ANALYSIS OF DOCTORAL PROGRAMS IN LEADERSHIP: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

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Abstract:-
The objective of this study was to analyze strengths and weaknesses of doctoral degree programs in leadership offered by Thai universities. This study was a documentary analysis, which aimed at investigating and comparing doctoral degree programs in leadership offered by Thai universities. Google search engine was employed as a tool for conducting this study. The search was conducted during the first two weeks of April 2019, which limited only the vigorous doctoral programs in leadership. Numerous keywords such as doctoral degree program in leadership, degree in leadership, and leadership program in Thai universities were used for searching for information about doctoral degree programs in leadership. Surprisingly, according to findings, there were three active programs in leadership available for those who want to study doctoral degree in leadership. Among these three institutes, Rangsit University had provided sufficient information about the program much more than Mahidol University and Surindra Rajabhat University. However, these programs had both strengths and weaknesses in which candidates need to carefully review before making a final decision to apply for one of these programs.

Keywords: - *Doctoral degree, Doctoral program, Leadership, Leadership program*

INTRODUCTION

The term leadership has been used interchangeably with management, but in fact these two terms are distinctive. Management refers to position or title a specific person has to direct other people in an organization while leadership requires personal power not power from position (Dias, 2012). To become an effective leader, individuals, with their effort and practice, can be developed to be an extraordinary person beyond what they were naturally born (Zenger, 2010). In the U.S., leadership has become an important issue and been given number one strategic priority by more than a half of U.S. firms, according to the recent survey of Brandon Hall's State of Leadership Development 2015 (Velasquez, 2017). These companies strongly believe that individuals with robust leadership skills can provide an organization the opportunity to competitive advantage (Joubert, 2018). A recent study found the significant association between organizations with effective leadership and financial performance, customer satisfaction, productivity, and service quality (University of Notre Dame, 2012). However, more than 80 percent of organizations reported the lack of skilled leaders in the next five years. To solve this program by improving leadership skills, the need of graduate education and programs in leadership has been put to consideration (Joubert, 2018). In the past decades, leadership graduate programs have dramatically increased at colleges and universities around the world to help alleviate individuals' leadership skills (Greenwald, 2010). These graduate programs basically focus on improving leadership capabilities through coursework, training activities, and research methodologies.

Nowadays, leadership degree program is developed and designed to attract those who are seeking to enhance their capabilities beyond managerial skills, particular middle management level (Yates, 2011). Most leadership programs are basically developed for individuals from different professional and academic backgrounds who want to study and drive organizations to transformation and success (PhDstudies.com, 2019). The proliferation of leadership graduate degree programs in the past years has demonstrated the interesting of studying leadership for professional and academic purposes (Stork, Grant, & Darmo, 2015). The nature of graduate program, in particular, doctoral degree in leadership was emphasized on the integration of coursework and research with different concentration such as business, education, political sciences, and public health or nursing. In Thailand, doctoral degree programs in leadership are mostly concentrated on business and education. Numerous doctoral degree programs offered by Thai universities are tied up with the leadership skills and knowledge implication on educational institutions and business firms. However, regardless of the program concentration, people who study a doctoral degree in leadership can earn a lot of benefits for their future career. The possible careers for those who hold a doctoral degree in leadership are a business or an education professor, training and development manager, an operations research analyst, an education administrator, a management analyst, and the chief executive offer (Study.com, 2019).

Although doctoral degree programs in leadership in Thailand have increasingly become more popular and proliferated in the past years, lack of investigation on program benefits as well as strengths and weaknesses still exists. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze strengths and weaknesses of doctoral degree programs in leadership offered by Thai universities. This present study attempts to conduct a comparative review and analysis of doctoral degree in leadership among Thai universities. Benefits from the analysis of this study can increase the body of knowledge in curriculum development and provide a guideline and reference for prospective students or those who are interested in studying in leadership doctoral degree to benchmark and select a suitable alternative for their professional and career advancement.

Literature Reviews

A few studies on a comparison on graduate degree programs in leadership were conducted. Among the scarce studies in leadership degree programs investigation, Crawford, Brungardt, Scott, and Gould (2002) conducted the study to examine the nature of graduate programs in organizational leadership. They reviewed organizational leadership programs from 37 institutions in the U.S., totally 38 programs at master's level (one university offered two master's degrees in organizational leadership). Also, six doctorate's degree programs in organizational leadership were discussed. This study revealed the essential information about graduate programs in organizational leadership including characteristics and focus (name of degree program and credit hours), number of faculty, costs of tuition per credit hour, and delivery methods. Findings of this study indicated that various graduate programs in organizational leadership were in the early stage of development. Key factors could have an impact for future alteration and change of these programs. Results of this study could be used as reference for a review of graduate degree programs in leadership in a future. Numerous studies in leadership relating to an examination of related leadership programs in higher education have cited the study of Crawford et al. (2002) as a reference for their studies (Stork et al., 2015; Tolstikov-Mast et al., 2018). However, the use of this article as a guideline for conducting research in leadership programs in Thai context was zero despite the useful information and ideas to extend the study in a related topic in a different context. Thus, this present study tended to use the ideas of this article as a direction for investigating and comparing doctoral programs in leadership among Thai universities.

Methodology

This study was a documentary analysis, which aimed at investigating doctoral degree programs in leadership offered by Thai universities. Search engine like Google was utilized as a tool for conducting this study. The search was conducted during the first two weeks of April 2019, which limited only the vigorous doctoral programs in leadership. Numerous keywords such as doctoral degree program in leadership, degree in leadership, and leadership program in Thai universities were used for searching for information about doctoral degree programs in leadership. The lists of universities' websites that offered doctoral degree in leadership were organized for the in-depth analysis. The research went over each website

and carefully reviewed information relating to doctorate's degree in leadership based on the curriculum structure, program objectives, number of faculties both full-time and part-time, tuition fees, and program benefits. The criteria used for analyzing data and arranging a tabular matrix for a comparison to explore strengths and weaknesses among the doctoral programs in leadership were based on the suggestion of Crawford, Brungardt, Scott, and Gould (2002). The systemization of data to develop a matrix of information was processed. To make sure the validation of the program, the researcher used a telephone contact to each program coordinator to find out whether the program was still active.

Results

Based on search results on the internet, one university, namely Suratthani Rajabhat University, officially announced that its Doctor of Education program in Educational Administration and Leadership had been under curriculum redevelopment. In addition, PhD in Educational Leadership program offered by Assumption University (Thailand) had not been accredited by Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC), Thailand, according to the latest educational quality assurance assessment. These programs were excluded from the analysis in this study. Moreover, the accessibility of Doctor of Education in Educational Administration and Change Leadership program information at Eastern Asia University could not be retrieved from its doctoral program website. Thus, this doctoral program was not included in this study's analysis. Also, PhD program in Educational Leadership at Suan Dusit University could not be accessed for further information on its graduate school website. As a result, this program was excluded from the analysis.

Among institutions offering doctoral degree programs in leadership, Mahidol University had presented a very innovative and attractive international program curriculum for the 21st century. This program had claimed to be the first leadership program in sustainability in the world. Strengths of this PhD program included top scholars both foreigners and Thais who had ample research backgrounds and expertise in leadership areas and contemporary coursework. However, in program brochure available on its website, cost of program study and tuition fees were not provided. Rangsit University had offered leadership program relating to political sciences. However, the schedule of this program could be viewed as the weakness as the coursework for first year students were delivered on the weekday during 1-4 p.m., which was not suitable for those who worked full-time. Most of its coursework placed the emphasis on social science and politics rather than business. This reflects the imbalance of the program as the degree was designed to concentrate on three aspects: society, business, and politics but, in fact, this program placed little emphasis on business aspect. However, the course coordinator/instructor for each course displayed the careful decision of selecting experienced professors to teach in a doctoral level. This indication can be considered as strength of this program. Also, additional strength of this program was an MOU with foreign institutions, which can provide lots of benefits for students in terms of instruction, field study, and research. For Surindra Rajabhat University, information retrieved on its graduate school website was not update enough. The old curriculum of 2012 program was still presented on its website to be downloaded. This evidence demonstrated the major weakness of marketing and advertising the program. In addition, when accessed to the website of Faculty of Education, which was co-responsible organization for this doctoral program, information was not accessible. However, one of this program's strengths was numbers of visiting instructors and professors to teach in this program. Overall, these three doctoral programs in leadership had both strengths and weaknesses in different areas. Making a final decision to select one of these programs for prospective students needed to be done with caution.

Table 1: Relevant Components of Doctoral Degree Programs in Leadership in Thailand

Institutions	Characteristics and Focus	Faculty	Tuition Fees	Program Benefits	Websites
Mahidol University	Doctor of Philosophy (Sustainable Leadership) 63 credit hours (International Program)	20	N/A	The opportunity to get funding and scholarships from the Thailand Sustainable Development Foundation as well as CMMU	http://www.cmmu.mahidol.ac.th/phdinsl/
Rangsit University	Doctor of Philosophy (Leadership in Society, Business and Politics) 54 credit hours	10	475,000 THB/ an entire program	Collaborations with foreign universities and institutions, which provides the opportunity for students to collaboratively develop programs and curriculum, have a study visit and field study, and conduct research under supervision of experienced professor in related field from partnered university	https://www2.rsu.ac.th/files/Phd-leadership.pdf
Surindra Rajabhat University	Doctor of Philosophy (Leadership and Administration) 60 credit hours	21	150,000 THB/ an entire program	Collaborations with other Rajabhat universities for instruction and research advisors	https://bandhit.srru.ac.th/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/leadership.pdf

Conclusion, Discussions, and Recommendations

As studying in a doctoral program was required multi-tasking skills and sufficient knowledge in conducting research, it was quite difficult for students who attended the program to successfully graduate in a timely manner, which affected the program quality assurance. Also, instructors and professors who had taught in the doctoral level need to have not only teaching-oriented skills, but also research-oriented skills. Many universities had discontinued their admissions or been cancelled their accreditation coverage because of the shortage of skillful research scholars who could give appropriate advice to students. As can be found in this study, many Thai universities attempted to open doctoral programs in leadership, but they finally needed to close the program for improvement. As the OCHE was primarily concerned on program quality, to produce effective doctoral students needed supports in various functions from the university. The recommendation for this point was if any university was not ready to open a doctoral program due to lack of faculty and facilities (i.e. database for research/ laboratory/ study room), it should not be persisted. The evidence of this study demonstrated the failure of offering doctoral degree program in leadership in many universities in Thailand. For those who still exists and survives, they should work harder to fill in the gap and eliminate their weaknesses for the accessibility to program information and curriculum. One of the major weaknesses every program needs to eradicate was insufficient information about program benefits and highlights. Also, as we live in an era of digital, information about doctoral programs of these universities should be delivered and accessed in other platforms such as social media application.

Even though studying in a doctoral degree program in leadership can provide some knowledge and skills in leadership, other channels of leadership learning and development are still necessary. Becoming an excellent leader does not rely on the receipt of college and university education solely, but effective leadership, on the other hand, is developed through a never-ending process of self-study, education, training and experience. Thus, individuals who intend to improve their leadership skills need to continue their learning for a life-time.

Acknowledgement

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