

Academic Leadership of Teachers in Savannakhet University, Lao People's Democratic Republic

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Abstract

The study aimed at examining the components and indicators of the academic leadership of teachers in Savannakhet University, Lao People's Democratic Republic through document inquiries. Unstructured interviews with ten experts were also conducted to validate the appropriateness of each component and indicator. The result indicated that the academic leadership of teachers were appropriate and were categorized into four components with 11 sub-components and 49 indicators: 1) Personal development consisted of three sub-components with 13 indicators, 2) Student development consisted of three sub-components and 12 indicators, 3) Teaching role model consisted of three sub-components and 15 indicators, and 4) Being a transformational leader consisted of two components and nine indicators.

Keywords :Leadership Development, Academic Leadership, Teachers

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1. Introduction

Different organization demands for different leadership qualities to suit various situations and contexts. Leadership that fosters human creativity and development is central to the work of academic administrators and teachers to motivate individuals to perform toward the accomplishment of desired goals. For such preparation in the context of academic norms and higher education career path, academic leadership is required in higher education to bring the quality of teaching, research, and service of the faculty members, especially for teachers to perform the work continuously to engage and encourage students to want to learn, read, co-operate, and think critically, become life-long learners and quality citizens of society.

To succeed in this aim, administrators and particularly teachers of all educational institutions require considerable academic leadership. According to Daft (2005, p. 23), academic leadership involves various actions associated with teaching and learning. This includes a period that the instructional activities could be observed, such as classroom supervision, teaching observation, and counseling. It can be said that academic leadership is a component of the responsibility and practice of teachers and administrators; in a broader sense, academic leadership is the role of all leaders. In other words, the day-to-day administration that affects the learning of students can be classified as the function of any academic leaders.

Leadership problems in higher education are complicated and prepare for all that might happen on administrative would not be anticipated but learning from experiences could improve feasible academic success. In a case of Savannakhet University, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the same preparation of academic leadership should be embedded and driven by the current challenges faced in the organization. In its vision of the higher education in Lao PDR, Savannakhet University advocates teachers and faculty members to be aware of the importance of academic leadership and use their professional knowledge and skills to inculcate and advise students to become effective learners.

In achieving this vision, it is evident that the academic leadership of teachers in Savannakhet University, Lao PDR should be strengthened. The researcher, as one of higher education members, investigated components and indicators of academic leadership of teachers in Savannakhet University as a preliminary to identify possible solution to sustain leadership in higher education.

2. Research question

The research question of this study is: What are the components and indicators of the academic leadership of teachers at Savannakhet University, Lao PDR?

3. Research aim

The study focuses to determine components and indicators of academic leadership of teachers at Savannakhet University, Lao PDR.

4. Research methodology

The methods were used for data collection including document inquiries, and expert interviews. An investigation of academic leadership of teachers was done through an analysis of related documents and research. The secondary sources provide different perspectives and develop more understanding of what was happening in a selected setting. To complement the findings from document inquiries, the research conducted

expert interviews to validate the appropriateness of the components and indicators of academic leadership of teachers in Savannakhet University, Lao PDR. The components and indicators will be taken as benchmarks for academic leadership development of teachers in Savannakhet University, Lao PDR in the next phases of a large study.

5. Results of the research paper

The results from an analysis of related documents and research studies revealed that academic leadership of teachers in Savannakhet University, Lao PDR consisted of four main components, and 11 sub-components with 49 indicators as follows:

1.1 Personal development with three sub-components, including: 1(seeking knowledge for self-development, 2(improving teaching profession on a regular basis, 3(personality development. In addition, 13 indicators were also given to examine the self-development of academic leadership, including: 1(determining issues for researching knowledge, 2(planning for knowledge acquisition, 3(knowledge acquisition operations according to the planned scheme, 4(analysis of information from research findings, 5(Creating results from collective action and record keeping, 6(acquiring knowledge using various methods, 7(having knowledge and experience in educational management, 8(having skills and competencies necessary for teaching practice, 9(being a good role model in practice and ethics, 10(having characteristics of leadership and performance, 11(having appropriate and controllable emotions, 12(having desirable personality, faith, and respect, and 13 the (ability to accommodate others opinions and building positive relationship with colleagues.

1.2 Student development included three sub-components: 1(monitoring student progress, 2(maintaining student quality, 3(developing student learning achievement. There were 12 indicators, including: 1(organizing activities resulting from student progress, 2(implementing various techniques to assess student progress, 3(monitoring consistent evaluation of student progress, 4(developing strategies for improving teaching and learning outcomes, 5(setting effective goals of learning management, 6(establishing academic standards, 7(complying with academic standards, 8(enabling students to achieve specified goals according to the specified academic standards, 9(establishing strategies for developing a process to improve academic achievement, 10(being able to adapt the teaching-learning process, 11(creating conducive learning development activities, and 12(being capable of managing the classroom.

1.3 Teaching Role Model included three sub-components with 15 indicators, including: 1(student-centered emphasis, 2(creating teaching materials and measures, and 3(implementing various teaching and learning devices. The indicators were: 1(a variety of learning process patterns and teaching activities, 2(encouraging learners to learn with the brain, body and mind, 3(strengthening self- learning processes, 4) learners' participating in teaching-learning processes, 5(promotion of 'learning by doing' processes to meet students' needs, 6(developing learners' potential, 10(evaluating the use of media and innovation, 11(organizing training courses to build knowledge and understanding in media production and innovation, 12(improving teaching by learning new methods and techniques, and 13(choosing suitable teaching methods to achieve the set objectives, 14(having knowledge and expertise in the subjects taught, and 15(encouraging learners to seek knowledge from various media and learning sources.

1.4 Transformational leadership consisted of two components: 1(human relations with peers, and 2(being visionary leaders. There were nine indicators for transformational leadership, including 1(democratic interaction, 2(efficient and effective communication in the organization, 3(having trust in the colleagues' competency and

being relatable, 4(working systematically with colleagues, 5(establishing a clear strategic plan, 6(having good relationships with each other and being active in receiving and changing processes, 7(having goals and activities that promote shared vision, 8(establishing business and corporate strategy, and 9(possessing creativeness, vision, and effective communication.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

Teachers are the key persons for quality student development. To successfully motivate and empower students to learn and perform their duties according to assigned instructions and requests, teachers must have academic leadership skills. By being effective catalysts for students' success, it is certain that students would consequently gain the required knowledge and skills for academic success.

The components, sub-components, and the indicators gained from the study were in alignment with those found in many previous studies by Waraporn Saroj (2016), and Sukanton Singphuangphet (2014). Similar key components and indicators were found in the academic leadership of teachers, including professional teaching skills, vision, creativity, communication, self-improvement, confidence, problem solving ability, friendly atmosphere construction and learning environment creation, to mention just a few.

The most important function of any educational institutions is to offer quality education to the students. That is to say, academic leadership is deemed a key factor influencing the accomplishment of the school's educational management. As confirmed by Leithwood (2006, p. 28), academic leadership of teachers and administrators are crucial for the students' academic progress. Since students' learning achievements and the effectiveness of teachers' instructions are correlated, leaders of the educational institutions must pay close attention to the school mission by publicizing the institutional objectives and enhancing the instructional atmosphere.

7. Suggestions

The influence of academic leadership practices on classroom management, school environment and academic performance of students is vital to sustain academic success. The following suggestions could be of value at the higher education level.

1. Suggestions for the use of research results

The academic leadership components of the teachers should be taken for consideration by administrators so that they can empower their teachers to strive toward the success of their institutions. The inclusion of teachers in the academic leadership development process in the higher education policy could be implemented through the participation in academic seminars, training courses, research conferences, workshops. Moreover, they should be allowed and promoted to further their higher education to increase their knowledge and to master their teaching or other academic skills.

2. Suggestions for conducting future research

Academic leadership studies should be extensively conducted in other government and non-government organizations. The correlations between academic leadership and other variables would provide also intriguing and valuable topics for the academic sphere.

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