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The Development of Personnel Administration Model of Souphanouvong University

Bounthieng Vongsouangtham*, Sithane Soukhavong and Sounieng Vongkhamchanh

Office of International Relations, Souphanouvong University, Lao PDR
E-mail: bounthieng.su@gmail.com, st.soukhavong@gmail.com and
sounieng.vong@gmail.com
*Corresponding author

Abstract

The main purpose of the present investigation was to develop a model for personnel administration of Souphanouvong University, Lao PDR. To achieve the objective, a mixed method research was employed and the study was divided into four phases. Phase 1 examined the current status of personnel administration. Regarding this phase, a document analysis was conducted and the survey questionnaires were administered to the sample group. The population for this phase was administrators and teahers who worked at the university in total of 415 people. The sample group was 324 participants who were selected by using a purposive sampling method. Phase 2 developed a personnel administration model by using a Dephi Technique. The questionnaire was used in this phase. The target group consisted of 19 experts who had experience in the area of personnel administratioin. Phase 3 evaluated the model of personnel administration in terms of feasibility, utility, propriety, and accuracy. The target group was 9 experts. The data were collected by using focus group discussion. Phase 4 confirmed the potential practice of the model. The target group for this phase was the administrators, staff, and teachers in total of 60 participants. The tool was the 5- Likert scale questionnaire and the data were computed to find mean and standard deviation. The findings are as follows. The current status of personnel administration was at a high level, meaning that the practice of personnel administration is appropriate. Also, the development of the personnel administration model consisted of seven components such as planning, selecting, managing, developing, rewarding, evaluating, and retiring. The evaluation of the model in terms of its feasibility, utility, propriety, and accuracy was at the high level. Finally, the results reveal that the model was confirmed as the high potential for application/ practiced. This research illustrates a signficant knowledge for personnel administration in the context of Laos and beyond. It is suggested that the concerned university administrators consider implementing it and revising its policy.

Keywords: Personnel administration, Souphanouvong University, Administrators, Personnel, Model

Introduction

Human resource development is considered the most important factor for socioeconomic development of Lao PDR to graduate from a list of the least developed status in 2025 and become an industrialized country. According to the 5-year Education Sector Development Plan IX (2021-2025), the main focus is to develop the national education system with the aim of fostering human resources to possess knowledge, ability, morality, value, national passion, honesty, physical health, mental health, and national solidarity (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020, p.17-18).

A summary report on the implementation of the education and sports plans as well as personnel administration has pointed out that the problems and challenges related to staff recruitment and management are hindered by a limited number of the quota personnel given by the government. On the other hand, there was a large number of newly graduates and volunteer teachers, leading to a high rate of unemployment of new teachers because the priority was given to the employment of the volunteer teachers. However, the management of this was still ineffective; including a slow development of regulations due to limited budget. In addition, staff who were responsible for this work still lacked experience in the management (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020, p. 62). Also, the current status of teacher professional development and education and sports personnel upgrade was too general and inappropriate to the current situation, lesson learned, experience, and responsibilities, leading to the insufficiency of teachers at various levels and subjects (Department of Personnel and Human Resources, 2020, p.4-5).

Personnel development is an art of organizations to foster a positive environment for the implementation of work by personnel and staff, leading to increased quality and considered as a process of learning that staff pursue continuously. This was stated in the personnel management strategy of Lao PDR by proposing 9 strategic plans. One of which focuses on improving the training system and personnel development which indicates the importance and requirement for personnel development. To meet this requirement, a developmental strategic system was created with the aim of ensuring efficiency and consistency with the positions and in accordance with needs of specific sectors (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018, p.13).

In terms of the personnel management, Luangprabang province has evaluated and considered the situation for implementing the result of the VIII provincial personnel management as follows: A strategic plan was created to facilitate the work of upgrading and developing under the administration by providing educational support at various levels with responsibilities and in another local placement. Additionally, technology has been used in storing personnel biodata, account, and statistic management. This ensures the correct and systematic data, providing information for research, management, deployment conductive for the implementation of policy associated. The appointment, management, and deployment of personnel were also in responses to the needs and requirements of duties, positions of administration, action plans, appropriateness, abilities, agreement, and key personnel in alignment with party committees and self-administration.

Furthermore, the policy and social welfare works were practiced to ensure the effectiveness of staff-personnel, soldier-police as indicated in the law, regulations, especially the implementation of the salary system, support money, and other financial support on the basis of the current financial and economic situation of the country. This practice was also applied to appreciate, salary upgrade, retirement support as well as officials who greatly contributed to the protection and development of the country. Also, the staff who faced

challenges and difficulties, and deaths were also looked after and supported by the related organizations (Report on Improving and Upgrading Administration 5 years (2016-2020) and Future Directions 5 years (2021-2025) at the Meeting on Administration the VIII of Laungprabang, Date 16-17 December, 2021).

Souphanouvong University has performed and practiced its roles and responsibilities in accordance with the decree No. 009/PO, dated on the 3rd of April 2009 by the Office of Personnel and Administration as well associated sections of the faculty levels, centres, and library who centrally collaborated about personnel administration. The administration in this sense followed the duty and scope of responsibilities stated in administration of the university which consists of: 1) educating political ideaology, morality and regulations for staff, teachers, and students within the university, 2) conducting short trainings for staff of different sectors as required by society, 3) carrying out scientific research and developing technology of various sectors, 4) disseminating the research results which are beneficial for social and economic development of Lao PDR (Decree No. 009/PO, 2009).

Because of the above mentioned reasons, the researcher, an administrator at Souphanouvong University, was interested in investigating the current situation of the personnel adminstration by focusing on 7 components such as: planning, selecting, managing, developing, rewarding, evaluating, and retiring. The objectives of the present research were formulated on the basis of reviewting related literature and studies. Additionally, the objectives were drawn from the current situation of challenges and problems associated with the issue being examined. Therefore, the following objectives were formed. First, the present research was conducted to examine the current status of personnel administration of Souphanouvong University. It also aimed to develop a model for personnel administration. Third, it focused on evaluating the model in terms of feasibility, utility, propriety, and accuracy. Finally, it confirm confirm the model of personnel administration for its potential implementaiton/practice.

The researcher is interested in the issue because personnel administration is important as it contributes to and ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the education administration. The current practice of personnel administration of Souphanouvong University still faces a number of challenges such as a lack of proper planning and managing personnel staff. It was hoped that the findings provide suggestions and advice on enhancing personnel administration of the university and beyond.

Methodology

To fulfil the objectives, a research and development (R&D) method was adopted in this study (Godin, 2006) and it was divided into 4 phases as follows: Phase 1 investigated the current status of personnel administration. A document analysis and a survey questionnaire was used. 342 participants were selected. These include administrators, staff, and teachers. A purposive sampling method was used for the the participants selection. The data were analysed by using a computer program to find mean and standard deviation. The questionnaire was validated to ensure its reliability and congruency as follows. First, the questionnaire was evaluated to measure its content validity, construct validity, and item objective congruency (IOC). The IOC result of each item ranged from 0.80-1.0, indicating that the questionnaire is acceptable. The questionnaire was then piloted with a group of 60 academics who were not the participant of the main study. The pilot was run to find its reliability as suggested by Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The reliability is 0.89 which indicated that it is acceptable. Phase 2 developed a model of peronnel administration by utilizing a Delphi Technique. The

questionnaire was employed in this phase to seek perceptions of 19 experts who were selected by using a purposive sampling method. These experts include deputy head of Department of Higher Education, deputy head of Personnel Department, deputy head of Laungprabang Education Department Office, deputy head of Provincial Personnel Division, vice-rectors of Souphanouvong University, deans and heads of university offices. They were selected due to the following criteria. First, they had at least 10-year experience of administration. Second, they had a 15 year of education institutions administration. Finally, they had a high administrative position in the field of education. The data were analysed by using percentage and content analysis (open-ended questions). The data were then analysed to find Interquartile-Range of each item and further suggestions. Phase 3 evaluated the feasibility, propriety, utility, and accuracy of the model. The target group was 9 experts, which include the president of the university, head of Higher Education Department, head of Personnel Department of Ministry of Education and Sports, head of Personnel Division of Laungprabang, head of Home Affairs Division of Languagprang, head of Lanngprabang Education and Sports Division, vice-president of the university who was responsible for personnel affairs, academic affairs, and dean of Faculty of Physical Education of National University of Laos. These experts were invited to a group meeting (Cohen, Manion, & Marrison, 2011) by using a method of Stufflebeam (2003) such as: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. The tool that was used in this phase was the rating scale questionnaire of 5 levels. 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree. The data were computed to find means and standard deviation. Phase 4 confirmed the personnel administration model. The perception questionnaire; consisting of 7 components was administered to the target group to collect the data. The target group included administrators, staff, and teachers in total of 60 participants. The participants include deputy heads of offices, centres, institutes, personnel department, and concerned academics. They were selected by using a purposive sampling method. The underlying reason for utilizing the purposive and criteria sampling method was because this research focused on an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 1990). For this reason, the participants who met these criteria were invited to participate in this study. In addition, the purposive sampling method allows for convenience and accessibility (Palinkas et al., 2015) while permitting the researcher to examine the issues of interest deeply.

Results

The findings are presented in order to phases and objectives as inidcated earlier. The overall result of the current status of personnel administration was at a high level, meaning that the current practice of the personnel administration is appropriate. The findings also show that the model of personnel adminstration consists of seven components: planning, selecting, managing, developing, rewarding, evaluating, and retiring. These components are vital for effective administration of the university. Additionally, the findings indicate that the evaluation of the model in the areas of feasibility, utility, propriety, and accuracy were perceived as the high level, indicating that the model can be taken into consideration for effective application. Finally, the results reveal that the model personnel administration was perceived as the high potential implementation in each aspect as indicators reveal. To conclude, this research yielded a signficant knowledge for personnel administration, especially in terms of the seven components for Souphavnoung University and beydong. Drawing from the main findings, key components of the model can be summarized as follows. planning, selection, managing, developing, rewarding, evaluating, and retiring. The model is illustrated in Figure 1 below.
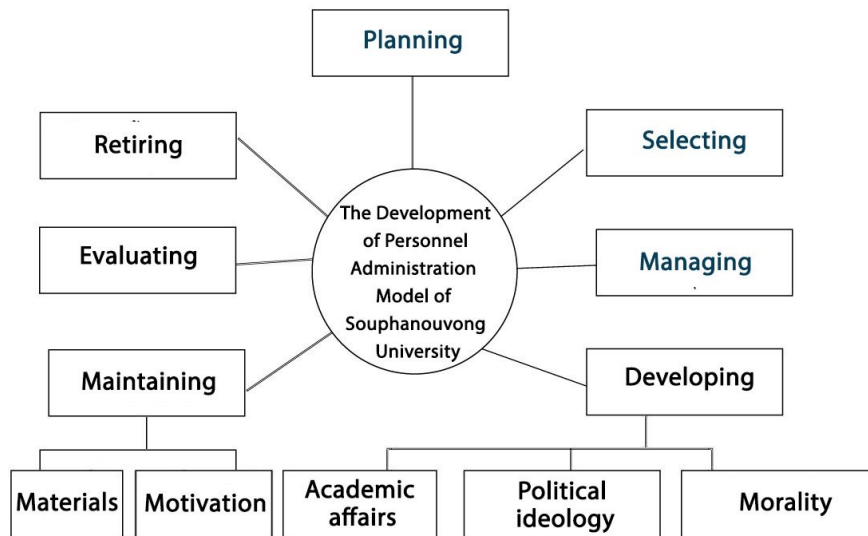
Figure 1 Model of personnel administration

Discussions

Objective 1: The current status of personnel adminstration

The findings reveal that the current state of personnel administration of Souphanouvong University was perceived as good and appropriate. This means that, although some components were not fully practiced, the uninversity had done quite well in terms of personnel management and administration. The problems, however, was that some key components were not fully focused on in real situations. This is due to various factors such as a lack of full attention, proper minotoring and evaluation, and coporate culture in the sense that it was indirect management and administration of the organization. An indirect way of discussing and giving feedback to those who violated the rules and regulations might reflect ineffective administration. This means that the administrators had the capability to plan, manage and take action in terms of personnel adminstration (Rajaratnam, 2007; Junboonnak, Ngamprakhon, & Ruangsanka, 2018).

Objective 2: The development of personnel administration model

The development of personnel administration model of Souphanouvong University, Lao PDR consists of 7 components such as: planning, selecting, managing, developing, rewarding, evaluating, and retiring. These components play a crucial role in the administration of the personnel. Planning is considered the first for effective administration. In this regard, proper and systemic planing is conductive to the success of personnel or general administration (Jeseviciute- Ufartiene, 2014) . Selecting staff for work is also important to ensure the appropriatness. There is a criteria for recruting and selecting staff which is mandated by the university. Once staff are selected, it is imperative that they are assigned with appropriate responsibility. Putting the right man for the right job is vital for the efficient work. To meet

this requirement, it is important to cosnider the qualification of the staff for right job (Boselie, Van & Veld, 2021). Developing personnel or human resource is another aspect to pay attention to for upgrading and building skills and knowledge of the staff. In-service professional training is one method that the university has conducted (Swanson, 2022). Another component is rewarding which plays a vital role in the process of personnel administration. Rewarding in this sense refers to the process of supporting and giving encouragement or the benefit of the staff. To maintain the staff within the organization, it is important for the university provide proper support and encouragement (Naqvi et al., 2022). What is also important for personnel administration is evaluating. Evaluating refers to the process of evaluating work performance. This is to ensure that staff have achieved their responsibilities and also to be used as a guide for staff evaluation and promotion. There are two types of evaluation: academic staff evaluation and administrative staff evaluation (Wang & Spitzer, 2005). In this regard, academic and administrative staff are required to keep porfolios of related documents. Retiring is also an important component of the personnel administration at Souphanouvong University. The process of managing this is in alighment with the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Sports and Ministry of Home Affairs. The process, however, might not be proper practiced in the actual implementation.

Objective 3: The evaluation of the model of personnel adminstration of Souphanouvong University.

The evaluation of the model of personnel administration of Souphanouvong University was at the high level overall. This means that each aspect of the model was useful, approprate, feasible, and accurate. To elaborate, each aspect/component of the model is perceived by the target group as the high level in terms of its possibility for improving and developing personnel administration of the unversity in particular. It is useful for other education institutions to consider using this model as a guide for their own sake of personnel development.

Objective 4: The confirmation of the model in terms its potential practice

The confirm of the personnel administration regarding its posibility of practice reveal a high level in each component. When considering from the highest to the lowest. First, the component about selecting was perceived as the highest, followed by managing, retiring, developing, planning, evaluating and rewarding respectively. Each of these aspect is discussed as follows.

Regarding selecting, seven indicators were found such as: 1) appointing a selection committee systematically, 2) the quotas given was managed according to the actual needs of each sector, 3) an announcement for recruitment should be done through varous platforms such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television and social media, 4) indicating a selection criteria of applicants such as age, health, character, and morality, 5) designing a selection test that is suitable with nature of work, position, and qualification, 6) selection is made on the basis of criteria of honest, ethical and fair selection, and 7) the results of selection should be anounced to the related persons and applicants. The practice of selection committtees represented the adminstration which follows the step and system to ensure transparency and fairness for all sectors. This practice is in line with the decree on Personnel (2009) of the Lao PDR, No. 82/PO, Vientiane 19th of May 2003 which states that personnel are considered the Lao citizen who are allocated in central, local and international organizations and were received salary and other support from the government as indicated in Article 4 of the law on personnel management. Additionally, the selection process must be in alignment with the principles and unity between central and local administration. The findings here are also consistent with Mounikorn & Phousiri (1994, p.28) who stated that the process of selecting must be appropriate for the position and be fair for the applicants. This also related to Outthachack (2008, p. 45) who

pointed out that selecting is a process of finding out personnel who have knowledge, skills, ability and wisdom for the sake of the organization. There are two schools of thoughts in this regard. First, it was stated that personnel with wisdom and leadership skills can be trained to perform all types of work. Second, it was stated it is not possible for a personnel to be good at all things because different persons have different abilities, and experiences can be fostered during work and professional experiences.

       With reference to managing, six indicators were found: 1) appointing was made on the basis of work nature, position, and academic major, 2) it was done on the basis of regulations and quotas given to each sector, 3) having orientation for new staff, 4) official appoinment for new staff, 5) provide suggestions to new staff to help them understand their roles and responsibilty by doing at one year internship,and 6) appointing existing sfaff to work, position and academic major as appropriate. This process should be consistent with the guidelines approved by the Ministry of Education and Sports (2020, p. 27), Decree of Prime Minister No. 117/GoL, dated on 5th June 2015 on higher education of Lao PDR, Section 6 is about teachers and personnel. Article 36 which states that teaching staff and teachers who work at the higher education institutions must be appropriate in terms of number, academics, knolwedge, abilities and morality, meeting the conditions as indicated. This is consistent with Phetthavong (1996, p. 59) who stated that appionting personnel staff is a process of selecting staff who are capable of working and this also is consistent with Phommanimit and others (2003, p. 15) who wrote that appointing personnel is a process of recruiting applicants for government officials and managed for vaccant positions.

       With reference to retiring, four indicators were found: 1) considering to move according to the position and nature work stated in the regulations, 2) considering to abstain from work by receiving a compensation money as indicated in the regulations, 3) considering and approving requests to retire made by personnel, and 4) replacing personnel who has retired as indicated in the regulations. Generally speaking, Souphanouvong University had a number of personnel who were no longer hired each year, including moving, requesting for a compensation when quitting work and retirement in alignment with regulations. This is the responsibility of administrators, including consideration judgement of each sector which related to decree on teacher personnel, No. 177/GoL, article 27 on finishing teaching jobs in form of being sacked, resigning or other reasons. It can be stated that the reasons for finishing and retiring from work are as follows: official retirement, asking for leave obsence from work, or was moved to another sector. This is consistent with Law on staff-personnel, No. 74/NA, article 64 on completing being personnel-government officials in the following conditions: leaving, lost of nationality, lack of responsibility, being sacked, disability, retirement, and deceased. In addition, article 65 of the law indicates that personnel-government officials can leave from work without being forced, but can request a permission and financial support. For those whose services are less than five years and leave of absence from work without an official permission are cosnidered absent from work and no complementary money was considered. Article 66 of the law states that those who lost of nationality also considered finished the services. Article 67, leaving responsibility, points out that personnel who are absent from work more than one month without proper reasons are considered inqualified for continuing work. Article 68, sacking, states that those who violated the regulations and law or executed by court are expeled from work, article 69 also indicates that those who are disable and have mental problems and are no longer served as stated by medical doctors cannot work and will receive social welfare as indicated. Article 70 points out that those who meet the criteria and regulations of retirement are considered under the law and principles.

In terms of developing, 14 indicators were confirmed: political ideaology: 1) providing the opportunity for personel to take part in political training courses at various levels in both domestic and overseas countries, 2) providing the opportunity for personnel to have an orientation in political idealolgy, policy, guidelines, regulations and orders from time to time, 3) providing the opportunity for personnel to have a study tour about administration and governance from various sectors, 4) allowing personnel to express ideas through implementing the policy, law and work, 5) supporting and fostering personnel in working, leading by examples with responsiblities for others, 6) supporting personnel to possess honesty, transparancy, ethics, well organized plans, and without corruption, 7) supporting personnel to maintain solidarity by participating in various activities, 8) providing the opportunity for personnel to take part in extra organizations and party to become good leaders; academic affairs: 9) creating personnel development plans appropriate with a position and in consistency with an academic qualification, 10) seeking scholarhsips for peronnel to updgrade education in domestic and overseas institutions, 11) fostering an academic ability for personnel by conducting training, seminars and exchange programs on different topics, 12) supporting personnel to do scientific research, publication, and dissemination for society, 13) supporting personnel to write, compile textbooks and academic papers, and 14) supporting academic cooperation such as: developmental partnership. It can be seen that develeoing personnel cannot be seperated from policy and political idealology which is consistent with a decree on personnel devleopment in 2017, section 2 which states the model of personnel development and training, article 7, orientation for new personnel about the roles and resonsibilities (Killian, 1989. As stated by Sourinthone (2010, p. 38), developing personnel is a process of fostering knowledge, ability and skills for staff, leading to increased responsibilty, effectiveness and efficacy. Additionally, organizations concerned should conduct training and support personnel in enhancing capacity, which is consistent with Saipinta (2011, p. 17) who stated that developing personnel is vital which cannot be underestimated although problems and obstracles exist. After all, this depends on the sacrifice and intent of the administrators and teachers to consider the personnel development.

In terms of planning, six indicators were found. 1) a reflective meeting at the administrative and academic level from time to time, 2) analysis of position and work data which is suitable for each sector, 3) planning the needs for personnel according to the nature of work, position and acdemic degree, 4) planing and indicating the target which is appropriate with the needs of each sector, 5) evaluating and improving personnel administration continously, 6) indicating academic degree with the nature of work and position in each sector. Due to the importance of the planning stage, Souphanouvong University should have a system for storing data and each sector should report the number of personnel. The plan should also focus on an important role and neccessity in order to ensure the achievement of the plan. This is consitent with Castetter (1996) who pointed out that human resource management was the first step for personnel administration which was expected for recruting personnel in the future and should be consistent with three factors such as: 1) general knowledge of the personnel, 2) organizational knowledge, and 3) knowedge about a current and future direction of the organization. As Mondy, Noe, & Vongsarnsy (1997) stated, a definition of planning for personnel is the process of anticipating the needs of the organization, types of personnel require, education qualifications, numbers and other processes.

In terms of evaluating, three indicators were found: 1) appointing a committee to assign rights, responsibilities, and duties as indicated, 2) evaluating work performance of personnel in a systemtic, proper and continuous manner, and 3) taking notes of the data regarding teaching personnel and administrator in terms of the existing problems to improve

the system. Through involving various sectors, indicating a division of duty as well as ensuring credibility and faireness. Through this process, data were collected and results of evaluating can be used as a baseline data for improving and developing personnel. Ministry of Home Affairs (2018, p. 1- 2) stated that evaluating personnel is to consider and measure the achievements that personnel has performed by focusing on the principles and agreement of the committees. It also allows for democracy, unity and growth to foster. If evalation is guaranteed, it is important for the organization to maintain transparency, openness, fairness, accuracy and principles, leading to fsotering solidarity and prosperity as expected and indicated. Furthermore, Phimkham (2018, p. 44) said that evaluating work performance is to assess the success by considering the amount of work and its effectiveness. This is the responsibility of the adminstrators, following the principles and criteria set. In this regard, three main aspects should be focused on: characteristics or nature of work, ability to work and work committment. The benefit of evaluating is that it allows personnel to know their peformances and weaknesses that they can be improved in the future. It also a tool for administrators to consider a promotion and increase salary. This is related to Makornphone (2016, p. 34) who stated that evaluation is to assess work performance of personnel within an organization by following the appointed committees, with the aim of finding out evidence and data for regarding and punishing in case of being found quity. In addition, Thengpadit (2014, p. 23) pointed that evaluation is an activity of personnel administration to certify performances in terms of knolwedge, ability and implementing work through using criteria and principles of evaluation set by the organization. This is also consistent with Herbert (1972) who found that work evaluation and assessment is a method for assessing personnel performance which can be done through observing and actions.

Regarding rewarding, there are eight indicators: materials, 1) providing salarity and social welware for personnel on time, 2) creating policy for teacher funds and funds for assisting each other to solve problems, 3) provding the conditions and opportunities for field work and academic services; motivation, 4) evaluating work performance according to the principles, regulations with transparency and a reliable evidence, 5) giving appreciations with medals and rewards for success and oustanding performances, 6) providing consultations in terms of work responsibilities and prevent absence from work and leave of absence from work, 7) creating a good environment which is conducive for working, and 8) fostering experiences and knolwedge to ensure security and safety at work. It is obvious that supporting personnel with materails and motivation is important for fostering living conditions and daily situation of the staff as well as teachers. Additionally, receiving the opportunity to work in the field as well implementing duties allowed personnel to foster life skills and experiences. Also, it is important to consider academic degree to be consistent with the position, development, and promotion. This is to ensure that personnel are equiped with abilities and skills that are crucial for work. More importantly, administrators should assign work to the personnel whose knoweldge is related, avoding using power in the wrong way and those who are closely associated with them. As Jaming (2016, p.28) and Makornphone (2016, p.32) pointed out, the purpose of supporting personnel is to foster effective work and to enhance reliabilty, faith, and faireness within the organization. Fisher & Robert (1999) mentioned that most organizations are cautious about giving a safe and healthy environment of work place for personnel because this saves budget and follows the law of the country.

Conclusion and suggestions

The present research was conducted to find out the current status of personnel administration, develop a personnel administration model, evaluate the model and confirm its potential practice for Souphanouvong University. A mixed method was employed and the findings provide significant results for personnel administration development. Drawing from the findings, following suggestions are made:

Policy suggestions

1. The university should take the model into consideration as the guideline for human resource management and development.

2. The university should take the key role in developing the model to become the pilot model for all education institutions in Lao PDR and beyond by cooperating other related stakeholders.

3. The university should conduct follow up programs to monitor and support the implementation of the model.

4. State education institutions should cooperate with private education institutions in upgrading the processes and management of personnel administration.

Suggestions for future research direction

Future research should focus on:

1. Developing a teacher administration model to provide guidelines for teacher professional development;

2. Fostering motivation for developing personnel administration model of the state and private education institutions;

3. Implementing the model and expectations of the teachers/staff; and

4. Investigating the possible policy for developing education administration models.

New knowledge and the effects on society and communities

The present investigation was carried with the aim of forming new knowledge and finding out insights into the issue of personnel administration in the context of higher education, a university level, in Lao PDR. Although this research is limited to the context of Souphanouvong University, Lao PDR, it provides insights and useful data for academic discourse. Specifically, new knowledge and contributions can be suggested as follows. Firstly, this study identified and synthesized theories, concepts, and documents about personnel administration which is new area of study in the context of higher education in Lao PDR and beyond. Secondly, this study reveals key components of a personnel administration model such as: planning, selecting, managing, developing, rewarding, evaluating, and retiring. These components provide insights and knowledge to the area of education administration.

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