

Improvement of the quality of teachers' working lives in Catholic schools under Catholic dioceses in Thailand

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Date Received: June 29, 2015; Date Revised: July 24, 2015

Abstract – *This investigation aims to develop the quality of teachers' working life in Catholic Schools. During phase one, a set of indicators of teachers' quality of working life was developed. During phase two, teachers' quality of working life was developed. The results identify indicators of quality of working life as: reasonable and fair compensation, collaboration and human relationship, equilibrium between working life and personal life, safe and healthy environment, development of human potential, security and professional growth and characteristics of Catholic education identity. After development using these indicators, teachers had a higher level of satisfaction, with a significance level of .01.*

Keywords – *Quality of working life, Catholic schools, teachers, Thailand.*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play an important role in inculcating knowledge, thought and mentality in youths to a level where those individuals are able to apply their knowledge and competency in developing the society and nation [1]. Recently, teachers have stimulated learning reforms by encouraging students to self-develop based on their physical and mental potential. This is the aim of educational management but, to accomplish this goal, it is necessary for teachers to be motivated and have a good quality of working life [2]. Teacher motivation is affected by many aspects of the working environment, including administration and management, work characteristics, colleagues and location. A balanced working environment encourages positive teacher morale and work satisfaction, which makes the organization efficient and effective [3]. A high quality of working life has an impact on work practice and motivates teachers to accomplish goals on behalf of their managers and the organization itself [4].

For Catholic educational institutions, there is an additional responsibility in providing education to develop the spiritual mind of children, adolescents and young adults within the context of Catholicism. This mission, combined with a desire for academic excellence, is a burden for teachers [5]. Catholic schools request the teachers to love their colleagues as well as their students, students' parents, and the community. Teachers must be an example of study-

oriented, knowledge-oriented planning and they are expected to provide an appropriate learning experience to meet the individual need of each student. The aim is to encourage students to excel academically, while possessing a well-defined set of ethics, so that the Catholic education remains sustainable, stable and appropriate in the context of modern society. The teachers must consider knowledge, the psychology of instruction and development of their own mental and spiritual conscience in alignment with academic, vocational, technological and quality instructional management [6]. Teachers must be responsible, self-sacrificing, dedicated and diligent. They are expected to lead a good example, maintain a strong code of ethics and encourage and reinforce their students' love in practicing religion continuously and sustainably. In order to motivate teachers to work to their full potential and fulfil the specified expectations, it is necessary to develop a good quality of working life [7].

The quality of working life is important for administration and management. The school develops or fails depending on its members. These members apply themselves based on the quality of their working life [8]. Therefore, schools should enhance and support the quality of working life using various techniques so that the teachers are happy and enjoy work. They will progress and take pride in their everyday tasks, which will lead to a decrease in teacher absences and resignations. As a result, school funds and time will be

saved, causing the school to operate at a high quality level [9].

For the reasons outlined above, it necessary to develop a set of indicators of quality of teachers' working life in Catholic schools under Catholic dioceses in Thailand. School administrators would then be able to use these indicators to develop the quality of teachers' lives, which will have a positive effect on the development of students to be intelligent, moral and live happily in society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research was to develop a set of indicators of quality of teachers' working lives in Catholic schools under Catholic dioceses in Thailand, which could subsequently be used to develop the quality of teachers' working lives in Thai Catholic schools.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

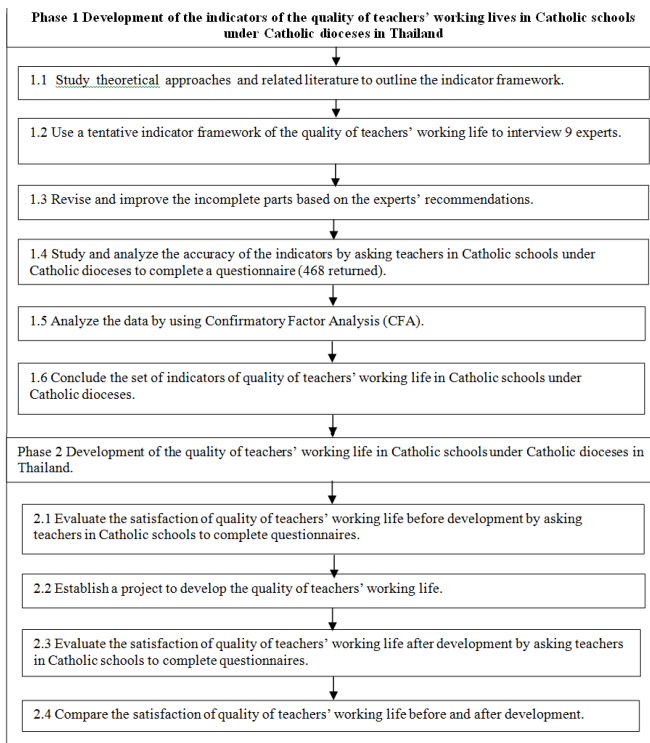


Figure 1: Process of research and development in teachers' quality of working life in Catholic schools under Catholic dioceses.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed to gather data. The research area and population were determined by purposive sampling and included 10 dioceses in 10 provinces across Thailand, namely Bangkok, Ratchaburi, Chantaburi, Chiang Mai,

Nakhon Sawan, Surat Thani, Sakhon Nakhon, Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Ratchasima and Udon Thani. The investigation was conducted in two phases. During phase one, a set of indicators of teachers' quality of working life in Catholic schools under the jurisdiction of Catholic dioceses in Thailand was developed. This was achieved by studying theoretical approaches and related research literature, outlining the framework of indicators, in-depth interview with 9 purposively selected experts, asking teachers and analyzing the data using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). During this process, 509 questionnaires were handed out to staff in Catholic schools and 468 (93.60%) returned. During phase two, teachers' quality of working life was developed. This was achieved by evaluating the teachers' satisfaction in their quality of working life before development, establishing a project of development, evaluating the success of the project and comparing the satisfaction in their quality of working life before and after the development. 40 purposively selected teachers completed the evaluation. The research process is shown in Figure 1.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of phase one show that indicators of the quality of teachers' working lives are: reasonable and fair compensation, collaboration and human relationship at work, equilibrium between working life and personal life, a safe and healthy environment, the development of human potential, security and professional growth and the characteristics of Catholic education identity.

Table 1. Evaluation results of quality of working life satisfaction before development of school practices in line with given indicators in Catholic schools under Catholic dioceses in Thailand.

Quality of working life indicator	\bar{X}	SD	Level of Satisfaction
1. Reasonable and fair compensation	3.13	0.31	Average
2. A safe and healthy environment	3.50	0.49	Average
3. Security and professional growth	3.27	0.34	Average
4. The development of human potential	3.52	0.48	Average
5. Collaboration and human relationship at work	3.13	0.26	Average
6. Equilibrium between working life and personal life	3.41	0.49	Average
7. Characteristics of Catholic education identity	3.36	0.48	Average
Total	3.25	0.22	Average

Forty individuals were then asked to complete an evaluation of quality of working life satisfaction before and after development of school practices in line with these indicators. Phase two results showed that teachers had a higher level of satisfaction in their quality of working life after development than before, with a significance level of .01. These results are documented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 2. Evaluation results of quality of working life satisfaction after development of school practices in line with given indicators in Catholic schools under Catholic dioceses in Thailand.

Quality of working life indicator	\bar{X}	SD	Level of Satisfaction
1. Reasonable and fair compensation	4.54	0.41	Highest
2. A safe and healthy environment	4.94	0.13	Highest
3. Security and professional growth	4.97	0.11	Highest
4. The development of human potential	4.97	0.17	Highest
5. Collaboration and human relationship at work	4.71	0.38	Highest
6. Equilibrium between working life and personal life	4.92	0.14	Highest
7. Characteristics of Catholic education identity	4.93	0.11	Highest
Total	4.76	0.16	Highest

These results are broken down by indicator below.

Reasonable and fair compensation

Teachers had higher level of satisfaction in their quality of working life after development, with a .01 significance level. Teacher salaries are based on the level of their educational degree, as specified by the Office of the Private Education Commission. Their salary is sufficient for personal expenditure and care of their families. They obtained adequate revenue for their profession. In comparison with similar occupations, their salary is appropriate for their knowledge, competency and working experience. They have other fringe benefits besides those specified by the Office of the Private Education Commission. In addition, they are promoted based on standard criteria for evaluating working value and working duration every academic year.

A safe and healthy environment

After development, it was found that the teachers had a higher level of satisfaction with their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. They had a working environment that enhanced their physical and

mental health. The schools appointed a committee to take care of working environment and safety. The schools determined precise rules and principles for work safety. Besides, physical check-ups and medical expenses were covered by the schools based on the regulations specified by the Office of the Private Education Commission.

Security and professional growth

After development, it was found that the teachers had a higher level of satisfaction in their working life, with a significance level of .01. They were appointed based on regulations specified by the Office of the Private Education Commission. They completed assignments appropriately using their knowledge, competency and educational degree. They had security and progress in their work based on a standardised merit system. They had a secure income, fair employment rules and the security of unemployment compensation based on the Labor Protection Act. They could be promoted to higher positions, given badges of honour and had a specific working position.

The development of human potential

After development it was found that the teachers had a higher level of satisfaction with their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. Every teacher was assigned work to enhance and develop their skill, knowledge and competency. Everyone developed a love for their profession, ideals, a teaching spirit and professional certification. Everyone developed their physical and mental attitude. The teachers were given opportunities to further their study for self-development. Everyone attended at least 20 hours of seminars and training per academic year, both inside and outside the school. Everyone was also supervised and observed regularly and participated in academic activities, contests and academic performances. Furthermore, everyone participated in evaluation and was informed of the results from work performance evaluation.

Collaboration and human relationship at work

After development, it was found that the teachers had a higher level of satisfaction with their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. The teachers could work in a team work with their colleagues. They had unity without discrimination. They helped and supported each other in both their work and personal life. They were able to cooperate with their administrators and colleagues formally and informally. Moreover, they had a stronger relationship with students' parents and the community.

The equilibrium between working life and personal life

After development, it was found that the teachers had a higher level of satisfaction with their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. They had adequate time for their work, travel and family. They had leisure time to rest and pursue personal activities. They could take annual and special vacations according to the circumstances. They had sufficient time to engage in social activities. In addition, they, as well as their families, had time to attend school activities.

Characteristics based on the Catholic education identity

After development it was found that the teachers had higher level of satisfaction with their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. They expressed love, mercy and respect for themselves and others' worth and esteem. They were honest, had courage to do the right thing and were reliable. They were grateful and appreciative of the achievements of others. They were ready to return gratitude to on all occasions. They were satisfied with their position, their economy and their family life. They loved colleagues as part of a brotherhood and respected different beliefs, religions and cultures. Furthermore, they strived for excellence in study and personal development in order to fulfil their human potential.

DISCUSSION

The indicators identified by this investigation are supported by the research of Sasan Baleghizadeh and Yahya Gordani [10], who studied the motivation and quality of work life among Secondary School EFL Teachers. They conclude indicators as fair and appropriate compensation, work conditions, chance of growth, social constitutionalism, relevance of work in life, work and total space of life, social integration in the organization and use and development of potential. Walton [11] suggests that the indicators of teachers' quality of working life, consisted of adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and the total life space and the social relevance of work life. Studies by the Catholic Educational Council of Thailand [12] also suggested the importance of the education identity in the quality of teachers' working lives. They concluded that for successful implementation of the Catholic education principles,

and thus a higher quality of working life, the teacher must be compassionate, respect the value and dignity of themselves and others, be honest, maintain themselves in reality, have the courage to do what is right and honest, be grateful and recognize the good that others afford them, save money, live a simple and happy life, love their colleagues, respect differences of faith, religion and culture, focus on pursuing excellence, acquire and disseminate new knowledge and complete human potential.

Teachers had a higher level of satisfaction in their quality of working life, with an overall significance level of .01. This is supported by the research of Plunkett, Attner and Allen [13], which concludes that satisfied teachers obtained work contracts, personal competency development, participated in working projects and progressed in a merit system. These teachers were successful in their work, since they had good relationships with their managers and colleagues. They also respected the rights of others. When teachers have a good working environment and socio-economic status, they are more optimistic and increase their motivation to work. Cumming and Huse [14] also suggest that teacher satisfaction is dependent on adequate and fair compensation, a safe and healthy environment, development of human potential, growth and security, social integration, constitutionalism, space and social relevance. Furthermore, Yon Choomchit [15] found that satisfied teachers had string ethics and morality, they behaved following the virtues of religion, they were thrifty, honest, diligent and scholarly, they had a strong sense of professional ideals, emphasized religious principles and dedicated themselves to their work. The longer they experienced these conditions, the more satisfied they felt. Below, further discussion is divided by indicator.

Reasonable and fair compensation

After development, teachers had a higher level of satisfaction in their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. This was supported by the investigation of the Educational Council [16], which suggests that the teachers obtained sufficient salaries in schools and insurance from work contracts. They had adequate income to live on with dignity without working too hard or working for supplementary revenue. Walton [17] suggests that the teachers obtained adequate and fair revenue for their job, as specified by society. The revenue obtained from their work was appropriate in comparison with other jobs. Moreover, Cummings and Huse [18] suggest that the teachers obtained salary and other benefits befitting an

acceptable standard of living. This was also supported by the research findings of Suchanuch Pantaniya's [19] study of the organizational climate affecting teachers' quality of working life. Pantaniya regards income and fringe benefits from school as appropriate for the work teachers were required to do. Pantaniya also viewed that the evaluation of work practice adequate and fair, which contributed to high levels of worker satisfaction.

Safe and healthy environment

After development, teachers had a higher level of satisfaction in their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. This agrees with Walton's [20] suggestion that teachers must work in a safe and healthy environment, with an appropriate number of working hours, which could decrease the risk of illness and injury. Moreover, Cummings and Huse [21] suggest that teachers are affected by both physical and mental aspects of their working environment. Herrick and Macaby [22] recommend that teachers apply secure and safe principles in their work, which would decrease their anxieties over health, hygiene and work safety. The school organization must improve the working environment to be better because it affects teacher attitude, quality of working life and output. Settachai Chaisanit and Malai Muangted [23] argue that there must be a safe working system to protect individuals and prevent potential accidents. Teachers must attend training to refresh and increase their knowledge of appropriate behaviour in the case of an emergency. There must be a school group insurance policy, which will safeguard the teachers and have a positive effect on their work practice. In addition, Suchanuch Pantaniya [24] found that schools with safe environments that were well lit and had good ventilation provided the necessary atmosphere for teaching.

Security and professional growth

After development, teachers had a higher level of satisfaction in their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. This is supported by the research of Cummings and Huse [25], which suggests that teachers must be appointed to positions appropriate for their knowledge and competency. This will allow them to progress in their occupation and develop their own ability to obtain new kinds of knowledge and skills. Stein [26] recommends that teachers see security, progress and development in their work and are rewarded by the organization. Challenging work will best help teachers to develop their skills and expertise. Walton [27] also suggests that teachers are assigned challenging tasks to develop their competency, as well

as their potential. Those teachers whose work performances are recognized by their colleagues and family members get the most satisfaction out of their jobs. Settachai Chaisanit and Malai Muangted [28] recommend that teachers are hired and promoted based on a merit system so that they can be confident they will not be dismissed from their work without reasonable reasons. Teachers must also know that they will receive compensation when they are dismissed from their work.

Development of human potential

After development, teachers had a higher level of satisfaction in their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. This is supported by the research of Wexley and Latham [29]. They suggest that all teachers should develop and improve their self-awareness. They must obtain the skill, knowledge and competency to complete their work duties and keep pace with changes. They must analyze work guidelines to be successful, efficient and effective. They must adjust their attitude, develop understanding, create collaborative staff relationships and motivate each other to dedicate themselves to their full potential. Schuler [30] recommends that teachers continually develop and enhance their knowledge, skill, attitude and philosophy. Besides, they must also obtain new experiences outside of their educational institutions. Cummings and Huse [31] suggest that teachers are assigned work that requires application of knowledge and competency. Work must be clearly defined and monitored by a careful work control system. Suchanuch Pantaniya [32] found that teachers must participate in seminars and conferences and practice their work based on the field of study in which they have training. Furthermore, they must also have the opportunity to take part in planning for work practice and evaluation of their work performances.

Collaboration and human relationship at work

After development, teachers had a higher level of satisfaction in their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. This is congruent with the research of Walton [33], which suggests that satisfied teachers were members of a clearly defined organization, worked in groups or teams in support of one another. Teachers with a higher level of satisfaction have closer relationships and are given the opportunity to talk openly. They help and encourage one another, leading to good working morale. Cummings and Huse [34] recommend that teachers are given opportunity to interact with other people in the school without discrimination. Everyone must have an equal

opportunity to be promoted based on merit. This idea is supported by Suchanuch Pantaniya [35]. She found that teachers should be given the opportunity to attend various activities within the community, including activities to develop society. Besides, they must also have the opportunity to contact students' parents to collaborate and solve the students' problems of learning achievement and behaviour.

Equilibrium between working life and personal life

After development, teachers had a higher level of satisfaction in their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. Cummings and Huse [36] suggest that teachers must be allowed to balance their work and personal life. They must have time to rest and pursue recreational activities. Milton [37] found that teachers needed personal time, during which they did not want to be disturbed. Walton [38] also recommends that the teachers have a defined timetable for work that included time spent travelling to work. Suchanuch Pantaniya [39] found that teachers felt happiest with their work practice in school when they were given the opportunity to attend activities and talk with their colleagues to relax the tension during their work practice.

Characteristics based on the Catholic education identity

After development, teachers had a higher level of satisfaction in their quality of working life, with a significance level of .01. This is consistent with the research of The Catholic Education Council of Thailand [40]. They suggest that teachers love and teach not only in knowledge but also the growth of humanity. They must dedicate themselves to students with care and encouragement. They must teach by transmitting the values of scripture to accomplish the intentions of Catholic educational management. Yon Choomchit [41] argues that teachers must be honest and diligent in searching for knowledge. They must have professional ideals and emphasize religious principles. The Catholic Education Council of Thailand [42] suggests that teachers have strong intentions and dedication to accomplish their mission by organizing activities and maintaining the identity of the Catholic Education Council.

CONCLUSION

This investigation found that the indicators of quality of working life of teachers in Catholic schools under Catholic dioceses in Thailand were reasonable and fair compensation, collaboration and human relationship at work, equilibrium between working life

and personal life, a safe and healthy environment, the development of human potential, security and professional growth and the characteristics of Catholic education identity. After development of the quality of working life for teachers in Catholic schools based on these indicators, the teachers had higher level of satisfaction, with an overall significance level of .01. It can be concluded that the school administrators were able to use these indicators as a framework for effectively developing the quality of teachers' working lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings can be used a framework for policy-making by school administrators. School administrators can develop teachers' quality of working life by establishing projects based on the identified indicators. Further research should consider the factors affecting the development of quality of teachers' working life in Catholic schools under Catholic dioceses. There should also be similar investigations into the development of quality of teachers' working life in Catholic schools under Catholic dioceses in different regions and of different sizes. These indicators could also be developed to form a framework applicable to Catholic schools in a variety of different contexts.

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