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ANTI-CORRUPTION LEADERSHIP FOR EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE: A FIVE-STAGE MIXED-METHODS STUDY IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening integrity within educational governance demands leadership capacities that transcend individual ethical orientations to encompass systemic accountability and transparency. This study aimed to: (1) develop and validate an integrity-based anti-corruption leadership framework for basic education administration; and (2) assess and prioritize leadership development needs to inform evidence-based governance interventions. Employing a rigorous five-stage exploration sequential mixed-methods design, this research integrated document analysis, in-depth interviews, a nationwide survey, expert consultations, and stakeholder focus group discussions. Qualitative insights guided the development and validation of a comprehensive leadership framework consisting of eight core elements and 68 behavioral indicators. Subsequently, quantitative data were gathered from 993 school administrators and teachers under Thailand's Office of the Basic Education Commission. The analysis utilized descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI Modified). The research yielded a validated framework encompassing eight core elements and 68 behavioral indicators. Findings characterize anti-corruption leadership in basic education as a multidimensional governance capacity that bridges ethical self-leadership with structural mechanisms of transparency, accountability, reporting systems, and technology-enabled monitoring. Notably, the PNI Modified identified the most urgent development priorities as technology-enabled monitoring and prevention, anti-corruption education, and strict rule enforcement. Furthermore, statistically significant perception gaps between administrators and teachers across all elements exposed a misalignment in governance expectations, underscoring the critical necessity for inclusive, multi-stakeholder approaches to leadership development.

KEYWORDS: Anti-Corruption Leadership, Educational Governance, Integrity, PNI Modified, Mixed-Methods Research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Effective educational governance hinges not merely on formal policies, regulatory frameworks, or mechanisms of accountability, but fundamentally on the quality of leadership exercised within educational institutions (OECD, 2020; UNODC, 2019). In contemporary education systems, school administrators are increasingly expected to operate not only as instructional leaders but also as pivotal governance actors responsible for upholding transparency, accountability, ethical conduct, and organizational trust (Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2019; Karunia et al., 2023). In contexts characterized by centralized administration, limited institutional autonomy, and persistent resource constraint conditions prevalent in many developing countries, the capacity of school leaders becomes a determinant factor in ensuring that governance reforms translate into meaningful practice at the school level (Kuipers, 2021; Shin & Peachey, 2021).

Within this governance landscape, anti-corruption leadership emerges as a critical dimension. Far from being confined solely to legal compliance or regulatory enforcement, anti-corruption leadership encompasses the capacity to shape ethical norms, manage discretion responsibly, establish transparent systems, and cultivate trust among stakeholders (Brown & Treviño, 2006; OECD, 2020). Consequently, integrity-based leadership plays a central role in transforming schools into accountable and trustworthy public institutions, particularly in systems where corruption risks threaten institutional legitimacy and public confidence (Quah, 2011, 2022a).

Thailand provides a salient case for examining the intersection of leadership, governance, and anti-corruption in education. The country's anti-corruption agenda, anchored in the 2017 Constitution and the 20-Year National Strategy (2018–2037), emphasizes transparency, accountability, and ethical governance as foundations for sustainable development (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2018; UNODC, 2019). However, despite sustained policy commitments and institutional reforms led by the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), corruption remains deeply entrenched. Between 2015 and 2024, Thailand's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) scores fluctuated between 34 and 38, stagnating at 34 in 2024, which reflects persistent governance vulnerabilities (Transparency International, 2025). Within this milieu, the education sector has repeatedly emerged as a high-risk domain, plagued by allegations involving procurement, financial management, personnel decisions, and abuse of authority in basic education institutions (National Anti-Corruption Commission, 2019–2024).

While existing research on educational leadership has extensively addressed ethical leadership and good governance principles (Brown & Treviño, 2006; OECD, 2020), empirical studies that systematically integrate priority needs assessment into the development of anti-corruption leadership competencies remain limited, particularly within basic education systems in developing contexts (Kuipers, 2021; Leonov et al., 2024). Moreover, leadership development initiatives often rely on generalized training models that insufficiently account for context-specific governance challenges and stakeholder perceptions (Milton, 2020; Shin & Peachey, 2021). Without the empirical identification of competency gaps—areas where the discrepancy between current practice and desired standards is most pronounced—capacity-building efforts risk misalignment with actual institutional needs (Kaufman, 1972).

This study addresses these gaps by developing and validating an integrity-based anti-corruption leadership framework for educational governance in Thailand's basic education system. Employing a five-stage exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, the study integrates theoretical synthesis, expert consultation, national-level priority needs assessment using the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI Modified), and stakeholder co-validation. Specifically, the study aims to: (1) develop and validate an integrity-based anti-corruption leadership framework for basic education administration; and (2) assess and prioritize leadership development needs based on national-level empirical evidence. By translating global governance and integrity principles into contextually grounded, measurable leadership competencies, this study contributes to the advancement of educational leadership scholarships and provides evidence-based guidance for strengthening integrity-based governance in developing country contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Integrity-Based Leadership as a Foundation for Educational Governance

Contemporary discourse on educational governance increasingly prioritizes integrity, accountability, and transparency as core leadership imperatives rather than peripheral administrative concerns (OECD, 2020; UNODC, 2019). Integrity-based leadership transcends individual moral conduct to encompass the institutionalization of

ethical norms, transparent decision-making processes, and accountability mechanisms that collectively shape organizational culture and stakeholder trust (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Dey et al., 2022). In school contexts, administrators play a pivotal governance role, acting as intermediaries between policy mandates and daily operational practices. Consequently, their leadership capacity becomes a critical determinant of whether governance principles are effectively translated into ethical and transparent institutional behavior (Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2019).

Ethical leadership theory provides a foundational lens for understanding integrity-based leadership in education. Ethical leaders are characterized by moral role modeling, fairness, and responsibility, fostering organizational climates that discourage misconduct and normalize ethical behavior (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Empirical studies in educational settings indicate that ethical leadership positively influences trust, rule compliance, and professional integrity among teachers and staff (Bashir & Hassan, 2020; Dey et al., 2022). However, ethical leadership alone proves insufficient when structural governance weaknesses—such as excessive discretion, opaque procedures, and limited accountability—remain unaddressed (Kuipers, 2021).

This limitation necessitates integrating ethical leadership with governance-oriented approaches. Integrity-based leadership, therefore, represents a synthesis of moral agency and structural governance capacity, requiring leaders not only to model ethical behavior but also to design and enforce systems that mitigate corruption risks (OECD, 2020). In this study, integrity-based leadership is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing ethical self-leadership, transparent governance management, rule enforcement, ethical culture building, community responsibility, anti-corruption education, secure reporting mechanisms, and technology-enabled monitoring. These dimensions collectively form the conceptual foundation for developing an integrity-based anti-corruption leadership framework in basic education administration.

2. Governance, Accountability, And Anti-Corruption Leadership

Scholarship on anti-corruption consistently emphasizes governance quality as a paramount determinant in corruption prevention (Quah, 2011, 2022a; UNODC, 2019). Governance frameworks highlight transparency, accountability, participation, the rule of law, and responsiveness as essential institutional safeguards (OECD, 2020; World Bank, 2017). In education systems, weak governance structures—manifested through opaque procurement processes, discretionary personnel management, and limited oversight—create environments conducive to corruption (Cárcaba et al., 2022; Karunia et al., 2023).

Klitgaard's (1988) corruption formula conceptualizes corruption as the result of monopoly power and discretion exacerbated by weak accountability. Applied to educational administration, these conditions arise when school leaders exercise broad authority without transparent procedures or effective monitoring mechanisms (Pinandito, 2022; Dung & Thanh, 2023). Within this context, anti-corruption leadership involves actively constraining discretion through clear rules, transparent processes, and enforceable accountability systems (Kuipers, 2021).

Within educational organizations, governance-oriented leadership requires administrators to operationalize accountability through participatory decision-making, transparent budgeting, conflict-of-interest management, and secure reporting systems (OECD, 2003; Golladay & Jain, 2022). Research further indicates that whistleblower protection and trust-based reporting mechanisms are critical for the early detection of misconduct and institutional integrity reinforcement (Miceli, Near, & Dworkin, 2008; Kang, 2022). Moreover, technology-enabled governance tools—such as open data systems and digital monitoring platforms—have been shown to enhance transparency and reduce corruption risks when embedded in leadership practices (Janssen et al., 2012; Nikiforova & McBride, 2021; Xing et al., 2024).

These governance-oriented perspectives inform the present study's framework development by positioning anti-corruption leadership as an institutional capacity embedded in governance systems, rather than solely as an individual ethical attribute.

3. Integrity, Leadership Development, And Competency-Based Frameworks

Recent leadership scholarship has increasingly gravitated toward competency-based approaches, emphasizing observable behaviors and measurable capacities over abstract moral values (Boyatzis, 2008; Mikhaylova & Shao, 2024). In the context of integrity-based leadership, competencies such as transparent decision-making, consistent rule enforcement, ethical communication, and stakeholder engagement provide concrete indicators for leadership

development and evaluation (Resnik, 2019; Leonov et al., 2024).

However, existing leadership development models in education often rely on generic frameworks that fail to sufficiently account for corruption risks and governance vulnerabilities specific to basic education systems, particularly in developing country contexts (Shin & Peachey, 2021; Milton, 2020). Moreover, many frameworks lack empirical grounding in stakeholder perceptions, limiting their contextual relevance and practical applicability (Kuipers, 2021). The present study responds to this gap by constructing an integrity-based anti-corruption leadership framework through a systematic synthesis of theory, policy, and empirical evidence. By integrating ethical leadership, governance accountability, and anti-corruption principles into a coherent competency framework, the study advances a context-sensitive model tailored to the realities of basic education administration in Thailand.

4. Priority Needs Assessment as a Strategic Tool for Leadership Development

The efficacy of leadership development hinges not only on identifying desirable competencies but also on prioritizing development efforts based on actual performance gaps (Kaufman, 1972). Priority needs assessment provides a systematic mechanism for aligning leadership development initiatives with areas of greatest need, particularly in resource-constrained educational systems (Leonov et al., 2024).

The Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI Modified), mathematically operationalized as (I - D) /D has gained widespread application in educational research to prioritize teacher and leadership development needs (Sangsri & Kanjanawasee, 2020; Rattana, 2021). Its methodological strength lies in its ability to integrate stakeholder perceptions of importance (I) and current performance (D) into a single prioritization metric. Despite its demonstrated utility, empirical applications of PNI Modified to anti-corruption leadership development remain scarce, especially within basic education contexts (Kuipers, 2021).

This study extends the application of PNI Modified by systematically assessing and ranking anti-corruption leadership development needs among administrators and teachers nationwide. By incorporating multi-stakeholder perspectives, the study not only identifies priority competency gaps but also reveals perceptual differences between administrators and teachers—differences that are critical for designing legitimate, responsive, and effective leadership development interventions.

5. Conceptual Integration: Linking Framework Development and Priority Needs

Synthesizing these theoretical and empirical perspectives, the present study conceptualizes integrity-based anti-corruption leadership as a governance-oriented leadership capacity that must be both structurally embedded and strategically developed (OECD, 2020; Quah, 2022a). Framework development (Objective 1) establishes the core dimensions and competencies of integrity-based leadership for educational governance, while priority needs assessment (Objective 2) identifies where leadership development efforts should be concentrated to achieve maximum impact.

By integrating framework construction with empirical prioritization, the study advances an evidence-based approach to leadership development that bridges normative governance ideals and practical implementation. This integrative approach ensures that anti-corruption leadership development is theoretically grounded, empirically validated, and aligned with stakeholder expectations within Thailand's basic education system.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in a conceptual framework that positions integrity-based anti-corruption leadership as a multidimensional capacity underpinning effective educational governance. Drawing on theories of ethical leadership, good governance, and anti-corruption mechanisms, the framework conceptualizes leadership integrity as operating through two complementary dimensions: individual-level ethical self-regulation and institutional-level governance mechanisms.

The framework is operationalized through eight core leadership elements, which collectively encompass ethical self-leadership, transparent governance management, strict rule enforcement, ethical organizational culture, social responsibility, anti-corruption education, secure reporting mechanisms, and technology-enabled monitoring. Together, these elements translate normative governance principles into observable leadership behaviors and organizational practices.

Empirically, these elements served as the basis for assessing the discrepancy between "perceived importance" and "current performance" among school administrators. The Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI Modified) was subsequently employed to quantify these gaps, enabling the evidence-based identification of critical development priorities. As

illustrated in Figure 1, the framework demonstrates how integrity-based leadership competencies function as a mechanism for converting governance ideals into actionable development strategies, thereby strengthening the resilience of educational governance against corruption.

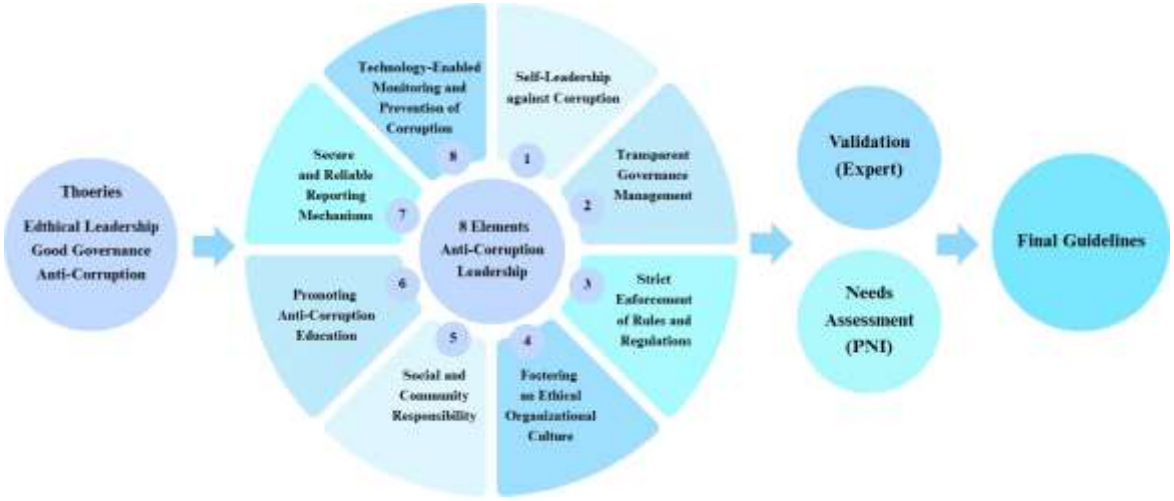


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Developing. Integrity-Based Anti-Corruption Leadership.

Note: The Framework Synthesizes Concepts from Ethical Leadership Theory, Good Governance Principles (Transparency, Accountability, Rule of Law), And Anti-Corruption Mechanisms. It Conceptualizes Leadership as a Critical Variable Influencing Educational Governance Outcomes in the Context of Thailand's Basic Education System.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a rigorous five-stage exploration sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) to construct, validate, and operationalize an integrity-based anti-corruption leadership framework. The research design systematically transitioned from theoretical synthesis to empirical validation and stakeholder-informed development, ensuring both methodological rigor and practical relevance. The five distinct stages served three integrated functions: framework construction, empirical validation and prioritization, and developmental translation into actionable guidelines.

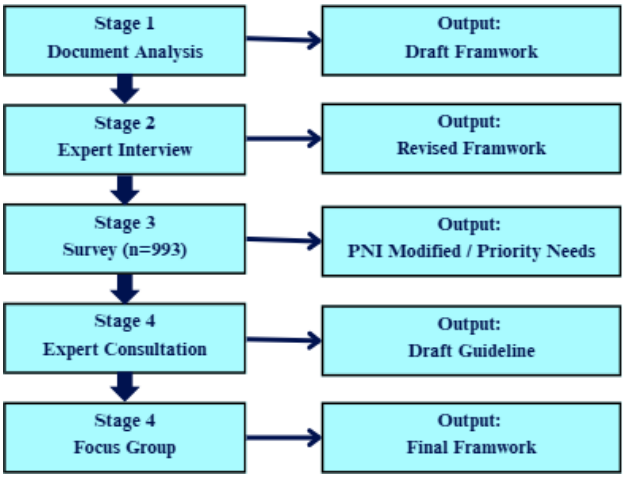


Figure 2: The Five-Stage Exploratory Sequential Mixed-Methods Research Design.

Note: This Flowchart Illustrates the Research Progression from Qualitative Exploration (Stage 1-2) To Quantitative Validation (Stage 3), And Finally to Developmental Translation (Stage 4-5). The Process Integrates Document Analysis, Expert Interviews, A Nationwide Survey Using the PNI Modified Technique, And Stakeholder Consensus.

Stage 1: Systematic Synthesis of Leadership Elements

The initial stage focused on synthesizing core elements and indicators of anti-corruption leadership through a comprehensive document analysis. Data sources encompassed national and international policy documents, academic textbooks, peer-

reviewed journal articles, and research reports drawn from diverse databases. A structured protocol ensured consistency and transparency in data extraction, while content analysis was utilized to identify recurring concepts, governance principles, and theoretical foundations. The outcomes of this stage constituted a preliminary conceptual framework that grounded the subsequent phases.

Stage 2: Expert-Based Framework Refinement

Qualitative refinement was conducted through in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine purposively selected experts representing four distinct stakeholder groups: senior educational administrators at provincial or national levels, executives from anti-corruption agencies, experienced school administrators, and representatives from civil society organizations. All participants possessed a minimum of ten years of relevant professional experience. Interviews focused on validating the relevance, clarity, and practical applicability of each leadership element within the preliminary framework. Verbatim transcripts were subsequently analyzed using content analysis to produce a revised, contextually grounded framework.

Stage 3: National Survey and Priority Needs Assessment

The third stage employed a quantitative survey to assess priority needs among basic education administrators and teachers under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC). The study population comprised 25,152 administrators and 307,963 teachers from 29,152 institutions (Academic Year 2024). Sample size determination followed Taro Yamane's formula with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, establishing a target of 500 respondents per group. Through proportional stratified random sampling across Thailand's four educational regions, the study obtained 993 valid responses (495 administrators and 498 teachers), achieving a 99.3% response rate. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring "Importance" and "Current Performance" on a 5-point Likert scale, with content validity confirmed by experts (IOC = 0.60–1.00) and reliability coefficients exceeding .80 across all dimensions. Priority needs were established using the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI Modified), calculated as $(I - D) / D$, to identify critical development gaps.

Stage 4: Strategic Formulation Through Expert Consultation

To translate empirical findings into development-oriented insights, a second round of in-depth interviews was conducted with experts from the same four stakeholder groups as Stage 2: senior educational administrators, anti-corruption agency executives, experienced school administrators, and civil society representatives. This stage specifically aimed to extract strategic approaches for leadership development, mechanisms for effective implementation, and enabling conditions for integrity-based governance. Content analysis was employed to synthesize these expert insights into preliminary development pathways aligned with the priority needs identified in the previous stage.

Stage 5: Stakeholder Co-Validation

The final stage involved consensus validation through focus group discussions to evaluate the feasibility, relevance, and contextual appropriateness of the proposed guidelines. Participants included representatives from the four key sectors: senior educational administrators, anti-corruption agencies, experienced school principals, and civil society organizations engaged in integrity promotion. The feedback was synthesized to finalize the Integrity-Based Anti-Corruption Leadership Development Framework.

4.1. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic characteristics, while independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare perceptions between administrators and teachers with statistical significance set at $p < .05$. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups underwent systematic coding and thematic analysis to ensure analytical rigor and triangulation across data sources.

5. RESULTS

1. Development of the Integrity-Based Anti-Corruption Leadership Framework

The qualitative synthesis, derived from document analysis and expert interviews across four stakeholder groups, culminated in the validation of an Integrity-Based Anti-Corruption Leadership Framework.

Expert consensus confirmed the framework's conceptual coherence, emphasizing the necessity of integrating two complementary dimensions: (1) a structural dimension, encompassing governance systems, rules, reporting mechanisms, and technology-enabled monitoring; and (2) a cultural

dimension, involving ethical self-leadership, shared organizational values, and social responsibility.

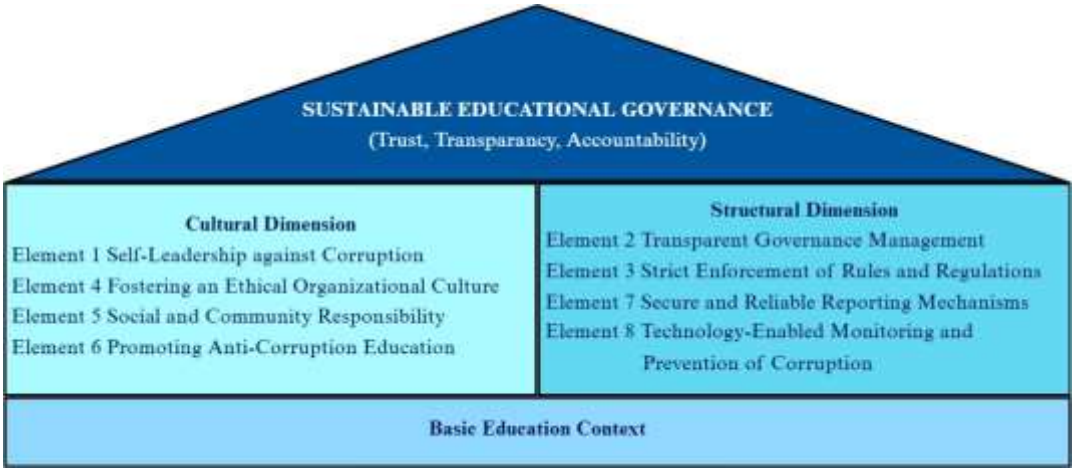


Figure 3: The Validated Integrity-Based Anti-Corruption Leadership Framework for Educational Governance.
Note: The Figure Depicts the Integrated Governance Model Comprising Eight Core Elements Operationalized Through 68 Indicators. The Model Bridges the Cultural Dimension (Ethical Self-Leadership, Organizational Culture, Social Responsibility, Anti-Corruption Education) With the Structural Dimension (Transparent Management, Rule Enforcement, Reporting Mechanisms, Technology-Enabled Monitoring) To Achieve Sustainable Institutional Integrity.

Note.

The framework illustrates the integration of two complementary dimensions of leadership: (A) The Cultural Dimension (Left), focusing on ethical self-regulation and values-based cultivation (Elements 1, 4, 5, 6); and (B) The Structural Dimension (Right), focusing on systemic mechanisms and enforcement (Elements 2, 3, 7, 8). Together, these dimensions function synergistically to promote transparency, accountability, and institutional trust within basic education administration.

This synthesis operationalized anti-corruption leadership into eight core elements and 68 behavioral indicators (see Table 1). These elements span multiple levels of governance, ranging from individual self-regulation to systemic monitoring. The resulting framework highlights that effective anti-corruption leadership transcends individual moral conduct, requiring robust mechanisms to support transparency and accountability. These elements subsequently served as the foundation for the quantitative instrument used in the nationwide survey.

Table 1: Core Elements of Integrity-Based Anti-Corruption Leadership for Educational Governance.

No.	Core Element	Operational Focus	No. of Indicators
1	Self-Leadership against Corruption	Ethical self-regulation, personal integrity, accountability	12
2	Transparent Governance Management	Transparency, stakeholder participation, documentation, oversight	12
3	Strict Enforcement of Rules and Regulations	Fair enforcement, impartiality, due process, risk control	8
4	Fostering an Ethical Organizational Culture	Ethical climate, trust, fairness, shared values	7
5	Social and Community Responsibility	Public service orientation, stakeholder accountability, social trust	8
6	Promoting Anti-Corruption Education	Awareness, prevention, capacity building, ethical learning	8
7	Secure and Reliable Reporting Mechanisms	Whistleblower protection, reporting systems, data security	8
8	Technology-Enabled Monitoring and Prevention of Corruption	Digital governance, traceability, monitoring and control	5
Total			68

Note: This Table Summarizes the Core Elements of Integrity-Based Anti-Corruption Leadership Identified in This Study. The Framework Comprises Eight Elements And 68 Behavioral Indicators, Which Were Used to Develop the Survey Instrument Assessing Perceived Importance and Current Performance Levels. These Assessments Formed the Basis for the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI Modified) Analysis Conducted in the Subsequent Research Phase.

2. Priority Needs for Leadership Development

Quantitative analysis using the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI Modified) assessed the

discrepancy between the "Importance" and "Current Performance" of each leadership element. While all eight elements received high importance scores (M = 4.77 - 4.81), significant performance gaps were identified. As presented in Table 2, the analysis revealed that the most critical development priorities lie in structural and preventative mechanisms. The three elements with the highest PNI Modified values were: Technology-Enabled Monitoring and Prevention of Corruption (PNI = 0.112) Promoting Anti-Corruption Education (PNI = 0.106) Strict Enforcement of Rules and Regulations (PNI = 0.103) These findings indicate that while school administrators possess a foundational level of ethical awareness, there is an urgent need for development in digital governance supervision, participatory anti-corruption learning, and impartial rule enforcement.

Table 2: Table 2 Priority Needs Index (PNI Modified) of Anti-Corruption Leadership Elements.

8 Elements of Anti-Corruption Leadership		Importance (I)		Degree of Success (D)		PNI modified	Rank
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
E1	Self-Leadership against Corruption	4.808	0.434	4.361	0.808	0.102	4
E2	Transparent Governance Management	4.789	0.436	4.367	0.814	0.097	6
E3	Strict Enforcement of Rules and Regulations	4.809	0.417	4.360	0.858	0.103	3
E4	Fostering an Ethical Organizational Culture	4.808	0.431	4.424	0.823	0.087	8
E5	Social and Community Responsibility	4.788	0.444	4.357	0.819	0.099	5
E6	Promoting Anti-Corruption Education	4.778	0.431	4.322	0.830	0.106	2
E7	Secure and Reliable Reporting Mechanisms	4.781	0.446	4.372	0.799	0.093	7
E8	Technology-Enabled Monitoring and Prevention of Corruption	4.784	0.429	4.303	0.821	0.112	1

Note: PNI Modified Was Calculated As (I – D) / D, Where I Represent the Mean Score of Perceived Importance and D Represents the Mean Score of Current Performance. Higher PNI Values Indicate Greater Perceived Development Needs.

3. Comparison Of Priority Needs Between Administrators and Teachers

Table 3 presents the comparative analysis of the eight elements of anti-corruption leadership between teachers and administrators, using the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI Modified). The results reveal statistically significant differences across all elements ($p < 0.01$), indicating that teachers consistently reported higher perceived needs for leadership development in anti-corruption compared to administrators, as shown in Table 4. These findings suggest the presence of a perceptual gap between the two groups, with teachers perceiving a greater urgency for anti-corruption leadership development. This underscores the importance of targeted policy interventions and differentiated capacity-building initiatives to bridge this perception gap.

Table 3: Comparison of Priority Needs Between Administrators and Teachers Using PNI Modified And T-Values.

	8 Elements of Anti-Corruption Leadership	PNI Modified					
		Teacher (n=498)		Administrators (n=495)		t-value	p-value
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
E1	Self-Leadership against Corruption	0.136	0.046	0.074	0.027	4.033	<0.001
E2	Transparent Governance Management	0.129	0.036	0.069	0.010	5.553	<0.001
E3	Strict Enforcement of Rules and Regulations	0.149	0.036	0.061	0.005	6.892	<0.001
E4	Fostering an Ethical Organizational Culture	0.127	0.024	0.051	0.005	8.161	<0.001
E5	Social and Community Responsibility	0.128	0.025	0.072	0.017	5.167	<0.001
E6	Promoting Anti-Corruption Education	0.136	0.024	0.078	0.005	6.540	<0.001
E7	Secure and Reliable Reporting Mechanisms	0.122	0.027	0.067	0.009	5.371	<0.001
E8	Technology-Enabled Monitoring and Prevention of Corruption	0.151	0.010	0.076	0.008	13.396	<0.001

Note. PNI Modified Was Calculated As (I – D) / D, Where I Represent the Mean Score of Perceived Importance and D Represents the Mean Score of Current Performance. Higher PNI Values Indicate Greater Perceived Development Needs.

Results reveal statistically significant differences across all elements ($p < 0.01$), with teachers consistently reporting higher development needs than administrators. The substantial t-values (ranging from 4.033 to 13.396) indicate meaningful perceptual gaps between stakeholder groups. The largest differences emerged for use technology for monitoring (t = 13.396), fostering an ethical culture (t

= 8.161), and strict enforcement of rules (t = 6.892), suggesting these domains exhibit the most divergent stakeholder perspectives. This pattern indicates that teachers perceive considerably greater urgency for development in these areas compared to administrators' self-assessments, pointing to either administrator underestimation of competency gaps or teachers' higher expectations for leadership transparency and accountability.

6. DISCUSSION

This study employed a systematic needs assessment to identify priority areas for developing integrity-based anti-corruption leadership among school administrators in Thailand's basic education system. By quantifying competency gaps through the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI Modified) and comparing multi-stakeholder perspectives, the research established an evidence-based foundation for targeted capacity-building initiatives. Three domains emerged as critical development priorities: Technology-Enabled Monitoring and Prevention of Corruption (PNI = 0.112), Promoting Anti-Corruption Education (PNI = 0.106), and Strict Enforcement of Rules and Regulations (PNI = 0.103). These priorities reflect not merely technical deficiencies, but deep-seated systemic vulnerabilities in educational governance that require urgent transformation. Equally significant, the findings revealed that teachers consistently reported higher development needs than administrators across all eight elements ($p < .01$). The substantial magnitude of these differences—particularly in technology-enabled monitoring (t = 13.396)—indicates that effective development programs must address not only administrators' technical competencies but also the profound trust deficit characterizing the administrator-teacher relationship. The following sections examine the development implications of each priority domain and the critical significance of stakeholder perception gaps.

Priority 1: Technology-Enabled Monitoring and the Crisis of Discretion

Technology-Enabled Monitoring and Prevention of Corruption emerged as the highest priority (PNI = 0.112), exhibiting the largest perceptual gap between teachers and administrators (t = 13.396). This finding aligns with global digital governance trends which posit that technology reduces corruption by increasing transparency and limiting human discretion (Janssen et al., 2012; Nikiforova, 2021). However, the extraordinary gap in this study unveils a specific contextual reality: teachers fundamentally distrust the subjective discretion of administrators and harbor deep skepticism toward traditional, paper-based verification systems. In the Thai context, where patronage networks can influence decision-making, teachers perceive technology not merely as a tool for efficiency, but as a necessary "objective auditor" to counterbalance the ambiguity of administrative power. Consequently, the lack of digital transparency in procurement, budget allocation, and personnel decisions exacerbates suspicions of misconduct. Therefore, leadership development must transcend technical training in e-procurement or data analytics. It must cultivate a mindset where administrators embrace "algorithmic accountability"—viewing digital transparency not as a threat to their authority, but as a mechanism to legitimize their decisions and restore institutional trust (Quah, 2022b).

Priority 2: Moving Beyond Performative Anti-Corruption Education

Promoting Anti-Corruption Education ranked as the second priority (PNI = 0.106), reinforcing the role of schools as primary venues for integrity cultivation. Despite the existence of comprehensive curricula from the NACC, the persistence of this need suggests a phenomenon of "institutional decoupling," where policy adoption is disconnected from actual practice. The significant perception gap suggests that teachers view current administrative efforts as performative or superficial compliance rather than an authentic commitment. Teachers often observe that while anti-corruption activities are documented for reporting purposes, they are insufficiently integrated into the school culture or supported by adequate resource allocation. To bridge this gap, leadership development must focus on "Authentic Ethical Leadership," equipping administrators with the pedagogical leadership skills to embed integrity themes across the curriculum and, crucially, to model these values in their daily conduct. Strategies should include cascading capacity-building where administrators act as trainers, thereby reinforcing their own commitment to the cause.

Priority 3: The Challenge of Moral Courage in Rule Enforcement

Strict Enforcement of Rules and Regulations (PNI = 0.103) represent the third critical priority. The substantial gap (t = 6.892) indicates that teachers perceive a widespread inconsistency in rule application, likely driven by the pressure of patronage systems and informal power structures. In many developing contexts, strict enforcement

threatens established social networks, placing administrators in a precarious ethical dilemma were impartiality risks retaliation. Teachers' heightened demand for development in this area reflects their direct observation of favoritism in recruitment and conflict resolution—violations often rationalized by administrators as political accommodation. Consequently, development interventions must go beyond legal knowledge to focus on "Moral Courage" and "Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks." Administrators require practical tools to navigate conflicts of interest and document their reasoning transparently. Furthermore, systemic reforms are necessary to create institutional protection mechanisms that shield administrators from political interference when they choose to enforce rules impartially.

The Perception Gap as a Crisis of Legitimacy

The consistent finding that teachers reported significantly higher development needs than administrators highlight a critical governance challenge related to institutional legitimacy. This perception gap should not be interpreted merely as a difference of opinion, but as a diagnostic indicator of "Governance Blind Spots." Several dynamics likely contribute to this misalignment. First, the "Self-Enhancement Bias" may lead administrators to overestimate their effectiveness due to a lack of honest feedback loops within hierarchical school structures. Second, teachers, operating at the operational frontline, possess greater visibility into the practical consequences of opaque governance—such as resource shortages or unfair workloads—which administrators may overlook. Third, and most critically, the gap signifies "Historical Trust Erosion." Even when administrators act correctly, a history of perceived inconsistency leads teachers to interpret actions with skepticism. Therefore, integrity-based leadership cannot be assessed solely through self-perception. Addressing these gaps requires a paradigm shift toward "Multi-Stakeholder Governance," where leadership development includes mechanisms for transparent dialogue and where administrative performance is validated by the trust and confidence of the educational community.

7. CONCLUSION

This study responds to the imperative for integrity-based leadership in educational governance by developing and validating a contextually grounded framework for Thailand’s basic education system. Findings confirm that integrity-based anti-corruption leadership is a multidimensional capacity that must integrate ethical self-leadership with structural governance mechanisms.

Priority needs assessment highlighted critical vulnerabilities, specifically in technology-enabled monitoring, anti-corruption education, and strict rule enforcement. These results underscore that ethical orientation alone is insufficient to combat corruption; systematic institutional capacity building is required. Furthermore, the significant perceptual gaps between administrators and teachers reveal a "blind spot" in current governance practices, suggesting that leadership effectiveness cannot be validated by self-assessment alone but requires the confidence of the broader educational community.

Theoretically, this study advances scholarship by synthesizing ethical leadership with governance accountability frameworks. Practically, it provides policymakers with an evidence-based roadmap for designing interventions that move beyond generic training toward targeted digital and structural transformation. Ultimately, achieving corruption-resilient governance requires a multi-stakeholder approach that embeds integrity into the very DNA of school administration, thereby contributing to the broader achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the empirical findings and the prioritized needs identified in this study, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen integrity-based leadership in educational governance:

Policy-Level Recommendations

1. Establishing a National Integrity-Based Leadership Competency Framework Policymakers, particularly the Ministry of Education, should formalize the eight leadership elements identified in this study into a National Competency Framework. This framework serves as a standardized reference for the recruitment, performance evaluation, and career advancement of school administrators. Integrating these competencies into professional standards ensures that integrity is treated not as a soft skill, but as a core professional requirement for educational leadership.

2. Mandating Digital Governance and Open Data Standards To address the critical priority of Technology-Enabled Monitoring (Priority 1) and the inherent distrust in manual discretion, education authorities must prioritize the implementation of "Open Data" governance systems. Policies should

mandate the real-time, digital disclosure of budget allocations, procurement documents, and school performance data. Capacity-building initiatives must accompany this digital transition to ensure that technology serves as a tool for transparency rather than merely increasing administrative burdens.

3. Enhancing Multi-Stakeholder Accountability Mechanisms Given the significant perception gap between administrators and teachers, governance reforms should institutionalize inclusive accountability structures. School boards should be empowered to include diverse representatives—teachers, parents, and community members—in monitoring corruption risks. Establishing participatory oversight mechanisms can bridge the trust deficit, align stakeholder expectations, and ensure that governance practices reflect the reality of the school community.

4. Strengthening Institutional Protection and Whistleblower Safeguards To combat the pressure of patronage networks, policy reforms must reinforce institutional protection mechanisms. This involves strengthening whistleblower safeguards and ensuring that disciplinary processes are handled by independent bodies outside local influence. Clear, legally binding protection protocols are essential to encourage reporting, mitigate the fear of retaliation, and empower administrators to enforce rules impartially.

Practice-Oriented Recommendations for School Administrators

1. Modelling Authentic Integrity and Ethical Visibility School administrators must transcend performative compliance by modelling authentic integrity. This involves transparent communication, ethical consistency in decision-making, and "ethical visibility" where administrators openly discuss ethical dilemmas and the rationale behind their decisions. Creating spaces for such dialogue fosters organizational trust and reinforces integrity as a shared cultural norm.

2. Leveraging Technology to Mitigate Discretionary Risks Administrators should strategically utilize digital tools to minimize ambiguity in budgeting, procurement, and personnel management. By shifting from paper-based to digital platforms, administrators can create verifiable audit trails that protect them from allegations of bias. Continuous professional learning and peer collaboration are vital for mastering these digital governance tools.

3. Institutionalizing Anti-Corruption Education via Curriculum Integration Responding to Priority 2, integrity principles must be embedded into the core of educational activities. Administrators should lead the cross-curricular integration of anti-corruption themes, rather than treating them as isolated activities. Collaborative learning initiatives that engage teachers, parents, and civil society can further strengthen the alignment between school values and community expectations.

4. Fostering a Safe, Responsive, and Trusted Reporting Culture Schools must cultivate a reporting environment defined by confidentiality, fairness, and responsiveness. Trust in reporting mechanisms is built not just by having a system, but by demonstrating action. Administrators should ensure timely follow-up on reports and regularly communicate the effectiveness of these systems (without breaching confidentiality) to reassure stakeholders that their voices lead to change.

5. Ensuring Consistent Rule Enforcement through Documented Reasoning To address Priority 3, administrators must reinforce rule-based governance by applying procedures consistently and documenting the rationale behind contentious decisions. When discretion is necessary, documented reasoning serves as a defense against claims of favoritism. Developing collegial support networks can also provide administrators with moral courage and collective strength to resist undue external pressures.

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APPENDIX

Behavioral Indicators of Integrity-Based Anti-Corruption Leadership

Element	Indicator Code	Behavioral Indicator
1. Self-Leadership against Corruption	1.1	Demonstrates emotional self-control when encountering situations that may involve corruption.
	1.2	Regularly reflects on and evaluates personal behavior to ensure non-involvement in corrupt practices.
	1.3	Understands ethical principles and consistently applies them in daily professional conduct.
	1.4	Performs duties with responsibility and refrains from the misuse of organizational resources.
	1.5	Considers the potential impact of personal decisions on others and the organization.
	1.6	Discloses work-related information transparently and honestly.
	1.7	Refuses offers, incentives, or benefits that may lead to corruption.
	1.8	Avoids participation in activities that may indicate or facilitate corrupt practices.
	1.9	Demonstrates the courage to prevent, challenge, or report unethical or inappropriate actions.
	1.10	Encourages and motivates others to refrain from engaging in corrupt behavior.
	1.11	Serves as a role model of integrity and honesty in professional conduct.
	1.12	Accepts responsibility and accountability for the consequences of personal decisions.
2. Transparent Governance Management	2.1	Conducts operations with clear procedures at every stage and openly discloses relevant information to concerned parties.
	2.2	Consults relevant stakeholders before making decisions on significant or sensitive matters.
	2.3	Maintains comprehensive and verifiable documentation for all operational processes.
	2.4	Publicly discloses budgetary information and organizational performance in a transparent manner.
	2.5	Facilitates access to information necessary for monitoring, review, and accountability.
	2.6	Establishes accessible channels for receiving complaints or reporting corruption-related concerns.
	2.7	Applies disciplinary measures for misconduct in an appropriate, fair, and transparent manner.
	2.8	Provides opportunities for stakeholders to participate in organizational decision-making processes.
	2.9	Gives serious consideration to stakeholder feedback and incorporates it into decision-making where appropriate.
	2.10	Complies strictly with applicable rules, regulations, and organizational policies.
	2.11	Demonstrates awareness of and commitment to ethical standards in professional practice.
	2.12	Implements systems for monitoring, auditing, and evaluating performance to prevent violations of rules or ethical standards.
3. Strict Enforcement of Rules and Regulations	3.1	Enforces rules and regulations consistently and without discrimination.
	3.2	Makes decisions based on fairness and impartiality, free from bias or personal influence.
	3.3	Monitors and reviews operational processes at all stages to minimize corruption risks.
	3.4	Implements rules and regulations to ensure a safe, orderly, and standard-compliant organizational environment.
	3.5	Provides equal opportunities for all parties to present information and receive fair treatment in the event of disputes.
	3.6	Provides personnel with clear guidance and information on rules and regulations to prevent misconduct or misunderstandings.
	3.7	Acts against violations through transparent and verifiable procedures.
	3.8	Responds to violations promptly and fairly in accordance with established rules and regulations.
4. Fostering An Ethical Organizational Culture	4.1	Promotes behaviors among personnel that reflect integrity and ethical conduct in the workplace.
	4.2	Strengthens organizational values to align with ethical principles and standards.
	4.3	Encourages personnel to consistently perform their duties with responsibility and professionalism.
	4.4	Demonstrates accountability for the impacts and consequences of organizational actions.
	4.5	Supports activities and initiatives that promote social responsibility.
	4.6	Prioritizes fairness and equity in organizational management and operational practices.
	4.7	Operates transparently to build trust within the organization and among external stakeholders.
5. Social and Community Responsibility	5.1	Aligns organizational operations with societal needs and public expectations.
	5.2	Recognizes and upholds responsibilities in delivering public services to society and local communities.
	5.3	Evaluates organizational performance in relation to established social goals and community outcomes.

	5.4	Publicly discloses information of public relevance to enable transparency and accountability.
	5.5	Respects the rights and dignity of individuals and communities throughout all operational processes.
	5.6	Manages organizational resources and initiatives to generate sustainable benefits for the community.
	5.7	Implements projects or activities that effectively respond to the genuine needs of the community.
	5.8	Communicates with community stakeholders in a clear, transparent, and accountable manner.
6. Promoting Anti-Corruption Education	6.1	Enhances knowledge and understanding of the meaning, forms, and types of corruption.
	6.2	Promotes the exchange and sharing of experiences related to anti-corruption practices.
	6.3	Creates platforms for dialogue and discussion to build shared understanding of anti-corruption issues.
	6.4	Provides education on the social and economic impacts of corruption.
	6.5	Develops skills for identifying situations and activities that pose corruption risks.
	6.6	Develops skills for managing and responding to situations involving potential corruption risks.
	6.7	Plans and designs activities or programs aimed at preventing corruption within the organization.
	6.8	Encourages personnel and students to participate in activities that promote learning and awareness of anti-corruption.
7. Secure and Reliable Reporting Mechanisms	7.1	Establishes clear and accessible channels for reporting misconduct and communicates these channels effectively to personnel.
	7.2	Encourages personnel to report corruption-related information without fear of retaliation.
	7.3	Provides guidance or training on procedures and methods for reporting problems or misconduct within the organization.
	7.4	Protects whistleblowers and ensures the confidentiality and security of reporters' personal information.
	7.5	Verifies the accuracy and credibility of information received from reports in a systematic manner.
	7.6	Supports the development and continuous improvement of reporting systems to enhance their effectiveness and reliability.
	7.7	Securely stores reported information to prevent data leakage, unauthorized alteration, or loss.
	7.8	Facilitates reporting through both online and offline channels to ensure accessibility and inclusiveness.
8. Technology-Enabled Monitoring and Prevention of Corruption	8.1	Manages organizational data collection systems efficiently to ensure that information can be audited and verified.
	8.2	Supports the development and implementation of technological systems for monitoring personnel performance and operational processes.
	8.3	Utilizes technology to supervise, monitor, and review activities that pose risks of corruption.
	8.4	Applies technological tools to support transparent and traceable operational practices.
	8.5	Encourages personnel to develop technological skills that enhance transparency and accountability in their work.