

## A STUDY OF TEACHERS' LEADERSHIP STYLES AT TWO BILINGUAL SCHOOLS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

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**Abstract:** This study identified the most frequently used leadership style, to compare each leadership style with teachers' age groups, and to determine the relationship between the leadership styles and their work experience. The study had 3 objectives, which were 1) to identify the most frequently used leadership styles by teachers at two bilingual schools in Bangkok, Thailand, 2) to compare each leadership style with different age groups of teachers at both schools, and lastly 3) to determine the relationship between teachers' leadership styles and their work experience. This study was conducted at Amnuay Silpa School (ANS) and Interkids Bilingual School (IBS). Both schools are located in Bangkok, Thailand. In this research, there were 100 respondents out of the entire targeted population ( $N = 111$ ) in kindergarten and primary levels at both schools. A survey was sent to individual schools. The survey checked the transformational leadership, transactional leadership style, and demographic factors of the teachers. There were three hypotheses in total. Two of them were rejected but one of them existed. There is a significant difference in the use of transactional leadership style among different age groups of teachers in both schools. The findings in this researcher were 1) transformational leadership style was the most frequently used by teachers at two bilingual schools in Bangkok, Thailand, 2) there was no significant difference in the use of transformational leadership style among different age groups of teachers in both schools, 3) there was a significant difference in the use of transactional leadership style among different age groups of teachers in both schools, and 4) there was no significant relationship between teachers' leadership styles and their work experience. The researcher recommends teachers in kindergarten and primary teachers use more transformational leadership style in their classroom because according to the theory, the outcome or the achievement of the students will be beyond the expectation. Further research should be conducted using other demographic factors of teachers at international schools or government schools.

**Keywords:** Teachers, Leadership Styles, Bilingual School, Age, Work Experience

### Introduction

The growth of a country is not only based on how high the economy is developed. The intellectuals are the actual human resource that empowers a country. In order to fuel the human resource of a country, the root begins from the education system. To catch up with the pace of a challenging and changing era, Thailand has set educational reforms through the process of new learning theories and brain based models. In an educational reform, the most important ingredient is the teacher, especially when he or she is the leader of the classroom. Today's Thai education system is branched from the 1999 Education Act which covers the aspects of administration, decentralization, and student-centered approach (Ministry of Education Thailand, n.d.). Although a great portion of the educational sector is provided by the government, private schools are also encouraged to contribute in Thai education system. Among private schools and public schools, bilingual schools are popular, and have taken an essential sector in the Thai education system (Ministry of Education Thailand, n.d.).

English is a high demand in Thailand and there is also very slim chance that it is going to be reduced. Parents are willing to pay for the best education and that includes English. Bilingual schools have become another option for parents in Thailand to give their children an opportunity to learn English as well as their mother tongue - Thai. Bilingual schools have become a better option for some foreigners who cannot afford the expensive international schools (Ley, n.d.) but still want to give their children some international standard education. For the parents who cannot afford to send their children to international schools get the same chance of having western teachers or English native speaking teachers at bilingual schools to teach their children English, and at the same time their culture (James, 2011). In a bilingual classroom, there are usually two teachers - one local (Thai) and one foreign teacher. They teach at different times with different versions of the same lesson, basically in different languages - Thai and English. At other bilingual schools, a foreign teacher will teach his or her subject in English in different classes while a local teacher does the same for his or her subject.

In the way of educational route, the first step is to begin at kindergarten level then step higher to primary level and secondary level accordingly. In education, teachers teaching at beginning levels are just as important and challenging as other grades. In a classroom, teachers may use different techniques and strategies to optimize their students learning potential. Plus, a teacher normally awards incentives, or punishes the students depending upon their performance or behavior. The majority of

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kindergarten and primary teachers lead their classroom in a delicate manner, in order to welcome their young students. Although teachers may not consider themselves as leaders, they are actually performing or utilizing leadership in their daily school life. Which leadership style have they consciously or unconsciously built in their classroom?

Teacher leadership has been around for quite some time; however, people did not start to view teachers as leaders until the beginning of twentieth century (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). Fullan (as cited in Smylie et al., 2002) stated that although the literature of 1970s and early 1980s pointed out the importance of strong leadership, they just emphasized on the principal and superintendent for school improvement. Teacher leadership has been approached in some studies in United States (Smylie et al., 2002) but not much attention was given to at bilingual school teachers in Thailand.

In an educational community, to be more specific, in a classroom, the leadership styles used by teachers affect the students' learning, classroom environment, students' achievement, and their future when they grow up. For teachers, they lead their students, who happen to be the followers. The basic features of a leader will consist of directing, coaching, supporting, guiding, facilitating, or delegating. Stein pointed out that one of the characteristics that influences a teacher's efficacy in a classroom management is their leadership style (as cited in Burkett, 2011). Stein continually stated that it is necessary for a teacher to have a leadership skill to motivate the students in order to help them learn and behave (as cited in Burkett, 2011).

There have been several definitions of leadership defined by theorists. Even one of the pioneers of leadership theorists, Burns (1978) pointed out that leadership is the phenomenon which is mostly looked into yet the least understood on earth. He also mentioned that there had been 130 definitions of leadership.

Burns (1978) defined leadership in early years as below:

Leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations - of *both leaders and followers*. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations. (p.19)

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study addressed theories of transformational leadership and transactional leadership styles. Scoping down transformational leadership style, four components were discussed, and three components on transactional side.

Bass (1998) stated that transformational leadership was initially introduced by Burns as transforming leadership specifically focuses on political leaders (as cited in Aung, 2012). Burns (1978) identified transforming leadership has transforming effects on both leaders and

followers. More importantly, the leader using transforming leadership style leads his or her followers by uplifting their motivation and full potential in order to achieve the common goal in a moralistic way. Bass (1998) later described that transformational leaders not only make their followers accomplish the goals, but also motivate them to reach the goal more than they intend to, and perform more than they think is possible. Transformational leaders set challenging expectations and in the end reaching higher achievement than the targeted level. Bass sub-categorized transformational leadership into four components which is also known as the four I's – Idealized influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration (Bass, 1998).

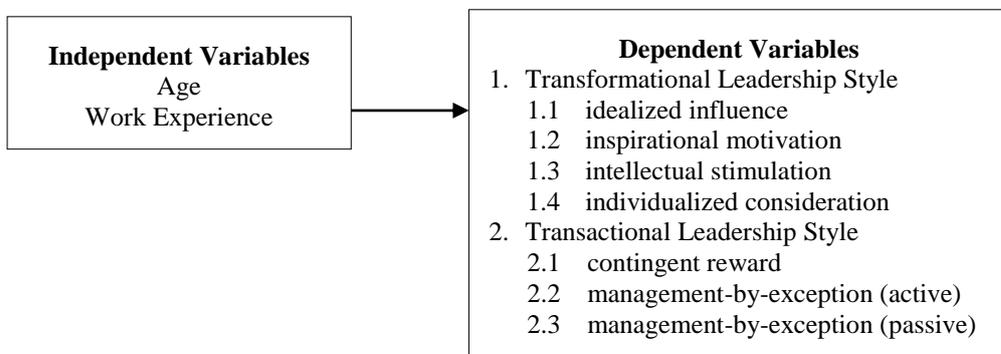
Idealized Influence is also known as charismatic leadership style. As the name implies, leaders who follow this style influence his or her followers by being a role model for them. They are admired, respected, and trusted by their followers. For having persistency, strong determination, and unique abilities to emulate, the followers are willing to take risks for their leader (Bass, 1998). Inspirational Motivation is a vital role in developing the vision. The vision has to be clear and must be repeatedly communicated to followers. This type of leadership is required when innovating and maintaining the energy to face new directions. The main objective of an inspirational leader is having higher levels of cooperation and agreement with the purposes behind the vision (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Intellectual Stimulation leaders encourage their followers to innovate new ideas and be creative. They stimulate them by questioning assumptions, reframing problems and developing new ways out of the old situation they are dealing with (Bass, 1998). Individualized Consideration leader supports individual followers who need personal challenges or individual needs. The leader assists followers by demonstrating acceptance, two-way communication, and listening to their needs (Northouse, 2010). Followers lead by this type of leader can contribute and rise to higher levels of performances because the individuals' needs, values and capabilities are taken into consideration. Each one of them is supported and the leaders try to develop them to the higher levels of motivation and ability (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

Burns, who rooted transactional leadership style, stated that transactional leadership can be seen commonly in the relations between leaders and followers. Leaders trade one thing for another with their followers (*quid pro quo*) (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). Bass (1998) discussed in his study that transactional leadership is more interested in exchanging simple rewards and punishments for either accomplishing the task or failing the goal. He branched out three components under transactional leadership style. Among the factors, Bass (1998) stated that Contingent Reward, constructive transaction, is reasonably effective. The leader sets a goal or a job to be carried out by the followers. Once the assignment is completed, the followers are rewarded in exchange of

their accomplishment. This is probably the case which could be found in most organizations. The other two factors of transactional leadership are management-by-exception (passive) and management-by-exception (active). Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) gave a clear explanation that active leaders pay attention to problems that occur, then they set standards and monitor the followers' behavior while management-by-exception passive leaders wait until they make mistakes, then take corrective action (Northouse, 2010). Yukl (1998) also stated that passive management by exception contains use of contingent punishments and actions to correct anything that deviates from acceptable performance standards.

### Conceptual Framework

There were two independent variables in the teachers' demographic, age and work experience. On the dependent variables side, the research focused on transformational style and transactional leadership style.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### Method

#### *Participants*

The study was conducted in a population of two bilingual schools in Bangkok, Thailand. Those schools were Amnuay Silpa School (ANS), and Interkids Bilingual School (IBS). A total number of 111 kindergarten and primary teachers from both ANS, and all IBS three branches were targeted. Out of the targeted population ( $N = 111$ ), 100 participants responded the survey.

#### *Instrumentation*

The survey questionnaire was adapted to use as research instrument. It was originated by Bass and Avolio in 1995 (as cited in Dar, 2011). The initial part of the questionnaire consisted of categorized questions to collect information about the respondents' personal information (demographic variables). The second part of the questionnaire was adapted from Dar (2011) in order to measure the transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style of the teachers. Dar (2011) adopted this questionnaire in her study to find the relationship between transformational leadership style and situational factors for successful operational at Assumption Samutprakarn school in Thailand. Chen

(2008) also adopted the questionnaire in her study of relationship between situational factors and leadership styles in Chengdu institute in Republic of China.

In terms of scoring, five-point Likert scale was used. The questionnaire which was used for this study is a highly validated questionnaire by Bass and Avolio's 1995 Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Leader Rater Form (MLQ 5X-Short). Northouse (2010) stressed that MLQ was initially created by Bass in 1985 after interviewing 70 senior executives in South Africa. After Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam (as cited in Northouse, 2010) had tested the psychometric properties of the MLQ using a business sample of over 3,000 raters, the validity of the MLQ was found stronger. Having had several revisions, the reliability and validity of the MLQ was strengthened (Northouse, 2010).

In the study of transformational leadership at a higher education institution by Niekerk (2005), the reliability of MLQ 5X was in the range of 0.75-0.94 except the scales of contingent reward (0.68) and

management-by-exception (0.69). Moreover, an educational research concerning with students evaluating teachers as leaders by Yang (2008), also supported that the reliability of the questionnaire ranged between 0.58 and 0.91. In addition, Chen's (2008) study also corroborated that coefficients of MLQ 5X were above 0.80 for both transformational and transactional leadership styles. According to Bass and Avolio's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire's manual (as cited in Niekerk, 2005), the acceptable range of the reliability is between 0.77 and 0.95. Zikmund (as cited in Aung, 2011) stated that if Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient is 0.7 and more than 0.7, the variables are reliable. To provide the evidence in an educational setting, the researcher tested the reliability of the two leadership styles' subscales, and it turned out that coefficients of transformational leadership was 0.92 and transactional leadership was 0.77 respectively.

#### *Procedure*

Once the researcher received the permissions from the respective executives from the two bilingual schools, surveys were distributed to the respective principals. The surveys were collected in person in June 2013. There were 54 questionnaires distributed at ANS, and 83% of them

were returned. The researcher passed out 57 questionnaires at IBS, and 96% of them were returned. Out of the entire population, 100 questionnaires (91%) were returned.

### Results

The results of data analysis are presented in four sections - the profile of the study which is the descriptive analysis of teachers' demographic factors; the research objective one by descriptive statistics, the research objective two by one-way ANOVA; and the research objective three by Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

**Table 2: Most Frequently Used Leadership Style**

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Transformational Leadership Style	2.97	.58	High
Transactional Leadership Style	2.17	.61	Moderate

Referring to table 2 and mean criteria interpretation, transformational leadership was High because  $M = 2.97$  was in the range between 2.50 and 3.49 while the mean of

**Table 1: Number and Percentages of Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Demographics	Number	Percentage
Age	20-30 years old	44
	31-40 years old	38
	41 and above	18
	Total	100
Gender	Male	24
	Female	76
	Total	100
Nationality	British	22
	Canadian	1
	Asian	63
	Other	13
	Total	99
Grade Level	Kindergarten	45
	Primary	54
	Total	99
Work Experience	less than 5 years	42
	5-10 years	32
	11-15 years	13
	above 15 years	13
Total	100	100.0

\*One respondent did not answer nationality and grade level items.

According to table 1, there were three different age groups from the research finding. The majority of the respondents were from 20 to 30 years old which gave the result of 44% participants. The second age group that followed was from 31 to 40 years old which was 38% participants, and the last age group was 41 and above group which showed that 18% of the participants responded the questionnaire. From the total number of respondents ( $N=100$ ), there were 76% female respondents whereas 24% was males. In terms of nationality ( $N=99$ ), the highest percentage was Asian (63%), which was followed by British at 22%, Other at 13%, and Canadian at 1% respectively. There was no respondent from Australia. Regarding grade level ( $N=99$ ), the majority of the teachers were from primary level (54%) while the rest (45%) were from kindergarten level. In terms of work experience ( $N=100$ ), teachers with less than 5 years of work experience scored highest in percentage (42%). 32% of the teachers had 5-10 years of work experience. The lowest percentage or the teachers who had experience from 11 to 15 years, and above 15 years were at 13% each.

transactional leadership style (2.17) was at Moderate as it was between 1.50 and 2.49 scale. From this finding, it answered objective one that transformational leadership style was more frequently used than transactional leadership style at the two bilingual schools.

**Table 3: ANOVA Results Pertaining to Transformational Leadership Style Relative to Age**

	SSQ	df	F	p	
Transformational Leadership Style	Between Groups	.762	2	1.119	.331
	Within Groups	33.003	97		
	Total	33.765	99		

The first hypothesis was "there is a significant difference in the use of transformational leadership style among different age groups of teachers in both schools." Teachers' ages had been divided into 3 groups: 20 to 30

years old, 31 to 40 years old, and 41 and above. The result of the study showed in table 3 that transformational leadership style ( $p = .331$ ) had no significant difference among different age groups. Therefore, the first hypothesis was rejected as  $p$  value was greater than 0.05.

**Table 4: ANOVA Results Pertaining to Transactional Leadership Style Relative to Age**

Age		SSQ	df	F	p
Transactional Leadership Style	Between Groups	3.382	2	4.874	.010*
	Within Groups	33.653	97		
	Total	37.035	99		

\*  $p < 0.05$

The second hypothesis was “there is a significant difference in the use of transactional leadership style among different age groups of teachers in both schools.” In order to find the mean difference among three different age groups, the researcher utilized Scheffé’s Post Hoc Test. Teachers’ ages had been divided into 3 groups: 20 to 30 years old, 31 to 40 years old and 41 and above. Table 4 reveals that as  $p$  value was less than 0.05 level, three age groups were different from each other in the use of transactional leadership style. Hence, the second hypothesis was accepted since significance  $p$  was less than 0.05.

**Table 5: Scheffe’s Post Hoc Test of Transactional Leadership Style Relative to Different Age Groups**

Dependent Variable	(I) Age	(J)Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Transactional Leadership Style	20-30 years old	31-40 years old	-.40580*	.010*
		41 and above	-.14752	.671
	31-40 years old	20-30 years old	.40580*	.010
		41 and above	.25828	.313
	41 and above	20-30 years old	.14752	.671
		31-40 years old	-.25828	.313

\*  $p < 0.05$

Table 5 reveals that age group 20-30 years old was significantly different from the age group 31-40 years old with the mean difference of -0.40580 and a  $p$  value .010. The mean of 20-30 years old age group and the mean of 31-40 years old age group were significantly different at 0.05 level of significance in the direction that the mean of 31-40 years old age group was higher than the mean of 20-30 years old age group. But the mean of 20-30 years old age group and the mean of 41 and above age group

**Table 6: Coefficients of Teachers’ Leadership Styles and Their Work Experience**

		Work Experience	Interpretation
Transformational Leadership Style	Pearson $r$ value	.063	little or no correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.536	
Transactional Leadership Style	Pearson $r$ value	.168	little or no correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.094	

were not significantly different at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 6 illustrates that the Pearson’s Correlation,  $r$ , for transformational leadership style and work experience was .063 and the significance was .536. It explains that there was little or no correlation between transformational leadership style and teachers’ work experience because  $r$  value was close to 0.3. Since the correlation  $r$  was very little, there was no significant correlation between transformational leadership style and work experience. In addition to it, the significant (2-tailed) value .536 was greater than 0.05.

Moreover,  $r$  value for transactional leadership style and work experience was .168 and the significance was .094. It means there was little or no correlation between transactional leadership style and work experience. Significant (2-tailed) value .094 showed that correlation significance was greater than 0.05. Hence, the third hypothesis was rejected.

## Discussion

From the research findings of demographic factors, there were more young teachers, and the number of female teachers was more than three times the number of male teachers in kindergarten and primary levels. This illustrated that young female teachers were more preferable in these two grade levels at bilingual schools. Nationality demographics indicated there were 63 Asian teachers out of 99 respondents. This was because both

bilingual schools were in Thailand, and each class had at least one Thai teacher. As the researcher mentioned earlier, the age and work experience could be related to each other. There were teachers with less than five years’ of experience at both schools. Consequently, it was apparent that young and active teachers were more employed in kindergarten and primary levels at bilingual schools.

In random format, the questionnaire used in this study included items of both transformational leadership

and transactional leadership styles throughout the survey. The result showed that transformational leadership carried more statistical weight than transactional leadership. Theory surrounding transformational leadership describes how performances of followers are more motivated and inspired by transformational leadership than transactional leadership (Yukl, 1998). According to Thomas (as cited in Burkett, 2011) transformational teachers use ideals and values to compel students' obedience for purposes of instruction. The teachers work with students to set expectations, and consequences for not meeting those expectations.

To study whether there was a significant difference relative to teachers' age groups in their use of transformational and transactional leadership styles, the two were compared. Results indicated that all age groups of teachers employed the transformational leadership style, while there was a significant difference between the age groups of teachers who used the transactional leadership style. Although the first hypothesis of this research was rejected, the finding was consistent with Bass' literature. Generally, there is an insignificant difference between age and transformational leadership (as cited in Bartling and Burkett, 2006).

A fact that stands out in the research results was that among the three age groups, the 20-30 year old and 31-40 year old groups had a significant difference in the use of transactional leadership style, and the mean of the latter was higher than the former. However, the 31-40 year old and the 41 and above age groups had no significant difference. It can be concluded that teachers between 31-40 years of age preferred to use the transactional leadership style. Although Anuwatprakit (2003) found that there were no statistically significant differences in the two types of leadership styles relative to age. However, this study showed that there was a significant difference between transactional leadership style and different age groups of teachers.

Bartling and Bartlett (2006) found in their study that younger participants preferred to use less transformational leadership. They also stated that there was no statistically significant difference found between leadership styles and age. In contrast, in this study the difference was found between transactional leadership style and teachers' age. Therefore, their finding was partially in line with this study. The difference between the current research and their findings is that their study was responded to by adult educators, while this study was responded to by kindergarten and primary teachers.

In this study, there were four working experience ranges available in the survey. The previous study, made by Lord et al., (as cited in Anderson, 2008) stated that younger and less experienced teachers have leadership styles typical of transformational leaders. However, in terms of the result of hypothesis three, it showed that there was no significant relationship between both leadership styles and the teachers' work experience. What could be drawn from the outcome is that the work experience of

kindergarten and primary teachers at bilingual schools had no reflection upon their leadership styles in teaching.

Nevertheless, a previous study by Tatlah, Quraishi, and Hussain (2010) showed a significant correlation between teachers' level of experience and leadership style, but claimed that their hypothesis was rejected. It is interesting that their study and this study's hypotheses corresponded, while both studies' hypotheses were rejected because the result showed that there was no significant correlation between the leadership styles and work experience at the 0.05 significant level.

With the aforementioned research, what is revealed is that in different industries, in either companies or schools, with differing theories and instruments, illustrate different research outcomes.

### Recommendations

To enhance the students' learning at the kindergarten and primary levels, it is important that the teachers consider themselves transformational teachers. However, teachers need not be using transformational leadership exclusive of transactional leadership. The researcher also would recommend that administrators be aware that all teachers should be given equal opportunities at to teach in kindergarten and primary levels, regardless of age. Moreover, teachers with less experience should also be given opportunities to gain more experience in their teaching career.

Recommendations for future research regarding teachers' leadership styles and their demographic factors:

1. Research should be conducted pertaining to students' achievement by the effect of the leadership style used by teachers. From this, teachers could have direct vision of the input they make and the students' accomplishments as an output.

2. More research in leadership styles of teachers, and their demographic factors, is recommended. Quite a few studies have taken place regarding gender, but there are other characteristics needing to be studied. For instance, nationality could be considered to determine one possible factor behind leadership styles.

3. Research, such as this study, could be conducted at government schools or international schools with higher populations to support findings of even greater value.

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