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## Collaborative Action Professional Development of School Principals

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### Abstract

The professional development of school principals is not only crucial to the reform agenda but also a matter of national concern and part of the strategic plan of the Thailand Ministry of Education. Therefore policy educational institutions and related organizations are required to form strong collaborative teams within schools in order to widely develop schools and community networking. The aim of this study is to investigate collaborative action for the professional development of school principals. This collaborative action involves three parties composed of universities, the Office of Educational Service Area and its schools and communities. The timeframe of this study was two years and included four phases. The first phase consisted of a contextual study and model construction, followed by the model verification in the second phase. The third phase involved the development of programme assessment tools and preparation of supplementary learning documents. Finally, an evaluation of the implemented programme was carried out in the last phase. Results revealed that the majority of school principals are satisfied with the training and learning process. Hence they have improved their knowledge skills and competencies in management. Consequently, they developed quality projects for their schools by using action research, strategic planning and instructional leadership. In conclusion, an effective model of collaborative action is multi-dimensional involving needs assessment, goal setting, empowerment, self-study, intensive seminars, action research and programme evaluation.

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### 1. Introduction

Globalization has brought with it an intense interest in education quality overall. It is strongly believed that empowering schools would lead to better administration and higher student achievement (Keawdeang, 2003; Somprach, 2003; Ruenchareon, 2005). In respect of this, the professional development of school principals is vital because leadership has a direct impact on learners and plays a central role in developing the quality of students (Whitaker, 1993; Kinney, 2008; Yan & Ehrich, 2009). Therefore principals are expected to be leaders and managers

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who are visionary, provide guidelines, make strategic plans and decisions, resolve problems, develop teachers and generally oversee every aspect of the school's functioning (Butler, 2008; Moller, 2009).

## 2. Research objectives

The main aim of this study is to develop a framework for the professional development of school principals. The following are the objectives of the study:

- To study different methods for achieving the professional development of school principals at the Office of Educational Service Area.
- To develop the collaboration necessary for the professional development of school principals.
- To study the outcomes of the model for school principals' professional development.

## 3. Methodology

This study was conducted in four phases in order to build a model in which personal initiative and networking make substantial contributions to the renewal ongoing education and development of principals. The four phases included contextual study and model construction, verification of the model, development of performance and programme assessment tools, and implementation and evaluation of the programme.

### 3.1. Contextual study and model construction

The first phase generally covered the study of concepts, theories, contexts, and policies and practices in order to develop and outline the collaboration pattern of the professional development of school principals. Below are the details:

- To study concepts, theories and review of related literature in the professional development of school principals.
- To study the self-development of outstanding school principals.
- To interview three experts from the Ministry of Education, leading Thai universities and the Educational Administrator Development Institute, specifically on the topic of collaboration and the professional development of school principals.
- To analyse and synthesize concepts and related information for developing a process or a model of the professional development of school principals.

### 3.2. Verification of the model

The second phase dealt with connoisseurship - to interview experts on an appropriate model. Below is the procedure followed in the second phase.

- To identify the qualifications of experts and recruit 17 experts.
- To plan seminars, determine related issues, prepare documentation, set appropriate times and make appointments to meet the experts.
- To establish a suitable model of development according to the research plan.
- To improve the components and activities of the model of development according to the experts' suggestions.

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