

**A PROPOSED MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR AN
ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL IN THAILAND**

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Abstract

Alternative schools provide an opportunity for parents to choose the best pedagogy for their children where the instruction is different from the conventional school. It represents an important way to succeed in educational reform.

This study aimed to propose a management model for alternative schools in Thailand. The research was conducted using a Delphi technique. The sample comprised 22 experts from three groups selected using the snowball technique:

- *Group 1: administrators and educators who are experts in alternative schools (8 persons).*

- *Group 2: educators who are experts in educational administration (7 persons).*

- *Group 3: chief executives of the Ministry of Education (7 persons).*

An interview form was used in round 1, while a 5-level rating scale questionnaire was used in rounds 2 and 3. The study found the alternative schools in Thailand used in this study were schools that are run by private organizations. They use the national curriculum, but have the freedom to organize and creatively structure the instructional content, teaching methods and use of text books. They employ a different instructional strategy from the conventional school – they emphasize a child-centered

approach. They use innovative pedagogy. Their instruction is based on acknowledging individual differences and developing each child's individual capability with the goal of developing each learner to be a whole person.

To sustain the initial success of alternative schools in Thailand, the administration needs to increase the number and quality of students, and the acceptance of the schools' pedagogical approach as viewed from the outside. The future of alternative schools in Thailand relies on increasing the number of alternative schools, as well as the types of alternative schools to provide chances for special groups of students to receive the same educational opportunities, such as alternative schools built and managed by local communities for disadvantaged persons, where the proper instruction is organized and matched to the context. The government should support and give local communities the chance to open their own alternative schools. The government, while monitoring and assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of alternative schools, should give these schools the freedom to innovate and to spread the pedagogy of alternative schools to the universities to help them prepare teachers.

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Introduction

In the history of education, no single best instructional method has been identified. Because children come from different backgrounds, family and culture, they have developed different ways to learn. As an acknowledgement of these differences, a new pedagogy has developed that differs from the formal or traditional approach to education. This pedagogy has been implemented in alternative schools, such as Summerhill, Montessori, Waldorf, Neo-Buddhism and Santi-asoka. That pedagogy has spread around the world. There are now more than 6,000 alternative schools around the world, with more than 10 in Thailand. Alternative schools are schools that teach the national curriculum, but have the freedom to creatively organize the instructional contents, methods and use of textbooks. They teach the core academic content, but also engage the learner's interest in developing life skills and team work through the use of group activities, field trips and student research. They can adjust and reduce the content to be appropriate to various age groups, and place an emphasis on having students clearly understand, synthesize and apply the knowledge. They place a great deal of emphasis on individual valuables and developing in students the competencies required to be a whole person. It is a proper way to solve the present social problems. The alternative school should be made available to parents as one of their choices for selecting the best pedagogy for their children. All alternative schools have a pedagogy that differentiates them from the conventional school, and enhances the quality of human capital to achieve greater success.

The enhancement of human capital

through the efficient management of alternative schools is critical to developing Thai students to function as successful members of the global economy. If there is no good system and vision for managing alternative schools, we will lose time for developing the future educational process and our human capital. The output will continue to be low quality education. The policy of management excellence is the key to achieving our future goal of educational reform. For these reasons and the availability of alternative schools as a means to educational reform, a management model is proposed for alternative schools in Thailand. The alternative schools can apply this implementation model to their school to be effective and highly efficient in carrying out their jobs.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to propose a management model for alternative schools in Thailand.

Procedure

This study used the Delphi Technique to examine educational management and reform. The steps used in the research were as follows:

1. Expert selection – to select by the Snowball Technique study participants who were completely qualified. There were 22 experts from 3 groups.

- 1.1 The administrators and educators who are expert in alternative schools (8 persons).

- 1.2 The educators who are expert in educational administration (7 persons).

- 1.3 The chief executives of the Ministry of Education (7 persons).

2. To collect data through 3

rounds of Delphi Technique.

- Round 1: to interview the experts using a questionnaire that was created by the researchers.

- Round 2: to quantify the expert opinions taken from the questionnaire responses in round 1 using a rating scale.

- Round 3: To calculate the median, mode and inter-quartile range of each item using the data from round 2 to build a closed questionnaire, and ask the experts to consider the same items again. In every round the experts were the same. Finally, to identify those items where the experts achieved consensus and use these to create a management model for alternative school in Thailand.

Results

The major result of this study was development of an alternative schools' management model that the experts consensually agreed upon, with the following qualities:

1. The specification of alternative school

The alternative school is a school that is run by a private organization. They use the national curriculum, but have the freedom and creativity to organize the instructional content, teaching methods and use of textbooks in different ways. They have a different pedagogy from conventional Thai schools. They provide opportunities for the learner to learn in ways most interesting to them and provide parents an opportunity to choose the pedagogy that is the best fit for their children. The administrators and teachers of alternative schools believe their approach to be the better way for developing children than the traditional way. They have the principles and pedagogy to develop

children and solve our social problems better than the present approach.

The instructional approach of alternative schools places an emphasis on child-centered, authentic learning and learning outside of textbooks. They use innovative pedagogy to make learning interesting and provide authentic learning through group activities, field trips and student research. Instruction is based on individual differences and on creative, learning innovations. This "whole person" approach to curriculum and instruction can develop the children's innate capability. The purpose is to develop the learner to be a whole person who has both intelligence and common sense. The teaching techniques emphasize natural learning and self-learning. Their philosophy encompasses academic learning, life skill development and teamwork/relationship building. They can adjust instructional content and approach to meet the needs of various age groups, but in every case emphasis is on clearly understanding and synthesizing the knowledge.

2. The vision of alternative schools in Thailand

The vision of the alternative schools in Thailand aims to develop the school to be a learning organization, educational leader and educational innovation leader. The vision for the administration and management in alternative schools is a modern system of high efficiency, modern instruction, with learning processes aimed at developing students' natural capability, preserving cultural art and Thai wisdom, leveraging technology for academic, and enhancing moral, ethical and culture values. These schools employ a variety of learning processes, with the instructional method always emphasizing a child-centered approach.

The vision these schools have for

the learner is to develop students who are civic minded, whole persons who have healthy, common sense, intelligence, as well as moral and ethical values. The students concentrate on self-development and self-esteem in Thai – all qualities that appear in the standards of national education.

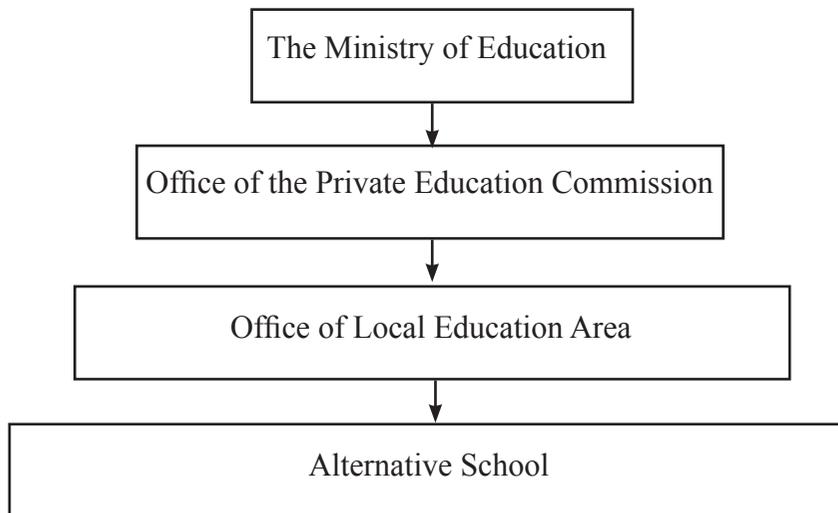
3. The mission of alternative schools in Thailand

The mission of alternative schools in Thailand is to enhance and support learning processes that place an emphasis on child-centered learning, developing and supporting learners to be good citizens who have moral and ethical values, organizing learning activities to help learners develop themselves and prepare them to live in society with peace and happiness.

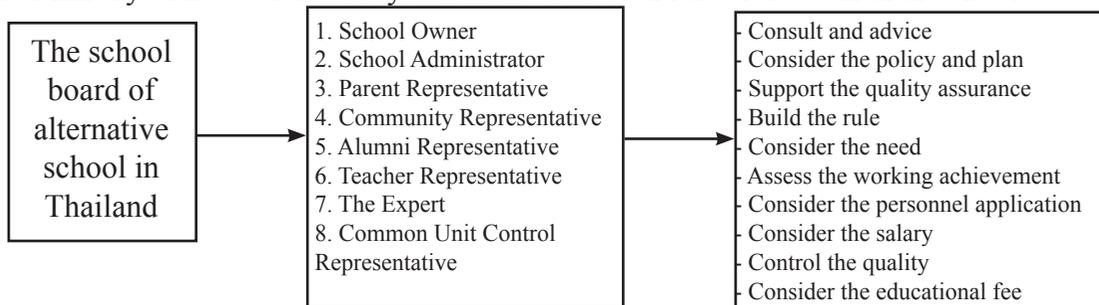
The administration and management of alternative schools emphasizes high efficiency. They attempt to organize a cooperative administration that enhances and supports school personnel to be skillful and obtain higher knowledge. They look to develop learning innovation within their schools, and to create the atmosphere of a learning resource center that serves instruction, organizes the curriculum and instructional activities to emphasize child-centered learning, and develops a system of information technology to foster higher efficiency of educational administration and learners.

4. The administration of alternative schools in Thailand

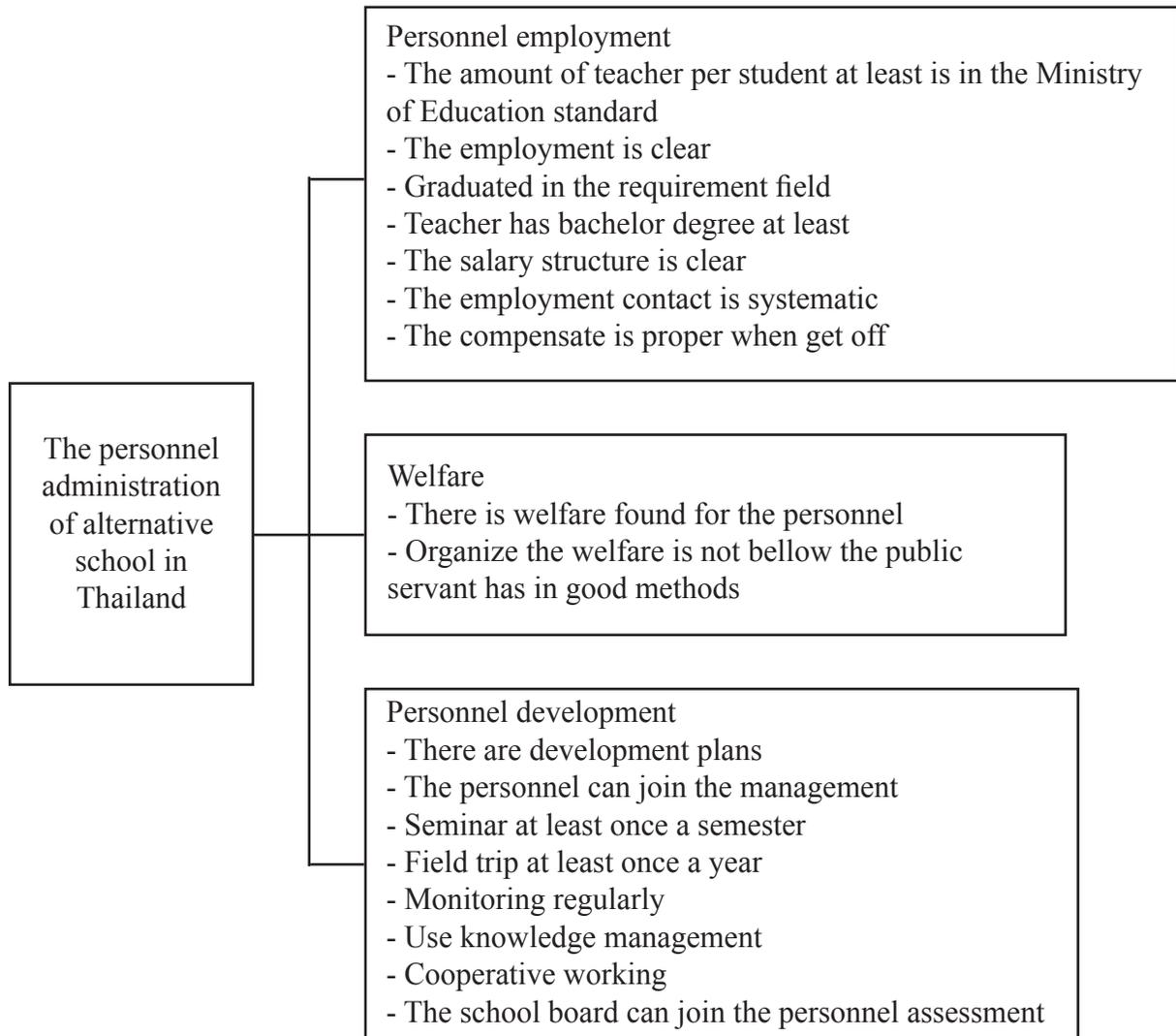
4.1 The infrastructure



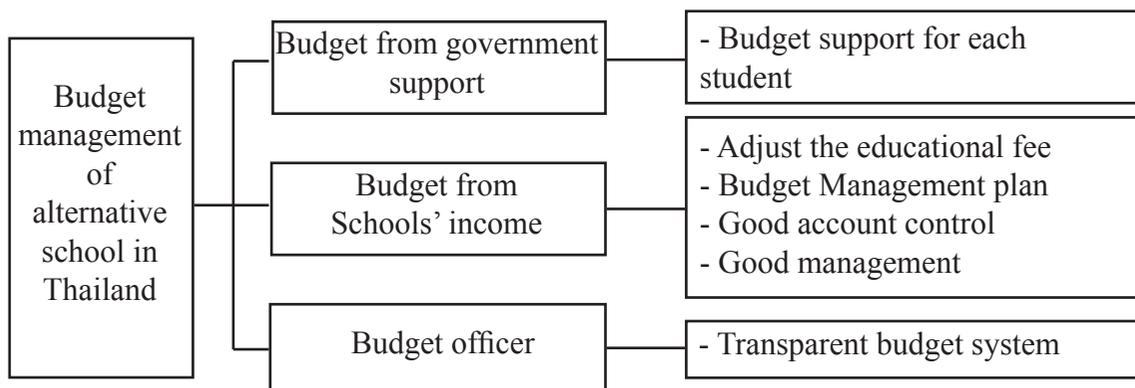
The alternative schools should be private schools with their own administration and management. And they should be under the control of an Office of the Private Education Commission of the Ministry of Education. They can make their own rules for use in their school.



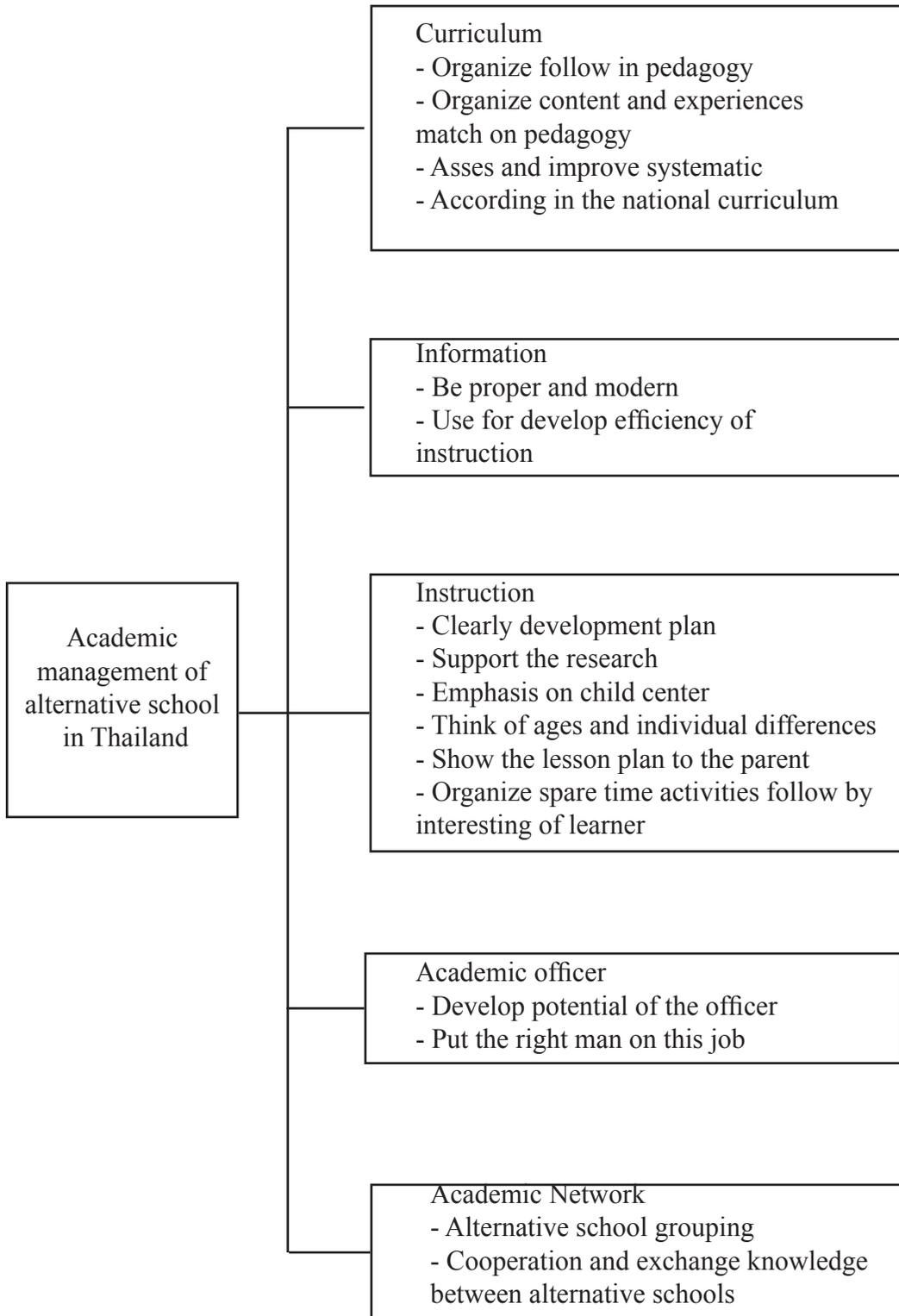
4.2 The personnel administration



4.3 Budget management

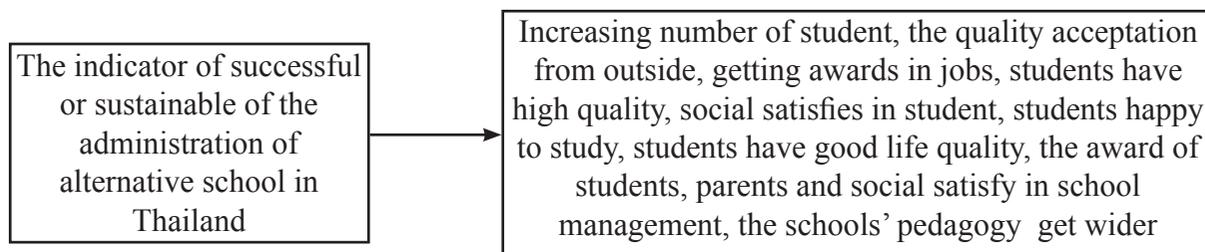


4.4 Academic management



5. The indicators of success and sustainability of the administration of alternative schools in Thailand

The goal of any school administration is to develop a successful, accepted and sustained school. The same can be said for the administrators of alternative schools, whose job is to organize instruction to achieve success in their goals. The indicator of success and sustenance of the administration of alternative schools in Thailand should be as follows:



6. The future of alternative schools in Thailand

The opinions of the 22 experts for the future of alternative schools in Thailand were as follows:

1. The number of alternative schools should increase to provide for variety and learning innovation.
2. The alternative schools should be grouped for administration and management sharing.
3. There should be alternative schools to give opportunities to everyone who can choose learn from their interesting approach.
4. There should be alternative schools for special groups, such as gifted children or people with disabilities to allow them to develop their capability.
5. The government should support and give opportunities by opening alternative school under their control, to facilitate them and help to build them up.
6. There should be alternative schools built and managed by the local people and the Local Authority Organization that can serve the local needs.
7. The alternative schools should have support from the government with flexible control.
8. The government should monitor and assess the efficiency and effectiveness to ensure that the learners will not lose opportunities or prevent the owners from taking advantage.
9. The alternative schools should have freedom to develop innovative approaches for use in school.
10. There should be alternative schools for disadvantaged children to study in a highly efficient and innovative learning environment.
11. There should be alternative schools which organize the instruction to fit the context and requirements in nationality and religion.
12. The pedagogy of alternative schools should be extended to the universities which produce the teachers.

Discussion

Based on the results of this study, the following points are discussed:

1. The specifications of alternative schools in Thailand were consistent with Suchada Chakpisuth and her colleagues (2005, pp. 77-79), who said that the alternative school is a formal school where instruction is based on learning innovation to enhance the children's abilities, individual differences, providing experimental learning and organizing the environment to serve learning. Porn Pan-o-soth (cited in Veeratheph Patoomchareonwattana, 2002, pp. 65 – 68) also claimed that the alternative school is a school which has its own educational pedagogy and philosophy. Furthermore, Suraphol Thamromdee (2006) stated that an alternative school is a school that teaches the national curriculum, but has freedom and creativity in its curriculum content, setting, teaching methods and textbooks, study of academic knowledge, life skills, and teamwork, beginning with the learners' interests learning through authentic learning, group learning, field trips, and student research, adjusting and reducing the curriculum content to be appropriate for the students' ages and emphasizing synthesis of their knowledge. In an interview, Prasert Ngamphan, the secretary of Office of the Teacher Education Committee, said that support of the specification of alternative schools in Thailand would help to develop Thai education and be accepted by the government system as long as it did not reduce educational quality. It is time to support the private sector to organize education, especially alternative schools, in the role of private or juristic person in administration and management.

2. The vision of alternative schools in Thailand found in this study supported the vision of the Office of Basic

Education Committee of the Ministry of Education to serve governmental policy (Budget policy in 2007 – 2008). This finding matches the research of Marquardt (1996), who concluded that vision setting would be effective for the cooperative working and supportive of the events that will happen in the future. Phod Sapienchai (2001, p. 1) agreed that, in a learning organization, everyone has to have the same vision. The vision is the prospective view, what are the things we want and how satisfied we are, how the school should be, and what is the instructional base of the school. So we have to build the school's vision. The vision setting is not created by the administrator alone, but everyone in the organization has to be a participant. And this finding matches with Somkid Soanam (2002, p. 156), who found that vision is a critical factor to becoming a learning organization. Vision setting will be critical to the development of the school and will continue to be critical in achieving school quality.

3. The mission of the alternative schools in Thailand that was found in this study matched with Kaiser (2000), who found that a mission is necessary for organizations who want to develop and change themselves. The same point about the mission's importance is outlined by the Office of Basic Education Council, the Ministry of Education (Budget policy in 2007 – 2008) in the enhancement of educational quality and standards, for the decentralization of administration and management. It also matches Part 1 of the General Purpose and Principles of the Educational Act, 2002, which states that educational organizations have to develop the Thai people to be the whole person in health, good minded, intelligence, knowledge, moral, ethics and culture, to live happily and to live successfully with other people, enhance and develop the school personnel, and

encourage cooperative management. These are the same goals as stated in the national standards (Office of the Education Council, 2006, pp. 3-7) to develop every Thai person to be competent, virtuous and happy, in an atmosphere that provides good support for learning and cooperative administration.

4. Somkiet Chobphol, the secretary of the Office of the Basic Education Committee disagrees with some items about the management of alternative schools in Thailand. His reasoning is that only some items adhere to the governmental system, such as the school board of alternative schools. He believes it should be flexible. The results appear similar to his view, because almost all of the experts in this study have been government officers. And the specification and duties of the school board is just one example. In fact, alternative schools still have the freedom to build and run their jobs flexibly in their own context. They are consistent with the Strategy 5, Simple Rules of Development and Integration of Life Long Learning Strategy in 21st Century of the Office of National Education Committee, Office of Prime Minister that reduces the complex steps and governmental system for building new ways that are simple, clear and appropriate for learning.

5. The future of alternative schools in Thailand that were found in this study is consistent with the Educational Act 2002 in Section 12, Section 13, and Section 14. These sections provide for opportunities for personal, family, the organization, the community, organizations of professional establishments and other social institutions to have the right to organize basic education. Government supports the privilege, such as budget, reduce or exempt taxes. Alternative schools should give the opportunity to everyone in learning, choosing to follow their self interesting. Matching this position on 21st Century

education, Veerathep Patoomcharoenwattana (2002, p. 11) concluded that alternative schools provide an educational approach that emphasizes learning from the child-centered point of view. These schools emphasize an interaction with the environment, use of educational technology and media to support learning throughout the learner's life cycle. In terms of the building of alternative schools by local people, the Local Authority Organization manages to serve local needs. In matching the future trends of education, Paiphan Kietchotchai (2002, p. 75) suggests an emphasis on varieties of activities that serve community needs and individual differences, which is integrated with the new pedagogy for the enjoyable learning of children. In the other words, the government would control, monitor and assess the efficiency and effectiveness of alternative schools. This point is consistent with Kriengsak Charoenwongsak (2000, p. 16), who said that the government should develop ways to convince private organizations or persons to cooperate in educational management, and that the government should provide support and monitoring of these organizations. This opinion supports Piphop Thongchai (2001, p. 77), who said that the future trend of alternative schools would be accepted, as shown by the more than 6,000 alternative schools around the world and more than 10 in Thailand. So the future of alternative schools in Thailand, according to the conclusion of the expert opinions, would be the new face of Thai education.

Suggestions

1. General suggestions

1.1 Administrators should use this model to implement and develop efficient and effective school administration, and lead the way to school success, with a school

administration manual, a school action plan and a set of school standards.

1.2 Teachers should use this model to enhance instructional efficiency and to be a working action manual for education. This would include development of individual working standards leading to success on the job.

1.3 Parents should use this management model for making the decision to select a school for their children and to be participants in school management. They can also use this model to gain an understanding of school management and the best way for school monitoring.

1.4 Educators and students should use this model to gain an understanding of alternative schools, and to apply the model as a means of taking the best qualities of educational management from conventional schools and incorporating them into the management of alternative schools.

1.5 Prasert Ngamphan, the secretary of Office of Teacher and Educator Committee proposed using this model for chief executives who control the national policy in education; and argues that this model should be in the development plan. If possible, it should be proposed to religious foundations, non-government organizations and local jurisdictions, because they are outside of government control. He also states that it could be proposed to Local Authorities, so long as there is certainty of there being no corruption. He advocates that alternative school pedagogy should be combined in the curriculum of higher education institutions that produce teachers, which would spread the knowledge to a wider audience.

1.6 Somkiet Chobphol, the secretary of the Office of Basic Education Committee suggests that the infrastructure of alternative schools in Thailand be placed under the control of the Local Education Area or Office

of Non-formal Education Commission.

2. Suggestions for further study

2.1 There should be further study of the effectiveness of the management model for alternative schools in Thailand to increase the confidence of the model users.

2.2 There should be further study in general management of education, because it is an important task for the mission of alternative schools, supporting such aspects as buildings and places, environment, student union and public relations.

2.3 There should be further study of the management model used in other units that are not schools to identify some potential to match with the needs of alternative schools

2.4 There should be further study of factors related to the parents' decision in choosing an alternative school for their children.

2.5 There should be further study using a qualitative research approach and examination of case studies involving alternative schools' administrators, to transfer their knowledge to the new generation.

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