Development of Administrative Model for High-Performance Organization of Primary Educational Service Area Office

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Abstract

The aim of this R&D research was to create an administrative model for developing a primary education office area toward a high-performance organization by assessing the current situation and desirable conditions of primary education service area offices and identifying the need for developing the management model. A management model was then created and developed; and finally, its implementation was evaluated, with recommendations for improvement. The model, a result of mixed-methods research, comprised eight components that could help primary education service area offices become high-performance organizations, with respective priorities as follows: 1) leadership, 2) strategic planning, 3) organization structure and work processes, 4) human resource management for high potential, 5) data and information technology management, 6) stakeholder orientation, 7) learning organization, and 8) productivity and outcome-based orientation. The current situation of office administration in primary education areas was at a high level, while the desirable condition overall was at the highest level. The developed model was assessed and affirmed by experts as feasible, appropriate, and useful at a high level. When considering the utility of the management model after the implementation, the overall level was also high, and satisfaction with the implementation was also very high. The model can be applied in other office areas depending on their unique conditions.

Keywords: model development, high-performance organization, educational service area office

1. Background and Significance of the Problem

Global changes and globalization have become driving forces for countries to adapt and survive by developing capabilities on par with all organizations, aiming for a competitive advantage. These organizations pursue a strategy of becoming high-performance organizations by introducing new management tools and practices to enhance organizational performance and align operations with their strategic goals or visions. By increasing organizational competence, they not only enhance their competitiveness within the country but also contribute to their nations' overall competitiveness.

In the context of educational organizations, enhancing competitiveness receives is emphasized for the opportunity it presents to deliver high-quality work that aligns with a country's needs. The Office of the Basic Education Commission (2008) states that educational organizations recognize the importance of increasing their competitiveness, which enables them to receive support and recognition for creating valuable, quality work aligned with national requirements. Additionally, the reform of the Thai bureaucracy has focused on developing organizations that are highly capable, modern, and relevant to a professional workforce.

This development effort emphasizes several key aspects, including a modern, streamlined organizational structure; a flexible, efficient working system; a paradigm shift in the approach to work; and a focus on creativity to enhance personnel competency. The aim is to promote effective work, create value in fulfilling national missions, optimize operational costs, and foster social responsibility with a sustainable focus on environmental conservation (Office of the Public Sector Development Commission, 2015).

Aligned with the national strategy for 2022–2037, Strategy 6 emphasizes the need to balance and develop the public administration system. The goal is to transform the government sector into a "government of the people, for the people, and the common good" by ensuring that government agencies are appropriately sized for their roles and

responsibilities. This involves distinguishing between supervising agencies and service agencies, all within the context of a highly competitive economy guided by good governance principles.

Overall, the problem concerns the need for organizations, including educational institutions and government agencies, to enhance their capabilities, streamline their operations, foster creativity and professionalism, and contribute to the country's overall competitiveness and development. These efforts align with global changes, the demands of a competitive landscape, and national strategies focused on excellence, efficiency, and good governance. To adjust the work culture to focus on achievement and collective benefits, it is crucial to create a modern, vital and adaptable environment that keeps pace with global changes. This includes embracing innovative technologies such as big data and implementing digital working systems that align with international standards. Additionally, fostering an open-minded culture that encourages collaboration and participation from all sectors is important in responding to the needs of the people in a friendly, agile, and transparent manner.

To cultivate a positive work culture, all sectors in society must work together and uphold core values such as honesty, thriftiness, and a strong stance against corruption. Misconduct should be strictly prohibited, and effective law enforcement should be in place to guide the organizational context. These laws should be up to date and effective and contribute to reducing inequality while fostering development.

The organizational structure and context can be defined as a space where two or more individuals come together within a specific territory to collectively engage in activities aimed at achieving set objectives within a defined timeframe. It should be systematic, organized, and not unnecessarily complicated, progressing from easy to difficult. The organizational context can be formal and documented, or it can be informal, based on cultural traditions that have been passed down and accepted by individuals within the organization (Tin Prachayaprut, 2010).

Education management in an educational service area, particularly at the basic education level, plays a crucial role in supporting the decentralization of power. This decentralization encompasses various aspects, including academics, budget management, personnel management, and general administration. The aim is to provide equal, high-quality educational opportunities to students and the public. To achieve this, educational administrators must demonstrate leadership qualities and effective management behaviors. They should possess a clear vision, academic knowledge, and the ability to make data-based decisions. They must be proactive in recognizing and leading educational changes, particularly in the era of globalization where knowledge forms the basis for competition and development. They should uphold honesty, responsibility, and transparency in their management practices, allowing for accountability and scrutiny. Utilizing human relations and networking skills, administrators should be open to the opinions and input of colleagues and stakeholders. Additionally, they should be able to utilize and leverage technology effectively for management purposes.

Leadership drives success, and administrators should have strategies for creating good relations, building collaborative networks, promoting knowledge sharing, and continuously learning. Emphasizing the quality of work is essential in modern education management to be in line with high performance in a world where conditions change rapidly, particularly in educational management.

2. Research Questions

(1) What essential components of education management can be developed in a primary educational service area office to transform it into a high-performance organization?

(2) What are the current conditions and needs for developing an educational management model within a primary educational service area office to achieve desirable for becoming a high-performance organization?

(3) What does an effective education management model, capable of enhancing education quality and transforming a primary educational service area office into a high-performance organization, look like?

(4) How can an educational management model be implemented and developed within a primary educational service area office to transform it into a high-performance organization, and what are the outcomes?

2.1 Objectives of the Research

(1) To investigate the components of an education management model that can be developed within a primary educational service area office to transform it into a high-performance organization.

(2) To examine the current conditions and identify the desirable conditions and needs for developing an educational management model that can transform a primary educational service area office into a high-performance organization.

(3) To create and develop a management model aiming at fostering the transformation of the primary educational service area office into a high-performance organization.

(4) To find out the outcomes of implementing the educational management model to assess its effectiveness in enabling the primary educational service area office to become a high-performance organization.

2.2 Research Methodology

To address the research questions and achieve the research objectives, a mixed-methods research approach was employed, utilizing an embedded design (Creswell & Clark, 2007) as well as a quasi-experimental design (Ninphan, 2012).

The research was conducted in four phases to align with the objectives, each employing a specific research method, as outlined below:

Phase 1: Conducted a comprehensive study of the management components of primary education service area offices with the aim of understanding their impact fostering high-performance organizations.

Phase 2: Investigated the current conditions, desirable conditions, and needs pertaining to the management of primary education service area offices, with a focus on initiating and leveraging their transformation into high-performance organizations.

Phase 3: Developed and created a management model tailored specifically for primary education service area offices to facilitate their transition into high-performance organizations.

Phase 4: Examined the utilization and effectiveness of the developed management model within primary education service area offices, specifically in their path towards becoming high-performance organizations.

By following this research methodology, the researchers aimed to provide comprehensive insights and practical recommendations for enhancing the management aspects of primary educational service area offices and enabling their transformation into high-performance organizations.

2.3 Qualitative Data Collection

In-depth interviews were conducted with five experts who have knowledge and experience in this specific field of HPO. The experts were purposively selected to ensure their relevant expertise to this research.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to deliberate and evaluate the draft management model for developing the quality of education in the primary education service office. Two separate FGDs were conducted: one with seven experts to consider the suitability of the draft model and another with nine experts to evaluate the management model of the primary educational service area office toward a high-performance organization.

2.4 Quantitative Data Collection

The population of this research consists of 245 educational service area offices all over the country. A sample group of 150 offices was selected using random sampling. The sample size was determined based on Krajcie and Morgan's table.

The informants for quantitative data included the director or acting director of the primary educational service area office and three deputy directors from each office, totaling 600 informants. Stratified random sampling was used to determine the sample group, employing Krajcie and Morgan's ready-made tables.

2.5 Research Tools

2.5.1 Qualitative Research Tools

Interview Form: A structured interview form was used to gather information on education management and the development of educational quality towards a high-performance organization in the Primary Educational Service Area Office. The form was validated by presenting it to five experts to ensure content validity and appropriate language.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD): FGDs were conducted to assess the draft of management model. One FGD with 7 experts, and another FGD with nine experts. These discussions deliberated on and evaluated the suitability and the feasibility of the draft model.

2.5.2 Quantitative Research Tools

A questionnaire was used for quantitative data collection, comprising two parts:

Part 1: General information of the respondents and questions related to the current and desirable conditions of the management of the primary educational service area office as a high-performance organization.

Part 2: Assessment from of the current and desirable conditions of the management educational service area office toward a high-performance organization, consisting of eight key components.

In Phase 4, a satisfaction assessment form was used to evaluate the implementation results of the model conducted in the education service area office.

2.6 Data Collection

The data collection process was done by conducting in-depth interviews with experts, from focus group discussions, and distributing questionnaires to the selected sample group. The interviews and FGDs were recorded, and the questionnaire responses were collected for further analysis.

2.6.1 Qualitative Data Collection

Phase 1: Study of Management Model Components

Step 1: Studied, analyzed, and synthesized relevant theories and research on the components of primary education service area office management

Step 2: Examined the suitability of management components through in-depth interviews with five experts, purposively selected

Phase 2: Study of Current Conditions, desirable conditions

Step 1: Developed assessment forms for evaluating current conditions, desirable conditions, and needs of the management of primary education service area offices.

Step 2: Studied the current conditions the desirable condition and analyzed the needs of the management model through data collected from the assessment forms.

Phase 3: Creation and Development of the Management Model

Stage 1: Analyzed the needs for developing a management model by studying best practices in educational service areas.

Stage 2: Drafted the management model based on research results and relevant theories and validated its suitability through a focus group discussion with seven experts.

Step 3: Evaluated the draft model by another focus group discussion with nine experts, incorporating their comments and suggestion for improvements.

2.6.2 Quantitative Data Collection

Phase 2: Study of Current Conditions and Needs

The sample group consisted of 150 people randomly selected from educational service area offices.

Data were collected from the director or acting director of each office (one person) and three deputy directors (three people) or according to the actual number of deputies.

A total of 600 informants participated, and 96% of the data was collected.

Phase 4: Study of Results of the implementation of the Model.

A satisfaction assessment form was used to gather data from stakeholders on the implementation of the management model in the Primary Educational Service Area Office as a high-performance organization.

2.7 Data Analysis

Step 1: Analysis of management model components

The researcher analyzed the data obtained from the evaluation of component appropriateness by sorting and tabulating the frequency of content.

Step 2: Analysis of Current Conditions and Needs

Data were analyzed by comparing the frequencies obtained from the assessment forms of the district office administration model's present and desirable conditions

The difference between the current and desirable conditions was determined, and the Priority Need Index (PNImodified) was calculated to identify priority needs.

Step 3: Analysis of management Model Development Content analysis is conducted on the data obtained from the FDGs by transcribing audio recordings.

Please note that this is a summary of the data collection and analysis process. The actual analysis may involve more detailed procedures and techniques specific to the research methodology being employed.

In the quantitative data analysis process, the following steps are involved:

2.8 Data Processing

Verification of the completeness of the current condition assessment form and the desired condition assessment form.

Categorized and coded the data for analysis.

Used a computer with a packaged program for statistical analysis.

2.8.1 Analysis of Personal Data

Analyzed the personal data of the samples using frequency distribution and percentage.

2.8.2 Analysis of Current and Desirable Conditions

Analyzed the current and desirable conditions of the administration of the primary educational service area office using mean and standard deviation.

Interpreted the mean values based on criteria provided by Boonchom Srisa-at (2011).

2.8.3 Analysis of Components

Put in to order the frequencies derived from the current condition assessment form and the desirable condition assessment form for each of the eight components of the primary education service area administration model.

Determined the difference between the current conditions and the desirable conditions.

Calculated the average scores and sorted the difference using the Priority Need Index (PNImodified) as described by Suwimon Vongvanich (2006).

The statistics used were frequency distribution, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and the Priority Need Index.

3. Research Findings

The findings can be summarized as follows.

3.1 Components of Management Model

The research identified eight components for the management of the primary educational service area office toward a high-performance organization: leadership, strategic planning, work process and organizational structure, human resource management for high potential, data management and information technology, stakeholder orientation, being a learning organization, and productivity and outcome-based orientation. These components were supported by 45 key performance indicators (KPls) and the priority needs listed respectively. As for the current conditions, desirable conditions, and needs for development, the study assessed the current conditions and desirable conditions of the management model for the primary educational service area office toward a high-performance organization. Overall, the current conditions were at a high level (mean = 3.80), while the desirable conditions were at the highest level (mean = 4.52).

The prioritized needs for improvement were 1) leadership and strategic planning, 2) becoming a learning organization, 3) focusing on productivity and outcomes, 4) organizing work processes and organizational structures and managing human resources for high potential, 5) managing data and information technology, and 6) stakeholder focus.

3.2 Creation of a Management Model

The management model for the primary educational service area office toward a high-performance organization was developed in two steps.

Step 1 involved creating the model, which consisted of three main parts: the introduction (principles and objectives), concepts of district office management model, and the management model itself (eight components and 45 indicators).

Step 2 involved validating the management model through expert assessment, which demonstrated a high level of appropriateness and feasibility (mean = 4.48).

During FGD, one expert suggested that professional leadership should rank topmost among all eight components, and the researcher accepted the suggestion and changed the outcome-based focus and productivity as initially ranked. Another expert reminded the group that strategic planning should be tightly integrated in system management; the researcher found this recommendation very appropriate and helpful.

The researcher, as a director of the area office with position and authority, presumed that leadership should not be that important. After the FGD, the researcher realized that strong professional leadership creates long-term, sustainable development. Moreover, leadership continuity is crucial and inevitable for HPO success and sustainability.

Barber et al. (2010) cogently asserted, "By far, the most common event to spark the drive to reform is a change in leadership: every system we studied relied upon the presence and energy of a new leader, either political or strategic, to jumpstart these reforms" (p. xx). Leadership continuity is essential and most importantly the leadership longevity is crucial for organization sustainability. The concept of "Leaders create more great traders" must be fully realized and be put in place of actual practice for sustainability sake. The Thai education system is not much different from other countries' system. The median tenure of the new strategic education leaders, including the political leaders, is four years. The system must continuously cultivate the next generation of system leaders to ensure a smooth transition of leadership and the longer-term continuity in development process.

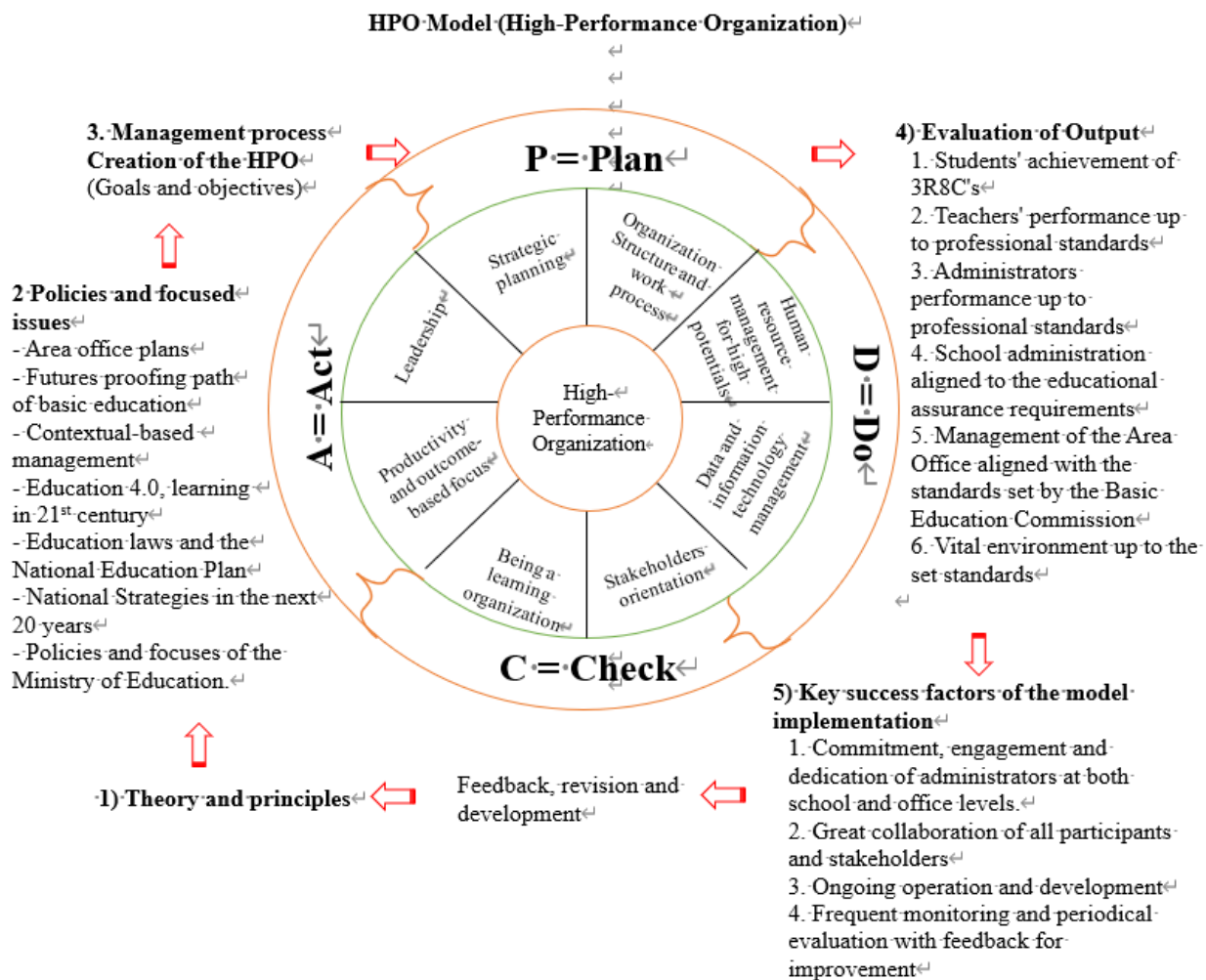The developed model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Management Model for Development of the Primary Education Area Office Towards
High-Performance Organization

4. Results of Applying the Management Model

The study examined the satisfaction level of applying the management model for the Primary Educational Service Area Office to a high-performance organization. Overall, the satisfaction level was high (mean = 4.37), with a particular focus on productivity and outcome-based orientation (mean = 4.59). These research results indicate that the development and validation of a management model for enhancing high performance of the primary educational service area office as follows: The model encompasses various components and indicators, addressing current conditions, desirable conditions, and development needs. The implementation of the model has shown positive results, with stakeholders expressing high levels of satisfaction.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study align with previous research conducted by Wattanatheerangkun (2012) and the American Management Association (2007) on strategies for managing primary educational service area offices and developing high-performance organizations. Similarly, the identified components and indicators of the management model correspond to the strategies proposed in many studies. This congruency suggests that the findings of the current research are supported by established literature and best practices in general.

As for the appropriateness of the components, this study found eight key components that are quite comprehensive, if not complete, as compared with de Weal and Linthorst's (2020) study, which is among the best known study in the history of HPOs. de Weal and Linthorst obviously confirm that a high-performance organization has five key characteristics: management quality, openness and action orientation, long-term orientation and continuous improvement and renewal; all the sub-elements entailed were almost all found in this study. Anyhow, most of the research and studies on HPOs in general are grounded in eight components asserted in this study.

Concerning the key component of leadership which is considered the most significant and ranked top of all in management toward high performance organization, Marin (2020) coined the term exponential leadership, in which being a leader of great many leaders leads to shared leadership and servant leadership capable of developing the next generation of leaders. In other words, leaders capable of making the organization's professionals and teams grow to innovate, think and act. They achieve this by using technological and digital resources and continuously achieve the company's objectives. Marin also espouses long-term orientation and work, openness and action orientation, innovation and continuous improvement, outcomes focus, futures and sustainability orientation.

Another crucial component that must be taken into consideration and discussion in this study is the management of information and technology in this digital age in particular. Not many studies have rigorously examined this component or have obviously articulated its significance. The authors of this study consider this particular aspect crucial in this age of digitalization and fast growing technology. The high-performance organization should include and integrate the information and technology management in the organization management model for more efficiency and effectiveness.

The central theme of this study is organizational development with high performance through alignment of organizational structure and process design, leadership, human capital management, resource allocation, accountability and performance improvement systems with focus on productivity and outcomes. It is in tune with Leithwood's (2011) study, "Characteristics of high-performing school systems in Ontario." His study indicated the significance of shared system direction (mission, vision, goals for students) with strong professional leadership, organizational structure, and process design alignment for strategic improvement such as strategic school and system improvement planning.

He also emphasized supporting conditions such as professional development, relationships among those in the system and between the system and external stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education.

This study is also in alignment with the Kaizen Associates study reported by Ivy Exec (2022) that identified four core components paramount in turning an organization into a top-performing outfit, including organizational structure, process, culture, and people. Organizational structure and process design are core elements with no less importance than people (collaboration, productivity, innovation, teamwork and excitement for future). Excitement for the future imbues long-term goals, consistency, and sustainability, for which the high-performance organization of the Primary Education Office in this study is striving.

A significant component of HPO in education is the high potential of teaching professionals. This study recognizes highly qualified professional teachers with continuity of professional development. It is in line with Tucker's (2019) study emphasizing highly qualified professional teachers with career ladders they can climb. Moreover, as Tucker suggests, "partnerships with first-rated universities to ensure a steady supply to highly capable, well-educated and well-trained teachers". The primary education service area in this study is a true partner of Northeastern University in the nearby area of Khon Kaen Province Thailand.

Most importantly, this proposed model as a system makes sure these eight components work together as one system rather than as eight separate components. The world's best systems are closing gaps while reaching for very high standards by thinking very carefully about how all parts fit together. Tucker (2019) urges school leaders to leave no stone unturned in the search for better ways to support the learning of the most vulnerable children.

As for the model, the emphasis should not be on "how the model should be created and what it should look like" but should focus more seriously and extensively on "how the model can be utilized and effectively implemented in a real situation in actual practice—not only" what it can be, "but what it becomes and be of great use".

This is a comprehensive model that can be applied in appropriately unique conditions of each context because there is "no-one-size-fits-all." In any case, this proposed model should be at least a helpful guideline for the education area office to develop effective schools as an indicator of a high-performance organization.

The researcher, as a director of Primary Education Service Office Area 4, Khon Kaen province, Thailand, along with strong staff leadership and a research team, has a definite plan to conduct this R&D and put the model into actual practice in the Area Office wherein the researchers work. The research is quite comprehensive rigorously and collaboratively conducted with strong determination and the intention to realize the objectives and be an effective model for the other education service area offices throughout the country.

Based on the results, several policy recommendations and suggestions for further research can be made. Policy recommendations include adapting the management model to suit the specific context of each educational service area office, raising awareness among stakeholders to drive the organization towards high performance, and utilizing the model to enhance educational management and quality.

For further research, a suggestion is to study the management model's impact on school quality, learner quality, and customer satisfaction. Additionally, exploring strategies for driving primary education service area offices towards high performance would contribute to the model's development and improvement. Future-proofing the high-performance organization of education service areas and schools is essential and must be given full attention of Thai education, in particular at the regional and local levels.

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