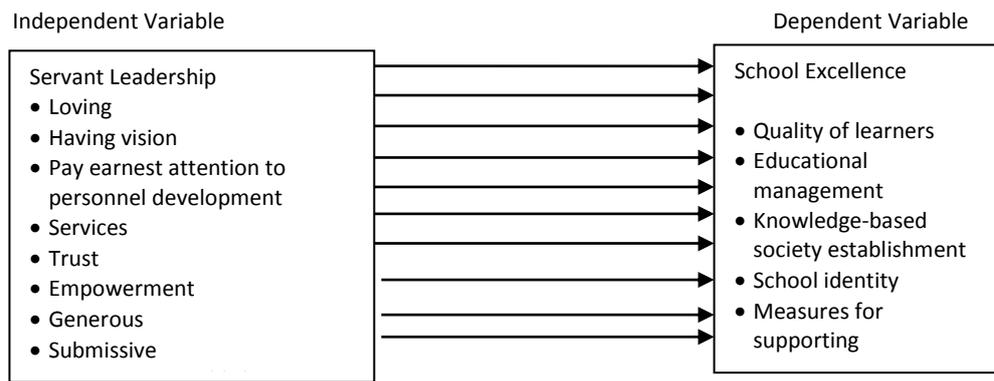


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

6. Results

6.1. Servant leadership

Table 1 shows the mean scores and standard deviations of servant leadership of administrators perceived by the respondents. As indicated in Table 1, the mean scores for all the nine components of servant leadership either from administrators or teacher perspectives were at high level. From the administrator perspective, mean scores were ranged from 4.41 to 4.70 whereas mean scores were ranged 3.99 to 4.28 from the teacher perspectives. Teachers perceived the servant leadership practice is slightly lower compared to administrators' perceptions. The highest perception level of administrators' and teachers' agreement was pay earnest attention to personnel development component ($\bar{x} = 4.70, SD = 0.34$) and ($\bar{x} = 4.28, SD = 0.64$) respectively. The lowest mean score was submissive component ($\bar{x} = 4.41, SD = 0.55$) from administrator perspectives and services component from teacher perspectives ($\bar{x} = 3.99, SD = 0.81$).

Table 1. Servant leadership of administrators from administrator and teacher perspectives.

Servant leadership components	Administrator		Teacher	
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
Loving	4.66	0.42	4.13	0.72
Having vision	4.64	0.39	4.23	0.64
Pay earnest attention to personnel development	4.70	0.34	4.28	0.64
Services	4.46	0.47	3.99	0.81
Trust	4.49	0.38	4.07	0.70
Empowerment	4.49	0.45	4.09	0.72
Generous	4.52	0.57	4.07	0.70
Submissive	4.41	0.55	4.03	0.82
Community establishment	4.63	0.51	4.22	0.68
Overall	4.56	0.36	4.12	0.67

6.2. School excellence

Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviation of the five key outcomes of school excellence. As shown in Table 2, the mean scores ranged from 4.13 to 4.40. This indicates that, the highest excellence outcome was from educational management ($\bar{x} = 4.40, SD = 0.49$). The second highest outcome was from knowledge-based society establishment ($\bar{x} = 4.30, SD = 0.55$). This is followed by measures for supporting ($\bar{x} = 4.29, SD = 0.54$) and school identity ($\bar{x} = 4.25, SD = 0.73$).

The least excellence outcome was from quality of learners ($\bar{x} = 4.13, SD = 0.52$). Therefore, based on Table 2, it can be concluded that the excellence level of Catholic Schools in actual situation, was high.

Table 2. School excellence.

Excellence outcomes	\bar{x}	SD
Quality of learners	4.13	0.52
Educational management	4.40	0.49
Knowledge-based society establishment	4.30	0.55
School identity	4.25	0.73
Measures for supporting	4.29	0.54

6.3. Correlation between servant leadership and the school excellence

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation coefficient between servant leadership and the school excellence. Based on De Vaus's (2002) interpretation of correlation coefficients in Table 3, the correlation results between the nine servant leadership components and the school excellence of Catholic schools showed a significant and positive relationship ($p < 0.01$), with strength of association varying from 'moderate to substantial' and 'substantial to very strong'.

Table 3. Designation strength of association based on size of correlation coefficients.

Strength of association	Negative	Positive
Low to moderate	-0.29 till -0.10	0.10 till 0.29
Moderate to substantial	-0.49 till -0.30	0.30 till 0.49
Substantial to very strong	-0.69 till -0.50	0.50 till 0.69
Very strong	-0.89 till -0.70	0.70 till 0.89
Near perfect	-0.99 till -0.90	0.90 till 0.99
Perfect relationship	-1.00	1.00

As indicated in Table 4, the excellence level of Catholic schools was significant, positive and substantial to very strongly correlated with community establishment ($r = 0.618; p < 0.01$), trust ($r = 0.593; p < 0.01$), empowerment ($r = 0.583; p < 0.01$), pay earnest attention to personnel development ($r = 0.570; p < 0.01$), submissive ($r = 0.569; p < 0.01$), services ($r = 0.566; p < 0.01$), and having vision ($r = 0.561; p < 0.01$). In addition, it was moderate to substantial correlated with loving ($r = 0.466, p < 0.01$) and generous ($r = 0.465, p < 0.01$). This means that, to a substantial extent, an increase in community establishment, trust, empowerment, pay earnest attention to personnel development, submissive, services, and having vision is associated with an increase in the school excellence of Catholic schools; and to moderate to substantial extent, an improvement in loving and generous components is associated with an increase in the excellence level.

Table 4. Correlation coefficient between servant leadership and school excellence.

Variables	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	X ₅	X ₆	X ₇	X ₈	X ₉	Y
Loving	1.00									
H. vision	.79**	1.00								
Pay atten.	.75**	.81**	1.00							
Services	.83**	.79**	.77**	1.00						
Trust	.83**	.78**	.79**	.86**	1.00					
Empower.	.79**	.76**	.79**	.83**	.88**	1.00				
Generous	.72**	.64**	.65**	.74**	.74**	.76**	1.00			
Submiss.	.78**	.72**	.72**	.86**	.85**	.85**	.79**	1.00		
Com. Est.	.75**	.78**	.79**	.62**	.83**	.83**	.72**	.83**	1.00	
Excellen.	.47**	.56**	.57**	.57**	.59**	.58**	.46**	.57**	.62**	1.00

6.4. Significant predictor for the excellence of Catholic schools

To identify the significant predictor for the excellence of Catholic schools, a Stepwise regression analysis was carried out. In this analysis, the nine servant leadership components were treated as predictor variables, while the school excellence was treated as the dependent variable. The purpose of estimating this regression equation was to identify the servant leadership components that have significant impact on school excellence that is the servant leadership which constitute the predictors for the excellence of Catholic schools.

In this analysis, the size of the standardized coefficient (β) directly indicates the importance of these predictors relative to one another. In the context, community establishment component ($\beta = 0.618$) was the most significant predictor, followed by trust component ($\beta = 0.258$), loving component ($\beta = -0.166$), and having vision component ($\beta = 0.216$), in that order. As shown in Table 5, the summary statistics of the estimated regression equation show the variables of which the coefficients are statistically significant.

The estimated regression equation was significant at 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), implying that all the four predictor variables (community establishment, trust, loving, and having vision components) that have an impact on the excellence of Catholic schools; thereby qualifying these to be the predictors for the latter. In brief, these four variables have a linear relationship with the excellence of Catholic schools. The adjusted R^2 being 0.380 in Table 5 shows that the impact of community establishment component was 38.0 percent, trust component was 1.8 percent, loving component was 0.7 percent, and having vision was 1.1 percent. In conclusion, the four variables account for 41.6 percent of variation in the dependent variable.

Table 5. Multiple regression of servant leadership on the excellence of Catholic schools.

Excellence	B	β	Adjusted R^2	Change of R^2	p-value
Community E.	0.437	0.618	0.380	-	0.000
Trust	0.182	0.258	0.398	0.018	0.001
Loving	-0.111	-0.166	0.405	0.007	0.035
Having vision	0.165	0.216	0.416	0.011	0.007

In conclusion, the four variables account for 41.6 percent of variation in the dependent variable. The following multivariate linear regression model shows the relationship between the predictor variables on the dependent variable.

$$\text{Unstandardized score : } \hat{Y} = 2.201 + 0.437(X_9) + 0.182(X_5) - 0.111(X_1) + 0.165(X_2)$$

$$\text{Standardized score : } \hat{Y} = 0.618(X_9) + 0.258(X_5) - 0.166(X_1) + 0.216(X_2)$$

7. Discussion and Conclusion

On this line of reasoning, this study was conducted to examine the perceptions of administrators and teachers on servant leadership in Catholic schools under Nakhon Ratchasima Diocese, Thailand. The findings of this study revealed that all the nine components of servant leadership were highly implemented. This finding is consistent with past research findings from Sumet (2009) and Ong-art (2013). Both of the past researchers Sumet and Ong-art found that having vision is a necessity component as well as a key factor to lead an organization progressively and successfully. This shows that administrators who have vision would keep up progressing to global movement and globalization. Moreover they are able to foresee the future as well as possess creativity to set the organizational direction and proceed accordingly by formulating the work plan and man power planning. Hence they would act persistently in order to achieve the target goals. This is so called as quality educational administration that can be accepted by parents and community.

In addition, results of this study showed that all the nine servant leadership components had either 'substantial to very strong' or 'moderate to substantial' relationship with school excellence. This finding was found to be in accordance to Ong-art Simseni's (2013) finding. Ong-art Simseni found

that having vision component had an effect on school effectiveness. In fact it was a vital component of leader to promote a quality organization by setting clear policy, vision and mission. Then the organization would proceed for school development in order to meet the quality and international standard.

According to the results from Stepwise regression analysis, there are four servant leadership components which have predictive power of 0.416 which is significantly at 0.05. Therefore the four servant leadership components namely community establishment, trust, loving, and having vision are able to predict the excellence of Catholic schools. However loving component was found to have a negative coefficient prediction power. This means that if administrators increase the loving component, the excellence of schools will decrease. This may be due to school administrators have to work under rules and regulations as well as establishment the internal quality assurance in order to develop quality and standard of education as mentioned by Kaewdaeng (2006). Rung Kaewdaeng said that educational administration is a crucial mission. According to Chiyaset Promsri (2012), management personnel with 'love' approach would assign his or her subordinates with caring and satisfaction. This is a proper way to reach the goal of the organization. However 'love' does not mean that provide freedom without paying attention to moral and ethical and it stands on the ground of righteous and justice as well as based on principles, structure and boundary of work in order to accomplish the target goal effectively.

On top of that, findings of this study indicated that community establishment component was the most significant predictor for school excellence and had coefficient predictive power of 38.0 percent. This shows that it is necessary to develop the formation of team building for teamwork with good relationship. The team members should care and help each other to solve conflict disputes creatively and every team member participates in consensus of decision making, accepts fully the conclusion, and applies it in their work tasks that would lead to the quality achievement in the organization. This finding corresponds to Gangpeng and Kan-Long's (2010) and Chamnan's (2011) findings.

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