

Strategies to Enhance Good Characters of Students in Schools under the Foundation of The Church of Christ in Thailand

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Abstract. *This research study is aimed to propose strategies to enhance good characters of students in schools under The Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand. The researcher used descriptive research through mixed methods. The qualitative information and data are gathered from in-depth interviews, a group interview, observation, and document study in 14 schools. Research instruments include in-depth interviews, a group interview, and observation form. The analysis is based on informative scrutiny by using content analysis technique. The quantitative information is gathered from 1,198 questionnaires in 25 schools. The collected data are analyzed in terms of frequency, averages, and standard deviations. The strategies are generated from TOWS Matrix by experts in strategic planning, educational management, Christian ethics, children's life skills, child and youth psychology, and school principals. Finally, seventeen people, including experts, educators, school principals and staff who are in charge of strategies implementation evaluated the feasibility and suitability of the derived strategies.*

The research results show that good characters of students can be divided into four areas: the self, the relationships, the society and the environment. Research had found that external and internal environments affecting the enhancement of students' good characters are presented in four dimensions based on SWOT analysis, namely strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The highest average mean of each dimension is described as follows: The strength is that the school administrators have high leadership qualities and a determination to enhance students' good characters. As for the weakness, the teachers' overloaded documentation and other works diminish the time available to closely monitor and look after all the students. The opportunity is based on the good reputation of the schools. However, one of the biggest threats that building and enhancing the students' good characters is the increasingly globalized fashions and trends, leading them to disregard principles of the sufficiency economy and their own national identity.

The researcher has thus concluded that there are 6 strategies in enhancing the good characters of the students in schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand. These strategies are: 1. To enhance the strength of the Christian mission in order to become the core base that implants good characters in students; 2. To strengthen teachers and school members' existing capabilities by pooling together their strengths, skills, knowledge, devotion and commitment to enhance the students' good characters; 3. To extract good characters of the students, allowing them to interact with other students and the local community; 4. To develop the learning processes to support and maintain students' good characters; 5. To improve management qualities of the school and teachers, which

will strengthen the students' characters; and finally, 6. To synergize the family, community and related organizations outside the schools as a way of enhancing the students' good characters.

Key words: Strategies to enhance good character of students / Good character

Introduction

It is of the utmost importance that education management gives particular attention and emphasis towards building characters of students as much as it does towards building the intellectual capabilities of students. (Lickona and Davidson, 2005: i) This is because the good characters lead to the development of other aspects of students, leading to the betterment of community, society and the country as a whole.

Schools or other bodies which are responsible for educational management, should define clear guidelines and goals in order to build human resources capacity and the educational management system that enhance good characters of students. They should also have a modern management system, clear principles and allow everyone and all the stakeholders to participate. (Davies, 2006: 11)

If we consider the Thai society nowadays, we will find that one of the crisis problems is the youth moral as was said in Thai Report of Education in 2007/2008 (Chiangkoon, W. 2008) that Thai youths have increased risky behavior in drugs taking stealing and fighting one another. Besides, the study of the Thai society in the past of the Thai Education Council (2008:7) these days?' that Thai society lack of protection from modern media and new technology from foreign cultures which caused the inappropriate behavior of Thai teenagers. These problems also happen in schools because most

The Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand is in charge of 25 schools all over the country and there 54,815 students (Statistics as of 10 June 2008) studying in these schools. Although these schools use the same vision which was created by The Department of Education Affairs (2008) under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand, in practice there has not been any studies on the clear direction nor implementations in enhancing good characters of students. In other words, there has not been a concrete or specific strategy that will enhance the good characters of students, or any guiding principles upon which students could build their characters. Amidst the growing problems of social and economic pressures, fast-paced lifestyles, technological shifts and advancements, of which are conducive to wrong-doings and acts of moral degradation, the researcher believes that the current educational management system does not yet clearly outline the end results of good characters of the students, or the good characters that the students should possess at the end of the learning process. The current system does not specify or clearly delineate the methods and ways in which the students should act to achieve the desired good characters. In addition, the current system does not enable organizations or schools to achieve the stated objectives, or allow them to prevent undesirable traits to manifest in students amidst the current socio-economic situations. The researcher is thus interested in studying the strategies to enhance good character of students in schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand.

The objective of this study is to propose strategies to enhance good characters of students in schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand. The research framework of the study is a moral and ethical dimension based on the study by Tate (2005), which is similar to Christian ethics, and to set up strategies similar to the model by



Wheelen and Hunger (2004). This is because the model has a basic foundation in strategic management using Environmental Scanning and Strategy Formulation that is clear and well-suited to the education management system of the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand.

Research methodology

From studies of business strategies that could be adopted into the field of educational management, Mintzberg and Quinn's (1996:9-10) study stated that effective strategies should: 1) Clear, decisive objectives, 2) Maintaining the initiative, 3) Concentration, 4) Flexibility, 5) Coordinated and committed leadership, 6) Surprises, and 7) Security, should also reflect the stability and security of the organization. From the point of view of building good characters of students, the researcher had based the strategies on the framework of the 10th National Development Plan (BE 2550-2554), which aligns with the National Educational Plan (BE 2545-2559). Taken from various academic literature, research studies, (Berkowitz M.W. 2002, Lickona, T.& Davidson, M. 2005, Wongwanich, S.2006 and Ryan, K. 2010,) and the syntheses of creating good characteristics of students, the researcher had found 5 main areas: 1) building networks that help enhance good characters; 2) learning and adjustments; 3) human resources development and creation of good role models; 4) integration of religious thoughts and activities into school curriculum, and 5) building a strong educational management system that helps enhance good characters. From the first point of building networks that enhance good characters, the networks should create strong collaboration between families and external institutions or organizations that foster and enhance good characters of students. This concepts aligns with study by Jongsatityoo and Sukhaphirom (2007), which had found that one of the important factors in fostering good characters among students is the family institution.

This study is a descriptive research, based on a mixed method in collecting data, both qualitative and quantitative data. The population is the 25 schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand. Qualitative data collection was conducted based on the 14 schools throughout Thailand, based on pre-specified size of the school. For the quantitative study, the researcher had collected a total of 25 schools using random sampling method in selecting school administrators, key persons and teachers from each school based on a stratified random sampling. A purposive sampling method was used when selecting the samples of teachers and students. The researcher relied on the table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to set all sample sizes of all the samples.

Research tools used in collecting data for qualitative analysis include interviews, observations and a group interview form. The tools used for quantitative analysis are 1,198 questionnaires and using descriptive statistics to interpret the results which are percentages, means and standard deviations. The comment and recommendations were based on open-ended questions used to analyze and summarize the main points.

The research methodology was divided into the following 5 steps:

Step 1: The first step was setting up a research framework by studying, analyzing and synthesizing the relevant concepts of good character, theories and important policies on the enhancement of the student good characters. The researcher had analyzed strategic management, strategy formulation and relevant strategies in enhancing the good characters by studying the document and consulting the expert in strategic plan, and then evaluated their contents, and finally set up a general scope and framework for the research study.

Step 2: This step was to present a summary of the good characters of the students under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand. In this step the researcher studied the external and internal environment, the organization and the conditions that helped enhance good characters of students. Within this step, the researcher conducted another four steps, including group interview used to gain relevant insights of the students, the site visit study of 14 schools, questionnaires focusing on the environment and the ways to help enhance good characters, and a SWOT analysis used for the TOWS Matrix (Wheelen and Hunger, pp.109-115).

Step 3: This step was to generate strategies using the SWOT analysis and TOWS Matrix. The researcher set up two focus groups, one comprised of policy implementers, and the other of experts from various fields including those involved in formulating strategies in school administration, experts in Christian ethics, experts in youth skills, and child psychology experts. Afterwards, the researcher then analyzed, synthesized and then summarized all the results, while using them to generate strategies in enhancing good characters of the students within the schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand.

Step 4: This step focused on evaluating appropriateness and relevancy of the developed strategies in enhancing good characters of the students within the schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand. This step involved 17 experts and strategy implementers to evaluate the strategies in enhancing good characters of the students within the schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand by using the evaluation form.

Step 5: This final step was to present final results on the strategies to enhance good characters of students within the schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand

Conclusions

The researcher had found that good characters of students in schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand should comprise of:

1. Self-discipline with high responsibilities on their own actions and words, and live lives based on a sufficiency economy philosophy. (This philosophy was developed by the King of Thailand).
2. Being honesty, integrity and gentleness in dealing with others.
3. Have faith in God, use the words of God to live with others and respect social rules.
4. Value nature and the environment, have a strong sense conservation of natural resources and support sustainable development.

From the study of the factors affecting the schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand, it has been found that both external and internal factors have an impact on building good characters with varying degrees. Based on the SWOT analysis, the schools' reputation is considered an opportunity; threats include current trends and fashions among students, making them live not on a balanced and sufficient way of life, and not cherishing their own national identity. Strengths of the schools include strong leadership quality and traits of teachers and school administrators, and their determination to build good characters of the students, while weaknesses include a huge load of paperwork, making teachers unable to concentrate and pay close attention to students.

The researcher also had found 6 strategies to enhance good characters of the students within the schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand, with 19 sub-strategies, and policies and procedures. The following table show the students' good



character and the strategies and sub strategies and the diagram summarizes the overall results.

Strategies to enhance Good characters of students in schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand

Students' Good Characters	Strategies / Sub Strategies
1. The self * Have self-discipline * Have high responsibilities on the actions and words * Determine ethical values * Live lives based on a sufficiency economy philosophy	1. Enhance the strength of the Christian mission in order to become the core base that implants good characters in students - Develop and promote religious activities and the teaching based on Christian ethics, while creating a variety of interesting activities for students. 2. Strengthen teachers and school members' existing capabilities by pooling together their strengths, skills, knowledge, devotion and commitment to enhance the students' good characters - Emphasize the positive energy of human resources and creating role models for building good characters of students 3. Extract good characters from the students, allowing them to interact with other students and local community - Build a network of good actions among and between students - Strengthen the efforts of good behaviors through a variety of activities 4. Develop the learning processes to support and maintain students' good characters - Develop academic curriculum that aims at building good characters of the students - Develop good learning processes through the use of information technology - Develop learning center to help build good characters through the support system by the local community 5. Improve management qualities of the school which will strengthen the students' characters - Increase work efficiency in all aspects while aiming to enhance good characters for the students
	6. Synergize the family, community and related organizations outside the schools as a way of enhancing the students' good characters - Create a core group of change agents who can help drive building good characters of the students - Search for knowledge based from various outside experts that can help create good characters among students.

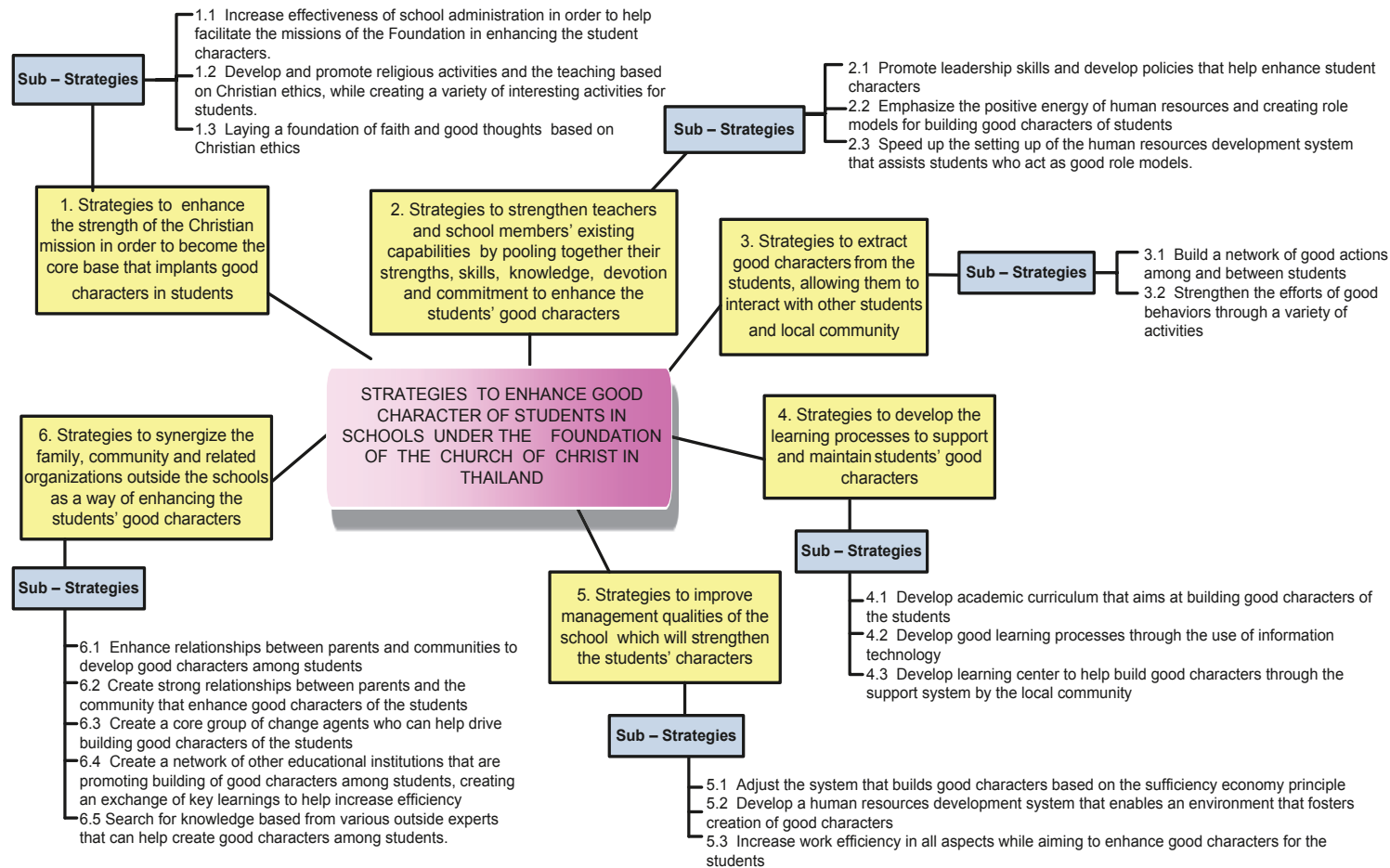


Students' Good Characters	Strategies / Sub Strategies
<p>2. Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Be honesty * Be integrity * Have a sense of caring towards others 	<p>2. Strengthen teachers and school members' existing capabilities by pooling together their strengths, skills, knowledge, devotion and commitment to enhance the students' good characters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasize the positive energy of human resources and creating role models for building good characters of students <p>3. Extract good characters from the students, allowing them to interact with other students and local community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build a network of good actions among and between students - Strengthen the efforts of good behaviors through a variety of activities <p>4. Develop the learning processes to support and maintain students' good characters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop academic curriculum that aims at building good characters of the students
<p>3. Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Have faith in God *Use the words of God to live their lives *Respect social rules and a democratic system. 	<p>1. Strength of the Christian mission in order to become the core base that implants good characters in students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and promote religious activities and the teaching based on Christian ethics, while creating a variety of interesting activities for students. <p>2. Strengthen teachers and school members' existing capabilities by pooling together their strengths, skills, knowledge, devotion and commitment to enhance the students' good characters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasize the positive energy of human resources and creating role models for building good characters of students <p>3. Extract good characters from the students, allowing them to interact with other students and local community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build a network of good actions among and between students - Strengthen the efforts of good behaviors through a variety of activities <p>4. Develop the learning processes to support and maintain students' good characters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop academic curriculum that aims at building good characters of the students <p>6. Synergize the family, community and related organizations outside the schools as a way of enhancing the students' good characters</p> <p>Search for knowledge based from various outside experts that can help create good characters among students.</p>



Students' Good Characters	Strategies / Sub Strategies
4. The environment	3. Extract good characters from the students, allowing them to interact with other students and local community
* Value nature and the environment	Build a network of good actions among and between students
* Have a strong sense conservation of natural resources	4. Develop the learning processes to support and maintain students' good characters
* Support sustainable development	- Develop academic curriculum that aims at building good characters of the students
	- Develop learning center to help build good characters through the support system by the local community
	5. Improve management qualities of the school which will strengthen the students' characters
	- Adjust the system that builds good characters based on the sufficiency economy principle

Diagram showing the strategies to enhance good characters of the students in schools under the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand





Details of each of the strategies are summarized below:

1. Strategies to enhance the strength the Christian mission in order to become the core base that implants good characters in students Sub strategy:

1.1: Increase effectiveness of school administration in order to help facilitate the Christian missions of the Foundation in enhancing the student characters.

Policies & Procedures:

- Set up strategic plan in enhancing student characters based on the main foundation of Christian ethics in each school in order to clearly demonstrate the work, process, and key performance indicators of the student good characters.

- Allow and promote the adoption of human resources management techniques based on the teaching of the Bible in all functions.

Sub strategy:

1.2 Develop and promote religious activities and the teaching based on Christian ethics, while creating a variety of interesting activities for students.

Policies & procedures:

- Adjust the teaching methods by focusing not on the general knowledge of Christian ethics but on allowing students and giving them opportunities to demonstrate ethical codes of conducts that they have learned. These can include prayers, singing songs, pledges of allegiance, as well as seminars on a variety of interesting topics based on Christian teachings and the Bible.

- Make the preaching in church or in an auditorium quality time for students, having a clear topic with interesting content, and using captivating teaching methods while emphasizing on both mental and spiritual aspects of student learning as a key foundation for good thoughts and behaviors.

Sub-strategy:

1.3 Laying a foundation of faith and good thoughts based on Christian ethics

Policies & procedures:

- As a matter of policy, make sure that all classes teach and talk about the Bible once a week, allowing students to exchange and share their own activities as related to the Bible, with teachers playing supportive roles.

- Print notebook of good deeds and actions for students, or improve on existing notebooks while linking the four aspects of good characters with the teaching from the Bible that students are impressed with.. Teachers can also give awards to students who regularly record their good deeds.

Strategies to strengthen teachers and school members' existing capabilities by pooling together their strengths, skills, knowledge, devotion and commitment to enhance the students' good characters.

Sub Strategy:

2.1. Promote leadership skills and develop policies that help enhance student characters

Policy & Procedures:

- School administrators should lead the way in researching policies or activities with parents and the community, or outside of classroom learning in order to have a most productive use of their time, or to preserve the local traditions.

- Set up knowledge management (KM) in promoting good characters by inviting famous alumni, teachers and students who have outstanding characters to exchange their knowledge, views as well as interesting stories or events that have influenced them to

have outstanding characters. KM system can help record this practice, from which other organizations can build and create database for further dissemination of this practice.

Sub-strategy:

2.2. Emphasize the positive energy of human resources and creating role models for building good characters of students.

Policies & Procedures:

- Set up activities that honor current students, alumni, teachers and other school personnel that have demonstrated outstanding characters so that the students can look up to and take up as role models.

Sub strategy:

2.2. Speed up the setting up of the human resources development system that assists students who act as good role models.

Policies & Procedures:

- Setting up a network of good teachers by selecting those with outstanding characters to become mentors in teaching, coaching and evaluating the new generation of teachers who dedicate themselves to disciplining their students based on teachers' ethics.

3. Strategies to extract good character from students, allowing them to interact with other students and local community.

Sub strategy:

Build a network of good actions among and between students.

Policies & Procedures:

- creating opportunities for students to express their views and opinions, as well as plans, and for them to decide and participate in the community activities, focusing on experience-based activities or activities that assist in students' self development. At the same time, a presentation of the results should be shared among students, teachers and parents.

Sub strategy:

3.2 Strengthen the efforts of good behaviors through a variety of activities

Policies & Procedure:

- Set up a variety of activities, including activities that directly teach ethics or those that indirectly use or blend in Christian ethical values. For example, a photography club, a traditional music club, an energy conservation club or a little guides group.

4. Strategies in developing the learning processes to support and maintain students' good characters

Sub strategy:

4.1. Develop academic curriculum that aims at building good characters of the students.

Policies & Procedures:

- integrate all the four aspects of good characters into academic curriculum of each school

- develop learning methods and activities by allowing all students to participate through an Activities-Based Curriculum. Activities can range from small, medium to large size, and can involve the whole school. This is to encourage students in the learning of responsibilities, kindness, harmony and unity.

Sub strategy:

4.2 Develop good learning processes through the use of information technology

Policies & procedures:



- develop extra on-line curriculum to help develop good characters of the students. These curriculum should have interesting contents, insightful questions or angles which help stimulate children's curiosity as well as are relevant and timely to their current situations. There should be activities that focus on the interactions of the learners to have an opportunity to express their opinions and raise questions directly to teachers.

- Encourage teachers to use technologies that have been developed in-house and materials that can be downloaded for free through several international websites, helping to build good characters and leadership skills among the students.

Sub strategy:

4.3. Develop learning center to help build good characters through the support system by the local community.

Policy & Procedures:

- Link up with local communities to share the information together, building a consciousness in conserving local traditions, cultures and the local environment.

5. Strategy to improve management qualities of the school which will strengthen the students' characters

Sub strategy:

5.1 Adjust the system that builds good characters based on the sufficiency economy principle.(The philosophy that was developed by the King of Thailand).

Policy & procedures:

- Adopting the sufficiency economy principle while bringing it into practice and integrating it with the annual action plans; set up sufficient budgets for equipment and learning materials that help build good characters and other aspects of the students. There should also be activities that help demonstrate the need for being self-sufficient, the building of self-immunization system based on knowledge and moral that helps protect the local community.

Sub strategy:

5.2 Develop a human resources development system that enables an environment that fosters creation of good characters.

Policy & procedures:

- Set up a committee comprising of representatives from senior school administrators, retired and current teachers, while inviting outside experts to review current regulations and to create manuals that are easy to understand. These manuals should be accepted by all departments; they should be made aware to all the teachers as well as the personnel department. These manuals should be regularly used and adopted , while all stakeholders should strictly adhere to these manuals.

Sub strategy:

5.3. Increase work efficiency in all aspects while aiming to enhance good characters for the students:

Policy & procedures:

- Create classroom environment, buildings, and surrounding environment that are safe and constructive for setting up activities for students. Under this scheme, students should be also be encouraged and delegated to take some responsibilities in looking after their own environment. This will create a sense of ownership, volunteerism, and conservation efforts among students.

6. Strategy to synergize the family, communities and related organizations outside the school as a way of enhancing the students' good characters.

Sub strategy:

6.1 Enhance relationships between parents and communities to develop good characters among students

Policy & procedures:

- Create activities that foster good relationships between teachers and parents in various forms based on the readiness of the families. These activities demonstrate the importance of parents in teaching the students, while allowing students to participate in various activities. They could also enable students to be the leaders of the activities. These activities include singing songs, showing academic results and demonstrating other skills, such as cooking for their parents.

- Create activities that honor parents who maintain regular contact with the school and who participate in school activities which enhance good characters of the students when they are at home.

Sub strategy:

Create strong relationships between parents and the community that enhance good characters of the students

Policy & procedures:

- Create a network of parents at each school level that acts as a core task force in disseminating information and stimulating other parents to pay extra attention to the activities that foster good characters. This network should help enhance students' disciplines and other four aspects of good characters of the students.

Sub strategy:

6.3 Create a core group of change agents who can help drive building good characters of the students.

Policy & procedures:

- Enable the formation of a core group comprising of teachers, alumni, and current students, which acts as a task force to drive activities among students to demonstrate their acts of courage, ethics and leadership skills, based on the four aspects of good characters. Activities should involve "movements", and use information technology (ICT) to communicate these role models, creating a wave good change within the society.

Sub strategy:

6.4 Create a network of other educational institutions that are promoting building of good characters among students, creating an exchange of key learning to help increase efficiency.

Policy & procedures:

- Create a network of famous academic institutions, both domestically and internationally, that promote building of good characters. This will help enable the schools to learn best practices that foster good characters, while bringing them to the international standards.

Sub strategy:

6.5 Search for knowledge based from various outside experts that can help create good characters among students.

Policy & procedures:

- Invite alumni who demonstrate outstanding characters to come and give talks to current students in order to increase their understanding in the ways of managing one-self amidst the current trend in consumerism, or life's limitations, as well as other factors that help ones become successful.



Result Discussions

By analyzing various strategies listed above, the researcher has found the significant points as follows:

The strategy that strengthens the Christian missions acts as a core activity that helps enhance the good characters of the students. It is a strategy that provides answers to the policies and education missions of the Foundation of the Church of Christ in Thailand. The Foundation has defined its missions as follows: To develop the Christian missions within affiliated schools under the office to correspond with the Church of Christ in Thailand's policies to foster ethics and moral integrity among students.

The fact that a second-tiered organization has a policy that aligns with the main organization can be seen as effective. Mintzberge and Quinn (1996:9) have similarly stated that: "...both business and military diplomatic settings-suggest that effective strategies should at a minimum encompass certain other critical factors and structural elements." This strategy is another outstanding aspect that creates uniqueness of the schools under the Foundation of Church of Christ in Thailand.

The participation by the children's fathers, mothers and parents in enhancing good characters of the students is part of the 6th strategy, which involves a synergizing of efforts by families, communities and external organization. This is considered a crucial point in building good characters of the students. This is because students, which spend most of their time with parents, senior relatives and family members, can be educated and inculcated with good values and behaviors.

This strategy aligns with the research by William, D. (2002:61) which has found that parents have the most influence on the children's behavioral development. This strategy is also in line with another research study by Jongsatityoo and Sukhaphirom (2007, 106-231), which found that family institution plays a crucial and pivotal role in cultivating ethical values and good characters in many countries. This study showed that, in a case study of Vietnam, the Vietnamese students are educated by their parents and grandparents on many virtues and values, which make up good characters of the students. These values and virtues include the sense of nationalism and pride, diligence, filial piety and dutifulness. Parents often teach their children that the young must have filial piety, without it they cannot have advancement in life.

The Implementation of the Strategies

This research has proposed the following recommendations:

Schools should first analyze both external and internal factors that affect the character of students and can help lead to good characters of the students. This is in order to incorporate the results with the goals and strategies that align with the individual school's readiness and missions.

Within the schools, there should be a committee set up to be directly responsible in implementing these strategies. The committee should set clear roles and responsibilities, allocate resources and budget so that the implementation can take place effectively and yield tangible and substantial results.

There should be the study which help to define the indicator of good character of students in school under the Church of Christ in Thailand so it will come up with the process of measurement and evaluation of the strategies.

There should be the study of model or strategies in building network among school family and church or other religion institutions that will bring strong power to support the enhancement of good character in students.

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