

# Enhancing Ethical Leadership in Basic Education Administration Based on the Four Brahmavihāras: A Case Study of the Khon Kaen Primary Educational Service Area Office 1\*

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*Received 19 October 2024; Revised 1 December 2024; Accepted 5 December 2024*

## Abstract

This research aims to 1. Study the administration of educational institutions 2. Compare the administration of educational institutions. Data were collected from a sample of 413 people, by specifying the sample size according to the Crazy and Morgan table and using a simple random sampling method. The research instrument was a rating scale questionnaire with a reliability of .94. The statistics used to analyze the data were frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Hypotheses were tested by using the t-test (Independent Sample) and the one-way analysis of variance (F-test (One-Way ANOVA)). When differences were found, pairwise comparisons were made with the least significant difference (LSD).

The research results found that:

1. The administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic education institutions found that overall, the average value was at a high level. When classified by each aspect, it was found that the aspect with the highest average value was the aspect of general administration according to the principles of the four divine states, followed by the aspect of personnel administration according to the principles of the four divine states and the aspect of academic administration according to the principles of the four divine states, respectively. The aspect with the lowest average value was the aspect of budget administration according to the principles of the four divine states.

2. The results of the comparison of the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states classified by educational status and work experience of the sample groups, overall and by aspect, showed no differences in practice.

## Citation



\* Phrapattaphong Thittayano (Closed Tarapho), Teerasak Buengmum and Sangwan Piyura. (2024). Enhancing Ethical Leadership in Basic Education Administration Based on the Four Brahmavihāras: A Case Study of the Khon Kaen Primary Educational Service Area Office 1. Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation, 1(4), 1-11.;

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.>

<https://so14.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/AJHSI>

**Keywords:** Education School Administration According to Four Brahmaviharas, Basic Education School

## **Introduction**

The National Education Act (No. 3) B.E. 2553, Section 37, stipulates that the administration and management of basic education by adhering to the educational area, taking into account the level of basic education, the number of educational institutions, the population, culture, and appropriateness in other aspects, including the management of basic education for persons with physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, social, communication, and learning disabilities, or those with physical disabilities or disabilities, by organizing basic education in the form of non-formal education or informal education, and for those with special abilities, including organizing distance education and organizing education that provides services in many educational areas (Royal Gazette, National Education Act (No. 3) B.E. 2553)

The study that can develop learning and use it as a tool to change the foundation of knowledge in educational development to be both efficient and effective, decentralizing the administration and management of education in terms of academics, budget, personnel administration and general administration to the committee and the area education office and educational institutions in the educational area directly (Prawet Wasi, 2001). The administration of educational institutions is carried out by the school administrators with support from representatives of parents, teachers, community organizations, local government organizations, alumni of the educational institution, representatives of monks or representatives of other religions in the area (Khaemmani, 2006).

Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic educational institutions, Office of the Primary Educational Service Area, Khon Kaen Area 1, to be used as information and guidelines for considering improvements or developments in educational institution administration, which can be integrated with Buddhist principles, especially the principles of the four divine states, to create further efficiency.

## **Objective**

1. To study the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic educational institutions under the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area, Khon Kaen Area 1.
2. To compare the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic educational institutions under the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area, Khon Kaen Area 1, classified by job position, educational qualifications, and work experience.

## **Literature review**

The concept of ethical leadership in educational administration is pivotal to cultivating integrity, compassion, and equity in schools. Ethical leadership, as defined by Brown and Treviño (2006), involves the demonstration and promotion of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships. In the context of Thai educational administration, the integration of

Buddhist moral principles, especially the **Four Brahmavihāras**—loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), empathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*)—offers a culturally grounded framework to guide leaders' ethical behavior (Phra Dhammapitaka, 2007).

Scholars such as Hallinger and Heck (2010) emphasize that school leadership must be value-driven and community-sensitive, especially in basic education settings where ethical dilemmas are frequent. The Brahmavihāras provide a spiritual-ethical compass that complements administrative rationality. For example, *mettā* fosters inclusive policies and non-discrimination, while *karuṇā* supports responsive care for students with special needs or socio-economic hardships (Sujato, 2015).

Research conducted by Srisura and Phukamchanoad (2021) revealed that school administrators who practiced ethical principles inspired greater trust and cooperation among teachers, which led to improvements in both teaching effectiveness and student behavior. Similarly, Uthayophas (2019) studied the application of Buddhist principles in educational leadership and found that administrators who embody the Brahmavihāras gained higher moral authority and were more effective in conflict resolution and team-building.

Furthermore, Thai scholars such as Chantarasombat (2013) advocate for the institutionalization of Buddhist ethics in educational leadership development programs. He argues that incorporating these moral dimensions not only enhances individual leadership practice but also nurtures a holistic school culture rooted in compassion and justice. The relevance of this approach is particularly significant in northeastern Thailand (Isan), where Buddhist values deeply influence social and institutional norms (Nimnuan, 2018).

In sum, the integration of the Four Brahmavihāras into school leadership in the Thai context aligns with both international ethical leadership theories and indigenous moral frameworks. This literature suggests that ethical leadership guided by Brahmavihāra principles may lead to more inclusive, empathetic, and morally resilient educational environments, particularly within basic education institutions.

## Methodology

1. Research Design This research used quantitative research methodology with survey methodology using statistical methods to analyze data and present descriptive analysis.

2. Population and sample The population consisted of 1,694 school administrators and teachers in basic education institutions, Office of the Primary Education Service Area 1, Khon Kaen (Information System for Educational Administration, 2017). The sample consisted of 413 school administrators and teachers in basic education institutions, Office of the Primary Education Service Area 1, Khon Kaen (Information System for Educational Administration, 2017).

3. Research instruments In this research, the researcher used a questionnaire to collect data on school administration according to the principles of the Four Divine Abodes in basic education institutions. The research was conducted under the Office of the Primary Education Area, Khon Kaen Area 1. It was a survey research with a checklist format, a 5-level rating scale questionnaire, and an open-ended questionnaire, consisting of 3 sections as follows: Section 1: General information of the respondents regarding their status, educational qualifications, and work experience, in the form of a

checklist. Section 2: A questionnaire on the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the Four Divine Abodes in basic education institutions under the Office of the Primary Education Area, Khon Kaen Area 1, in the form of a 5-level rating scale based on the Likert scale (Bunchom Srisat, 2011). Section 3: A questionnaire on guidelines for promoting the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the Four Divine Abodes in basic education institutions under the Office of the Primary Education Area, Khon Kaen Area 1, in the form of an open-ended questionnaire consisting of 4 aspects: the principle of loving-kindness, the principle of compassion, the principle of sympathetic joy, and the principle of equanimity.

4. Data collection The researcher proceeded with data collection according to the following steps:

4.1 Request a letter to collect data from the Graduate School Center, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, regarding the appointment of experts, request permission from relevant agencies and send it to the sample group.

4.2 The researcher sent the questionnaires to each sample group, 1 set, with a stamped envelope, correctly, so that the questionnaires could be returned to the researcher by mail and the researcher delivered some of the questionnaires himself and went to collect them himself.

4.3 Returned the 413 questionnaires to process the data by checking the accuracy and completeness of each questionnaire set.

4.4 Analyzed the 413 complete questionnaires according to the research objectives using a ready-made data analysis program.

5. Data analysis The researcher analyzed the data in the following order:

5.1 Analyze the general data of the respondents regarding their status and work experience by analyzing the number and percentage.

5.2 Analyze the level of school administration according to the principles of the four divine states in basic education institutions under the Office of the Primary Education Area, Khon Kaen, Area 1 by analyzing the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation (S.D.) both overall and in each aspect using the Likert method. Then compare with the criteria, average of 5 levels and interpret the results (Bunchom Srisat, 2011)

5.3 Analyze and compare the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic educational institutions under the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area, Khon Kaen, Area 1, classified by status by testing (t-test, independent samples)

5.4 Analyze and compare the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic educational institutions under the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area, Khon Kaen, Area 1, classified by educational qualifications by testing (t-test, independent samples)

5.5 Analyze and compare the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic educational institutions under the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area, Khon Kaen, Area 1, classified by work experience by using a one-way analysis of variance (F-test, one way ANOVA). When differences are found, find the differences in pairs using the Scheffe' method.

5.6 Analyze the guidelines for administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic educational institutions

Under the jurisdiction of the Khon Kaen Primary Educational Service Area Office, Area 1, 4 areas, by analyzing the number, finding the frequency value and analyzing the descriptive data.

## Results

From the research results, there are issues that should be discussed as follows:

1. The administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic education institutions found that overall, the average value was at a high level ( $\bar{x} = 4.30$ , S.D. = .51). This may be because the administrators of basic education institutions have applied the principles of the four divine states, namely loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, to the administration of basic education schools in terms of academic administration, budget administration, personnel administration, and general administration, which is consistent with the research of Buppa Pikulkaew (2010) who conducted research on "The application of the principles of the four divine states in the administration of academic affairs of administrators in private higher education institutions in Bangkok." The research results found that the application of the principles of the four divine states in the administration of academic affairs of administrators in terms of curriculum and teaching, measurement and evaluation, academic promotion, and academic planning was at a high level. Males and females with different work experiences had overall opinions in all aspects that were not different, while those with different ages and educational levels had overall opinions. There was a statistically significant difference at the .05 level. The analysis of important components found that the administrators mostly applied the principle of compassion, followed by loving-kindness, equanimity, and mudita, especially using the principle of compassion with measurement and evaluation, using the principle of compassion with academic planning, using the principle of mudita with academic promotion, and using the principle of equanimity with curriculum and teaching. This is consistent with Wichian Boonkla (2007) who conducted a research study on "A Study of the Use of the Four Divine Abodes by School Administrators in Basic Education Institutions Under the Office of the Surin Educational Service Area 3." The research results found that school administrators as a whole used the four divine abodes in their work to a high degree, and this was consistent with Nattaporn Phuthongngen (2012) who conducted a research study on the personnel management of school administrators according to the four divine abodes in the groups of schools under the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area 1 to 4 under the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area 1, Khon Kaen. It was found that overall, there were opinions at a high level.

2. The administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic educational institutions classified by job positions were as follows:

2.1 Different job positions had different opinions on the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic educational institutions under the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area, Khon Kaen, Area 1, which was not in accordance with the hypothesis. This may be because the administration of basic educational institutions is participatory administration with diverse duties or mutual assistance, so the opinions on the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine

states in the administration of basic educational institutions under the Office of the Primary Educational Service Area, Khon Kaen, Area 1 were not different. This is consistent with the research of Thippaya Phatkhlangsaeng (2013) who studied the research on “Administration according to the principles of the four divine states of education of school directors in schools under the jurisdiction of Nakhon Sawan Municipality” and found that municipal teachers of different genders had different opinions on the administration of school administrators according to the principles of the four divine states of education in schools under the jurisdiction of the municipality. Nakhon Sawan Nakhon Sawan Province is not different but is not consistent with Mukda Anukanon (2012) who researched on the study of behavior according to the principles of the four divine states of mind of school administrators according to the perception of teachers in secondary schools under the Office of the Secondary Education Area 17. The research results found that 1. The morality of school administrators according to the principles of the four divine states of mind according to the perception of teachers is at a high level overall. The average ranking from highest to lowest are Mudita, Metta, Upekkha, and Karuna. 2. The results of comparing the morality of school administrators according to the principles of the four divine states of mind according to the perception of teachers classified by gender, work experience, and school size, both overall and in each aspect, found that they are different.

2.2 Educational qualifications are different. School administration according to the principles of the four divine states of mind in basic education institutions is different, which is in line with the hypothesis set. This is because even though they have different educational qualifications, they have different opinions on school administration according to the principles of the four divine states of mind in basic education institutions under the Office of the Primary Education Area, Khon Kaen, Area 1, which is consistent with the research of Nam Oi Anusonthi (2011) who studied the research on “A study of the use of the four divine states of mind by school administrators under local administrative organizations in Kamphaeng Phet Province” The research results found that the overall use of the four divine states of mind by school administrators in all aspects of school administration was at a high level. The results of the comparison of opinions of teachers on the use of the four divine states of mind by school administrators under local administrative organizations in Kamphaeng Phet Province classified by gender and work experience found that teachers in schools under local administrative organizations in Kamphaeng Phet Province had different opinions on the use of the four divine states of mind by school administrators. The research of Wichian Boonkla (2007) studied the topic of “A study of the use of the four divine states of mind by school administrators in basic educational institutions under the Office of the Surin Educational Service Area 3”. The research results found that school administrators as a whole used the four divine states of mind in their work to a high level. When considering each aspect, it was found that all aspects were at a high level, ranked from highest to lowest as follows: mudita, loving-kindness, equanimity, and compassion. The results of the comparison of the use of the four divine states of mind by school administrators found that school administrators and teachers had a perception of The overall use of the four divine abodes by school administrators is different. When considering each aspect, it was found that the use of the four divine abodes in every aspect is different.

2.3 Different working experiences have different opinions on the administration of educational institutions according to the principles of the four divine states in basic education institutions, which is not in accordance with the hypothesis. This may be because the school administrators and teachers have similar working experiences, which is consistent with the research of Thippaya Phasaklangsaeng (2013) who studied the topic of “Administration according to the principles of the four divine states of education of school directors in schools under the jurisdiction of Nakhon Sawan Municipality”. It was found that the municipal teachers of different genders had different opinions on the administration of school administrators according to the principles of the four divine states of education in schools under the jurisdiction of Nakhon Sawan Municipality, Nakhon Sawan Province. This is not consistent with the research of Wichian Boonkla (2007) who studied the topic of “A study on the use of the four divine states of education by school administrators in basic education institutions under the jurisdiction of Surin Educational Service Area Office 3”. The research results found that school administrators as a whole used the four divine states of education in their work to a high degree. When considering each aspect, it was found that all aspects were at a high level, ranked from highest to lowest as follows: **Mudita**, **Metta**, **Upekkha** and compassion: The comparative results of the use of the four divine abodes by basic education administrators found that school administrators and teachers had different perceptions of the use of the four divine abodes by school administrators overall. When considering each aspect, it was found that the use of the four divine abodes in every aspect was different.

## Discussion

The findings revealed that the overall administration of basic education institutions in accordance with the Four Brahmavihāras—**Metta** (loving-kindness), **Karuna** (compassion), **Mudita** (sympathetic joy), and **Upekkha** (equanimity)—was at a **high level** ( $\bar{x} = 4.30$ , S.D. = .51). This suggests that school administrators in the Khon Kaen Primary Educational Service Area Office 1 have successfully integrated Buddhist ethical principles into various domains of school management, including academic, budgetary, personnel, and general administration. These results are consistent with the study by **Buppa Pikulkaew (2010)**, who found that academic administration in private higher education institutions in Bangkok—particularly in curriculum development, assessment, and planning—reflected a strong implementation of Brahmavihāra-based ethics.

The data also indicate that **Karuna (compassion)** is the most frequently applied principle in school administration, especially in academic planning and student evaluation. This aligns with **Wichian Boonkla’s (2007)** findings in the Surin Educational Service Area, which emphasized the high-level application of all four Brahmavihāras, with compassion being prominent. The application of **Mudita** (especially in academic promotion) and **Upekkha** (notably in curriculum and instruction) further highlights a nuanced, context-specific application of each divine abode based on the function of leadership roles.

Regarding **demographic factors**, the study showed **no significant differences in perceptions across job positions**, indicating a likely **collaborative or participatory leadership style** in schools, where both administrators and staff share ethical practices and mutual responsibilities. This is in line with **Thippaya Phatkhlangsaeng (2013)**, who found no significant differences among municipal teachers regarding the ethical behaviors of their administrators. However, this finding contrasts with **Mukda Anukanon (2012)**, whose research on secondary schools under the Office of Secondary Education Area 17 revealed that perceptions of administrators' ethical behavior varied significantly depending on gender, experience, and school size.

In terms of **educational qualifications**, the study found that individuals with different qualifications had **significantly different views** on Brahmavihāra-based administration. This supports the hypothesis and aligns with **Nam Oi Anusonthi's (2011)** study in Kamphaeng Phet, which reported similar differences based on educational background and gender. These variations might be attributed to differences in professional training or ethical sensitivity shaped by educational experiences.

Interestingly, **work experience did not significantly influence perceptions**, suggesting a possible **uniformity in administrative culture** within the area. This contradicts Boonkla (2007), who reported variations in perception based on experience, with differences in emphasis on Metta, Mudita, and Upekkha across experience levels. The findings highlight an essential characteristic of ethical leadership in Thai education: while rooted in Buddhist virtues, the effectiveness of Brahmavihāra-based administration depends on **how contextually and equitably these values are interpreted and applied**. This underscores the need for further leadership training programs that are sensitive to demographic diversity and capable of translating spiritual ethics into practical educational outcomes.

## **New knowledge**



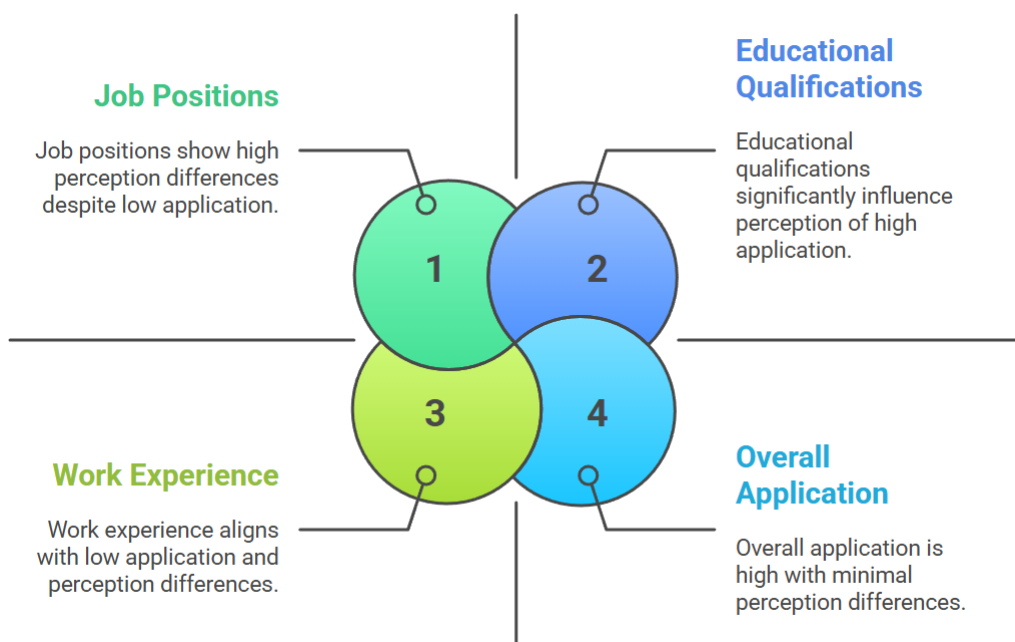


Figure 1 New knowledge, 2024

### Quadrant 1: Job Positions (Top Left - Green)

**Content:** “Job positions show high perception differences despite low application.”

**Interpretation:** Even though divine-state practices are not heavily applied across different roles, perceptions vary widely, possibly due to role-based responsibilities or authority levels.

### Quadrant 2: Educational Qualifications (Top Right - Blue)

**Content:** “Educational qualifications significantly influence perception of high application.”

**Interpretation:** Those with different levels of education perceive the use of divine-state principles differently, with higher qualifications likely correlating with greater recognition of their use.

### Quadrant 3: Work Experience (Bottom Left - Yellow-Green)

**Content:** “Work experience aligns with low application and perception differences.”

**Interpretation:** Administrators and teachers with similar experience levels tend to perceive application similarly, suggesting a more uniform leadership environment over time.

### Quadrant 4: Overall Application (Bottom Right - Light Blue)

**Content:**

“Overall application is high with minimal perception differences.”

**Interpretation:** The general use of the Four Divine States is consistently high, and most stakeholders perceive it similarly—indicating a shared ethical culture across the educational institutions studied.

### **Purpose and Use**

This visual serves as a concise analytical tool to:

- Summarize demographic factors influencing ethical leadership.
- Compare perceived vs. actual application of Buddhist principles.
- Highlight areas of alignment and discrepancy in leadership practice.

### **Recommendation**

From the research results, the researchers have the following recommendations:

#### **1. Policy recommendations**

1.1 Relevant agencies should campaign for the application of the 4 Iddhipada principles in their agencies/departments/divisions to create a shared mind, create shared responsibility, and recognize the importance of using resources to achieve the greatest value.

1.2 The Office of the Primary Educational Service Area, Khon Kaen Area 1 should organize training for administrators to promote and develop methods of school administration according to the principles of the 4 Brahmaviharas.

1.3 The Office of the Primary Educational Service Area, Khon Kaen Area 1 should have continuous activities to promote administrative leadership for educational personnel.

#### **2. Recommendations for implementation**

2.1 The results of this study should be used as information for planning the administration of basic educational institutions to be of higher quality and efficiency.

2.2 The problematic approaches obtained from the study should be used to improve and solve the problematic areas. More clarity

#### **3. Suggestions for future research**

3.1 Should study the application of other Buddhist principles such as the Four Bases of Power, Kindness, Compassion, Mudita and Upekkha, etc., to the administration of basic education institutions.

3.2 Should study the sample groups from educational institutions with different structural characteristics to find differences.

3.3 Should study by increasing the number of independent variables to be more diverse.

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