



## Proactive professional networking strategies for enhancing teacher engagement in private school: Case study of Kraiumnuayvittaya army sponsor school

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The purpose of this research is to use the case study of Kraiumnuayvittaya Army Sponsor School to develop proactive professional networking strategies for increasing teacher engagement in private schools.

**Methodology:** Information was gathered from the school's administrator, principal, school board members, and teachers through narrative inquiry and in-depth interviews for this phenomenological study.

**Findings:** Proactive professional networking strategies were found to consist of (1) problem joint strategies, (2) teacher leader strategies, and (3) expertise strategies, all of which were found to increase teacher engagement in private schools. To better understand how to most effectively influence effective teacher engagement in the private school, each strategy was examined through a research and development approach within a school year.

**Novelty/Implications:** This research's discussed tactics were inspired by an apparent chasm between the school's administration and its faculty. The study's overarching goal was to shed light on how school board members, principals, and teachers at all levels perceive the school's progress toward successfully implementing a change in teachers' engagement.

*Key Words:* Proactive Professional Networking Strategy, Teacher Engagement, Private School

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### INTRODUCTION

Over the past seven decades, Kraiumnuayvittaya Army Sponsor School (KASS) has grown to become a private school with unique self-management throughout the army supported under the reform agenda of the Ministry of Education. The principal assumes the difficult role of change agent, while the army officers assume the role of policymakers and monitor the entire school management system as part of the army management team and school administrative team. Teacher morale was negatively impacted by the system's hierarchical structure. Modern businesses need to be able to communicate with employees who work in different locations, and the long-range command system facilitates this (Groysberg and Slind 2012; Yahya et al. 2015). According to Crumpton (2012), some companies still struggle to make the connections necessary to ensure that all of their employees feel supported and empathetically treated during times of change, despite having many channels to do so.

Extreme difficulty was a major issue for KASS in 2010. The decline in enrollment, estimated to be around 40%, has hurt Thailand's private schools' ability to compete internationally and domestically. Even though official statistics have consistently placed private schools at the top of quality rankings, many of them, especially those on the smaller or middle ground of the private school spectrum, are struggling to meet rising demand. The crisis-driven reform and development of the KASS management team resulted from teachers' collective realization that their school system must change to accommodate educational reform and sustain school improvement. As a result, the teacher engagement reform was declared to be of the utmost importance and implemented immediately. In addition, Groysberg and Slind (2012) talked about how stimulating dialogue between an organization's upper and lower levels can boost communication and output in ways that boost morale and productivity. Thus, the professional communication climate is the most important factor in reviving teachers' enthusiasm for their work. In

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the past, teachers have only sometimes been provided with the resources and training required to fully implement their role as school participants. It significantly affects education reform by exposing a difficult flaw in KASS. Students' results may also be significantly impacted by their level of self-efficacy and engagement (OECD 2014). According to school reports, students' performance has steadily declined over the past five years, and the blame lies with the school's management and the enthusiasm of its teachers. The new plan was developed by the board of education, which includes military officers, the school's principal, and teacher representatives. Therefore, the reform's focus on teachers effectively addresses the critical issue and propels the reform forward. According to Hallinger (2004), assumptions about organizational change in the Thai cultural context are reflected in the vision of strategic education reform.

For principals and educators, the most difficult barrier to overcome is the KASS reform phenomenon. Connecting to external resources, in particular, requires military approval. There is no denying that networking requires more work and dedication than the average academic institution. Perhaps a fresh viewpoint on management is emerging from this study for KASS, and it will prove to be a potent management tool for increasing teacher engagement and fostering holistic school improvement under army command.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was a qualitative research with the objective to create proactive professional networking strategies for enhancing teacher engagement in private school with case study of Kraiumpuayvittaya Army Sponsor School. The theoretical framework was analyzed and synthesized by 5 main concepts:

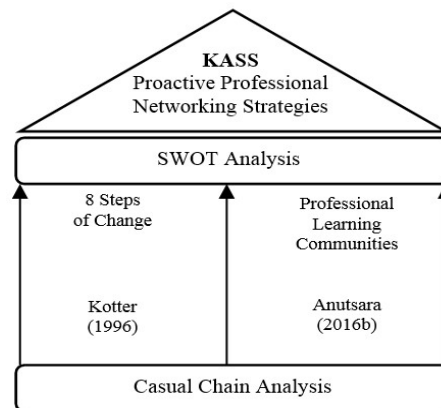


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

Causal Chain Analysis consists of 1) defining system boundaries; 2) collection and analysis of data; 3) identification and prioritization of problems; 4) determination of the impacts of each priority problem; and 5) analysis of root causes for each problem (IW:LEARN 2014).

8-Step Change Model consists of 1) create a sense of urgency; 2) create guiding team; 3) develop vision and strategy; 4) share the vision; 5) enable people to act; 6) create quick wins; 7) make more change; and 8) anchor change (Kotter 1996). Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) consist of 1) shared vision, value, and norm; 2) collective learning and collaboration; 3) focus on student learning; 4) professional reflective dialogue; and 5) managerial shared leadership (Suwanwong 2016a). Corporate Network refers to work-based education framework of Panyapiwat Institute of Management (PIM) which is divided into 3 groups of network; Higher Education Network, Private Sector Network, and International Network. This concept aims to create the academic network and corporation for supporting and empowering professional pedagogy development and reform (Manarungsan 2015; Sadik 2016).

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis refers to Wheelen and Hunger (2011)

including SWOT analysis and Town matrix.

## METHODOLOGY

The research gathered data through narrative inquiry designed to generate and identify the casual cause of school management crisis from teacher's perspective during a series of workshops on school change conducted with 40 teachers in 2016. The workshop employed a problem-based learning design (Bridges and Hallinger 1995) and casual chain analysis that engaged the principal in instructing a case study around a specific change being implemented at the KASS (Hallinger and Lee 2011). The workshop employed an iterative sequence of group dialogue and discussion to be conducted by the experts and scholars. There were three phases in the workshop which focused on identifying professional's problem and professional's need, analyzing teacher engagement and school management system as a proper context for change, and designing strategies.

The in-depth interviews were conducted by three school managers who were representative of army sponsor committee and five school board members which consisted of principal, vice-principals and teachers in discussion about the school SWOT analysis that significantly influenced teacher engagement and school development.

The proactive professional networking strategies for enhancing teacher engagement in private school was excelled and implemented in two phases during a school year in 2015, semester 1 and semester 2 by R&D approach. The observation was collaborated by army officers, principal and vice-principals, and school consultants who were educators and experts. The content analysis was used to analyze the data by triangulation technique and sorted into three strategies to create change in the school and to foster long-term teacher engagement effectiveness. The research method entails description and analysis of school contexts, constraints, teachers' behaviors and assumptions about teacher engagements.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results revealed proactive professional networking strategies for enhancing teacher engagement in private school case study of KASS which consisted of (1) problem joint strategy 2) teacher leader strategy and (3) expertise strategy. Each strategy was examined through research and development approach to reveal a deeper understanding of ways to most successfully influence the establishment of effective teacher engagement in the school.

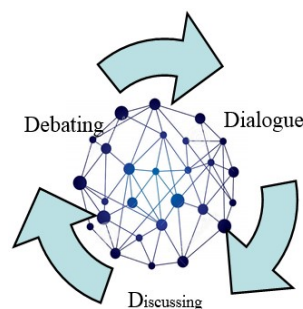


Figure 2. 3D cycle of SJS

The research revealed the code of three main collaborations to perform the common goal and to keep the problem solving through 3D Cycle of Solving Joint Strategy, represented in Figure 2. Based on the process, the strategy revealed that the new focus was being incorporated into KASS's current situation and problem from other perspectives. Teachers are required to participate in school management for accountability reason. Particularly, Teachers participated in dialogue, discussing and debating with school board members friendly and freely that made up their motivation positively. In the dialogue process, teachers learned and improved their seeking and using of information skill for contributing the advance dialogue. This activity benefitted teachers by raising professional

standards of teachers' performance who conducted themselves as good models for learners through the problem solving and dialogue. Meanwhile, the discussing and debating process raised their communication and negotiation skill. Crumpton (2012) resulted that having conversation with staff regarding organizational change and financial future influences proactive leadership with techniques related to delegation, negotiation, supervision and training or coaching.

In KASS, teachers were incorporated with the army officers and principal objective to have conversation for matters of the school problem and matters of change which reflected on the school initiatives. The school problem and change were determined properly by the information that they discovered. The school board members will learn to listen critically and to share leadership with teacher throughout the process. Davis and Davis (2003) argue that in this type of environment, the best strategy is to rely on heuristics, or unconscious mental shortcuts to quickly make decisions and move on. Although they go on to detail the tendencies of expert decision makers, Davis and Davis (2003) do not attend to how principals, in particular, will work through the administrative problems as opposed to merely making decisions about them. Hence, the problem join strategy is an essential way to improve the cognitive skill as well as critical problem solving skill. The research result showed that the solving joint strategy would benefit teachers by raising professional standards of teachers' performance and also raised their professional learning skill which was eligible in the modern society that the information flows rapidly. Giving teachers the opportunity to be included in telling the school's story can be a powerful tool in gaining acceptance to changes that need to be made. Moreover, this strategy would also bring trust, respect, honor and dignity in the school which was called "the community of trust". After a year of school environment changes, even as relief to professional development and teacher engagement begin to root as common value.

### **Teacher Leader Strategy**

With a view toward enabling teachers to improve their leadership in school consistent with professional standards, as well as to attain professional development, the distributing leadership is most important paradigm shift of managers and principal in KASS. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) recognized and recovered that leadership becomes critical and administrators and organization leaders must develop the skills necessary to lead results. Teacher leader strategy was developed to obtain their potential under the motto "Create Leaders and Create Connectors" which related to the standards of education administration's performance. This strategy purposes to motivate teachers to feel as a school partner which would affect the effective engagement of school reform. So, the teacher leader team was established properly as a first pilot project in the semester one of the school year and distributed to the whole school staff. They responded for initiating the school system in order to move on the improvement. While, principal encouraged leadership throughout the school by allowing teacher to join in the school board meeting and sharing the challenging ideas was required seriously by the teachers. They truly believed that shared leadership between the manager team-school board-teachers is necessarily needed as policy. It further proposes that effective change will be occurred when this strategy was acted.

Heifetz et al. (2009) recognize and reflect on new skills that leaders will need to guide their school into new opportunities. And the principal and teachers should be taking care of what is next as we pass from quality of education and student enrollment crisis. So teacher leader strategy will help strong leaders lead others and build improved school. The principal was to decentralize authority, engage scholar and local initiative in the management and delivery of empowered teachers (Kantamara, Hallinger, and Jatiket 2006). In addition, the school consultants have played major role in providing supervisory and co-coordinating so that the school board members and teachers shall be capable of developing the whole school system, including teacher engagement. Moreover, the school consultant and school board members are responsible for setting school performance standards. Team work is the important key performance indicator that represents multitask work under the KASS organizational structure in which teacher can meet and work with others, army officers and experts. This strategy engaged the army officers, principal, and teachers in leading school culture change.

### **Expertise Strategy**

The expertise strategy is one aspect of network that improved teacher engagement in the school significantly. Involving external experts who represent the higher education, business sector, or education consultant takes an essential role of the school improvement and professional development. In other words, it serves as meaningful tool to reduce the conflicts between the principal and teachers which is the regulation regarding the third National Education Act 2010 of Thailand which united the human resources to participate in educational management by applying the persons' experience, expertise, skill, and local wisdom to be useful for school development (Kanauan and Inprasitha 2014). Moreover, the expertise strategy is helpful for enhancing teachers' professional standards of performance which are based on Regulation of the Teachers Council of Thailand on Professional Standards and Ethics 2005 (Wisalaporn 2005).

Expertise is defined in different ways in the literature. For this research defined that the school networking is collaborated by two dimensions; internal and external collaboration. There are many kinds of teacher's professional development but the key success factor in professional learning school is cooperation and collaboration of teachers and experts who particularly were educators and scholars under the standards of teachers' performance in which teachers are required to constructively cooperate with others in their educational institution and in community. Meanwhile, the principal is required to disseminate the standards of knowledge and performance in public and community relations administration which constructively cooperate with the community and other agencies for seeking and using information for school development. In addition, the cooperation created opportunities for improving under all circumstances. The higher education or university has the important role to improve teacher performance and competencies. Expertise strategy also affected instructional leadership competency which is relevant to the research of Goldring et al. (2008) and problem solving in which school reforms insist that school principals be instructional leaders (Brenninkmeyer and Spillane 2004). Actually this strategy is linked with the problem joint strategy which would involve feedback of the impact of the internal and external participation in school management and the development of new policies as needed. Moreover, the new era of economy which concerns the development of knowledge and innovations required the cooperation and coordination in education management (Vesamavibool et al. 2015).

### **Discussion**

For readiness preparing for enhancing the private school competitiveness, the teacher engagement is required to participate increasingly in order to feedback the essential needs of professional performances and student demands. KASS needs to develop proactive professional networking strategy that further interconnects the environmental, social, and economic performance goals of the school. Using a concept analysis and integrative literature review approach, the research examined the evolving role of corporate management and evaluated strategic management tools for environmental compliance, environmental performance and corporate sustainability. The research reveals that the role of the KASS professionals will continue to evolve towards corporate sustainability management, where KASS professionals must shift the perception from "compliance cops" to "change agents". General trends in the literature are noted, including the importance of teachers self-efficacy, the need for collaboration, intrinsic rewards, teachers' autonomy, administrative support, and education policy.

The strategic analysis result that is commonly found in the scholarly literature revealed that teacher engagement is the main trap of effective school development and the weakest point of professional learning is lack of networking with external experts or educators. So the meaningful strategies were 1) problem joint strategy 2) teacher leader strategy and 3) expertise strategy. While, the data are limited to perceptions of KASS on a focal issue. In fact, there are new strategies emerging rapidly in other school contexts that might be different and various. So the teacher engagement should be improved under the specific context and to be relevant to the national standards. Moreover, proactive professional networking strategies for enhancing teacher engagement in private school with case study of KASS might not be suitable and fit for all school types so that it needs to be tested for applying and implementing efficiently.

## CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The strategies addressed in this study were grounded in perceptions of a gap between the school managers, principal and teachers. The research sought to shed light on progress towards the successful implementation of school change in teachers engagement as perceived by school board members, principal, and teachers at all levels. We conclude the report by summarizing the results and then discussing the implications with the external 100 Suwanwong / Proactive professional networking strategies networking such as experts and scholars. Skilful principal and managers can draw on the exercise of their teachers who build the momentum for further change. The study also explored a variety of phenomena that could be impacting the schools' effort to change positively. Moreover, the key success factors supporting phenomenon change of teacher's engagement were policy support, school-level leadership, cooperation, collaboration, and communication.

### Limitations and Future Research Directions

The results were implemented effectively in the KASS context, but we also wish to highlight the fact that while effective strategies have yet to reach and solve the critical problem, there has been progress in developing teachers capacities and competencies. Thus, this study must be extended in future, and scholars must investigate the teacher engagement strategies in different contexts.

### Acknowledgement

The finding of this study provides very practical qualitative element that expands existing research on improving teacher engagement strategy. The research suggests the mandate for rapid reform in the private school embraced by educational change and competition. This study identified the strategies for enhancing teacher's engagement in private school which has unique management system as Kraiumnuayvittaya Army Sponsor School. The teacher engagement has direct impact on the whole school system while it also has indirect impact on student's learning. Proactive professional networking strategy is seemingly challenging in Kraiumnuayvittaya Army Sponsor School as emerging new context of change. However, the strategies help that school to be more successful in the high competition nowadays.

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