GUIDELINES FOR THE COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL DIRECTORS
UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF PHNOM PENH MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
YOUTH AND SPORT, THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

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การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาองค์ประกอบสมรรถนะของผู้อานวยการโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษาสังกัดสำนักงานศึกษาธิการ เยาวชน และการกีฬา กรุงพนมเปญ 2) ศึกษาระดับสมรรถนะของผู้อานวยการโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษาสังกัดสำนักงานศึกษาธิการ เยาวชน และการกีฬา กรุงพนมเปญในสภาพปัจจุบันและที่พึ่งประสงค์ 3) พัฒนาแนวทางการพัฒนาสมรรถนะของผู้อานวยการโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษาสังกัดสำนักงานศึกษาธิการ เยาวชน และการกีฬา กรุงพนมเปญ กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นผู้อานวยการและครูของโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษาสังกัดสำนักงานศึกษาธิการ เยาวชน และการกีฬา กรุงพนมเปญ คือ ผู้อานวยการ จำนวน 66 คน และครู จำนวน 370 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยคือ แบบสอบถาม แบบสัมภาษณ์ แบบสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้าง วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยสถิติ ความถี่ ร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน วิเคราะห์ความต้องการจำเป็นใช้ค่าดัชนี PNI_modified

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า 1) สมรรถนะของผู้อานวยการโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษาสังกัดสำนักงานศึกษาธิการ เยาวชน และการกีฬา กรุงพนมเปญ ประกอบด้วย 7 องค์ประกอบ คือ ด้านนโยบายและความเป็นผู้นำ ด้านการจัดการเรียนการสอนและผลสัมฤทธิ์ ด้านการบริหารการเปลี่ยนแปลงและนวัตกรรม ด้านทรัพยากรและการปฏิบัติการ ด้านมนุษย์และความสัมพันธ์ ด้านคุณธรรมจริยธรรมสำหรับผู้นำ และด้านภาษา และ 31 สมรรถนะ 2) สมรรถนะของผู้อานวยการโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษาสังกัดสำนักงานศึกษาธิการ เยาวชน และการกีฬา กรุงพนมเปญในสภาพปัจจุบันและที่พึ่งประสงค์ ในภาพรวม อยู่ในระดับสูง โดยในภาพปัจจุบัน มี 1 องค์ประกอบอยู่ในระดับต่ำ คือ ด้านภาษา มี 2 สมรรถนะ อยู่ในระดับต่ำ คือ ด้านภาษา อังกฤษ และ 3) แนวทางการพัฒนาสมรรถนะของผู้อานวยการโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษาสังกัดสำนักงานศึกษาธิการ เยาวชน และการกีฬา กรุงพนมเปญ ประกอบด้วย 10 แนวทาง

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Abstract

This study aimed to: 1) study competency dimensions and sub-dimensions, 2) determine the present and desirable competency levels, and 3) develop some guidelines for developing competency of secondary school directors under the jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport. The researcher studied related literature to construct research instruments. The research instruments were questionnaire and interview. The sample population comprised 436 respondents consisting of 66 school directors and 370 teachers. Statistics used in this study were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and PNI modified.

Research findings showed that: 1) There were 7 competency dimensions including policy and direction, instructional and achievement, managing change and innovation, resource and operation, people and relationship, morality, values, and ethics of leadership, and language and 31 competency sub-dimensions, 2) both present and desirable competency levels were high in overall. In present state, all competency dimensions were at the high level, except for the language dimension which was at the moderate level. Only two competency sub-dimensions expressed moderate level, while the rest were at the high level, and 3) there were 10 guidelines for developing competency of school directors.

Introduction

Since the 1970s, many previous research and studies have taken attention on school principals as main persons of both school effectiveness and student achievement. The school-effectiveness literature of the 1970s reported the principal as a key person for an effective school (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979). Many researchers have attempted to describe effective schools, reinforcing the notion that the principal plays the main role in achieving student academic success (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Whitaker, 2003). Moreover it is reported that principals result in a difference in students’ learning of the school as principals make a significant and measurable contribution to the effectiveness either of staff and in the learning of students in their responsibilities (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992). The influence of principal leadership is largely contributed to and has either direct or indirect effects positively on student achievement (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

Although competency is not new, paying for competency is rapidly gathering attention. In Cambodia, the National Development Policies and Priorities support and foster the development of human resources with quality, ability and virtue is a key factor to support economic growth and the country’s competitiveness in the future. To this purpose, human resource development is proceeded through the building of knowledge, competence or competency, entrepreneurship, skills, creativity and innovation (MoEYS, 2014a). In parallel, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has a vision to transform educational personnel including principals to be more competent, effective, efficient and
reliable by equipping them with highly professional skills in order to respond to the national needs (MoEYS, 2012). However, Cambodian education is currently dealing with the shortage of skillful educational personnel, especially principals who are the main driver of the school and also of effective management and utilization of educational personnel (MoEYS, 2012). In 2002 a training course on education management and leadership for secondary school principals was conducted by SEAMEO RETRAC. The course aimed to improve management, leadership and competencies of secondary school principals in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam (SEAMEO Secretariat, 2002).

MoEYS showed that school principals in Cambodia have now become required to commit themselves to students in classrooms, its assessment and evaluation as well as to school administration (MoEYS, 2000a), are now responsible for various kinds of school activities from school administration (MoYES, 2000b), and are required to show pupils’ and schools’ performance and progress with some clear indicators (MoEYS, 2000c). Cambodia’s education reforms have loaded new and additional responsibilities onto individual schools and principals, and these responsibilities should be conducted in participatory styles in one way or another. This is a challenge for principals to get involved with the above mentioned commitment given that they have never been tried on their ability to successfully manage their schools with little government intervention (Ai, 2006). Imposing these new responsibilities on school principals means that principals’ competencies must be determined and measured.

After fifth-mandated election, MoEYS strengthen the quality of education by imposing strict mechanism to the national examinations both grade 9 and grade 12. That is why the focus falls on the secondary level. The percentage of passing students was low; the MoEYS decided to hold the second examination with strong support from Royal Government of Cambodia (MoEYS, 2014b). Presently MoEYS strongly focuses on secondary education so that students finish high schools with high quality prior to going to university.

From the above description, it conveys that Cambodian education, especially secondary level, has a question about school principals’ competencies to fulfill their roles for improving their schools effectively and achieving student achievement, meaning that the competency level of school principals is still a concern. A competency is a new trendy topic for Cambodian school principals, so there should be some guidelines for developing their competencies. Due to all these concerns, the researcher is interested in studying on guidelines for the competency development of secondary school directors under jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport, the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Research Objectives
1. To study the competency dimensions and sub-dimensions of secondary school directors under the jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport.

2. To determine the present and desirable competency levels of secondary school directors under the jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport.

3. To develop some guidelines for developing the competency of secondary school directors under the jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport.

**Research Procedures**

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods as described in details in the following phases:

**Phase 1:** set research conceptual framework. In this phase, the researcher studied, reviewed, and synthesized the literature for obtaining the first draft of research conceptual framework. To obtain final draft of research conceptual framework the researcher conducted semi-structured interview with five Cambodian experts specializing in competency in education field.

**Phase 2:** study the present and desirable competency levels of secondary school directors under the Jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth, and Sport, the kingdom of Cambodia. In second phase, this study employed quantitative method, through a survey questionnaire. Quantitative research allows researchers to remain objective in reporting research findings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The questionnaire instrument used a 5-point Likert scale. Leedy & Ormrod (2005) revealed that using rating scale and allowing multiple individuals to complete the same survey independently of each other are strategies the researcher can use to maintain objectively. To test quality of the instrument, the researcher checked content validity (Item Congruence Objective: IOC) by using experts and reliability by trying out the questionnaires with 30 respondents characterized as similar to the sample. The population for this study included all school directors of public secondary schools under the jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth, and Sport. In academic year 2013-214, there were 66 school directors. The respondents consisted of school directors and teachers. In the same academic year, there were 5,629 teachers. The sample size of teachers was 370 teachers (Yamane, 1973), and sampling design employed stratified random sampling to determine the proportion of the sample size and simple random sampling to select the number needed. Statistics used in this phase were frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

**Phase 3:** draft the guidelines for the competency development of secondary school directors under the Jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport, the kingdom of Cambodia. In this phase, the researcher used gap analysis
between present and desirable competency levels of school directors by using the formula of modified priority needs index (PNI\textsubscript{modified}), \( PNI_{\text{modified}} = (I - D)/D \). Wiratchai & Wongwanich (1999). Then the researcher order priority needs in adjusting the guidelines for developing competency of secondary school directors under the jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport, meaning that \( PNI_{\text{modified}} \) of which competency having the highest value is ordered as having the highest priority needs. In order to select competency dimensions and sub-dimensions of school directors as priority needs in the benefit of developing guidelines for the competency development of school directors, the criteria is set: modified priority need index (PNI\textsubscript{modified}) of each competency dimension and/or sub-dimension is equal to or higher than average modified priority need index (PNI\textsubscript{modified}), meaning that that competency dimension and/or sub-dimension is needed as priority for developing guidelines for the competency development of school directors.

Phase 4: verify the guidelines for the competency development of secondary school directors under the Jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport, the kingdom of Cambodia. In fourth phase and final phase, the researcher verified the draft guidelines for developing competency of school directors using individual interviews with academics, school administrators, and school directors.

Research Findings

1. Competency Dimensions and Sub-Dimensions of Secondary School Directors under the Jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport

Based on the first draft of research conceptual framework obtained from literature review and interview result from five Cambodian experts specializing on competency in education field, the competency dimensions and sub-dimensions of secondary school directors under the jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport that were used as final draft of research conceptual framework were displayed in Figure 1 below.
2. Present and Desirable Competency Levels of Secondary School Directors under the Jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport

Both present and desirable competency levels of school directors were high in overall ($\bar{x} = 3.72$ and $\bar{x} = 4.41$, respectively).

Considering competency dimensions for the present state, it revealed that all competency dimensions, except for language dimension, were at a high level: morality, values, and ethics of leadership ($\bar{x} = 4$), people and relationship ($\bar{x} = 3.83$), instructional and achievement ($\bar{x} = 3.74$), managing change and innovation ($\bar{x} = 3.73$), resource and operation ($\bar{x} = 3.67$), and policy and direction ($\bar{x} = 3.65$). Whereas, language was at a moderate level ($\bar{x} = 2.99$). For the desirable state all the competency dimensions, except for morality, values,
and ethics of leadership which was at a highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.5$), were at a high level: people and relationship ($\bar{x} = 4.47$), instructional and achievement ($\bar{x} = 4.45$), resource and operation ($\bar{x} = 4.39$), managing change and innovation ($\bar{x} = 4.38$), policy and direction ($\bar{x} = 4.36$), and language ($\bar{x} = 4.01$).

Considering competency sub-dimensions for the present state, almost all the competency sub-dimensions were at a high level: competency of professional and leadership ethics had the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4$), culture competency received the next highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.97$), and situational awareness had the lowest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.5$). Of all 32 competencies, only two competencies were at a moderate level: ICT management ($\bar{x} = 3.47$) and English skills ($\bar{x} = 2.99$). For the desirable state, most competencies were at a high level: competency of knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment and communication competency had the highest mean value ($\bar{x} = 4.49$), teamwork competency had the next highest mean value ($\bar{x} = 4.47$), and English skills had the lowest mean value ($\bar{x} = 4.01$). Only five competencies were at a highest level: professional and leadership ethics competency had the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.58$), culture competency received the next highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.56$), competency of managing school improvement scored the next highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.55$), monitoring and evaluating competency had the next highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.54$), and discipline competency received the lowest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.53$).

3. Guidelines for Developing Competency of Secondary School Directors under the Jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport

After analyzing priority needs based on the value of modified priority needs index ($\text{PNI}_{\text{modified}}$), there were 15 competencies needed as priority to be developed and these competencies could be grouped into 6 dimensions. The six competency dimensions are listed from most priority to the least, accompanied by 10 guidelines for the competency development as follows:

1) Language
   
   1. There should be training courses on English language for school directors continuously during vacation, quarterly, or semester and scholarship for school directors and teachers who meet the criteria of good performance to learn English.

   2. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport should recruit and select those as school directors with English skills.

2) Resource and operation
   
   1. There should be training courses on ICT and finance management for school directors to have knowledge and skills of using ICT and preparing budget effectively and efficiently for limited resources the schools have.
2. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport should recruit and select those as school directors with ICT and finance skills.

3) Policy and direction

1. School directors should have long personal vision for their schools.
2. There should be training courses on policy and strategy formulation to allow school directors to have knowledge of and skills in writing school policy, strategies, and even quality development plan in accordance with clear vision, mission, and goals of the school.

4) Managing change and innovation

1. School directors should read and study more foreign documents related problems that happened in schools so that they can recognize the problems in advance for prevention, and ensure that all situations happening in the school are under control. To do so, school directors should adapt leadership styles appropriately into the situations for school change.
2. School directors should prepare an annual plan for making a change in the school by encouraging staff, teachers, and even students to have creative ideas, exposing willingness for making change, checking conditions and context to making change, and inspiring teachers to use new teaching methodology.

5) People and relationship

School directors should prepare a staff competency development plan yearly through training; the training plan should be structured training consisting of needs analysis, the training itself, and a follow-up; and the training should be local and international.

6) Instructional and achievement

School directors should set teaching standards associated with school goals to achieve and encourage teachers to commit to such standards with strong support of school directors and those standards should cover the recognition and understanding of diverse students such as different ages and backgrounds.

Discussion

The results of analyzing competency dimensions and sub-dimensions of secondary school directors under the jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport revealed that seven competency dimensions could be used for research conceptual framework of the study. The seven competency dimensions were policy and direction, instructional and achievement, managing change and innovation, resource and operation, people and relationship, morality, values, and ethics of leadership, and language; each with one to seven competencies. This research finding agreed with competency literature. The number of competency dimensions (7 dimensions) was appropriate as supported by many authors, five categories (Cotton, 2003), five domains (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2013), six domains (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 2010), six
clusters (Boyatzis, 1982), six clusters (Spencer & Spencer, 1993), and seven clusters (Shermon, 2004). The content of these competency dimensions in this study was also consistent with Cotton (2003) describing five categories of school principals’ behaviors contributive to student achievement: establishing a clear focus on student learning, interactions and relationships, school culture, instruction, and accountability, with The Teachers’ Council of Thailand (2006) suggesting ten competency standards: principles and procedures for educational administration, educational policy and planning, academic administration, administrative, financial, procurement and building management, personnel administration, student activities administration, educational quality assurance, information technology management, public and community relations administration, and morality and ethics of educational institution administrators. In addition, these competency dimensions agreed with Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (2010) expressing 6 competency domains: leadership, administration, academic activities, staff professional development, facilities, and professional ethics. The seven competency dimensions are competency categories that school directors, especially public sectors, are supposed to possess in order to manage and lead their schools effectively and boost student achievement, and school directors practice in their daily operation, meaning that it seems to cover all task sections of school directors. Therefore, the seven competency dimensions used as research conceptual framework for this study cover all aspects related to school principals’ competencies and the strength of this framework is that it was additionally obtained from the interview with Cambodian experts for the appropriateness of the context over the first draft framework from the synthesis of literature. However, limitation of this framework is detected. The synthesis was conducted based on researchers’ ideas, and thus bias may occur. It is better if the synthesis is applied using concept mapping (Jackson & Trochim, 2002) in order to analyze open-ended content systematically and statistically; still, it is a time consuming concern. In terms of language dimension which received from the interview result, it matched with the research finding of Vathanophas (2006) reported that English skills was one of twenty-three competencies effective for job performance in the Thai public sector. In the context of ASEAN integration, more or less school directors should know languages such as languages of ASEAN countries and especially English, in order to gain in competition in the region.

The research results of the present and desirable competency levels of secondary school directors under the jurisdiction of Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport revealed that the present and desirable competency of school directors were at a high level, which matched with the study of Intarasopa (2012) showing that all fourteen instructional competencies of small-sized school administrators for present and desirable perspectives were at a high level and with the study of Pothikul (2009) finding that competency of school administrators under Suphan Buri Educational Service Area Office 2 in
overall leveled high, as well as many previous research (Hadwiset, 2008; Sattasathuchana, 2006; Srichanvaing, 2010). However, this study found that language dimension was at the moderate level. This is because Cambodian school directors are appointed but not recruited and selected based on the qualifications; they are teachers and are elected internally when school directors retire. Demographic data revealed that most had more 20-year work experience in current position; in other words, most school directors have worked since 1980s or 1990s, which was the age that foreign language broke in, except for French. Therefore, their English skills competency was limited. The result of this study showed that the dimension of morality, values, and ethics of leadership had the highest mean value comparing to other five dimensions. This research finding reflects the culture of respecting each other and seniority of school directors, the old generation people according to demographic data of the sample. School directors carefully behave and act because their behaviors and actions affect teachers and students, and therefore school directors should be good model for all and bear in mind that the way they act will result in their followers. That is the reasons why school directors were scored high for morality, values, and ethics of leadership dimension. This dimension is more important as it is a mean for school directors to get closer to staff, teachers, and students and there must be a consensus among them as the sole basis for justifying actions and decisions and to ensure that consensus and consequence oriented decisions remain genuinely democratic a school administrator incorporate the components of values informed deliberations into decision-making processes (Begley, 2006). While the dimension of morality, values, and ethics of leadership was scored the highest, the policy and direction dimension received the lowest mean value.

The problems suggested by the majority of the respondents fell into policy and direction dimension. This is because they had a complaint on the policy from the top (the ministry or department) that could not respond to their school needs. School directors just followed the policy of the ministry or department. Those were challenges for school directors to be independent in building school vision, mission, and goals and quality focus. This is a gap between the three administrative levels (institution, district, and ministry).

This study revealed that of 31 competencies of school directors, English skills competency was the most priority need to be developed. This result may inform that in the nearest future, ASEAN integration takes attention from member countries to be ready, and the most important component to be considered is language. Since ASEAN member countries have their own languages, English must be inevitably the-only-one language used for communication and cooperation. ICT management was scored as the second priority need. This result agreed with the problems and recommendations of the respondents describing that school directors lacked ICT skills and some schools had no computers or any technological devices; in other words, school directors just followed the traditional devices for completing their tasks. This is the reasons why the respondents suggested that in the
future school directors should be trained or even recruited and selected by meeting the criteria revealing they are competent in ICT skills in order to lead their schools forward to the modern world. It agreed with Curtis and McKenzie (2001) reported that technology skills contribute to effective execution of tasks. Similarly, the research finding of Pakut (2013) revealed that both school directors had high competency of ICT in favor of the development of ICT management in education institutions to be competitive with world-class standard, as well as the study of Jadmuang (2012) found that ICT competency of school administrators under Educational Service Area Offices in Amphoe Pho Thale, Phichit for the desirable perspective were at high and highest level and school directors and teachers had similar opinions that school directors should be able to use management information system (MIS) in order to respond to the school-in-dream project. It is not surprising that the competency of vision, mission, and purpose also ranked in the top of priority needs (the third). This competency was problematic. Most respondents in this study expressed that policy from the ministry or department was neither extensive nor responsive causing school directors to follow the policy and could not establish school vision, mission, and goals. Literature claims that this competency is important to school principals (Cotton, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), leads to authentic leadership (Begley, 2006). Of 15 competencies to be developed, the competency of strategic thinking and planning had the least priority needs. Cambodian school directors had been recently imposed more responsibilities including planning and other leadership skills (Ai, 2006). And they were invited to attend training course on management and leadership provided by the ministry. For such this, school directors could build their capacities in planning and even developing strategies. However, this competency was still a priority needs because the training was conducted in short time that was not enough for school directors to capture and bring into practice, expressed by the respondents in this study.

The result of this study revealed that guidelines for developing competency of school directors could be summarized as three main points – training, self-study, and policy from parent department or ministry. This research finding agreed with previous research (Lai & Kapstad, 2009; Nybø, 2004), the research showed that organizations engaged training, on-the-job learning, and career development in competency development. Lai and Kapstad (2009), however, claimed that training in itself does not meet the desirable level of competency development. This results from a lack of interest into the processes preceding and following training (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). The research indicates that in order to enhance the effectiveness of their training, organizations increasingly develop structured plans that consist of need analysis, the training itself, and a follow-up (De Vos, De Hauw, & Willemse, 2011). Self-study is also important for developing school directors’ competencies as it is a quick mean for them to research and learn more at any time. Wittayapaan (2009) explained that self-study could happen through reading books, surfing the Net and watching
videos. Third main suggestion in the guidelines for developing competency of school directors was policy from parent department and ministry. This relates career development. And career development is a part of career management, such as job rotation and promotion. Academics claim that career management enhance mobility which leads to an increase in competency development in the organization (Karaevli & Hall, 2006).

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation for utilization**

1. This research result revealed that there were fifteen competencies to be developed. Therefore, school directors and Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport should consider these competencies as priority to develop.

2. School directors and Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Education, Youth and Sport should consider 10 guidelines for developing competency of school directors.

**Recommendation for future research**

1. For future research, researcher should study guidelines for developing competency of school directors in primary level for comparison to this study.

2. Researcher should study guidelines for developing competency of school directors by using other methods such as Behavioral Event Interview (BEI) to study competency dimensions and sub-dimensions.

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