

The Influence of Ethical Motivation for Senior Executives on the Quality of Education of Thai Private Universities

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Abstract

This article aimed to evaluate the measurement of the senior executives' ethical motivation of the Thai private universities on the quality measure and provide guidelines for senior executives' ethical motivation of the Thai private universities. This research employed a mixed research methodology. There are 380 samples for quantitative data collection and 40 samples for qualitative data collection. Data were randomly selected from faculty members of the Thai private universities. The data were analyzed by using the descriptive statistics consisting of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics consisting of Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA). The research findings showed that Transformative Leadership and Ethical Development have positive relationships with the quality of education of the Thai private universities with a statistical significance of .05 level. The results of Multiple Regression Analysis showed that the five components of ethical motivation guidelines have an influence of the quality of education of Thai private universities. These five components can be ranked from higher to lower as follows: ethical development (Beta = .785, $p < .01$), ethical norms (Beta = .718, $p < .01$), transformational leadership (Beta = .710, $p < .01$), ethical appraisals (Beta = .689, $p < .01$), and personal management (Beta = .678, $p < .01$) respectively. Recommendation from the study is that ethics and morality should promoted and applied to increase the quality of education of Thai private universities.

Keywords: Influence of Ethical Motivation; Senior Executives; Thai Private Universities; Quality of Education.

1. Introduction

Thailand has been developing its peaceful society through civilization development for a long period of time. A number of different strategies are used to maintain peace in society for the benefit of the country and its people. The highest importance of the development of social functions and the evolution of Thailand's civil society is driven by ethics and morality. Thailand has always used ethics to determine decision-making behavior that leads to good actions. It is clearly understood that ethics is the appropriate measure for good actions for better well-being, rational living and good discipline, social discipline, and social development (Babbie, 2012). Society members realize that ethics is important and should be properly understood and applied in life. People in every society realize and understand that ethics is the basis of life. Therefore,

people must develop their minds and decision-making status before they can move to the next stage of social development. It is undeniable that without ethics, no one will be able to develop their own career path or become a leader in an organization without ethically accepting their behavior or attitude (Jindakul, 2006). In this regard, leaders need to be equipped with ethical and appropriate leadership based on ethics and values. Ethics is an important tool in how to behave and in earning respect from others both inside and outside the institution where leaders or administrators rely on ethics and act ethically in all respects. Ethical behavior within an organization includes interpersonal interactions and behavior and communication with others, and acceptance by others (Chirothphinyo, 2017; Verbos, Gerard, Forshey, Harding & Miller, 2007).

It can be said that ethics is important for everyone in society, especially those in the educational field, such as academics, practitioners, and policy makers because they have duties to lay the moral foundation and create the model of people's livelihood and standards. The researcher believes that ethics can be applied to increase the quality of education in Thai private universities. Therefore, the researcher conducted this study with the main purpose to evaluate the senior executives' ethical motivation of the Thai private universities on the quality of education and provide guidelines for senior executives' ethical motivation of the Thai private universities in promoting ethics and increasing education quality.

2. Theoretical Framework

Ethics is real knowledge that every member of an educational institution should possess. Being ethical is an important attribute of executives in conducting and controlling their actions and making a judgement. Ethical actions or ethical judgments cover a variety of personality traits, such as honesty, fairness, care, compassion, courageousness, respectfulness and responsibility. These are core and personality traits that can be acquired and imbibed through education (Campbell, 2006; Channuwong, 2018). Therefore, it is essential that leaders in educational institutions should be ethical. There are many studies of ethical leadership in education (Abrell-Vogel, C., and Rowold, J., 2014; Cherkowski et al., 2015; Hodgkinson, 1978; Starratt, 1991) that outline guidelines for ethics in educational leaders and suggests that ethical leadership should be the foundation for all leaders in the education industry.

Good leadership characteristics of senior administrators of educational institutions may include good conduct, punctuality, prevention of adultery, good teamwork, responsibility, discipline, and interpersonal relationships between teachers, parents and alumni, and improving education (Ruangsuan, 2010). It is clear that a good senior executive should have four characteristics: (1) responsibility for controlling one's own behavior, (2) honesty, working with morality and justice, (3) justice with facts and moral correctness, and (4) kindness to others (Ruangsuan, 2010).

Today there are many experts and academics who are unethical and inhumane. Part of the problems is that many private universities lack classroom resources (Caldwell & Hayes, 2007.) Valued educators should provide training and lectures to students to obtain a good and valuable education with appropriate morality and decision-making mindset.

University graduates are a group that needs to be developed in ethical thinking as they soon enter the workforce after graduation. Therefore, simple concerns with society must reflect the teaching

methods of various institutions and the content to be used in teaching. Among complex problems, an interdisciplinary approach is required. Universities must not be ignorant about the problem but being more accessible and ethical.

For these reasons, the executives of private universities should focus on the quality of education and ethics. Therefore, the researcher explored guidelines to promote executives' ethics of Thai private universities.

Research Objectives

The research has the following research objectives:

- (1) To study the influence of the ethical motivation of senior executives on the quality of education of Thai private universities.
- (2) To obtain senior executives' ethical motivation guidelines of Thai private universities.

Research Questions

This research examines ethical motivation guidelines for senior executives of private universities with special reference to Thailand. There are research questions as follows:

- (1) How do ethical motivations influence Thai private universities?
- (2) How do ethical motivations affect the education effectiveness of Thai private universities?

Research Hypotheses

The purpose of this research is to develop ethical motivation guidelines for senior executives in Thai private universities. The study is based on the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis: Ethical motivation among senior executives influences the quality of education in Thai private universities.

Ho: Ethical motivation among senior executives positively influences the quality of education in Thai private universities

Ha: Ethical motivation among senior executives does not influence the quality of education in Thai private universities.

Scope of the Research

The scope of this research focuses on five elements: (1) Transformative Leadership, (2) Ethical Development, (3) Ethical Norms, (4) Ethical Appraisals, and (5) Personnel Management (Menzel, 2016). These five elements are reviewed, monitored and evaluated under the principles set by the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC).,

Additionally, the Office of the Higher Education Commission identified three key indicators for evaluating the graduates' qualification; for example, the quality of the graduates, the effectiveness of private universities management, and the contribution to a knowledge-based society.

4. Research Methodology

The mixed method research was applied in this study; consisting of quantitative and qualitative method. Regarding the quantitative research, the researcher conducted the surveys by using the structured questionnaire while using the in-depth interview for the qualitative research.

Populations and Samples

1. Populations

The populations of this research are 7,745 lecturers from 72 Thai private universities.

2. Samples of the Quantitative Research

The sample represented in this research was calculated by using Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973) as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Formula

n	represents	sample size
N	represents	population size
e	represents	allowable error (= 0.05)

$$n = \frac{7,745}{1 + 7,745 (0.05)^2}$$

$$= 380.36$$

The samples used in this study were 380 persons. The sampling method of this research is randomly selected as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The Quantitative Research Sample

Rank	Institution Categories	Population Studies	Sample Studies
1	Private Universities	6,190	299
2	Private Colleges	1,215	55
3	Private Institutes	340	26
Totally		7,745	380

Source: Office of Higher Education Commission (2016)

3. Sample of the Qualitative Research

The samples used for the qualitative research were chosen purposively, calculated at the ratio of 10% of the samples of quantitative research and then the stratified sampling method was used according to the proportion of the sample types. The samples of qualitative research is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Sample Studies for qualitative research

Rank	Institution Categories	Population Studies	Sample Studies
1	Private Universities	250	25
2	Private Colleges	80	10
3	Private Institutes	50	5
Total		380	40

Source: Office of Higher Education Commission (2016)

Data Analysis

Two research tools were utilized in this study: a structured questionnaire for quantitative research and in-depth interviews for qualitative research. The collected primary data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Hypotheses were tested using inferential statistical techniques, specifically correlation analysis, to determine relationships between variables. Multiple regression analysis was employed to assess the direction of these relationships. Additionally, content analysis and triangulation were used to analyze the qualitative data.

3. Results

1. Demographic Profiles and Response Rate

The majority of participants were women (60.26%) and men (39.74%). As for age, population are 36-45 years old (50.26%), 26-35 years old (26.84%) and over 46 years old (22.90%) respectively. In terms of education, the majority hold master's degree (64.42%) and doctoral degree (36.58%). In terms of teaching experience, most had 6-10 years of teaching experience (46.58%), 5 years (29.74%) 11-15 years (21.32%) and 16 years or more (2.36%) respectively.

2. Guidelines of Ethical Motivation for Senior Executives of Thai Private Universities

According to research objective, there are five components: (1) Transformative Leadership (2) Ethical Development, (3) Ethical Appraisals, (4) Ethical Norms and (5) Personnel Management. The research findings revealed the guidelines of ethical motivation for senior executives of Thai private universities in overall was at moderate level ($M = 3.21$, $S.D. = 0.19$). In particular, transformational leadership had the highest mean score ($M = 3.91$, $S.D. = 0.23$), followed by personnel management ($M = 3.67$, $S.D. = 0.21$), ethical development ($M = 2.89$, $S.D. = 0.18$), ethical norms ($M = 2.81$, $S.D. = 0.22$), and ethical appraisal ($M = 2.78$, $S.D. = 0.16$) respectively (Table 3).

Table 3 Guidelines of Ethical Motivation for Senior Executives of Thai private universities

Guidelines of Ethical Motivation	M	S.D.	Interpretation	Rank
1. Transformative Leadership	3.91	0.23	High	1

2. Ethical Development	2.89	0.18	Moderate	3
3. Ethical Norms	2.81	0.22	Moderate	4
4. Ethical Appraisals	2.78	0.16	Moderate	5
5. Personnel Management	3.67	0.21	High	2
Total	3.21	0.19	Moderate	

3. The Quality of Education of Thai private universities

The research findings showed that the quality of education of Thai private universities, in overall, was at high level (M = 3.35, S.D. = 0.24). In particular, graduate quality had the highest mean score (M = 3.83, S.D. = 0.22), followed by management of educational standard of private universities (M= 3.42, S.D. = 0.27), and creating the knowledge and learning-based society (M= 3.42, S.D. = 0.27) respectively (Table 4).

Table 4 Descriptive Statistical Analysis on the Quality of Education of Thai private universities

The Quality of Education of Thai private universities in Overall	\bar{X}	S.D.	Interpretation	Rank
1. Graduate Quality	3.83	0.22	High	1
2. Management of Educational Standards of Private Universities	3.42	0.27	High	2
3. Creating the Knowledge and learning-based Society	3.35	0.17	Medium	3
Totally	3.53	0.24	High	

4. Correlation Analysis on a Relationship between Guidelines of Ethical Motivation of Senior Executives and Quality of Education of Thai Private Universities.

The results found that there is a relationship between the ethical motivation guidelines of senior executives and the quality of education of Thai private universities. In particular the three ethical motivation guidelines consisting of transformational leadership (.711, p < .01),, ethical development (.765, p < .01), and ethical norms (.150, p < .01) had a relationship with the quality education of Thai private universities (Table 5).

Table 5 Correlation Analysis of Relationship between Guidelines of Ethical Motivation of Senior Executives and Quality of Education of Thai private universities

Guidelines of Ethical Motivation of Senior Executives	Quality of Education of Thai private universities	
	R	Sig
1. Transformative Leadership	.711	.007*

2. Ethical Development	.765	.000*
3. Ethical Norms	.150	.008*
4. Ethical appraisals	.070	.051
5. Personnel Management	.040	.043*

* Significance level of 0.01

5. Regression Analysis of the Influence of Guidelines of Ethical Motivation on the Quality of Education of Thai private universities

The results of Multiple Regression analysis on the influence of the guidelines of ethical motivation on the quality of education of Thai private universities showed that each component had an influence on the quality of education of Thai private universities at the .01 level of significance. They can be ranked higher to lower as follows: Ethical development (Beta = .785, $p < .01$), ethical norms (Beta = .718, $p < .01$), transformational leadership (Beta = .710, $p < .01$), ethical appraisals (Beta = .689, $p < .01$), and personal management (Beta = .678, $p < .01$) respectively (Table 6).

Table 6 The Results of Regression Analysis on the Guidelines of Ethical Motivation Affecting the Quality of Education of Thai Private Universities

Topics	<u>Unstandardized</u>		<u>Standardized</u>	T	Sig.
	<u>Coefficients</u>		<u>Coefficients</u>		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
5 (Constant)	.4826	.085		44.976	.000
Transformative Leadership (X ₁)	.710	.051	.1504	.8291	.000
Ethical Development (X ₂)	.785	.063	.1615	.9142	.000
Ethical Norms (X ₃)	.718	.052	.1319	.8417	.000
Ethical appraisals (X ₄)	.689	.048	.1214	.7171	.000
Personnel Management (X ₅)	.678	.058	.1714	.8711	.000

* Significant at the 0.01 level

4. Discussion

The research findings revealed the guidelines of ethical motivation for senior executives of Thai private universities in overall was at moderate level. In particular, transformational leadership had the highest mean score, followed by personnel management, ethical development, ethical norms, and ethical appraisal respectively. The results of the findings can be discussed that senior

executives of Thai private universities must be able to motivate personnel and stakeholders in the private institutions to have a work ethics and act ethically. This research can develop morality gradually and consistently. This finding is relevant to a previous study by Makmeesup (2013) that claimed that leadership elements are necessary and important elements for all administrators to promote educational quality and promote ethical management in private educational institutions. In addition, transformative leadership is instrumental in driving educational work toward these goals. Good leaders must be honest and trustworthy to allow others to have faith in them and ultimately lead the team to success. Leaders must demonstrate ethical motivation in the form of personnel management and must receive ethical development in order to achieve quality development (Abrell-Vogel and Rowold, 2014). Ethical motivation can also be used to improve employees' morale and benefits (Weber, 2015). Furthermore, ethical motivation facilitates effective management (Romious et al., 2016). However, leaders should not be exceedingly firm about methods of ethical motivation because ethics requires skills (Mayer et al., 2013).

According to the research objectives, the results showed that the quality of education of private universities is determined by the Office of Higher Education Commission's indicators and reflected by the quality of graduates. Qualified graduates should complete all activities and assignments listed in the course management. Qualified graduates should possess the following qualities; (1) Lifelong learning skills that include morality commitment to study and professionalism; (2) Knowledge to ensure that the organization has enough qualified personnel; (3) Problem solving and innovative skills. In this matter, Chirothphinyo, N. (2017) concluded that five components: (1) student performance, (2) research development and innovation, (3) academic service, (4) cultural art and locality knowledge, and (5) institutional management are important to the improvement of the education quality of Thai private universities. This research and past studies confirm the process of create qualified graduates with merit thinking, attitude and standard of private universities and framework established by OHEC. Strategies should be aimed at developing students and applying the results to the development of research and innovation. A good curriculum must combine theory and actual practice, which is in line with the study of Chirothphinyo, N. (2017) who identified four important management factors: general management, human resources, academics, and budget. There is a need for cooperation between public and private education institutions, with follow-up on curriculum improvements every five years.

The results of correlation analysis showed that the three components consisting transformational leadership, ethical development and ethical norms had a positive relationship with the quality of education in private universities. This finding aligns with Dekker's (2004) study, which highlighted the critical importance of the relationship between leaders and the private institution's interests. These relationships should be clarified in both personal and professional contexts within the private institutions. Moreover, human resource management should be integrated with fostering a collaborative learning process, maintaining continuous faculty engagement, and seeking new knowledge. These efforts should be ongoing and periodically reviewed. To further elaborate, Chirothphinyo (2017) identified key findings in his research,

underscoring that the success of promoting ethics is rooted in good governance, as it is the initial step in setting the right attitudes and fostering a shared learning culture. Additionally, Bandura (2013) argued that ethical conduct should not remain merely an ideal or concept; a concrete indicator must be established. Bandura suggested that designing an appropriate measure for ethical behavior involves understanding what is right or wrong in relation to people's learning behaviors. Regarding leadership, decision-making is also crucial. Carroll and Buchholtz (2003) explained that leaders must exercise their roles and decision-making authority in a legitimate manner.

The discussion in this section illustrates that ethics extends beyond what is documented by the organization or institution or declared by authorities. While families may instill ethical values in their members, most individuals still require guidance from professionals in their workplaces. This is due to the various facets of ethics: some are straightforward and easy to adhere to, while others may need to be learned through interventions such as ethics training to shape employee attitudes and motivational programs to encourage ethical behavior. On the one hand, leaders or administrators of the private institutions must address ethics in line with the rules and regulations established by the organization and authorities.

These results this study align with the findings of Lakpetch and Lorsuwannarat (2012) and Snongtaweepon et al. (2018) who explored how knowledge aimed at building a knowledge-based and learning-based society is transferred from universities to industry. Their study suggests that Thai private universities should establish mechanisms to share or transfer knowledge with professional organizations in the industry. In the context of Thai private universities, this could also present commercial opportunities. Notably, the study found that a sustainable learning organization is fundamentally rooted in legitimate ethical behavior. Dekker (2004) further emphasized the critical importance of the relationships between leaders and individuals within and outside the private institutions. This process should take into account both personal and professional interactions among people in the private institutions, as the tacit and implicit knowledge derived from these interactions is valuable for developing control and merit systems. In addition to focusing on interpersonal relationships within the private institutions, the latest research by Doshi and Khokle (2011) on ethics-based learning organizations in the education sector highlights that, besides ethics-centric management, the co-creation of a learning process involves the continuous involvement of program faculty members and an ongoing search for new knowledge, particularly through observation to foster innovation. Acquiring practical experience from the real world is also highly recommended, requiring partnerships with relevant government agencies and appointed committees from the private education institutions, and potentially involving donors.

The results of Multiple Regression analysis on the influence of the guidelines of ethical motivation on the quality of education of Thai private universities showed that each component had an influence on the quality of education of Thai private universities at the .01 level of significance. They can be ranked higher to lower as follows: Ethical development, ethical norms, transformational leadership, ethical appraisals, and personal management. The results of this

study are relevant to a study of Bangbon et al. (2023) and Wongmajarapinya et al. (2023) who that ethical development is the policy and tool leading to increase total quality management and quality assurance of the organizations as a whole. Ethical development must be started from the top line and bottom line of the company. With regard to improving the quality of private universities, Gurgu and Bucea-Manea-Tonis (2018) stated that a significant progress must be made by the responsible authorities towards improving the quality of education, further efforts are needed concerning graduate quality, private universities management, and the development of a knowledge-based and learning-based society. Continuous improvement by the responsible agencies is essential for achieving sustainability in private universities management, and all stakeholders must benefit from ethical conduct

5. Conclusion

The five elements are Transformative Leadership, Personnel Management, Ethical Development, Ethical Norms and Ethical Appraisals are key components of ethical motivation that lead to quality of education of Thai private universities. Private universities are the non-profit organization. Therefore, the management of the institution must have some conscience about profiting financially from students, the community/society, and the nation. This consciousness must be shared by both academics and administrative officials. (1) Ethical appraisals require an appropriate quality reassurance process (PDCA – Plan, Do, Check, Act) which is widely used in organizational development process. (2) Personnel Management is the most importance for every organization because everyone can be deeply embedded with good governance which includes honesty and integrity. (3) The research findings help formulate the guidelines for ethical motivations for senior executives of Thai private universities as shown in Figure 1.

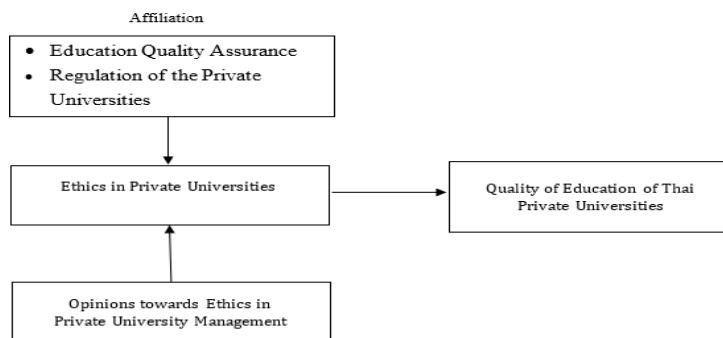


Figure 1 Guidelines of Ethical Motivation for Senior Executives of Thai Private Universities

6. Recommendations

1. Office of Higher Education Commission should provide a budget for training to Thai private universities in promoting ethics and morality for their staff because it is important for staff and lecturers in private universities to have the correct and thorough ethical knowledge.

2. Office of Higher Education Commission should employ ethics and morals as one of the features for educational quality assurance of private universities. These ethics and morals should be expressed through the quality of students or graduates.

3. Office of Higher Education Commission should evaluate the Thai private universities via leadership aspect by ethical assessment.

Contribution of this Research to the Society

This research places great importance on ethics, the concept and discipline that are concerned with what is morally good and bad, what is right and wrong which are the important principles to form the society to live with happiness and peace. The results of this study can be used as guidelines for senior executives of Thai Private Universities to increase ethics, morality and quality of education as a whole.

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