

**The Priority Needs for Developing Trustworthy Leadership of  
Primary School Administrators in Thailand**

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**Abstract**

This article explores the framework of trustworthy leadership and the trust levels of school administrators in Thailand through three key studies: (1) the conceptual framework of trustworthy leadership and leadership development, (2) the level of trust among school administrators, and (3) a needs assessment for developing trustworthy leadership in Thai primary schools. A multiphase mixed-methods approach was employed, with a sample of 1,185 participants (directors, deputy directors, and teachers) selected through multi-stage random sampling. Research instruments included two five-level rating scales: one for measuring trust in school administrators and another assessing the realistic and expected conditions of trustworthy leadership. Data analysis included frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation (SD), and PNIModified. Key findings: (1) Trustworthy Leadership Framework – Four core aspects were identified: Management Competence, Integrity, Openness, and Caring and Concern. Two learning areas were proposed: individualized learning (mentoring, coaching, e-learning) and group learning (action learning, networking, residential/off-site learning), (2) Trust Levels – The highest trust score was for Caring and Concern ( $\bar{x} = 4.57$ ,  $SD = 0.697$ ), followed by Integrity ( $\bar{x} = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.648$ ), Openness ( $\bar{x} = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 0.688$ ), and Competence, which had the lowest score ( $\bar{x} = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 0.661$ ), And (3) Priority Needs Index – Group learning had a PNIModified of 0.067 (with four sub-learning areas), while individual learning had a PNIModified of 0.046 (with five sub-learning areas). These insights offer valuable guidelines for strengthening trustworthy leadership among primary school administrators in Thailand.

**Keywords:** Trust, Trustworthy Leadership, Primary School, School Management, School Administrators

## **1. Introduction**

Goddard et al. (2009) suggest that schools, as social institutions, foster relationships that influence the trust structure between teachers and school leaders. Kulophas (2020) found that many Thai teachers struggle with communication, which weakens the trust between them and key decision-makers, leading to feelings of alienation and inconsistency. This lack of trust in school administrators undermines the academic relationship between teachers and school leaders, impeding meaningful and exploratory learning. The traditional hierarchical structure in Thai schools often exacerbates feelings of distrust, as teachers feel evaluated rather than valued. The principal's authority, often directed by the Minister of Education, further contributes to a lack of continuity and consistency in educational settings, fostering distrust among teachers. When trust and credibility are lacking, it affects the school environment, leading to problems in setting school goals and creating a positive atmosphere. If students do not feel trusted, it can create barriers to their learning, resulting in alienation. Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that schools with high internal control over learning environments had better educational outcomes, while those with lower climates struggled. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) emphasized the importance of a positive school climate for student achievement. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) highlighting that teacher control and trust in school administrators are crucial for a successful educational environment. Primary school students are in a crucial stage of cognitive and social development. A trusting environment can enhance the effectiveness of teaching methods and increase teacher satisfaction, which is essential for maintaining continuity and stability in the student learning experience (Adams and Forsyth, 2013). In the context of Thai primary schools, fostering teachers' trust in administrators is particularly significant.

## **2. Research Objectives**

2.1 To study the conceptual framework of trustworthy leadership and the framework for developing leadership among primary school administrators.

2.2 To examine the level of trust in primary school administrators.

2.3 To study the priority needs for developing trustworthy leadership among primary school administrators.

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Trust**

**Trust** is a multifaceted concept that scholars have defined in various ways, often emphasizing its complexity and the element of risk. Luhmann (1979) and Barber (1983) describe trust as a set of positive expectations that a vulnerable individual holds toward another person, group, or organization. Similarly, Rotter (1971) views trust as the general expectation that one can rely on another's promises or statements. Deutsch (1973) adds that trust involves confidence in finding what one seeks from others rather than what one fears.

Holmes and Rempel (1989) further explain trust as a confident expectation of a positive outcome in a relationship, rooted in the belief that the trusted party will act in ways that benefit or, at the very least, not harm others.

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) offer a comprehensive view of trust as an interaction based on five principles: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. Mishra (2013) reinforces this, defining trust as the willingness to take risks with others, grounded in reliability, openness, competence, and compassion—referred to as the ROCC of Trust.

In summary, trust involves the confidence that one will experience a positive outcome in interactions, even amid uncertainty, by relying on others to fulfill their commitments and act in good faith.

### **3.1.1 The Importance of Trust in Schools**

Trust is a critical foundation for the effective functioning and success of schools. Research consistently shows that when trust is established, school administrators can proactively address problems, improve decision-making, and foster a positive school culture. Bartolme (1989) found that highly trusted administrators can diagnose and resolve issues before they escalate, while open communication enhances the flow of accurate information, improving decision-making processes. Tarter et al. (1989) discovered that teachers, particularly those with high abilities, become more engaged and committed to their students when principals demonstrate high levels of trust. This trust also extends to greater collegiality among teachers.

Louis and Kruse (1995) emphasized that trust, openness, and respect, rather than structural conditions, are key to school success, particularly when trust between schools and parents leads to higher achievement. Bryk and Schneider (2003) further highlighted the strong correlation between trust and school improvement, noting that trust fosters a positive climate conducive to continuous growth. Tschannen-Moran (2004) argued that trust is essential for collaboration among staff, school boards, and communities, with effective leaders cultivating this trust to support research and problem-solving.

Forsyth et al. (2006) warned that low levels of trust isolate parents and the community, undermining collaboration. In contrast, Robinson (2007) linked trust between adults in schools to improved student outcomes, emphasizing the role of respect, competence, personal regard, and integrity in building trust. Respect fosters engagement and collaboration, while competence, particularly in conflict management, is essential for trust and school improvement. Personal regard for others, such as supporting professional development, reduces vulnerability and strengthens social bonds, and integrity, defined by consistency between a leader's words and actions, builds long-term trust.

Adams, Forsyth, and Mitchell (2009) and Moore (2009) underscore trust as a necessary condition for school success, fostering cooperation between schools and communities and improving academic outcomes.

In summary, trust is the cornerstone of school effectiveness, enabling leaders to create a culture where teachers are empowered, collaborate, and commit themselves to student success, with trust extending to students and society.

### **3.1.2 The Role of School Administrators in Building Trust**

**School administrators play a crucial role in building trust** within educational environments, which significantly impacts school performance and community relationships. Bryk and Schneider (2003) emphasize that trust-building requires a deliberate process where administrators acknowledge vulnerability, listen actively to concerns, and avoid arbitrary actions. This approach, when paired with a clear and consistent vision for the school, aligns leaders' words with their actions, fostering trust throughout the school community. Furthermore, effective administrators demonstrate empathy, recognizing the unique challenges of various situations, understanding contextual nuances, and identifying opportunities for growth, which enhances both foresight and performance.

Similarly, Hoy et al. (2006) highlight the importance of cultivating a caring school environment, arguing that openness and trust are fostered when administrators encourage creative thinking, risk-taking, and flexibility among faculty. They note that trust and caring are deeply interconnected, together creating a climate of success within schools.

Adams and Forsyth (2009) further explore the significance of trust, particularly in high-poverty settings, where it can mitigate the negative effects of socioeconomic challenges. They argue that trust, when ingrained in a school's culture, can enhance the overall effectiveness of the institution.

In conclusion, school administrators who prioritize both caring and trust-building create environments that promote staff performance, student achievement, and overall school success.

### **3.1.3 Components of Trust**

Trust is a fundamental component in leadership and has been the subject of extensive research across various disciplines. While scholars offer different models, common components consistently emerge. Mayer et al. (1995) identified ability, benevolence, integrity, and predictability as core characteristics of trustworthiness, emphasizing a leader's competence, ethical behavior, and reliability. Similarly, Mishra (1996) highlighted competence, openness, concern, and reliability, focusing on transparency and consistent behavior. Bryk and Schneider (2003) emphasized the relational nature of trust in educational settings, identifying respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity as crucial factors that influence perceptions of trust among school communities.

Ellis and Shockley-Zalabak (2003) extended the conversation by adding Identification as an essential dimension, which fosters a sense of belonging within an organization. The models of Hoy and Tchannen-Moran (2003) and Lapidot et al. (2007) align closely, identifying benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness as central to trust in leadership.

Further, Green and Howe (2012) introduced the "trust equation," integrating credibility, reliability, intimacy, and self-orientation, emphasizing both expertise and a focus on others' needs. Blanchard's (2021) ABCD model highlights similar principles, focusing on leaders being able, believable, connected, and dependable.

Finally, Mishra and Mishra (2013) and Tchannen-Moran (2014) reinforced these perspectives by underscoring key aspects such as reliability, openness, competence, compassion, and honesty. Across these frameworks, trust in leadership emerges as a multifaceted construct grounded in competence, ethical behavior, reliability, transparency, and genuine concern for others, which are essential for fostering strong, trustworthy leadership in organizations.

## **3.2 Leadership Development**

Macaulay (1998) views leadership development as a process aimed at enhancing the capabilities of individuals in both leadership roles and processes. He outlines several core principles for effective leadership development:

**Focus on Individual Potential:** Leadership development primarily emphasizes the growth of individual potential. While it also benefits teamwork and organizational development, the core objective is to strengthen each individual's capabilities.

**Development of Leadership Roles and Processes:** Leadership development involves preparing individuals to excel in both formal and informal leadership roles, enabling them to contribute effectively to the leadership process. Individuals can progress and adopt more effective leadership strategies over time.

**Belief in Individual Growth:** Leadership development operates on the belief that individuals can learn, grow, and evolve. While some leadership traits may be influenced by genetics or early experiences, significant leadership capabilities can be cultivated in adulthood through learning and experience, contributing to a leader's overall effectiveness.

Day (2001) expands on this by defining leadership development as the process of enhancing an organization's collective capacity to engage in effective leadership roles and processes. McCauley and Vanelsor (2004) further highlight that leadership development strengthens an organization's ability to establish direction, foster alignment, and maintain commitment toward organizational goals. Dixon (2011) adds that leadership development aims

to create a group of individuals capable of continuously solving problems within the organization.

In summary, leadership development is the process of expanding individual capacities with the belief that people can grow, learn, and change. This growth positively impacts both individual performance and the overall effectiveness of the organization.

### **3.2.1 Leadership development of school administrators linked to students**

Researchers have explored the connection between school principals' leadership and its impact on student learning outcomes. Leithwood et al. (2004) categorized leadership's influence on student learning into three main areas: Setting direction, Developing people, and Redesigning the organization. They emphasized that relationship-building skills are embedded within each of these dimensions, which collectively affect student learning, rather than being treated as a separate category.

Marzano et al. (2005) also highlighted the significant impact of principals' leadership on academic performance, noting a correlation of 0.25 between school-level leadership and average student achievement, demonstrating that effective leadership visibly improves academic outcomes.

Day (2009) advanced this understanding by presenting a clear causal relationship between school leadership and student success, arguing that strong school leadership is essential for school improvement and overall effectiveness. The study provided a deeper and more nuanced explanation of the traditionally recognized link between leadership and student achievement.

Moriyama and Heck (2010) further examined how context, leadership, and teaching practices influence elementary school learning outcomes. They found that leadership was positively correlated with teaching practices (0.28), which in turn led to significant annual gains in both mathematics and reading.

In summary, the literature reveals a positive relationship between the development of school principals' leadership skills and improvements in both school management effectiveness and student learning outcomes. This connection underscores the critical role of leadership in driving educational success.

### **3.2.2 Leadership Development Approach**

Bush (2008) emphasizes that the development of school leaders must consider their maturity and autonomy, allowing them to play an active role in identifying their own learning needs. Leadership development can be approached through two primary methods: individualized learning, which focuses on tailored support mechanisms, and group learning, which offers participants access to the latest knowledge and teaching methods. These approaches are designed to enhance leadership skills and can be applied through various strategies.

#### **Individualized Learning:**

Individualized learning is often achieved through facilitation, mentoring, coaching, and consulting.

Facilitation involves guiding participants' development by supporting both their work and learning processes. Facilitators play multiple roles, offering expertise, guidance, and advice, while also gaining valuable insights from their experiences and interactions with participants.

Mentoring is a one-on-one process where an experienced leader provides support and challenges to another leader, fostering growth. Effective mentoring requires careful matching of mentors and mentees to ensure a meaningful relationship. Mentoring may be

conducted by a senior leader or through peer mentoring, with an emphasis on proper training, time commitment, and a reflective process.

Coaching is a collaborative, structured process between coach and coachee, aimed at enhancing performance and promoting long-term improvement. Bassett (2001) distinguishes coaching from consulting by its focus on skill development. Bloom et al. (2005) highlight the confidential, supportive nature of coaching, which fosters personal, professional, and institutional growth over time.

Consulting encourages school leaders to mentor others and share their learning experiences. The Leadership Development Framework (NCSL, 2001) identifies eight key competencies for effective leadership: accurate self-evaluation, self-confidence, self-management, empathy, partnership, pattern recognition, developing others, and non-dominant warmth, which refers to caring for individuals without possessiveness.

E-learning involves the use of information systems to facilitate individualized learning. McFarlane et al. (2003) identify several indicators of effective e-learning, including pre-program diagnostics, peer communication, collaboration, reliable internet connectivity, motivational systems, program relevance, and thorough evaluation of activities.

### **Group Learning:**

While individual leadership development is often prioritized, group learning activities also play a crucial role in many development programs. Several group learning strategies enhance participants' growth:

Action Learning is the process of applying knowledge to real-world situations in a group setting, particularly within the workplace. Hallinger and Bridges (2007) argue that professional development should emphasize the practical application of knowledge, preparing administrators to act in real-life scenarios.

Residential and Off-Site Learning refers to educational experiences that take place outside the workplace. These opportunities are often highly valued, as they provide an environment conducive to networking and reflection, which can lead to personal and professional growth.

Networking and School Visits enable leaders to learn through interactions within networks or clusters, fostering collaboration and the exchange of ideas.

Portfolio Learning involves reflecting on one's professional accomplishments, supported by evidence of performance. Wolf and Gearhart (1997) describe portfolios as structured, documentary histories of achievements, often involving feedback from mentors or coaches. These portfolios, enriched by student work, promote serious reflection, discussion, and ongoing professional development.

By employing both individualized and group learning strategies, school leaders can experience a holistic approach to leadership development that prepares them to meet the diverse challenges of their roles.

## **4. Research Methodology**

### **4.1 A Study of the Conceptual Framework of Trustworthy Leadership and Leadership Development**

This research aimed to develop a conceptual framework for trustworthy leadership and leadership development in primary school administration by synthesizing key theories and literature on trustworthy leadership and leadership development. The study adopted a quantitative approach, focusing on creating a framework that could be applied to enhance the reliability and effectiveness of leadership among primary school administrators.

The framework evaluation, three experts were selected through purposive sampling. These experts included a specialist in primary school administration and leadership, a strategy

expert, and an expert in research methodology. Their collective expertise was crucial in assessing the theoretical and practical aspects of the trustworthy leadership and leadership development framework.

The primary instrument for data collection was an evaluation form designed to assess the appropriateness of the framework. Data from the evaluation were analyzed using statistical methods such as frequency and percentage, which revealed that the framework had a 67% for trustworthy leadership framework and 91% for leadership development framework in appropriateness rating, suggesting its suitability for use in this research. Additionally, qualitative feedback from the experts was analyzed using content analysis, allowing for further refinement of the framework based on expert insights and suggestions.

#### **4.2 A Study of the Level of Trust of Primary School Administrators**

This study employed a quantitative research methodology to examine the level of trust in primary school administrators across schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) during the 2023 academic year. The population for the study included all 26,702 primary schools under OBEC, based on data from April 1, 2024. A multi-stage random sampling method was used to select a representative sample of 395 schools from 19 provinces, including Bangkok, ensuring coverage of all regions of Thailand.

The sampling process followed a three-step approach. First, the Yamane (1973) formula was used to determine the appropriate sample size at a 95% confidence level. Then, stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation from all 18 provincial groups and Bangkok. From each group, one province was randomly selected, and the number of schools sampled from each province was proportional to its size. Finally, simple random sampling was used to select individual schools, with a total of 1,185 participants, consisting of one school director, one deputy director of academic affairs or personnel head, and one teacher from each selected school.

The primary research instrument was a 5-level rating scale assessment form measuring the level of trust in school administrators. Data collected through these forms were analyzed using SPSS for Windows. Statistical analyses, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were employed to evaluate the findings.

#### **4.3 Needs Assessment for Developing Trustworthy Leadership of Primary School Administrators in Thailand**

The primary research instrument was a 5-level rating scale for realistic condition & expectation condition assessment form measuring the realistic condition & expectation condition level of trustworthy leadership in school administrators. Data collected through these forms were analyzed using SPSS for Windows. Statistical analyses, including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and priority needs index, were employed to evaluate the findings.

Needs assessment research is often used to enhance operational plans and inform policy decisions. Issac and Michael (1985) note that needs assessment provides vital data for defining project or activity objectives. Nonglak Wiratchai and Suwimol Wongwanich developed an improved version of the Priority Needs Index (PNI) formula, refining the assessment by controlling the range of identified needs. The Priority Needs Index (PNI) ranks the significance of needs by comparing the difference in the mean of expectations (I) and satisfaction (D), weighted by the importance of the expectation. This modification, known as PNI<sub>modified</sub>, enhances the accuracy of prioritization by adjusting the index based on satisfaction and expectation levels, making development priorities clearer and more comparable. The formula for calculating the modified PNI is as follows:

$$MDF = I - D$$

$$PNI = (I - D) \times I$$

$$PNI_{modified} = (I - D) / D$$

5. Finding

5.1 The Conceptual Framework of Trustworthy Leadership and Leadership Development

Table 1. The summary of the synthesis of trustworthy leadership components with the studied documents

TRUSTWORTHY LEADERSHIP COMPONENTS	MAYOR ET AL (1995)	MISHRA (1996)	HOY AND TCHANNEN-	BRYK AND SCHNEIDER	ELLIS AND SHOCKLEY-	LAPIDOT AND (2007)	GEEN AND HOWE (2012)	MISHRA AND MISHRA (2013)	TCHANNEN-MORAN (2014)	BLANCHARD (2021)	FREQUENCY
1 Management Competency	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
2 Reliability in words and actions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
3 Openness		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		7
4 Caring and Concern	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10

Table 1 present the frequency of the researcher's synthesis of trustworthy leadership components align closely with existing academic perspectives. Competence, reliability in both words and actions, integrity, and caring and concern were consistently identified by all 10 researchers as essential components of trustworthy leadership. Additionally, openness was highlighted as an important component by 7 researchers. These findings reinforce the significance of leaders demonstrating skill, ethical behaviour, and genuine care, while also maintaining transparency and openness to foster trust within their organizations.

Table 2 Results of the evaluation of the conceptual framework on trustworthy leadership of school administrators

The Conceptual Framework of Trustworthy Leadership	Expert opinion (N=3)			Average (Percentage)
	Agree (+1)	Not sure (0)	Disagree (-1)	
1. Competence	1		2	33
2. Reliability in words and actions	2		1	67
3. Openness	3			100
4. Caring and concern	2	1		67
<b>Overall</b>				67

Table 2 present the evaluation of the framework for trustworthy leadership in school administrators, which encompasses four main aspects—1) Competence, 2) Dependability in honest words and actions, 3) Openness, and 4) Caring and Concern—was found to be 67 percent appropriate overall. Three experts agreed on the framework’s relevance, but they recommended revisions to enhance its clarity and applicability. Specifically, they suggested redefining the "Competence" aspect to include management skills. Based on this feedback, the researcher revised the framework, renaming "Competence" to "Management Competency" and adjusting "Dependability in honest words and actions" to "Reliability in words and actions" for consistency.



**Figure 1** Trustworthy Leadership Framework

Figure 1 present the result of trustworthy leadership conceptual framework which are 4 aspects —1) Management Competency, 2) Reliability in words and actions, 3) Openness, and 4) Caring and Concern

**Table 3** Results of the evaluation of the conceptual framework on leadership development

The Conceptual Framework of Leadership Development	Expert opinion (N=3)			
	Agree (+1)	Not sure (0)	Disagree (-1)	Average (Percentage)
<b>1. Individualization learning</b>	3			100
1.1 Facilitation	2	1		67
1.2 Mentoring	3			100
1.3 Coaching	3			100
1.4 Consultancy	3			100
1.5 E-learning	2		1	67
<b>2. Group Learning</b>	3			100
2.1 Action Learning	3			100
2.2 Residential and Off-site Learning	2		1	67
2.3 Networking and School Visits	3			100
2.4 Portfolios	3			100
<b>Overall</b>				<b>91</b>

Table 3 present the evaluation of the framework for leadership development, which encompasses two main aspects—1) Individualization Learning through facilitation, mentoring, coaching, consultancy, and E-learning, and 2) Group Learning through action learning,

residential and off-site learning, networking and school visiting, and portfolio. Three experts agreed on the framework’s relevance with overall 91 percentage.

### 5.2 A Study of the Trust Level of Primary School Administrators in Thailand

**Table 4** The level of trust of primary school administrators in Thailand

Trustworthy leadership	Level of trust		
	$\bar{x}$	(S.D.)	Level
1. Management Competency	4.48	0.661	High
2. Reliability in words and actions	4.55	0.648	Highest
3. Openness	4.51	0.688	Highest
4. Caring and concern	4.57	0.697	Highest
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.53</b>	<b>0.634</b>	<b>Highest</b>

The results from Table 4 indicate that the overall level of trustworthiness among primary school administrators was rated at the highest level. When examining individual aspects, caring and concern received the highest mean score, suggesting that school leaders are perceived as empathetic and attentive to the needs of others. This was followed by reliability in words and actions, highlighting the importance of consistent and dependable leadership behaviour, and openness, which reflects transparent communication and decision-making. However, management competency received the lowest mean value, indicating that while administrators excel in relational aspects of trust, there may be areas for improvement in their technical management skills.

### 5.3 A study of Needs Assessment for Developing Trustworthy Leadership of Primary School Administrators in Thailand.

**Table 5** The realistic and expectation conditions, and priority needs index of trustworthy leadership development in overall

Trustworthy Leadership Development	Realistic Conditions		Expectation Conditions		Priority Needs Index	
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	PNI <sub>modified</sub>	Rank
<b>1. Individualized Learning</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>0.793</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>0.649</b>	<b>0.046</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Facilitation	4.01	0.754	4.16	0.705	0.037	4
1.2 Mentoring	3.82	0.857	4.04	0.697	0.058	1
1.3 Coaching	3.85	0.899	4.07	0.693	0.057	2
1.4 Consultancy	4.02	0.823	4.14	0.673	0.030	5
1.5 E-learning	3.93	0.814	4.15	0.653	0.056	3
<b>2. Group Learning</b>	<b>3.81</b>	<b>0.850</b>	<b>4.07</b>	<b>0.636</b>	<b>0.067</b>	<b>1</b>
2.1 Action Learning	3.96	0.841	4.17	0.685	0.053	4

Trustworthy Leadership Development	Realistic Conditions		Expectation Conditions		Priority Needs Index	
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	PNI <sub>modified</sub>	Rank
2.2 Residential and Off-site Learning	3.65	0.974	4.02	0.697	0.101	1
2.3 Networking and School Visits	3.84	0.910	4.08	0.697	0.063	2
2.4 Portfolio	3.79	0.865	4.00	0.690	0.055	3
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>0.853</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>0.680</b>	<b>0.057</b>	

The table 5 presents the overall priority needs index of trustworthy leadership development which group learning (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.067) had more priority needs than individualized learning (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.046). Priority needs index of group learning through method as following: 1) Residential and off-site learning ( PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.101 ), 2) Networking and school visits (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.063), 3) Portfolio (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.055), and 4) Action learning (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.053.). While individualized learning prioritizes needs through: 1) Mentoring (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.058.), 2) Coaching (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.057.), 3) E-learning (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.056), 4) Facilitation (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.037), and 5) Consultancy (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.030).

**Table 6** The realistic and expectation conditions, and priority needs index of trustworthy leadership development in group learning.

Trustworthy Leadership Development	Realistic Conditions		Expectation Conditions		Priority Needs Index	
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	PNI <sub>modified</sub>	Rank
<b>2. Group Learning</b>	<b>3.81</b>	<b>0.850</b>	<b>4.07</b>	<b>0.636</b>	<b>0.067</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.1 Action Learning</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>0.841</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>0.685</b>	<b>0.053</b>	<b>4</b>
- Management Competence	3.97	0.897	4.14	0.779	0.043	3
- Reliability in words and actions	3.94	0.942	4.19	0.782	0.063	1
- Openness	3.93	0.990	4.17	0.737	0.061	2
- Caring and concern	4.02	0.922	4.17	0.803	0.037	4
<b>2.2 Residential and Off-site Learning</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>0.974</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>0.650</b>	<b>0.101</b>	<b>1</b>
- Management Competence	3.56	1.079	3.95	0.814	0.110	1
- Reliability in words and actions	3.61	1.123	3.99	0.765	0.105	2
- Openness	3.65	1.042	3.99	0.753	0.093	4
- Caring and concern	3.79	1.083	4.16	0.784	0.098	3
<b>2.3 Networking and School Visits</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>0.910</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>0.697</b>	<b>0.063</b>	<b>2</b>

Trustworthy Leadership Development	Realistic Conditions		Expectation Conditions		Priority Needs Index	
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	PNI <sub>modified</sub>	Rank
- Management Competence	3.75	1.056	3.99	0.859	0.064	2
- Reliability in words and actions	3.89	1.024	4.09	0.764	0.051	4
- Openness	3.86	0.994	4.07	0.763	0.054	3
- Caring and concern	3.87	1.010	4.15	0.793	0.072	1
<b>2.4 Portfolio</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>0.865</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>0.690</b>	<b>0.055</b>	<b>3</b>
- Management Competence	3.72	0.955	3.92	0.835	0.054	3
- Reliability in words and actions	3.79	0.985	4.00	0.759	0.055	2
- Openness	3.81	0.986	3.96	0.890	0.039	4
- Caring and concern	3.82	1.039	4.13	0.783	0.081	1

The table 6 presents the priority needs index of trustworthy leadership development for group learning through method: 1) Residential and off-site learning (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.101) in management competence (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.110) had the most needs and follow by reliability in words and actions (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.105), 2) Networking and school visits (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.063) in caring and concern (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.072) had the most needs and follow by management competence (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.064), 3) Portfolio (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.055) in caring and concern (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.081) had the most needs and follow by reliability in words and actions (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.055), 4) Action learning (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.053) in reliability in words and actions (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.063) had the most needs and follow by openness (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.061).

**Table 7** The realistic and expectation conditions, and priority needs index of trustworthy leadership development in individualized learning.

Trustworthy Leadership Development	Realistic Conditions		Expectation Conditions		Priority Needs Index	
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	PNI <sub>modified</sub>	Rank
<b>1. Individualized Learning</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>0.794</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>0.650</b>	<b>0.046</b>	
<b>1.1 Facilitation</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>0.755</b>	<b>4.16</b>	<b>0.705</b>	<b>0.037</b>	<b>4</b>
- Management Competence	3.96	0.835	4.15	0.776	0.048	1
- Reliability in words and actions	3.98	0.811	4.15	0.809	0.043	2
- Openness	4.00	0.910	4.13	0.767	0.033	3
- Caring and concern	4.10	0.860	4.23	0.811	0.032	4
<b>1.2 Mentoring</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>0.858</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>0.697</b>	<b>0.058</b>	<b>1</b>
- Management Competence	3.80	0.951	3.91	0.845	0.029	4

Trustworthy Leadership Development	Realistic Conditions		Expectation Conditions		Priority Needs Index	
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	PNI <sub>modified</sub>	Rank
- Reliability in words and actions	3.80	0.939	4.07	0.787	0.071	2
- Openness	3.77	0.970	4.06	0.778	0.077	1
- Caring and concern	3.93	0.986	4.14	0.762	0.053	3
<b>1.3 Coaching</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>0.899</b>	<b>4.07</b>	<b>0.694</b>	<b>0.057</b>	<b>2</b>
- Management Competence	3.79	1.032	3.95	0.889	0.042	4
- Reliability in words and actions	3.85	0.961	4.14	0.753	0.075	1
- Openness	3.86	0.963	4.07	0.764	0.054	2
- Caring and concern	3.92	1.030	4.12	0.762	0.051	3
<b>1.4 Consultancy</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>0.823</b>	<b>4.14</b>	<b>0.673</b>	<b>0.030</b>	<b>5</b>
- Management Competence	4.05	0.866	4.09	0.793	0.010	4
- Reliability in words and actions	4.02	0.942	4.15	0.769	0.032	2
- Openness	3.97	0.953	4.13	0.768	0.040	1
- Caring and concern	4.06	0.917	4.19	0.756	0.032	2
<b>1.5 E-learning</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>0.814</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>0.653</b>	<b>0.056</b>	<b>3</b>
- Management Competence	3.97	0.872	4.10	0.808	0.033	4
- Reliability in words and actions	3.91	0.905	4.16	0.747	0.064	2
- Openness	3.87	0.982	4.15	0.706	0.072	1
- Caring and concern	3.97	0.956	4.19	0.759	0.055	3

The table 7 presents the priority needs index of trustworthy leadership development for individualized learning through method: 1) Mentoring (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.058) in openness (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.077) had the most needs and follow by reliability in words and actions (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.071), 2) Coaching (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.057) in reliability in words and actions (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.075) had the most needs and follow by openness (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.054), 3) E-learning (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.056) in openness (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.072) had the most needs and follow by reliability in words and actions ( PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.064 ), 4) Facilitation (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.037) in management competence (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.048) had the most needs and follow by reliability in words and actions (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.043), and 5) Consultancy (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.030) in openness (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.040) had the most needs and follow by caring and concern (PNI<sub>modified</sub> = 0.031).

## **6. Discussions**

### **6.1 The Trustworthy Leadership Framework of Primary School Administrators in Thailand**

The discussion highlights several key elements of trustworthy leadership in school administrators, with management competency being a foundational aspect. Effective school leaders demonstrate strategic planning, resource allocation, and problem-solving skills, which enhance their perceived competence and build trust within the school community. This aligns with Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) findings that competence directly influences trust, and Bryk and Schneider's (2002) observation that trust is critical for improving school performance. Trustworthy leaders foster increased cooperation, communication, and a sense of community.

Reliability in words and actions is another critical component of trustworthy leadership. Leaders who act ethically and consistently follow through on commitments create a trustworthy environment, which boosts morale and motivation among staff, students, and parents. Consistent with Tschannen-Moran's (2014) research, reliability and honesty are essential for building a foundation of trust. Similarly, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2007) emphasized that dependable leadership behaviors reinforce integrity and competence, key factors in trust-building.

Openness in leadership also plays a vital role in fostering trust. School administrators who are transparent in decision-making, open to feedback, and willing to share information create an inclusive and trustworthy environment. Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that openness promotes a positive school climate, where teachers feel comfortable sharing ideas and concerns, which fosters collaboration and innovation. Hoy and Tarter (2004) and Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) further support the idea that openness leads to a sense of community and shared responsibility, improving school performance.

Finally, caring and concern for stakeholders is essential for building trust. School leaders who show genuine care for the well-being of students, teachers, and staff create a positive and collaborative environment. Tschannen-Moran (2014) and Kouzes & Posner (2017) emphasized that thoughtful consideration of others' needs and perspectives strengthens trusting relationships. Trustworthy leadership, characterized by competence, reliability, openness, and care, supports not only school performance but also the overall well-being and success of the school community.

### **6.2 The Trust Level of Primary School Administrators in Thailand**

The level of trust in primary school administrators in Thailand is found to be exceptionally high, influenced by cultural and social contexts that shape leadership dynamics. Thai culture, which emphasizes respect for authority and hierarchical structures, inherently fosters trust in school principals. As authority figures, principals benefit from cultural norms that promote respect and trust, aligning with Hofstede's (2011) notion that collective societies, like Thailand, often base trust in leadership on cultural expectations.

Among the aspects of trust, caring and concern ranked the highest. This may be attributed to the emphasis on seniority in Thai society, where those in senior positions are expected to show care and support to juniors, and juniors reciprocate with respect and obedience. Hallinger and Lee (2014) support this view, suggesting that empathetic leadership, which includes caring for the well-being of others, creates a nurturing environment that improves teacher morale and student engagement. Similarly, Punthumasen (2007) noted that Thai school administrators often adopt a paternalistic leadership style, which aligns with cultural expectations of leaders being seen as caring and attentive figures.

Reliability, particularly the consistency of words and actions, ranked second. Phongpaichit and Baker (2018) found that Thai school administrators who fulfill promises and

act predictably are trusted by teachers, students, and parents. This trust fosters a collaborative school environment, enhancing motivation and participation. Hallinger and Kantamara (2000) also noted that school leaders who exhibit integrity through transparent decision-making and fairness inspire trust, further reinforcing a positive school climate.

Openness ranked third in building trust, as Thai primary school administrators are transparent in their communication and receptive to new ideas. This openness creates an environment where teachers feel valued and supported, fostering collaboration and professional growth. The Integrity & Transparency Assessment (ITA) for 2023 indicated that 87.84 percent of schools in Thailand met high ethical and transparency standards. Open communication channels between administrators and staff, as noted by Supovitz, Sirinides, and May (2010), contribute to a positive school culture that supports both teacher engagement and student achievement.

Lastly, while management competence had the lowest average trust level, it was still high. Continuous development of management skills, supported by the Ministry of Education's leadership programs, ensures that Thai school administrators possess the necessary competencies to lead effectively. Hallinger and Heck (2010) highlighted that in addition to strategic vision and instructional leadership, trustworthy leadership is key to navigating challenges and ensuring school success. The Ministry's professional development programs further strengthen administrators' abilities in areas such as strategic planning and ethical decision-making (Ministry of Education, 2019).

### **6.3 Needs Assessment for Developing Trustworthy Leadership of Primary School Administrators in Thailand**

The overall needs for developing trustworthy leadership for primary school administrators in Thailand shown that group learning had more priority needs index than individualized learning. The integration of group learning into leadership development programs is essential for fostering trustworthy leadership. It enhances collaboration, emotional intelligence, reflective practices, and shared knowledge, all of which are vital for building trust in leadership roles. Group learning enables school leaders to engage in collective experiences that deepen their understanding of trustworthiness in leadership. It provides opportunities for them to reflect on their values, attitudes, and behaviours while receiving constructive feedback from their peers. As Kulopas (2018) emphasizes, trust-building in educational settings requires ongoing, interactive processes that are best supported through collaborative learning environments. Primary advantages of group learning is its ability to simulate real-life scenarios in a controlled and supportive environment. Leaders can experiment with trust-enhancing behaviours, such as open communication, transparency, and ethical decision-making, while receiving immediate feedback. According to Katzenbach and Smith (1993), group dynamics often highlight the importance of shared goals and interdependence, both of which are essential components of trustworthy leadership. Furthermore, group learning promotes the development of emotional intelligence, which is crucial for leaders to establish trust with their team members. Goleman (1995) argues that the ability to empathize, manage emotions, and foster positive interpersonal relationships is strengthened through interactive learning experiences. Group settings provide a space for leaders to practice these skills, learn from others' experiences, and build a network of supportive peers who share a commitment to trustworthy practices.

While individualized learning is a well-established approach in various educational and professional development contexts, its application to developing trustworthy leadership appears to have limited utility. Trustworthy leadership relies heavily on interpersonal dynamics, relational competencies, and the ability to navigate complex social interactions. These elements are inherently collaborative and contextual, making group-oriented learning

methods more appropriate than individualized approaches. Trustworthy leadership requires leaders to build relationships based on mutual respect, transparency, and effective communication (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Individualized learning, focused on personal goals and self-paced activities, does not inherently provide opportunities for participants to engage in trust-building interactions with peers. This absence of real-time social engagement limits the development of critical interpersonal skills necessary for trustworthy leadership. Additionally, individualized learning often overlooks the importance of shared experiences and collective problem-solving, which are vital for trust development. Research suggests that trust is built and sustained through shared efforts to address common challenges and achieve collective goals (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Such collaborative experiences are difficult to replicate in a self-directed or solitary learning environment.

Residential and off-site learning, mentoring, and networking and school visits were the vital needs learning methods for fostering the skills and attributes necessary for trustworthy leadership. These approaches address the complex and dynamic nature of leadership by offering practical, experiential, and reflective learning experiences. Residential and off-site learning programs, such as workshops, conferences, and training retreats, provide school leaders with an environment free from the constraints and routines of their daily responsibilities. Such settings encourage deeper reflection and learning. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), off-site learning allows leaders to focus on theoretical and practical leadership frameworks, develop a broader perspective on trust-building, and interact with peers facing similar challenges. This learning method also enhances exposure to innovative practices and global perspectives. Participants gain new insights into ethical decision-making, transparency, and relationship-building, which are critical for trustworthy leadership (Day et al., 2009). Mentoring is another highly effective approach for developing trustworthy leadership. Through mentoring relationships, less experienced leaders learn from seasoned professionals who model trustworthy behaviours such as integrity, accountability, and effective communication. Ehrich et al. (2004) highlight that mentoring provides mentees with practical guidance, emotional support, and a safe space to discuss challenges and develop solutions. The mentor-mentee relationship fosters mutual trust, which is a cornerstone of trustworthy leadership. Mentees often mirror the behaviours of their mentors, internalizing values and practices that promote trust within their own teams. In the Thai context, where hierarchical respect and relational dynamics are emphasized, mentoring aligns well with cultural expectations and ensures the transfer of trust-based leadership practices (Hofstede, 2001). The networking and school visits, or field-based learning experiences, enable leaders to observe successful practices and trust-building strategies in action. These visits provide direct exposure to effective leadership models, operational excellence, and collaborative cultures. According to Mulford (2003), seeing exemplary leadership in practice helps participants translate theoretical knowledge into actionable strategies that can be adapted to their own schools. School visits also offer the opportunity for comparative learning. Leaders can analyse the contextual factors contributing to the success of other schools and evaluate how similar strategies could be implemented in their own settings.

## **7. Recommendations and Conclusions**

### **7.1 Recommendations**

#### **7.1.1 Recommendations for Applying Research Findings**

Firstly, the school administrators should focus on developing their management competencies through group learning, as research findings indicate that trust in school administrators' management competency was the lowest. Additionally, group learning was identified as the top priority for developing trustworthy leadership. Development can be achieved through the following approaches: Professional development programs, such as

workshops and seminars, incorporating mentorship programs. Integration of technology in administrative tasks, including online training platforms and data analytics for performance tracking. Performance evaluation, utilizing 360-degree feedback from teachers, staff, students, and parents to provide a comprehensive perspective on the administrator's effectiveness. And, Innovative leadership practices, such as leadership simulation, peer learning, action research, and integrating these strategies into a comprehensive development plan to cultivate competent and trustworthy school administrators who are well-prepared to lead effectively.

Secondly, the organizations responsible for school administrator development should emphasize enhancing management competency, particularly in helping others through personal skills, to increase the level of trust. Research findings reveal that management competency has the lowest average score. However, in specific survey questions, school administrators demonstrated the ability to assist others using their own skills. Therefore, prioritizing this aspect is crucial for building trust within schools and extending it to society as a whole.

### **7.1.2 Recommendations for Future Research**

Firstly, the future studies should examine the level of trust in primary school administrators from the perspective of other stakeholders, such as students, school staff, parents, and the general public. The current study focused primarily on assessing trust in primary school administrators from the viewpoints of administrators, deputy administrators, and teachers. However, school operations involve multiple stakeholders, including students, parents, the general public, relevant organizations, and other school personnel.

Secondly, the new approaches to leadership training should be explored, such as gamification, virtual reality simulations, and AI-driven coaching, to enhance trustworthy leadership skills. The effectiveness of these approaches should be evaluated in real-world educational settings.

Finally, the research should be conducted on trust and school performance in Thailand by examining the relationship between trustworthy leadership and school performance metrics, such as student outcomes and the overall school climate. Additionally, studies should investigate how trust in leadership can help mitigate challenges and improve crisis management in schools.

## **7.2 Conclusions**

### **7.2.1 The Trustworthy Leadership and Leadership Development Framework of Primary School Administrators**

The Trustworthy Leadership Framework, synthesized from the works of Mayer et al. (1995), Mishra (1996), Bryk and Schneider (2002), Ellis and Shockley-Zalabak (2003), Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003), Lapidot (2007), Green and Howe (2012), Mishra and Mishra (2013), Tschannen-Moran (2014), and Blanchard (2021), comprises four essential components: 1) Management Competency, 2) Reliability in words and actions, 3) Openness, and 4) Caring and concern. These elements collectively serve as the foundation for building and sustaining trust in a school environment. Effective leaders demonstrate strong management skills, act consistently and reliably, communicate transparently, and show genuine care for their community. Together, these traits foster a trusting atmosphere that is vital for school success and the well-being of staff, students, and the broader school community.

The Leadership Development Framework synthesized from Bush (2008) Nongluck (1999), DuBrin (1995), Day (2001), Stanford Educational Leadership Institute (2005), and Conger (1992, as cited in Allen, 2008) The Leadership Development Framework is divided into two types of learning: Individualized Learning with five subcomponents: learning through facilitation, mentoring, coaching, consultancy, and e-learning. And, Group Learning with four

subcomponents: action learning, residential and off-site learning, networking and school visits, and portfolio development.

### **7.2.2 The Trust Level of Primary School Administrators in Thailand**

The research findings revealed that the overall trustworthiness of primary school administrators was rated at the highest level. Among the various dimensions of trustworthiness, caring and concern were identified as the most highly regarded attributes, reflecting administrators' genuine empathy and commitment to the well-being of their school communities. This was followed by reliability in words and actions, indicating consistency and dependability in leadership, and openness, which highlights transparency in communication. However, management competence was rated as the least trustworthy aspect, suggesting that while administrators are valued for their interpersonal qualities, there may be room for improvement in their managerial skills.

### **7.2.3 Needs Assessment for Developing Trustworthy Leadership of Primary School Administrators in Thailand**

The research findings highlight the priority needs for trustworthy leadership development, emphasizing the significance of group learning over individualized learning. Among group learning methods, residential and off-site learning ranked highest, particularly in management competence and reliability in words and actions. Networking and school visits, portfolio use, and action learning also demonstrated priority needs, focusing on attributes such as caring and concern, reliability, and openness. In individualized learning, mentoring emerged as the top priority, primarily enhancing openness and reliability. Other methods, including coaching, e-learning, facilitation, and consultancy, addressed various leadership dimensions, with openness, reliability, and management competence consistently identified as critical areas for development. These insights underline the tailored approach needed for fostering trustworthy leadership through both group and individualized learning strategies.

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