

Research Article

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Author for correspondence:

Jarunee Kao-ian

✉ Jarunee.k@yru.ac.th

✉ Yala Rajabhat University, Thailand

Developing an Innovative Leadership Model of School Administrators under a Multicultural Context

Jarunee Kao-ian 

Abstract

Background/purpose. This research aimed to: 1) develop a model of innovative leadership characteristics for school administrators in a multicultural society, and 2) evaluate the model's suitability for practical implementation.

Materials/methods. This study employed the Delphi technique and an exploratory sequential design consisting of five steps. Step 1 involved qualitative research, while Steps 2 through 5 focused on quantitative methods. The Delphi technique was used to gather qualitative data from anonymous experts and qualified individuals. In this study, qualitative data were collected from teachers and school administrators through a literature review, which informed the development of open-ended questions and interviews.

Results. The research findings indicated that, within the context of a multicultural society in Thailand, the innovative leadership characteristics of school administrators encompassed six key dimensions: administrative knowledge, administrative ability, technological competency, personality, awareness of global social changes, and understanding of Islamic culture. The school administrators must understand the culture and way of life of students, parents, and the community. They should be courageous in thinking, acting, and making decisions, demonstrate a spirit of sacrifice, and serve as positive role models. Additionally, administrators need to stay up-to-date, possess management knowledge and skills, and be proficient in technology. They must also be capable of organizing internal management systems, including budgeting, facilities, staff cooperation, the internal environment, organizational culture, and resource management.

Conclusion. The research concluded that six key characteristics define innovative leadership among educational administrators in Thailand's multicultural society, all of which are essential for effective leadership, community engagement, and institutional success.



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1. Introduction

Innovative leaders have become a crucial force in driving organizational progress and the exchange of ideas in global society. This is especially true in educational institutions, where leaders must continuously develop themselves to keep pace with external social changes. Such development is essential for administrators to effectively respond to the unpredictable and unstoppable changes in society (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Karimi, Malek, Farani, & Liobikiene, 2023). To elaborate, the innovative leadership of administrators serves as an important mechanism that significantly influences the outcomes of educational administration. Educational administrators must embody innovative leadership qualities that enable them to understand the ever-evolving challenges and perspectives of education today. They need to quickly adapt to new challenges and effectively leverage technology to enhance organizational administration. Furthermore, they should design and plan the internal structure of their systems so that all parties can collaborate harmoniously (Karen & Mark, 2017; Louis & Murphy, 2018; Milic, Visnjic, & Culibrk, 2023; Wangthanomsak et al., 2022). These efforts will align educational administration with the needs and changes of global society. The characteristics of innovative leadership are not fixed traits applicable in all educational administration contexts (Fuad, Musa & Hashim, 2020; Milic, Visnjic, & Culibrk, 2023). Horth and Vekar (2012) stated that innovative leaders must possess several key characteristics, particularly creativity in generating innovation. Research has shown that the behaviors of innovative leaders differ from those of traditional leaders. Essential traits for successful innovative leaders include charismatic leadership, a positive personality, the ability to lead change, and strong knowledge and skills in innovation. Therefore, these characteristics can shift according to the work context, particularly when managing educational institutions in diverse areas marked by varying lifestyles and cultures. Additionally, political violence and unrest have resulted in significant loss of life and property in regions like the three southern border provinces of Thailand for over 20 years.

In the southern border provinces of Thailand, which include Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, there exist areas characterized by unique cultural and linguistic differences. The population predominantly practices Islam and speaks Malay as their mother tongue. This blend of diverse cultures and religions fosters a distinctive identity that sets these provinces apart from other regions in Thailand. Consequently, educational institutions must be administered by innovative leaders who recognize and respect the differences in religion, culture, and lifestyle among teachers, staff, students, and community members involved in educational management. As noted by Sangthong (2003), effective educational management necessitates that innovative leadership aligns with social conditions, global changes, and the needs of the community, students, and parents. This includes fostering positive relationships between schools and all local stakeholders.

The innovative leadership styles of school administrators in the multicultural society of the southern border have evolved, lacking a clear framework. This has contributed to the ineffectiveness of school administration, preventing it from achieving its full potential. This research aims to build upon previous studies by developing a model of innovative leadership characteristics for school administrators within this multicultural context. Key questions include: What leadership styles should be adopted? How can these styles contribute to sustainable development on the southern border? In what ways will they play a significant role in enhancing the quality of education in the region? These elements are vital for fostering sustainable improvements in educational quality. The findings will serve as guidelines for school administrators, enabling them to implement effective leadership strategies that enhance educational outcomes in the southern border provinces. This version maintains the original meaning while improving clarity and flow.

1.1. Research objectives

1. To develop a model of the innovative leadership characteristics of school administrators in the context of a multicultural society in Thailand.
2. To assess the appropriateness of the model of innovative leadership characteristics of school administrators in the context of a multicultural society in Thailand for practical application

2. Literature Review

2.1. Innovative Leader

In this study, the term leadership is defined as the ability of individuals to motivate others, generate innovative ideas aligned with social norms, and influence others to work toward the success and effectiveness of their organization (House et al., 2004). Leadership is also described as the capacity to translate visions into reality and implement them amid social change (Blagoev & Yordanova, 2015). According to Kruse (2013), leadership is a process through which individuals influence others to increase their efforts to achieve goals in the context of change. Similarly, Robbins (1990) defines leadership as a process by which individuals influence groups to meet group needs or organizational objectives. It involves the art or process of influencing others to work willingly and enthusiastically toward the attainment of shared goals. In addition, Lecic, Milic, Visnjic, and Culibrk (2023) studied the effects of transformational leadership, empowerment, and innovation support. They found that transformational leadership was significantly and positively related to organizational innovation and innovation support. They also concluded that the leadership styles of top managers can significantly influence an organization's creativity and innovative capabilities. Yukl (1981) described a leader as someone who contributes to the success and progress of an organization by fostering relationships between leaders and subordinates, creating stability, and helping individuals achieve group goals. Similarly, Robbins (2002) defined leadership as the art of influencing others so that they are willing and enthusiastic to work toward the achievement of group goals. Mintzberg (2004) emphasized that a leader's role is to foster participation in the work process to ensure the group achieves organizational objectives. He also noted that a leader is the most influential person in the group and must fulfill the responsibilities of the leadership position delegated by others in the organization. Gardner (1990) identified several key characteristics of effective leadership, including physical fitness, intelligence, decision-making ability, self-confidence, adaptability, flexibility, responsibility, an understanding of coworkers and their needs, strong communication and interpersonal skills, and a desire to succeed in their work.

In terms of innovative leadership, scholars have defined the concept in various ways. Blagoev and Yordanova (2015) view innovative leadership as the ability of an individual to transform visions into reality. Fuad et al. (2022) and Kahn (2018) describe innovative leadership as a thinking style that reflects individual characteristics, emphasizing creativity and the development of new ideas that promote inclusive and equitable development, free from racial, religious, and cultural discrimination. This form of leadership values all members of the organization equally. Similarly, Musa and Hashim (2020) and Osman and Kamis (2019) conclude that innovative leaders play a critical role in improving and developing existing systems or creating new ones in the face of challenges. They achieve this by skillfully integrating tools, concepts, principles, and theories to enhance efficiency and success within organizations that must compete in a rapidly changing, technology-driven world. Innovative leadership involves adapting to evolving contexts by implementing original ideas, principles, and methods that have not been previously applied. In the field of education, innovative leadership refers to the behavior of educational administrators who utilize innovation to improve educational quality. This includes innovations in management, operations, and organizational leadership. These leaders inspire teachers, administrators, and other educational personnel to apply their knowledge, skills, and methods for effective educational administration (Shafaei & Nejati, 2023). According to Robledo

et al. (2012), innovative leaders exhibit a distinctive work style characterized by leading creative efforts, motivating teams, and driving progress toward organizational goals. From the above definitions, it is evident that innovative leaders possess unique characteristics that distinguish them from traditional or general leaders.

According to Rochvatanaboon (2010), innovative leaders possess several key characteristics, which can be categorized into personality traits, skills, role-related traits, and social characteristics. Clement and Richard (1992) emphasized that effective innovative leadership depends on certain leader attributes that support innovation. These include a positive work attitude, morality, honesty, intelligence, a sense of responsibility, skillfulness, flexibility, and self-confidence. Yukl (1981) identified traits associated with innovative leadership, such as high energy, strong stress resistance, high self-confidence, emotional maturity, moral integrity, honesty, and the ability to inspire and motivate others. Similarly, Dave (2007) described innovative leaders as individuals who demonstrate determination, efficiency, and a willingness to drive organizational change. They are capable of solving both current and future problems, actively motivating their team, and maintaining a high level of enthusiasm for their work.

From the above discussion, the characteristics of innovative leaders highlight the distinct competencies and potential that set them apart from other types of leaders. Various scholars have classified these traits into different categories, as previously mentioned. In the context of multicultural societies in the southern border provinces of Thailand, prior research has explored the leadership traits of innovative vocational administrators in Pattani Province. Jemu and Chookmnerd (2021) identified several key characteristics of innovative leaders in this context, including a vision for change, the ability to create an innovative organizational atmosphere, creativity, effective use of information and communication technology (ICT), and an emphasis on teamwork and participation. Similarly, Kholo-asae and U-senyang (2022) outlined six core characteristics of innovative leadership: (1) vision and change, (2) teamwork and participation, (3) creativity, (4) risk management, (5) use of ICT, and (6) fostering an innovative organizational environment. Therefore, educational administrators who embody these characteristics of innovative leadership can be seen as key contributors to successful management. Their leadership positively influences the quality of personnel and educational institutions, aligning their performance with the demands of an evolving global society.

From the above, it can be concluded that the characteristics of innovative leaders represent essential qualities that administrators must possess to effectively lead and manage. However, the study found that in the three southern border provinces of Thailand, there is still no clearly defined model of innovative leadership, nor are there leadership characteristics that are uniquely suited to the specific social and cultural context of the area. Most existing characteristics remain general and broadly applicable. Therefore, the researcher is interested in exploring and developing a model of innovative leadership characteristics specifically for educational administrators in the three southern border provinces. This model will be tailored to the local social context and serve as a practical guideline for administrators to enhance their leadership capabilities and improve the quality of educational institutions in the region.

3. Methodology

This study utilized the Delphi technique and an exploratory sequential design. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) outlined five steps: Step 1 involved a qualitative study, while Steps 2, 3, 4, and 5 were focused on quantitative studies. The Delphi technique gathers qualitative data from anonymous experts and qualified individuals. This qualitative data is subsequently analyzed for content and used to develop a quantitative data collection tool (Rowe & Wright, 1999). In this study, qualitative data was collected from teachers and school administrators through a literature review. This data was

then used to formulate open-ended questions and interviews, which contributed to the creation of a rating scale questionnaire for quantitative data collection.

Phase 1: Qualitative Research Using the Delphi Technique, Round 1

Informants

Seventeen experts were selected purposively, comprising ten teachers and seven school administrators (Creswell, 2013). The qualifications for selection included: knowledge and understanding of educational administration; knowledge and understanding of the context of a multicultural society in the southern border provinces; residency in the southern border provinces; a minimum of five years of work experience in the area; willingness to participate in data collection throughout the research and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time.

3.1. Research Instruments

A semi-structured interview was conducted, consisting of two parts:

General Information: This section gathered basic information about the respondents.

Interview on Innovative Leadership: This part focused on the characteristics of innovative leaders among school administrators within the context of a multicultural society in Thailand. Key areas explored included: administrative knowledge, administrative capabilities, technological capabilities, personality traits, awareness of changes in global society, understanding of Islamic culture

3.2. Data Collection

The researcher arranged face-to-face interviews with seven school administrators and university lecturers, as well as face-to-face focus group discussions with ten teachers at a university. The process involved introducing the researcher, outlining the research objectives, and obtaining permission to record audio. Each focus group discussion lasted no more than 60 minutes, while individual interviews took up to 90 minutes. Participants were informed that if they felt unprepared to provide information during the focus group, they could withdraw from the research at any time.

3.3. Data Analysis

The responses obtained from the interviews were analyzed using content analysis. The data were coded and categorized into six groups: administrative knowledge, administrative capabilities, technological capabilities, personality traits, awareness of changes in global society, and understanding of Islamic culture. This categorization was informed by studies conducted by Rochvatanaboon (2010), Kholo-asae & U-senyang (2022), and Jemu & Chookmnerd (2021).

Phase 2: Qualitative Research Using the Delphi Technique, Round 2

Informants

The expert group remains the same as that used in the qualitative data collection for Round 1.

3.4. Research Instruments

Data from interviews on the important themes of innovative leadership among school administrators in a multicultural society were analyzed through content analysis and synthesis. The characteristics of innovative leaders were initially grouped into six categories comprising 139 questions. These questions were then further analyzed and reviewed by experts to ensure consistency with the research objectives and core content. The key characteristics identified were administrative knowledge, administrative capabilities, technological competencies, personality, awareness of global social changes, and understanding of Islamic culture. Similar or overlapping questions were consolidated, reducing the total to 73 items. The structural and content validity of

the questionnaire was assessed using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), and the instrument was subsequently reviewed and confirmed by experts.

In this research, 17 experts (coded as A1 through A17) were interviewed to identify issues aligned with the characteristics of innovative leaders in each area and to ensure that the questions addressed these themes consistently with the research objectives.

3.5. Data Collection

The researcher contacted the experts individually to explain the purpose and details of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to the experts via mail, email, Line, and Facebook, as suggested by them, and was returned within one month.

3.6. Data Analysis

The experts confirmed the grouping points, completeness, and accuracy of the content to develop a model of innovative leadership characteristics for school administrators in a multicultural society. This model will undergo further validation by additional experts.

Phase 3: Quantitative Research Using the Delphi Technique, Round 3

Informants

The informants consisted of qualified individuals—university lecturers holding doctoral degrees in educational administration, Islamic studies, research, measurement, and educational statistics. They possessed expertise in educational administration and Islamic studies, and had been working in the three southern border provinces for no less than five years. A total of five individuals participated in this study.

3.7. Research Instruments

A questionnaire was developed to assess agreement and disagreement regarding the characteristics of innovative leaders among school administrators in the context of a multicultural society in Thailand. The questionnaire comprised 73 items and utilized a two-level scoring system: 1 (agree) and 2 (disagree).

3.8. Data Collection

For data collection, the researcher contacted experts individually to explain the purpose and details of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were delivered to the experts in person and were expected to be returned within 15 days.

3.9. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by calculating percentages. Statements that received agreement from 60 percent or more of the experts were used to develop a draft model of innovative leadership characteristics for school administrators in a multicultural society. These statements were subsequently reviewed by the experts in the next step. Items that garnered less than 60 percent agreement were eliminated from the research.

Phase 4 Quantitative research, Delphi technique, Round 4

Informants are the same group of experts as the quantitative data collection in Round 3.

3.10. Research instruments

It is a questionnaire with a 5-level measurement scale about the draft of the innovative leadership characteristics of school administrators in the context of a multicultural society in

Thailand. The scores are set at 5 (strongly agree), 4 (agree), 3 (moderately agree), 2 (disagree), and 1 (strongly disagree).

3.11. Data collection

For data collection, the researcher contacted experts individually to explain the purpose and details of the questionnaire, delivered it to the experts in person, and received it back within 1 month.

3.12. Data analysis

The data were analyzed using a ready-made program to find percentages (Percentage), medians (Median), and interquartile ranges. (Interquartile range) Any item that experts agree with 60% or more, has a median value greater than or equal to 1-3.50, and an interquartile range value lower than or equal to 1.50, will be kept to be used to create a draft of the innovative leadership characteristics of school administrators in the context of a multicultural society in the southern border provinces. The question text has been adjusted according to the suggestions of experts, to be used to create a draft of the innovative leadership characteristics of school administrators in the context of a multicultural society.

Phase 5: Quantitative Research Using the Delphi Technique

Round 5 is an assessment of the appropriateness of implementing the innovative leadership trait model for school administrators in the context of a multicultural society.

3.13. Sample Group

The sample group consists of 402 teachers and school administrators from a multicultural society in the southern border provinces. The sample size was determined using the Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973) and selected through stratified random sampling based on school size, specifically targeting small schools (Office of the Basic Education, 2023). Additionally, a simple random sampling method (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1993) was employed, utilizing a lottery system without replacement as the final step.

3.14. Research Instruments

The research utilized a 5-level rating scale questionnaire divided into two parts. Part 1 gathers general information about the respondents, including gender, position, size of the school, and province of work. Part 2 assesses the six characteristics derived from the Delphi technique in rounds 1 and 2 to evaluate implementation appropriateness.

3.15. Data Collection

Data collection involved sending the questionnaire along with an explanation of the research objectives to the sample group via mail, email, Line, and Facebook. The researcher also collected responses in person at educational institutions within the sample group and aimed to receive completed questionnaires back within three weeks. Upon collection, all questionnaires were checked for completeness; it was confirmed that all sets were fully answered and suitable for further analysis.

3.16. Data Analysis

The researcher coded the questionnaires using a pre-existing computer program to analyze their appropriateness for evaluation before implementation. Statistical methods employed included frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

4. Results

The study examined the characteristics of innovative leaders among educational institution administrators. These characteristics include knowledge of management, management capabilities,

technological proficiency, personality traits, awareness of global societal changes, and understanding of Islamic culture.

Phase 1 Step 1 Qualitative Method using Delphi round 1

Table 1. Demonstrating the characteristics of innovative leadership among school administrators in the context of a multicultural society

Characteristics	No. of Items	Characteristics	No. of Items
1. Administrative knowledge	22	4. Personality	30
2. Administrative ability	28	5. Awareness of global social changes	10
3. Technological competency	18	6. Understanding of Islamic culture	31
Total		139	

From the interview results of experts on the innovative leadership characteristics of educational administrators in the context of a multicultural society in Thailand, it was found that there are 139 items related to management knowledge, management capabilities, technological skills, personality traits, awareness of global societal changes, and understanding of Islamic culture.

Phase 2: Step 2 - Qualitative Research (Delphi Technique, Round 2)

In Round 1 interviews, the researcher analyzed and synthesized content-related issues that shared similarities, combining them into six groups with a total of 73 items. These were sent back to the experts for review and confirmation. The experts agreed with all items but suggested adjustments to enhance clarity and alignment with the characteristics of innovative leaders. The researcher made revisions based on this feedback.

Phase 3: Step 3 - Quantitative Research (Delphi Technique, Round 3)

The experts confirmed the consistency of the questionnaire regarding the characteristics of innovative leaders among educational administrators in Thailand's multicultural context. It was noted that 60% or more of the experts agreed with all items; however, they recommended further adjustments for consistency.

Phase 4: Step 4 - Quantitative Research (Delphi Technique, Round 4)

The experts agreed on the questionnaire's consistency using a 5-point scale. The median value was found to be greater than or equal to 3.50 for all items, while the interquartile range was less than or equal to 1.50 for all items. This indicates that the questionnaire can be utilized to draft a model of innovative leadership characteristics for school administrators in Thailand's multicultural society.

Phase 5: Step 5 - Quantitative Research (Delphi Technique, Round 5)

This phase focused on examining and evaluating the appropriateness of the innovative leadership characteristics for practical implementation among school administrators within a multicultural society.

The characteristics of innovative leaders among educational administrators in the context of a multicultural society in Thailand—such as administrative knowledge, administrative ability, technological proficiency, personality traits, awareness of changes in global society, and understanding of Islamic culture—are all deemed to be at a high level of appropriateness. When examining each aspect, the findings reveal the following:

Overall, administrative knowledge is rated at a high level of appropriateness (mean = 4.31). A closer look at individual items indicates that all are also rated highly. The item with the highest mean value is the necessity for leaders to possess knowledge of management theories and to be able to select and apply them appropriately (mean = 4.40). Following this, leaders must demonstrate a strong eagerness to learn and embody a mindset of continuous learning in management (mean = 4.39). Additionally, leaders should have a solid understanding of psychology when working with people (mean = 4.38).

The overall management capability is at a very appropriate level, with a mean score of 4.33. Upon examining each item, it was found that all were rated at a very high level. The item with the highest mean value indicated that leaders can adapt to the lifestyles, traditions, and cultures of the people within the organization and community, scoring 4.46. Following closely, administrators demonstrated an understanding of the specific abilities of personnel in the educational institution, with a score of 4.43. Additionally, leaders were noted for their ability to communicate and provide advice to members on various matters, achieving a mean score of 4.39.

Technological capability also stands at a very appropriate level across all items, with a mean score of 4.30. Each item was assessed at a very high level. The two items with the highest mean values shared an equal score: innovative leaders set budgets to promote self-development in technology for teachers (4.47), and they are experts in utilizing essential technologies for school administration (4.42). Furthermore, innovative leaders support the acquisition of necessary and sufficient technological equipment for use in schools, scoring 4.39.

In terms of personality, all items are deemed highly appropriate, with an overall mean score of 4.27. Each item was again rated at a high level. The item with the highest mean value highlighted that leaders must possess communication skills and know how to select appropriate channels for effective communication (4.39). Following this, leaders must serve as good role models in both academic and professional learning (4.37). Lastly, leaders are expected to have problem-solving skills applicable to issues faced by students, school personnel, and teachers alike (4.36).

The understanding of Islamic culture that influences innovative leadership is notably high across all items, with an overall mean score of 4.30. Upon examining each individual item, it was found that all received high ratings. The item with the highest mean value was that leaders allow everyone to freely practice their religion, scoring 4.45. This was followed by leaders organizing activities related to Islamic studies, which foster community participation and collective learning, scoring 4.37. Additionally, it is essential for innovative leaders to embrace diverse changes and to understand the Islamic way of life.

5. Discussion

From the study of innovative leadership characteristics among educational administrators in the context of a multicultural society in Thailand, it was found that key traits included administrative knowledge, administrative ability, technological proficiency, strong personality, awareness of global changes, and an understanding of Islamic culture—all deemed highly appropriate. This finding aligns with insights gathered from interviews, which emphasized that administrators must comprehend the cultures and lifestyles of their students, parents, and communities. They should possess the courage to think critically, take action, make decisions, be selfless, and serve as effective role models. Furthermore, administrators need to stay current with developments in their field and demonstrate both administrative knowledge and technological skills. Effective administrators must be adept at organizing internal management systems, overseeing budgets and facilities, fostering collaboration among organizational members, and managing the internal environment and organizational culture. This aligns with Sangthong (2003), who asserted that innovative leaders in educational administration must adapt to social conditions, global changes, and community needs while embodying strong

personal qualities. Specifically, innovative leaders should exhibit reliability, strong leadership skills, and the ability to instill confidence within their teams. Additionally, Rochvatanaboon (2010) identified critical characteristics of effective educational leaders as including personality traits, skill sets, social competencies, administrative abilities, knowledge of administration, awareness of global changes, with technological ability being the least emphasized characteristic.

In addition, this corresponds with Jemu and Chookmnerd (2021), who state that the characteristics of innovative leaders include a vision for change, the creation of an innovative organizational climate, creativity, the use of information and communication technology, teamwork, and participation. Similarly, Kholo-asae and U-senyang (2022) identify six main characteristics of innovative leadership: 1) vision and change, 2) teamwork and participation, 3) creativity, 4) risk management, 5) the use of information and communication technology, and 6) the creation of an innovative organizational climate. This perspective is further supported by Nanthasri (2021), who asserts that educational administrators or innovative leaders must demonstrate knowledge and expertise in one or more fields. They should be able to communicate effectively through speaking, writing, and actions that are logical in relation to problems and situations. Moreover, they must apply their knowledge and skills adeptly to solve problems appropriately. Additionally, Peterson (2011) emphasizes that being an innovative leader in the digital economy requires a deep understanding of new technologies to generate innovative ideas, processes, or products that create diverse opportunities and experiences, leading to varied perspectives. To foster an organizational culture within educational institutions, Kerdtip et al. (2019) found that ethical expression based on cultural diversity is essential. This entails giving equal importance to all personnel in educational settings, fostering a good understanding of various cultures within these institutions, maintaining a positive attitude toward all cultures equally, explaining the principles of multicultural collaboration to staff, establishing a work structure that promotes coexistence in a culturally diverse society, implementing participatory management principles, and prioritizing collective goals over individual ones.

From the study by Pharungsang (2018), it was found that multiculturalism is fundamentally rooted in the identities of religion and culture, specifically reflecting an understanding of Islamic culture. In regions where Muslims constitute the majority, their religious beliefs significantly shape societal values. The personality traits of innovative leaders emerge as crucial indicators of their values, preferences, practices, self-confidence, and attitudes. Supporting this view, Rochvatanaboon (2010) emphasizes that personality is a vital component of innovative leadership, as it conveys credibility, faith, and lasting impressions. The behaviors exhibited by these leaders further exemplify their personalities.

Moreover, Howell and Shamir (2005) assert that the personality and behavioral characteristics of innovative leaders are essential for fostering innovation. In terms of administrative capabilities, a high average value was observed. Consistent with Nanthasri (2021), it is evident that school administrators or innovative leaders must possess strong administrative skills. They are required to motivate and persuade their personnel to collaboratively analyze the educational institution's context, strengths, developmental points, challenges, and barriers. This analysis aids in formulating a shared vision, creating actionable plans, and implementing strategies to achieve tangible results while remaining cognizant of global societal changes.

The second lowest mean score aligns with the findings of Kholo-asae & U-senyang (2022), who argue that innovative leaders must possess visionary characteristics aimed at facilitating change. A detailed examination of each aspect reveals that the overall results of management knowledge for innovative leaders emphasizes the importance of innovative leaders in management. Leaders must possess a solid understanding of management principles and an awareness of the diverse nature of people. Effective management embodies both science and art; thus, leaders should be eager learners, committed to personal development, and adept at solving various organizational problems.

Innovative leaders must continuously develop their knowledge in people management. This involves using acquired knowledge as a framework for personal growth, enhancing work processes, and perpetually seeking new insights. Establishing a collaborative network for exchanging ideas is essential, as it fosters knowledge at individual, departmental, and organizational levels. In today's dynamic environment, school administrators must possess both academic and professional knowledge relevant to their roles. Such knowledge is crucial for achieving success in school administration. Saengthanang (2020) highlights that transforming an educational institution into an innovative organization requires administrators to have a firm grasp of management principles. This foundational knowledge provides direction, supported by theoretical frameworks that include models, objectives, input factors, processes, outputs, and conditions for success. Research by Puthong et al. (2020) identifies key characteristics of innovative leadership: a strong understanding of management science and the ability to work effectively with people. Successful innovative leaders not only need to possess this knowledge but also actively seek opportunities for self-improvement. Having a solid knowledge base translates into clear direction in one's work. This understanding enhances leaders' ability to better comprehend both tasks and team dynamics. Ultimately, it enables them to apply their insights effectively in managing educational institutions, paving the way for continuous improvement and innovation.

The overall management capability is at a highly appropriate level. An innovative leader must possess the ability to manage effectively, understand people, provide guidance to personnel, and engage in continuous self-development. Such leaders can foster strong relationships within the community, as they have the potential to encourage collaboration among individuals in educational institutions and between organizations. An effective leader is also capable of creating and nurturing an environment within the educational institution that supports the work of its members. This aligns with Rochvatanaboon (2010), who stated that innovative leaders can motivate others, communicate effectively, demonstrate emotional maturity, take responsibility for themselves and society, and build networks and relationships both inside and outside the organization. Furthermore, Prachankhet (2014) found that the leadership essential for fostering an innovative organization includes having a clear vision, being willing to take risks, actively listening to employee feedback, and creating an innovative atmosphere by providing adequate support in various areas. According to a study by Malai et al. (2023), innovative leadership is crucial for managing personnel within an organization. It stimulates creativity in work, aligns common goals among team members, fosters positive relationships within groups, and builds mutual trust. This type of leadership inspires personnel to work toward the organization's vision and aids in establishing a competitive advantage and enhancing educational quality. It also facilitates problem-solving through creative and strategic methods, promotes innovative management practices through collaborative efforts, and allows the organization to respond effectively to emerging needs. A critical factor in this process is the genuine support of senior executives for innovation. Hunter and Cushenbery (2011) emphasized that innovative leadership leads to new product ideas with practical implementation potential. These products arise from two essential elements: generating new ideas and evaluating and implementing those ideas effectively.

Overall, technological competence is at a high level of appropriateness, consistent with Kerdtip's study (2007). The role of educational technology leadership ensures that teachers can design curricula, develop strategies, and integrate appropriate technology into learning environments for effective teaching and learning. This includes integrating technology into school administrators' workloads to access information sources, analyze and understand student data, and allocate budgets and resources to meet various needs. Furthermore, Louis and Murphy (2018) noted that the current education system is experiencing rapid changes due to technological advancements. The application of technology introduces more innovation into our education system. These changes necessitate that

school leaders leverage these advancements to enhance school success. Innovative leaders must possess strong management skills. According to Smith (2002), school administrators can utilize various media, including telecommunications and school websites, to communicate and interact with stakeholders effectively. Additionally, Valdez (2005) emphasized the importance of technology in innovative leadership by outlining several key functions: 1) it helps develop the vision and goals of technology leadership; 2) it aids in assessing needs to prioritize actions for achieving those goals; 3) it assists in designing and utilizing professional practices; and 4) it anticipates and recognizes the challenges associated with change. Therefore, innovative leadership requires knowledge and technological skills that are essential for managing educational institutions. School administrators must adapt their roles by incorporating technology into both learning management and administrative tasks. This shift will lead to greater efficiency, effectiveness, and the provision of accurate and clear information. Schools must also establish and maintain modern technological systems to support these initiatives. This version enhances clarity while preserving the original meaning and flow of your ideas.

In terms of personality, innovative leadership is characterized by a range of essential traits, as highlighted in the studies by Malai et al. (2023) and Nanthasri et al. (2020). These studies emphasize that innovative leaders are willing to think boldly, take decisive actions, and make important decisions while also accepting responsibility for their choices. Such leaders must be prepared to sacrifice for their work, exhibit patience in challenging situations, uphold ethical standards, embrace risk-taking, and be open to change. Moreover, they should possess strong listening skills, an entrepreneurial spirit, a penchant for challenges, and confidence in their instincts. Creativity is vital, as is the ability to build trust, drive results, and solve problems effectively. Innovative leaders are also thought leaders who serve as role models, motivating others through effective communication. Emotional maturity and social responsibility are crucial traits that enable them to cultivate networks both within and outside the organization.

Additionally, Rochvatanaboon (2010) found that innovative leaders must be willing to take risks and embrace change—qualities that positively influence invention, development, and innovation within organizations. According to Jong Charoen (2012), innovative leaders exemplify competence by fostering strong relationships with others. They are approachable friends who take responsibility for their work while cultivating a cooperative atmosphere that enhances organizational success. This corresponds with the findings of Lunawong et al. (2021), which indicate that innovative leaders are flexible, adept at compromise, and straightforward in their interactions. Such leaders create a warm and safe environment where employees feel trusted and valued. This consideration for others' feelings and openness to diverse opinions contribute significantly to successful outcomes in the workplace. School administrators must possess a trustworthy personality, maintain good relationships with others, be open-minded, compassionate, emotionally mature, selfless, and serve as positive role models for both students and teachers.

From the study by Puthong et al. (2020), it was found that the characteristics of innovative leadership include having a broad vision, the ability to generate new ideas, successfully executing assigned tasks, and developing strategic plans aligned with innovation. Additionally, innovative leaders create a supportive atmosphere within educational institutions, analyze risks from both internal and external factors, and encourage their personnel to think independently and take action. They also motivate staff across departments to commit to their roles. Moreover, personnel must be open to thinking outside the box, committed to continuous learning and development, and willing to listen to others' opinions. The application of various technologies is essential for developing innovations within educational institutions, maximizing their benefits and value to achieve institutional goals. Norlaila Wati Osman and Arasinah Kamis (2019) emphasize that executives should know their colleagues individually, as this demonstrates that they value their team members. Such

recognition fosters pride among collaborators, making them more willing to contribute to the organization. According to Malai et al. (2023), fostering innovation and creativity requires collaborative innovative leadership, ensuring that everyone in the organization understands its objectives and goals in a unified direction. This aligns with Horth (2014), who stated that innovative leadership involves adopting new approaches that lead to novel management methods and problem-solving techniques based on access to information or visionary predictions. Innovative leaders must have the courage to showcase their work and potential while continually developing their skills through training. Furthermore, Sarapon (2024) pointed out that awareness of change is a key element of innovative leadership among educational administrators. These leaders are dedicated to achieving their institution's goals by analyzing trends in educational changes and appropriately defining their institution's vision. They strive to drive the vision, mission, strategies, and goals for personnel implementation to achieve desired outcomes. Additionally, administrators prioritize institutional values through active participation and emphasize new innovations that create opportunities for development within the educational setting. In managing institutions within a multicultural society, they must understand the culture, lifestyles, and social conditions of their context and continuously develop themselves to adapt to social changes. Building strong relationships with the community and society is essential for effective educational leadership.

The understanding of Islamic culture that influences innovative leadership is generally appropriate at a high level. It has been found that this understanding requires leaders to possess knowledge of Islamic principles, provide opportunities for everyone to fully practice their religion, and foster coexistence with community members. Although this region is characterized by diverse beliefs, religions, and cultures, its way of life is distinct from other areas, giving its people a unique identity. This uniqueness is evident in various aspects of life within a multicultural society. This perspective aligns with the study by Pharungsang et al. (2012), which emphasizes that educational management in the southern border provinces must adhere to principles that integrate lifestyles, celebrate uniqueness, embrace cultural diversity, and address the needs of the local community. The educational curriculum should be rooted in the way of life relevant to the social conditions of the southern border, incorporating social problem-solving as a foundational element while focusing on enhancing quality of life and economic development for a peaceful society. These principles reflect the distinctive characteristics of Muslims, highlighting the significance of responsibility for their livelihoods and religious practices, which are interconnected. Such elements serve as a reflection of Muslim society in terms of culture, as demonstrated through their behaviors and interactions. Furthermore, an understanding of social culture is intrinsically linked to studying the broader social context.

The limitations of this study on the innovative leadership style of school administrators in a multicultural context include the use of descriptive analysis only and the geographic restriction of the sample group to multicultural areas within Thailand. In addition, Norlaila Wati Osman and Arasinah Kamis (2019) assert that innovative leaders must recognize and understand religious differences in beliefs and practices. Furthermore, leaders need to be aware of their personnel's capabilities and the development approaches that can lead to positive changes. Innovative leaders play a crucial role in enhancing organizational efficiency. Malai et al. (2023) found that understanding individual differences, avoiding judgments based on external appearances, motivating others, demonstrating sincerity, and earning colleagues' trust are essential traits for leaders amid social changes. Leaders should also promote religious beliefs and foster friendships among individuals of diverse faiths. This means that innovative leaders must possess ideas that contribute to societal development and awareness. In today's society, the management processes within educational institutions must align with external societal dynamics. Leaders are required to manage both internally and externally, establishing relationships with outside organizations. They must understand differences, embrace

change, and serve as role models in fostering collaborative efforts. Despite varying beliefs and religions, the ultimate goal is collective success, where everyone works together harmoniously—this embodies the essence of innovative leadership among educational administrators in a multicultural context. Administrators must cultivate strong relationships with the community. They should be attuned to the lifestyles, traditions, and cultures of individuals within their organizations and communities. Promoting religious faith and building friendships among people of different religions is vital, especially in a multicultural society characterized by diverse cultures and beliefs. Administrators need to be aware of these differences and strive to coexist with individuals who hold varied ideas and practices. By understanding the way of life of those they serve, administrators can enhance their effectiveness both within educational institutions and in the broader community, ultimately leading to organizational success and acceptance among community members.

6. Conclusion

The results of the research concluded that the innovative leadership style of educational administrators in the context of a multicultural society in Thailand comprises the following essential characteristics: administrative knowledge, managerial ability, technological competence, a strong and positive personality, awareness of global social changes, and an understanding of Islamic culture. These characteristics are vital for educational administrators to achieve effective leadership, foster positive relationships with the community, and guide educational institutions toward success and academic excellence.

7. Suggestion

The questionnaire was designed using insights from experts, which included teachers and educational administrators. In future research, data will be gathered from a broader range of stakeholders to improve reliability and will be extended to other regions of Thailand, taking into account diverse social and cultural factors.

Declarations

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During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT to detect only grammatical errors. The author declares that I reviewed and edited the final output as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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About the Contributor(s)

Jarunee Kao-ian, Ed.D., is an Associate Professor of Educational Administration at Yala Rajabhat University. She serves as a qualified reviewer for the Nakhabutr Paritta Journal of Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University. Her areas of expertise include educational administration, leadership, psychology and guidance, sociology, and community development. Her research interests focus on educational administration, leadership, conflict resolution, and risk management.

Email: Jarunee.k@yru.ac.th

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-8863-1998>

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