

Management Strategies to Enhance Professional Learning Communities for the Office of Basic Education Commission

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Abstract

The purpose was to examine educational institution administration and its relationship to enhancing professional learning communities. The researchers employed a mixed research method, combining document analysis and questionnaires. The sample included 356 administrators and teachers from 190 schools in Phetchabun Primary Educational Service Area Office 3, selected using Taro Yamane's simple randomization method. The researchers analyzed the data using statistical measures such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Additionally, they conducted interviews with 10 successful administrators to draft strategies and sought feedback from 10 experts through a seminar to review and evaluate the strategies for conformity, suitability, feasibility, and usefulness. The study found that educational institution administration based on the concept of fostering professional learning communities consists of five conceptual frameworks: professional learning management, professional leadership distribution, exchange of knowledge and skills, support for professional learning, and the establishment of professional networks. The guidelines for implementing these frameworks include four steps: planning, action, performance evaluation, and bringing about improvements. In terms of strategies for school management to strengthen professional learning communities, the researchers identified five main strategies recommended by the Office of the Basic Education Commission. These strategies include professional leadership development for teachers, building partnerships for professional learning networks among educational institutions, ongoing professional learning management, training management that promotes vocational learning, and promoting acceptance and trust in working together. Overall, the developed strategies were found to be highly useful, with professional leadership development for teachers being the most consistent aspect. The creation of professional learning network partners of educational institutions showed strong potential, while feasibility and suitability were also rated positively. It is important to note that the study was conducted using a mixed research method and involved a specific sample from a particular educational service area office. Therefore, the findings and strategies may not be generalized to all educational institutions. Further research may be needed to validate and adapt these strategies in other contexts.

Keywords: Management Strategies, Professional Learning, Communities

1. Introduction

Thailand has implemented education reforms based on the Education Act B.E. 2542 and Amendment No. 2 (B.E. 2545). The reforms aim to establish Thailand as a learning society and wisdom (Wisdom and Learning Society) by developing individuals' qualities, fostering knowledge to build resilience, and leading to a society characterized by wisdom and sustainable lifelong learning. The transformation of the Thai education system's learning process is a crucial tool in enhancing the quality of the country's people in the 21st century, focusing on 21st-century skills. The core of this change is the shift from passive learning through lectures (Learning by Attending Lecture/Teaching) to active learning through practical application (Learning by Doing). This transformation affects schools and the entire education community, requiring a serious and systematic approach to "change management."

In the Minister of Education's policy for the Fiscal Year 2017 on Teacher Development, the goal is to enhance the quality of learners through Active Learning and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), aligning with the King's science and the vision of Thailand 4.0. The process of school-based teacher development arises from the collaboration, unity, and cooperation of teachers, administrators, and educators within schools, with a focus on improving learners' education. To alleviate the burden on teachers and minimize time spent on PLC training, the Ministry of Education has mandated that teachers integrate PLC training hours with their teaching hours. These training hours will be considered when evaluating teachers for promotion based on the forthcoming rules. The Office of the Basic Education Commission has actively promoted PLC (Professional Learning Community) processes in educational institutions, recognizing that the heart of teacher learning lies in enhancing learner education. Teachers' teaching and work have a direct impact on students' learning, necessitating an understanding of the differences in learning levels, fostering a cooperative environment, building positive relationships, and encouraging the expression of opinions with a constructive attitude.

Moreover, the royal initiatives of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej emphasize a social landscape that emerges from within, encouraging participation for the common good, a holistic approach, and a departure from rigid reliance on textbooks. These initiatives advocate self-reliance, simplicity, and maximizing resources effectively. Within the framework of a Professional Learning Community, change is driven by learning from the experiences of working groups comprising teachers who collaborate, support one another, and act as change leaders (Change Agents). The objective is to reform the learning process from within, with teachers working collectively to develop learner education. This involves jointly setting learning goals, evaluating and reflecting on both individual performance and overall results through a process of learning exchange and constructive criticism. By working together, pooling resources, and focusing on promoting a holistic learning process, these actions contribute to the educational reforms in Thailand.

1.1 Background and Importance of the Problem

It is important to note that these actions are part of Thailand's ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of education, guided by the Education Act and the Minister of Education's policies, in order to foster a learning society, wisdom, and sustainable lifelong learning for its citizens.

1. Share a common goal in learner management/development to help learners reach their full potential.

2. Foster learning through the exchange of experiences from the workplace/real classroom situations.
3. Encourage all stakeholders to engage in learning and collaborate to bring about change aligned with the shared goals.
4. Embrace constructive criticism to evaluate the outcomes of student development efforts.
5. Foster a sense of HOPE within the team, which includes:
 - (1) Honesty and humanity, based on factual information and mutual respect.
 - (2) Option and openness, choosing the best approaches for students and being receptive to learning from others.
 - (3) Patience and persistence, cultivating the determination to work diligently until clear results are achieved.
 - (4) Efficacy and enthusiasm, building confidence in the effectiveness of learner management methods that are suitable and inspiring for learners to fully develop themselves (Chaichaowarat, 2015).

A professional learning community (PLC) is characterized by several key features, in addition to its members being a group of people. These features contribute to the effectiveness of a PLC. Overall, there are five key characteristics that define PLCs:

- 1) Shared values and vision.
- 2) Collective responsibility for student learning.
- 3) Reflection and professional inquiry to assess results.
- 4) Collaboration among members.
- 5) Supportive conditions, including structural arrangements and collegial relationships.

Schools play a crucial role in driving Thai society towards becoming a learning society. Schools are social institutions that bring together individuals with their own professional norms, beliefs, and values. To foster a learning community within a school, it is important for management to recognize and prioritize the importance of continuous and sustainable development, especially in the face of international competition. This requires systematic management that aligns with professional development goals, creating an environment where teachers can exchange ideas and learn from one another. By doing so, teachers are not working in isolation but rather have networks to support them in improving student learning. Professional learning communities serve as tools for teachers to come together as a community and drive change, both in terms of educational reforms to enhance student learning and in developing teachers' professional skills (Rewadee Chaichaowarat, 2015).

1.2 Research Question

Given these reasons, the researcher is interested in studying and developing strategies for educational institution administration to strengthen professional learning communities. This process is driven by the Office of the Basic Education Commission and aims to improve the quality of educational institutions based on identified problems and needs.

1.3 Research Objective

1) To study the administration of educational institutions according to the concept of enhancing professional learning communities, as guided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

2) To formulate educational institution management strategies aimed at enhancing professional learning communities, as per the guidance of the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

3) To assess educational institution management strategies aimed at enhancing professional learning communities, in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Related Concepts and Theories

The principles, concepts, and theories of school management in this study were derived from the examination of relevant documents and research related to various issues. The research presented findings under four main topics: the meaning of educational management, guidelines for school management, and theories of educational management in the current context.

The meaning of educational management is crucial for the effective operation of any organization. It signifies the processes or activities within the educational context that individuals involved collaborate to develop human resources towards the defined objectives of the organization or institution. Managers must possess planning abilities to enable efficient collaboration among personnel and achieve maximum effectiveness and results. Management is primarily concerned with ensuring success in various endeavors, utilizing different perspectives and academic viewpoints. Several scholars have provided interpretations and perspectives on management, including:

Thawil Kesapun (2009) describes educational management as the collaborative process or activities in education, where individuals work together to develop human resources to become quality members of society as defined by the organization's objectives.

Ratchanat Pumjaj (2009) defines management as collaborative work utilizing various methods to achieve jointly set objectives, relying on management resources such as personnel, finances, materials, equipment, and suitable management methods to ensure the success and efficiency of organizational operations.

Somdet Saowandee (2010) defines management as the use of knowledge and skills to work together to achieve learning goals and the holistic development of individuals and society for lifelong learning.

Wiroj Saratna (2010) defines management as the process of planning within an organization, relying on leaders or managers to lead in various aspects and promote stakeholder involvement in operations and problem-solving to achieve predefined objectives collaboratively.

In summary, management refers to collaborative activities among individuals to achieve defined objectives effectively, efficiently, and professionally. It involves the cooperation of personnel, resources, materials, facilities, and budgets within the community to ensure the effective operation of educational management.

2.2 Literature Surveys

Roland (2008) conducted a study on the relationship between the leadership qualities of school principals and the job satisfaction of teachers. The study found that the leadership qualities of school principals are related to the job satisfaction of teachers. The behavior and role of school principals are crucial factors in the context of the school environment. From the study on job satisfaction in practice, it was found that variables influencing job satisfaction among teachers include gender, age, level of education, length of service, and average monthly income. The study encompassed five dimensions: policy management, working environment, interpersonal relationships, job stability, and compensation and benefits.

Panyajak and Nimanan (2014) studied the management process according to the workload of school administrators in expanding educational opportunities in Doi Tao District, Chiang Mai Province. The research found that the management process according to the workload of school administrators in expanding educational opportunities in Doi Tao District, Chiang Mai Province, can be divided into four aspects: academic management, budget management, personnel management, and general management.

Udom (2015) conducted research on the development patterns of quality management systems in secondary schools towards international excellence. The research found that the components of quality management in secondary schools towards international excellence consist of 7 main components: organizational leadership, strategic planning, focus on students and stakeholders, measurement, analysis, and knowledge management, focus on personnel, focus on practices, and student outcomes.

Apaijai (2017) conducted research on the management model for promoting careers for underprivileged children in schools under the Royal Initiative Project. The research found that the conditions and guidelines for educational management to promote careers for underprivileged children in schools under the Royal Initiative Project.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative research with qualitative research. The research method is divided into three phases as follows:

Phase 1 involves studying educational institution administration based on the concept of fostering a community of professional learning, as guided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

Phase 2 aims to determine educational institution management strategies for enhancing professional learning communities, in accordance with the guidance provided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

Phase 3 focuses on assessing educational institution management strategies for enhancing professional learning communities, as per the guidelines provided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

3.2 Population and Sample

Data collection from the research samples: The collected data were divided into two groups as follows:

Interviews were conducted with the directors of schools under the Phetchabun Primary Educational Service Area Office 3, totaling 9 individuals. A total of 347 students, along with deputy directors of schools and government teachers under the Phetchabun Elementary Education Service Area Office 3, were selected using Taro Yamane's simple random sampling method.

A 5-level questionnaire was administered, and statistical analysis included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

3.3 Research Instruments

Phase 1 consists of studying the conceptual framework for enhancing professional learning communities: The researcher studied relevant documents and conducted related research, then synthesized the findings to develop a conceptual framework for enhancing professional learning communities. The researcher presented the conceptual framework to experts for assessment of its appropriateness, and then used their feedback to refine and summarize it into an educational conceptual framework. Additionally, a data collection tool consisting of an interview form and a questionnaire for educational institution administration based on the concept of fostering a professional learning community was created. This process was guided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission with an accuracy of 0.95.

Phase 2 involves determining educational institution management strategies for enhancing professional learning communities. This is achieved by analyzing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT Matrix) to formulate strategies for enhancing professional learning communities, as guided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission. The formulated strategies are then reviewed and confirmed through Focus Group Discussions organized with experts.

Phase 3 entails the assessment of educational institution management strategies aimed at strengthening professional learning communities. This assessment is conducted by experts to evaluate suitability and feasibility, leading to the refinement of details within the strategies. The ultimate goal is to develop a comprehensive strategy for fostering professional learning communities, guided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

3.4 Data Collection

To collect qualitative data, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted using a questionnaire format. The interviews aimed to gather detailed insights (Semi-Structured Interview), and the accuracy of the data collection was maintained at 0.95.

For collecting quantitative data, a questionnaire on educational institution management strategies for enhancing professional learning communities was utilized. This questionnaire employed a rating scale model and was divided into three parts:

Part 1: General information of the respondents.

Part 2: Study of the administration of educational institutions to strengthen the community of professional learning, guided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

Part 3: Additional Comments and Suggestions on Management for Enhancement of Professional Learning Communities, as guided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission. The accuracy of this data collection was maintained at 0.95.

For the qualitative data collection in Phase 3, a focus group record form was employed after the establishment of an educational institution management strategy to strengthen the professional learning community, as guided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission. This form allowed experts to record the consensus resolution of the group (Consensus).

3.5 Statistics Used for Data Analysis

3.5.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Data analysis included descriptive analysis, content analysis, and thematic analysis based on the data obtained from the study of related concepts and theories. The synthesized data from Focus Group Discussions and research were combined to create a strategy for school management to strengthen the professional learning community, guided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

3.5.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed to describe the data or results obtained from the questionnaire or survey collection. This included frequency and percentage statistics, as well as mean and standard deviation (SD).

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

The results of data analysis of educational institution administration, according to the concept of promoting a community of professional learning, found that the conceptual framework for fostering professional learning communities consists of: professional learning management, professional leadership diffusion, work-based learning exchange, supporting vocational learning,

building professional networks. The guideline employs four steps: planning, actions (Do), performance evaluation (Check), and improving results (Act).

4.2 Data Analysis of the Qualitative Data

The results of establishing educational institution management strategies for enhancing professional learning communities, led by the Office of the Basic Education Commission, involved addressing environmental monitoring issues. Analysis using the TOWS matrix defined four strategies:

- 1) SO strategy: Leveraging internal strengths to exploit opportunities.
- 2) ST strategy: Utilizing organizational strengths to mitigate threats.
- 3) WO strategy: Seizing opportunities by addressing weaknesses.
- 4) WT strategy: Defending or mitigating weaknesses and avoiding threats.

The results of the strategy formulation can be summarized as five main strategies and fifteen secondary strategies as follows:

Main Strategy 1: Professional Leadership Development Strategies for Teachers

Secondary Strategy 1.1: Increase the teacher's authority and responsibility.

Secondary Strategy 1.2: Develop leadership for teachers.

Secondary Strategy 1.3: Enhance and inspire joint leadership.

Main Strategy 2: Strategies for building affiliates in professional learning networks of educational institutions

Secondary Strategy 2.1: Build a collaborative network with stakeholders.

Secondary Strategy 2.2: Establish cooperation networks with internal and external agencies.

Main Strategy 3: Continuing Professional Learning Management Strategies

Secondary Strategy 3.1: Promote teacher development through collaborative vocational learning.

Secondary Strategy 3.2: Establish guidelines for assessing teachers' professional progress.

Secondary Strategy 3.3: Develop teacher performance assessments linked to student evaluation.

Secondary Strategy 3.4: Foster a professional learning culture.

Main Strategy 4: Management Strategies that Promote Professional Learning

Secondary Strategy 4.1: Encourage teachers to learn and develop professionally.

Secondary Strategy 4.2: Allocate time to facilitate learning activities.

Secondary Strategy 4.3: Support teacher development by providing guidance and setting goals.

Main Strategy 5: Strategies to Promote Collaborative Acceptance and Trust

Secondary Strategy 5.1: Foster effective collaboration.

Secondary Strategy 5.2: Develop communication skills for teachers to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of fellow teachers.

Secondary Strategy 5.3: Create an atmosphere of trust and exchange of creative thinking.

4.3 Summary of the Results

The results of the assessment of educational institution management strategies aimed at enhancing professional learning communities by the Office of the Basic Education Commission, conducted by qualified assessors, indicated the highest level of suitability and feasibility.

5. Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

Strategies for school management to strengthen professional learning communities, led by the Office of the Basic Education Commission, comprise five main strategies: professional leadership development for teachers, building partnerships for professional learning networks of Educational Institutions, continuing professional learning management, training management that promotes vocational learning, promotion of acceptance and trust in working together.

Overall, the usefulness of the developed strategy was found to be at the highest level. When considering each aspect, professional leadership development for teachers was the most consistent, followed by the creation of professional learning networks of educational institutions in terms of feasibility and suitability.

5.2 Discussion

Regarding strategies for developing professional leadership for teachers:

Empowering teachers and fostering shared leadership are essential components of professional leadership development. This strategy aligns with previous studies by Chanthaphun et al. (2018) emphasizing the importance of developing teacher leadership qualities and Suwannawong (2015) advocating for distributed professional leadership among teachers. Udomsri (2015) also emphasized the role of leadership in building professional learning communities, suggesting that administrators and teachers should have a clear vision of learning to support such communities.

Establishing professional learning network partnerships for educational institutions: Creating networks with stakeholders and internal/external agencies is crucial for supporting teachers' and administrators' performance. This aligns with Intanams (2010)'s findings on the significance of networking in expanding professional learning communities. Such networks can enhance professional growth at both formal and informal levels, as suggested by previous research.

Continuing professional learning management strategies:

These strategies aim to develop teachers through ongoing professional learning and performance assessments linked to student evaluation. This approach aligns with studies emphasizing the importance of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in improving student outcomes, as highlighted by Draper DP (2014), Matthews SH (2014), and Square RL (2015).

Management strategies promoting professional learning:

Encouraging ongoing learning, allocating time for professional Intanam (2010)'s findings on the benefits of collaboration in school settings and the importance of shared responsibility among educators.

Strategies to promote mutual recognition and trust:

Fostering effective collaboration, improving communication skills, and creating a trusting atmosphere are vital for enhancing teacher collaboration and creativity. This aligns with the notion that effective communication and trust are crucial for successful collaboration among educators, as emphasized in various studies.

In summary, implementing these strategies can effectively strengthen professional learning communities in educational institutions under the Office of the Basic Education Commission.

5.3 Recommendation

Educational institutions should apply the research results to foster professional learning communities. Administrators should prioritize areas and steps based on management needs to strengthen Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). They should focus on areas with high developmental needs, such as building knowledge and understanding of operational guidelines for professional learning communities. Additionally, they should develop new educational tools or innovations for teachers to effectively engage in PLC activities. These initiatives should be implemented continuously every academic year following the PDCA quality cycle management model, as guided by the Office of the Basic Education Commission. School administrators should consistently promote the creation of professional learning communities by establishing a committee or center for human resource development within educational institutions. This resource can provide support for teachers' professional leadership development and aid in the effective management of student learning.

Future research should analyze the practical components of professional learning communities' processes in educational institution administration within different contexts. To gain insights for research through group discussions, researchers should clearly define the framework or discussion issues in each area, focusing on ways to improve the quality of education.

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