



## Flipping the position-entry approach for Thai school leader as the future needs

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to develop a new position-entry approach for Thai school leader in the future. The research method used in this study was Mixed Method Design. There were three groups of informants; The first group for quantitative research through questionnaire consisted of school leaders, teachers, chairman of school board, community representative, alumni and parents, with 370 samples. The research instrument used was a 5 level rating scale questionnaire. The data were analyzed by using frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The second group for qualitative research through interview consisted of experts and specialists in human resource management, educational management, school management, school supervision and teaching, totally 20 people. The third group for validating and fine tuning the draft through focus group consisted of 18 experts and educational stakeholders. The research findings were concluded with two new approaches for school leader's position-entry, which are Track 1 approach: The approach for Tenure School Leader Position-Entry, and Track 2 approach: The approach for Contracted-School Leader Position-Entry. In both approaches, the candidates require the same set of qualifications, characteristics, competencies, and same selection process. The differences between two approaches are on the term of appointment and performance evaluation system. Under Track 1 approach, there is tenure appointment up to retirement and no assessment process for renewal. In track 2 approach, there is a four-year term of appointment and assessment process for contract renewal.

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### Introduction

In the preparation of human resources to cope with the changes in a VUCA world, where the rate of change has Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity and there may not be only one correct solution (Siribanpitak, 2018), the school leader is considered as having a critical role. The school leader is very important in driving a school agenda to support the national goal. According to the direction of Thailand's 20-year national strategies (2018–2037), the upcoming changes will focus on innovation and development in order to strengthen human resources and increase competitiveness. Thus, education as a national human resource development function has become

one of the key priorities. Based on research, the success of a school is mainly derived from the management competencies of school leaders. It is similar to the success of organizations in the private sector, where the capabilities of corporate leaders are considered most important to an organization's success. Therefore, both public and private organizations have put high emphasis on the qualification and competencies for recruiting leaders. (Hallinger, 2011; Jacobson, 2005; Narintarangkul Na Ayudhaya, 2015)

The selection of school leader in Thailand has been a key topic and focus for many years. A major issue of the country is that there were more than 4,000 vacancies for school leadership positions under the Office of the Basic Education Commission, in 2018 (Mahasin, 2018). The issue has become one of the major barriers impacting students' academic achievement and quality of education in the country.

The school leader is named in a variety of terms, varying from country to country, including Principal, Head Teacher, School Head, and School Director (in case of Thailand). Each country has

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different processes for selection and entry to the leader position. In Thailand, entering the position of school leader is determined by the criteria and methods defined by the Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission (Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission, 2016). Based on the study, the evolution of the school leader's position-entry approach in the past has transformed continuously. The important changes can be summarized into 7 periods (based on literature reviews and interviews) in Table 1. To avoid any misunderstanding, the term "approach" in this study implies "a way of considering or dealing with something" (Cambridge University Press, 2019)

During the period of 2013–2015, there was a pathway through examination for teachers to become school directors without working experience in Deputy Director position. Teachers were classified into two groups: (1) Experienced Group, teachers were assessed based on examination scores and portfolio of work experience; and (2) General Group, teachers were assessed solely based on examination scores. In 2013, OTEPC organized the centralized examination, and there was no interview. However, in 2014, the Sub-Committee of Teacher and Educational Personnel in Educational Service Area conducted another examination and this time with interviews. On the development aspect, school directors had to go through the induction program before entering into the position as well as an apprentice program in both small and large schools.

Period of 2016–present: Qualifications of school directors have been more clearly defined as follows: (1) being a civil service teacher or an educational personnel under the Office of Basic Education Commission; (2) meeting criteria under Section 30;

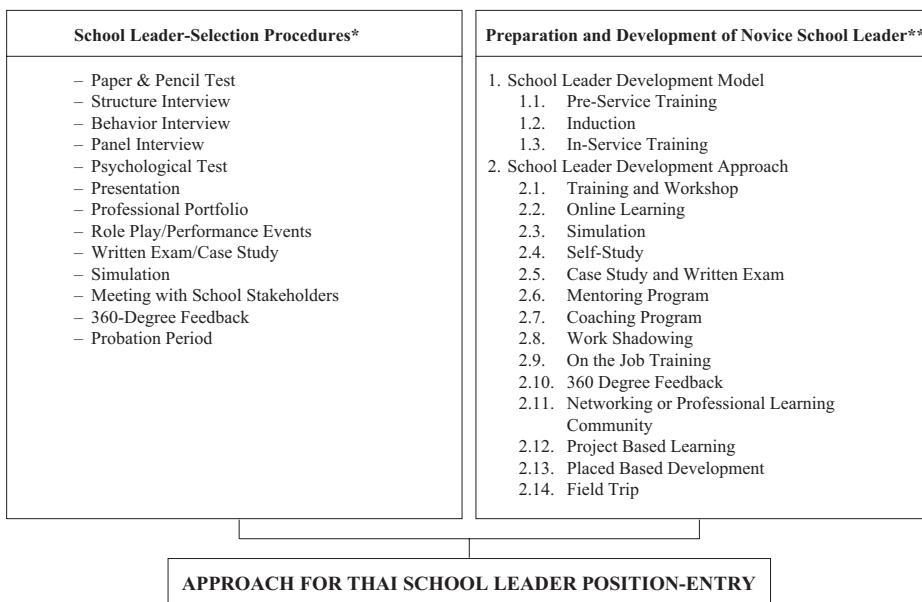
(3) having at least a Bachelor's degree in education or other degrees and criteria as specified by OTEPC; (4) being in the any of these positions: School Deputy Director for at least 1 year/ Deputy District Director/ Assistant District Director/ Basic Education Administration Officer/ Educational Supervisor with experience as head of function for at least 2 years. On top of the above qualifications, there are criteria for examinations with 100 points through a multiple-choice examination, testing general knowledge and proficiency, focusing on education, analysis, and implementation of educational theories. Another 200 points are based on historical performance (150 points) and interviews (50 points). In addition, there are pre-service trainings of 60-hour professional development sessions before entering positions (Office of the Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission, 2016).

Based on the history and evolution of position-entry approach of school director, there emerges a question of how the recruitment, selection, and position-entry of Thai school leaders in the future should look. This is due to the fact that the new generation school leader can help to transform the country towards the goal of Thailand 4.0 and 20-year National Strategies. As a result, the research topic of developing the position-entry approach for Thai school leader in the future is based on the need to support the educational policy maker.

The objective of this study was to develop new position-entry approaches for Thai school leader in the future. The conceptual framework of this study shown in figure 1 consists of a school leader-selection procedure and the preparation and development of novice school leader. The conceptual framework was analyzed and synthesized from 16 and 22 countries accordingly.

**Table 1** The evolution of Thai school leader's position-entry approach

Period before 1960	Period of 1960–1980	Period of 1981–2003
The public schools were under the Ministry of Education. There was only the position of the principal who was responsible for managing the school. There was no clear definition of the principal's qualifications. The school district (Suk Sa Thikarn Ampor) was responsible for selecting the principal, considered in terms of the appropriateness of age, knowledge, family status readiness, and on a voluntary basis. There was no process of induction or Pre and Post Training after entering the position. The selected principals reported to work and performed his/her duty as soon as the order was effective. The supervisor was the "District Chief" (Nai Ampor).	The public schools were under the Ministry of Interior: Provincial Administrative Organization determined the position of principal or headmaster. However, there were no clearly defined guidelines for qualifications for the principal. Provincial Administrative Organization was responsible for arranging a written examination. There was no interview in the process. There was no pre-training and induction, but there were in-service trainings after taking the position.	The public schools were under the Ministry of Education. There were vice principal, principal, vice headmaster, headmaster, vice school director and school director as school leadership positions, all of which required at least 6 years of teaching experience. Appointed by the Civil Service Teacher Committee, the Provincial Civil Service Teacher Sub-Committee organized a written examination and an interview. Similar to the previous period, there was no pre-training and induction, but there were in-service trainings.
Period of 2004–2007	Period of 2008–2012	Period of 2013–2015
Schools were still under the Ministry of Education. The qualifications for the selection of school directors were as follows:	The qualifications for selecting School Directors:	The qualifications for selecting School Directors:
1. Having a Bachelor's degree in education and other requirements as specified by The Office of the Teacher and Educational Personnel Commission (OTEPC).	1. Having at least a Bachelor's degree in education and meeting other criteria determined by OTEPC. Moreover, school director candidates must hold a certificate for professional school administrators and pass the required professional development according to the criteria and procedures set by the OTEPC.	1. Having at least a Bachelor's degree in education and meeting other criteria determined by OTEPC.
2. Having worked in the position of School Deputy Director for at least 1 year / or holding other educational positions for Deputy District Director/ Assistant District Director of the Education Area Offices for at least 2 years or other positions equivalent to professional expertise according to OTEPC.		2. Having worked as a teacher for at least 4 years with Bachelor's degree or 2 years with Master's degree or other equivalent positions as determined by OTEPC.
3. Having a certificate for professional school administrators. 4) Passing the required professional development according to the criteria and procedures set by the OTEPC.		3. Holding a certificate for professional school administrators.
		4. Passing the required professional development according to the criteria and procedures set by the OTEPC.



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework

Note: \*Analyzed from 16 countries, \*\* Analyzed from 22 countries

## Methodology

This research employed a mixed method approach, using Multiphase Mixed Method Design which entailed the following steps:

### Step 1

Study properties, desirable characteristics and performance, method of recruiting and selecting candidates for the school leader positions sub-steps are as follows:

1. Study documents and online resources related to the method of recruiting and selecting candidates for the school leader positions both in Thailand and abroad

2. Develop conceptual framework related to the method of recruiting and selecting candidates for the school leader positions

3. Study the methods of recruitment and selection of candidates for the future school leader position by using 5 scale rating questionnaire

Study of desirable conditions was conducted by collecting information from experts and stakeholders involved in recruiting and selecting candidates for the school leader through questionnaires and interviews.

### Data collection

Informants are comprised of two groups:

1. Questionnaires Responders: The stratified sampling method was applied. Schools were selected from 18 regional and central education areas across the country. Two schools were randomly selected in each province and two provinces were randomly selected in educational area. Informants were 370 samples in this study consisting of (1) School Directors,

(2) Teachers, (3) Chairman of the basic education school board, (4) Parents, (5) Representative from alumni

2. Interviewees: This was a collection of qualitative data from informants who are experts or professionals in educational administration, human resource management, and management, which were classified into 5 groups as follows: (1) experts in human resource management in the education sector, (2) experts of human resource management outside the educational field, (3) former school directors, (4) current school directors, and (5) teachers, for a total of 20 informants.

### Instruments

The research instruments used were 5 level rating scale questionnaire with open-ended questions and semi-structured interview form

### Data analysis

Data were analyzed by finding the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation (SD), conditions that are related to the attributes, quality, competency, performance, and assessment for selection and development of candidates for the school leader positions. Scoring criteria of the answers in the questionnaire was on a 5-level scale together with the content analysis from open-ended questions.

### Step 2

Develop the position-entry approaches for Thai school leader in the future.

1. Use the information obtained from questionnaires and interviews to analyze and prepare a first draft of guidelines for position-entry of school leader

2. Analyze, assess, and improve the first draft of approaches for entry into the position of the Director by using Focus Group Discussion techniques to discuss in-depth, exchange opinions, and provide suggestions.

3. Develop a complete draft of guidelines for entry into the school leader position by applying the results of the assessment of the appropriateness of the first draft of guidelines that has been evaluated and given opinions by experts and stakeholders through the Focus Group Discussion.

#### *Informants*

Informants were 18 qualified experts and those involved in the process of position-entry of school leader, consisting of 5 human resource experts, 2 academic management experts, 6 school management experts, and 5 academic and educational supervisors.

#### *Data analysis*

Data Analysis was conducted through content analysis by using the data obtained from the assessment of the appropriateness of the first draft of guidelines for entry into the position of the school leader and a summary of recommendations from recorded Focus Group Analysis.

### **Results and Discussion**

The methods of school leader selection were based on the findings from quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were (1) The selection committee should be “Five Parties-Selection Committee” consisting of School Management Representative, School Board, Teacher, Student, and Two External Experts ( $\bar{x} = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 0.722$ ) (2) The assessment methods should be “Interview, Cognitive and Narrative Test based on Competencies organized by Assessment Center” ( $\bar{x} = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 0.716$ ) (3) Weighted score for selection criteria should consist of 10 percent Characteristic 40 percent Competency and 50 percent Performance ( $\bar{x} = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 0.871$ ) (4) Candidate should score no less than 70 percent in each part of criteria ( $\bar{x} = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 1.053$ ) (5) Development program should be “Induction Program” ( $\bar{x} = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 0.489$ ) (6) Duration for Induction Program is 150 hours ( $\bar{x} = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 1.027$ ) The qualitative data consisted of 3 major findings that should be used in the selection process; (1) Performance History Record and Profiles ( $F = 9$ ) (2) Competency or Behavioral based Interview ( $F = 10$ ) (3) Multi-Tools in Assessment Center based on required competencies ( $F = 4$ ).

It was found from this study that there were two proposed new approaches to enter the position of school leader. The approaches were developed based on the information from interview and focus group stages. Combining quantitative with qualitative data using “Content Analysis” methodology, the major findings for developing the approaches were; (1) The involvement of school-board in school leader selection, (2) Using multi-selection tools and assessments. (3) A combination of past-experience (individual-portfolio) with cognitive test and using assessment center for selection (4) Three type of development approaches (pre-service, induction and in-service)

Regardless of the approaches, candidates must have the qualifications, attributes, competencies as set, but the difference

lies in the appointment to the position and the evaluation of performance. The first approach is appointing a candidate to the leadership position with tenure up to retirement, and there is no performance evaluation in order to consider an extension of the contract. The second approach is appointment of candidate with a term of 4 years, and performance evaluation is required for contract extension consideration. Both approaches have the following steps and details.

#### *Tenure School Leader Position-Entry (Track 1 approach)*

This approach emphasizes the position-entry of school leaders in the traditional way. The weight of the score should be determined from assessing the characteristics, competencies, and performance. This is in accordance with the findings from the research study of the Secretariat of the Education Council in the report on the development of guidelines for the school leaders. (Siribanpitak, Usaho, Narintarangkul Na Ayudhaya, & Poepakdee, 2017) The position-entry approach of the school leaders in the future consists of 3 stages (see Figure 2), as follows.

#### *Stage 1: Examination and assessment*

This is an important first stage with the aim of screening applicants through qualification screening, assessment of cognitive knowledge and competencies, which could be evaluated by examination, performance evaluation, and assessment through the assessment center. Details of the sub-stages are as follows:

1. Qualification Screening: This is a process for screening candidate's qualities based on the requirements of the position. It can be achieved by reviewing the candidates' past and present experiences. The details of the desirable characteristics of the school leaders should be based on the findings from guidelines for the school director (Siribanpitak et al., 2017) In the report, there were discussions on different qualities according to the school management experience.

2. Assessment of Competencies and performance: This is considered as a first-round assessment. It assesses cognitive & knowledge competencies, evaluated through examination, together with the reviewing of the performance records in the past 3 years. This performance review is conducted by the committee of 5 experts consisting of the school director, a representative from the school board, a teacher, and two external experts. The committee review the performance from various sources. Nevertheless, the proportion of the score from the examination is 50 percent and the performance review is 50 percent. Candidates must receive a total score from both sides of at least 60 percent, and a score of not less than 50 percent on each side. Candidates who pass the criteria of not less than 60 percent in the first round will go into the next round of assessment.

3. Evaluation through Assessment Center: This is considered as a second round of assessment, assessed behavior, characteristics and competencies that could not be determined through the normal written examination. Therefore, candidates who pass the first round must go through the second round of assessment by the Assessment Center. The assessment of behavior, characteristics and competencies will be conducted by various methods. For this round, candidates must receive a score of not less than 60 percent. The Assessment may include the following tools and methods; 360-Degree Assessment Tool, Personality Test,

Presentation, Behavioral-based Interview, Simulation, and other appropriate tools and assessment methods suitable for the school and local community context. The assessment center based on the study was the finest and fairest method to select the appropriate candidate for the position as well as promotion and placement with long-term proven benefits (Hughes, 2006; Tripathi, 2016).

4. Announcement of Qualified Candidates and 2-year Listed: Once the qualifying candidates have passed the behavior, characteristics and competencies assessment by the Assessment Center, they will be deemed to have been selected in the first step and will be listed with a 2-year period.

5. Choosing a School for Appointment: Qualified and listed candidates can put in their top three preferences of schools with vacant positions while waiting for the interview results from the School Board.

6. Announcement of Candidates Eligible for Interviews: The school district or the superior unit of the school review and announce the list of eligible candidates for the interview.

#### Stage 2: Interview by school representative

This stage is an opportunity for a school to be involved in the selection process of school leadership position. This stage emerged from the study as the critical need from a school. The school stakeholders need to know the candidate and be part of the selection process.

1. Interview Committee Appointment: The superior authority unit of the school appoints an interview committee which comprises of (1) three representatives from the School Board, 2) a representative from the Educational Service Area Office and (3) an expert who is/was a university professor, lecturer in educational management. All members of this interview committee must be trained in interviewing technique before conducting the interview

2. Final Announcement of Selected Candidates for School Leader Position. The interview committee concludes the interview results and submits the list of selected candidates to its superior authority unit to officially announce the results and move to the next step. Candidates who do not pass the interview could have additional interviews with the second and third schools they have chosen, or choose to re-list in the next interview cycle. However, if candidates cannot be appointed within 2 years, their names will be automatically removed from the list.

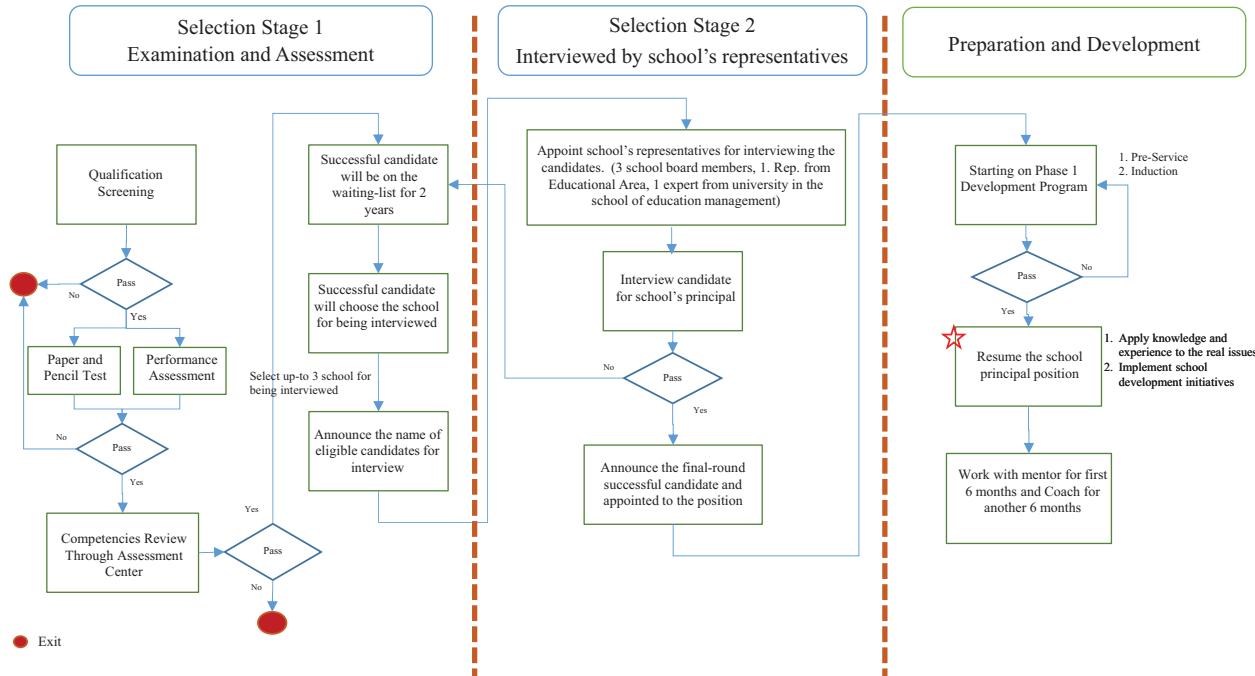
#### Stage 3: Preparation and development

Once the name of a successful candidate is announced, the candidates will enter into the first professional development stage, which consists of the following approaches:

1. Pre-Service Training: There should be no pre-service training. However, in some cases, only a critical training with limited number of hours could be allowed.

Track I

### TENURE SCHOOL LEADER POSITION-ENTRY TRACK 1 APPROACH



**Figure 2** Tenure School Leader Position Entry Track 1 Approach

2. Induction Program: The induction could be in the form of blended learning (70:20:10). The program should be customized based on a very specific need of the appointed school. The method of development should be blended among workshops, on-the-job training, project plan, coaching and mentoring program, networking of professional learning community or PLC, case studies, work shadow. The timeframe should be at least 150 hours to 12 months.

3. In-Service Training: The In-Service Training should be the programs that combine the tools and methods that support the objectives, competencies and skills; or use blended learning: 70:20:10 method.

Nonetheless, candidates entering the school leader position in Track 1 approach will work in this position without a designated timeframe. Transfer and change of position should be in accordance with current policies and regulations.

#### *Advantages of Tenure School Leader Position-Entry (Track 1 Approach)*

1. Increases opportunities for qualified candidates to apply for the school leader positions because the selection was not only based on the cognitive test but also involved multi-selection processes and tools addressed in stage 1 and 2.

2. The school interview committee as determined in stage 2 empowered the school to directly select school leaders based on its own needs and contexts.

3. Opens opportunities and encourages school's stakeholders to take part in school management and to have a mutual sense of belonging according to decentralization principle.

4. Schools in rural areas will have opportunities to have school leaders who are inspired and truly intend to work in a remote area as a result of having a school interview committee.

5. Reduces problems or issues from nepotism and inappropriate networking in appointing school leaders.

Comparing Track 1 approach with the current one: Track 1 approach empowers school to be able to select its leader based on local and specific needs that have never been addressed in the previous and current selection process. The Track 1 approach is aligned with those in countries such as France and United States where the school's local needs are counted. The interview will be verbally conducted by the school board (Saglam, Geçer, & Bag, 2017).

#### *Potential Issues of Tenure School Leader Position-Entry (Track 1 Approach)*

1. Competing for talents as schools are free to recruit and select school leaders themselves.

2. It may affect the morale of school administrators if these approaches are not clearly communicated.

3. Establishment of the agency responsible for Assessment Center is very important. However, it requires experts and may take a long time to establish.

4. The capability of each interview committee members may be different. It may take time to develop and standardize.

#### *Contracted-School Leader Position-Entry (Track 2 Approach)*

This approach focuses on position-entry of school leaders by contract, which is considered a newer approach and consists of 3 stages (same as Track 1 Approach). However, the additional conditions for Track 2 Approach are described as follows

1. Determine the duration of the school leader's term at 4 years with a contract, which clearly sets criteria for the performance evaluation. When the contract expires, the contract can be extended for another 4 years. In the case that the contract is not renewed, if the school leader is a government official, he or she could request to return to work as a government official in previous job title.

2. Candidates who are entering the school leader position must perform their duties and responsibilities at their best until the end of the contract in order to be considered for appointment to a new school without going through the selection process in stage 1 (Figure 3).

#### *Advantages of Contracted School Leader Position-entry (Track 2 approach)*

1. Increases opportunities for qualified individuals to become School leaders as a result of applying multi-selection processes and tools addressed in stage 1 and 2.

2. The School Leader must perform well and deliver a good performance result in academic and all aspects of educational management. They need to build a strong relationship with all groups of stakeholders in order to get good feedback for contract renewal.

3. Increase motivation to develop the school and student as the school and student achievement will only be the key for contract renewal.

4. Schools in remote areas will have the opportunity to hire a school leader who wishes and has a genuine intention to work in a local school.

5. Reduces problems or issues from patronage system or corruption due to the multi-selection processes and tools.

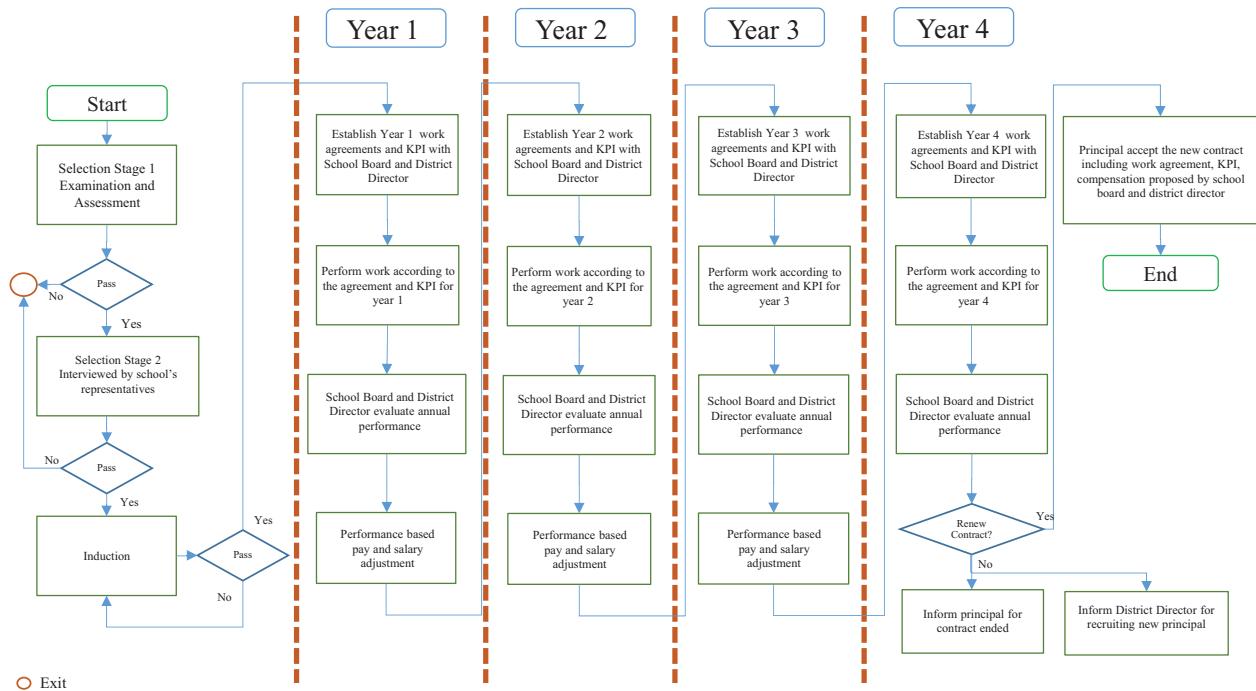
6. The remuneration of the school leaders according to Track 2 approach could be different from those in Track 1 depending on the complexity and difficulty of each school.

7. The remuneration could be used as a tool to motivate professional school leader to apply to the job in more challenging schools

Comparing Track 2 approach with the current one: The benefit is similar to that in Track 1. In addition, Track 2 creates more opportunity for qualified external candidate who brings in new ideas for school improvement. Track 2 will motivate school leaders to do their best for the school within 4 year-contract, not for a career stepping stone. To implement this approach, it requires some changes in regulations and mind-set from educational policy makers. The Track 2 approach is aligned with those in the countries such as USA, Poland, (Saglam et al., 2017) Australia (Victoria State Government, 2018)

Track II

## CONTRACTED-SCHOOL LEADER POSITION-ENTRY TRACK 2 APPROACH

**Figure 3** Contracted-School Leader Position-Entry Track 2 Approach*Potential Issues of Contracted School Leader Position-Entry (Track 2 Approach)*

1. There could be a problem of schools competing for talents as schools are free to recruit and select school leaders themselves. School with more resources may get more advantages in attracting better talents.

2. It may affect the morale of school administrators if these guidelines are not clearly communicated.

3. Career path of school leaders in track 2 approach may not be so clear in growing in educational management track.

**Recommendation***Recommendation for Implementing Research Results*

1. Track 1 should be used as the main approach and track 2 could be used as an option: Approach 1 which was derived from the research is aligned with the current government system, rules and regulations. However, in order for both candidates and schools to have choices, candidates should be able to choose the school. The school, on the other hand, should be able to recruit and select school leaders based on its own needs and specifying preference.

2. Rules and regulations should be improved in order to facilitate the use of both approaches: Because the finding on the qualifications, attributes, performance, competencies, recruiting methods, and approaches to the entry of school leader position are new and different from those determined in the existing rules, laws and regulations should be reviewed and revised to support and facilitate the use of new approaches.

3. There should be continuous research to follow-up and improve approaches for position-entry of school leaders: Due to continuous change in the VUCA world, the findings in this study may not perfectly fit the future changes. The research should be continuously conducted periodically.

*The Limitations of the Study and the Recommendation for Future Studies*

This research was developed based on the data from school point of view. There should be a study to collect the feedback from other stakeholders. The study on pilot test and initial implementation should also be conducted in the future.

**Conflict of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest.

## Acknowledgments

The research team would like to thank the Office of the Education Council for giving the researchers the opportunity to conduct this research. We hope that the results of this study will be used to develop the approaches to entering the position of school leaders and that truly benefit Thai education.

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