Autonomous Management and Creation of School Branding of Thai Primary Schools

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Abstract: The study aimed to examine the need assessments of autonomous management and school branding of primary schools in Khon Kaen province, Thailand. This is followed by developing approaches to create school branding. Researchers employed a mixed mode method utilizing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data. A total of 554 respondents were involved in a survey at the initial stage. Based on the need assessment results, researchers continued with a focus group discussion with the five specialists to develop approaches of creation school branding for primary schools in Thailand. Researchers used a stratified random sampling technique for the initial stage and purposive sampling technique for the final stage. Results revealed that academic management is the most crucial management category of autonomous management to create school branding according to respondents' perceptions. In addition, need assessment result on creating brand image indicated that schools have to be well recognized by the communities in term of their academic excellence at an international level. Besides, any performances obtain international recognition will be the branding assets. On top of that, school graduates continue to further their education in famous institute is the most important factor to sustain the school brand's reputation as the key brand awareness. Finally, qualitative results of this study have successfully developed approaches for the headmaster to create their school branding.

Keywords: Autonomous Management, Primary School, School Branding.

INTRODUCTION

[1] Defined autonomous management style as a management system which focuses on trust and professionalism in which teachers and work teams are given the authority to manage their own workload instead of having work details controlled by their headmasters. [2] further emphasized that autonomous management can enhance productivity and permit innovation of teachers. An obvious benefit of this autonomous management style is that teachers who are experts have their full reign to exercise control of their work environment. However, a downside of this management style is that to hire professional and top-performing talent teachers to join the primary schools is critical [1].

According to [3], school-based management is an autonomous management style that commonly practiced at the school level by expanding teachers' participation and empowerment and school decision-making autonomy. [3] found that the autonomous management style has significant impacts on the teaching-learning process, including measures of teacher effort and the impact of autonomous management model on several educational outcomes that relating to the teaching-learning environment. Moreover, [3] suggested that teachers should be given higher pedagogical autonomy and support to direct them for pedagogical improvement thus attracting more skilled teachers through a better alignment of teachers' benefits and professional development opportunities.

School branding is considered as an effective way for a school to build its identities, create opportunities for academic improvement, and create a sense of pride for students, teachers, parents, and their communities [4]. Hence, the ultimate aim of school branding is to reinforce and remind the whole school community including the headmaster, teachers, students, and parents of their immediate and future goals. School branding is essential in Thai primary schools because current students are more

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diverse, and primary schools can no longer take demographic for granted. For the time being, primary schools in Thailand have to compete harder for government funding [5]. In other words, today's school branding goes a step further and identifies a school's unique competitive advantage. Therefore, schools are tackling the fact that the school branding is only effective if the entire school and leadership commit as one voice to the brand promise [6].

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was conceptualized that school management under the basic education paradigm is divided into four components namely academic management, budget management, personnel management, and general management in accordance with [5]. Therefore, researchers hypothesized that there are significant relationships between the four components of management and school branding. In particular, the independent variables include academic management, budget management, personnel management, and general management while the school branding acts as dependent variable consists of a brand image, brand assets, and brand awareness.

Academic management refers to the management of all kinds of activities relating to learning development and enhancing learning quality. Budget management is defined as the planning of budget, resources, as well as materials and assets. Personnel management means the planning of human resources, personnel development, position planning, recruiting and inauguration, human empowerment and development, and discipline observance and retirement. General management is operationalized as the school information technology, environment, student development, and school communications. On the other hand, school branding is defined as the school reputation and image [7]. The three components of school branding are a brand image, brand assets, and brand awareness. Brand image is defined as the trust, recognition, and respect that the public has for the schools. Brand assets consist of the perception of the brand, relation with the brand, and brand loyalty. Brand awareness refers to the awareness about the educational service and leadership.

[5] aimed to promote independent educational management based on the school-based regime, so-called as autonomous management. This autonomous management style is considered as effective for the flowing of the school's work while being capable of creating intellectually developed humans who have good knowledge and morals, making them able to live happily with others. The proposed conceptual framework is adapted from the [5] as shown in Figure 1 below.
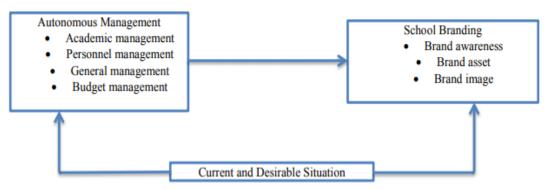

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The research designed to examine the need assessments of autonomous management in terms of the four components namely academic management, budget management, personnel management, and general management. This is followed by examining the need assessment of the school branding creation at primary schools, Khon Kaen province, Thailand. Finally, researchers suggested the approaches necessitate for creating school branding among the primary schools in Thailand.

METHODOLOGY

Researchers employed a mixed mode design to gather the quantitative and qualitative data utilizing stratified random sampling. It is referred to as a combination of different modes of collecting data for a single study. Researchers started to collect quantitative data followed by a collection of qualitative data to reach the sequential explanatory of the collected data. Stratified random sampling involves the division of

a population into smaller groups known as strata. In this study, the strata were formed based on schools under the administration of five educational service areas as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Population and Sample Distribution

Bil	Primary Educational Service Area Office	Population	Samples
	Distribution		
1.	Area 1	163	45
2.	Area 2	200	58
3.	Area 3	186	51
4.	Area 4	177	49
5.	Area 5	260	72
	Total	986	275

Researchers selected a headmaster and a teacher from each school, giving a total respondent as 550. However, researchers distributed 560 questionnaires to cater for the high non-response rate. The unit of analysis of this study was school using the questionnaire as an instrument at the initial phase. The initial phase of data collection was designed to investigate the need assessments of the variables. PNI modify calculation was used to measure the gap of need assessment between the current situation compared with the desired situation. The indication of the need assessment factors is based on the PNI value of at least .30, the need factors are more crucial when their number is higher than .30. The obtained data dictates the effective approaches needed for the development of an autonomous school as follow: PNI modified = (1-D)/D

Results of the initial phase were used to create an interview protocol related to components needed to implement autonomous management thus creating school branding in primary schools. At the final phase, researchers collected data with the five specialists using focus group discussion as a method of data collection. Qualitative data from the focus group discussion were analyzed using content analysis.

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in accordance with the study aims as stated above. There were 554 out of 560 distributed questionnaires to 275 primary schools in Khon Kaen province have been successfully collected with the assistance from vice headmasters of each study school, giving a response rate as 98.9 percent. These 554 respondents aged between 41 to 50 years old, most of them have more than 10 years of teaching experience, and 56.32 percent of them had their highest academic qualification as a master degree. The initial results are the need assessments about the two key variables namely autonomous management and school branding. The final results are presented based on the approaches suggested by the five specialists through the focus group discussion are performed.

Need Assessments for Autonomous Management Variable

Results of the need assessments for autonomous management showed that academic management is the key component of autonomous management to create school branding development. Table 2 portrays the details of each component of autonomous management ranking in order from the most needed to the least are as follows: academic management (PNI modified = 0.3119); general management (PNI modified = 0.2310); personnel management (PNI modified = 0.2176), and budget management (PNI modified = 0.2149).

Table 2: Overall Need Assessment Index of Autonomous Management

Autonomous Management Components	Need Assessment Index				PNI modified	Ranking
	Current conditions		Desirable conditions			
	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD		
Academic management	3.38	.454	4.43	.538	0.3119	1
General management	3.58	.476	4.41	.586	0.2310	2
Personnel management	3.62	.534	4.40	.635	0.2176	3
Budget management	3.63	.552	4.41	.637	0.2149	4

Each component of autonomous management was examined specifically. The greatest gap between the current condition and desirable condition in terms of academic management showed that headmasters have to collaborate with educational service area officers closely in order to develop systematic school supervision. Table 3 shows the first five greatest gaps between the current conditions and the desirable conditions for academic management.

Table 3: Overall Need Assessment Index of Academic Management

Academic Management	Need Assessment Index				PNI modified	Ranking
	Current conditions		Desirable conditions			
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Collaboration with educational service areas officers to develop systematic school supervision.	3.28	.663	4.47	.664	0.3658	1
Providing learning resources and integrating local scholars, parents, and community involvements.	3.38	.742	4.60	.547	0.3599	2
Developing internal coaching and supervision to promote instructional creativity.	3.26	.662	4.43	.698	0.3590	3
Providing academic and occupational guidance to students with teachers' participation.	3.35	.662	4.55	.635	0.3578	4
Analyzing curriculum to specify goals and missions based on the stakeholders' contributions.	3.30	.714	4.43	.636	0.3426	5

The next component of autonomous management was general management. The greatest gap between the current condition and desirable condition in general management indicated that headmasters have to form educational networks and continual training to the school personnel. Table 4 shows the top five greatest gaps between the current conditions and the desirable conditions for general management.

Table 4: Overall Need Assessment Index of General Management

General Management	Need Assessment Index				PNI modified	Ranking
	Current conditions		Desirable conditions			
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD		
Forming educational networks and continual training to school personnel.	3.47	.653	4.41	.716	0.2717	1
Encourage school personnel to conduct research and apply technology in their teaching.	3.54	.677	4.42	.711	0.2487	2
Surveying the needs of school management and providing support to the performances.	3.57	.607	4.45	.674	0.2477	3
Promoting and collaborating for the creation of formal, non-formal, and alternative education based on the school's capacity.	3.52	.694	4.38	.694	0.2449	4
Internal quality assurance planning based on the criteria and method given by Thailand State Audit.	3.60	.682	4.43	.678	0.2329	5

The following component of autonomous management to discuss was personnel management. Table 5 shows the top five greatest gaps between the current conditions and the desirable conditions for personnel management.

Table 5: Overall Need Assessment Index of Personnel Management

Personnel Management	Need Assessment Index				PNI modified	Ranking
	Current conditions		Desirable conditions			
	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD		
Recruiting and positioning of new teachers according to the approval of the provincial educational board.	3.58	.687	4.40	.752	0.2302	1
Being able to approve the teachers' resignation request.	3.62	.778	4.43	.770	0.2238	2
Taking prompt actions to appoint a working team to look into the sound accusation made to misconducted teachers.	3.63	.738	4.44	.712	0.2227	3
Promoting personnel development according to the needs.	3.58	.684	4.37	.709	0.2200	4
Requesting the successor of vacant positions based on the rules and regulations.	3.61	.770	4.39	.760	0.2155	5

The last component of autonomous management to discuss was budget management. Table 6 shows the top five greatest gaps between the current conditions and the desirable conditions for budget management.

Table 6: Overall Need Assessment Index of Budget Management

Budget Management	Need Assessment Index				PNI modified	Ranking
	Current conditions		Desirable conditions			
	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD		
Planning information technology budget, fundraising, educational resources, and students' scholarship effectively and reporting to the school board.	3.53	.686	4.42	.730	0.2499	1
Reporting school provision success factors, successful product indicators, budget planning, and school products to top management.	3.53	.685	4.35	.747	0.2314	2
Implementing finance and saving procedure according to the regulation of annual fiscal plan, scholarship, and grant expenditure plan.	3.65	.747	4.46	.675	0.2243	3
Systematic planning of information technology budget.	3.60	.674	4.38	.735	0.2172	4
Expenditure procedure is under observance of the regulations of the annual fiscal plan, student scholarship, and educational grants.	3.64	.708	4.40	.748	0.2081	5

Need Assessment for School Branding Variable

Results of the need assessments for school branding indicated that brand awareness component is the major component, followed by brand assets and brand image. Table 7 presents the sequence of school branding's components and ranking from most to least needed order.

Table 7: Overall Need Assessment Index of School Branding

School Branding Components	Need Assessment Index				PNI modified	Ranking
	Current conditions		Desirable conditions			
	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD		
Brand awareness	3.64	.516	4.51	.544	0.2407	1
Brand assets	3.76	.472	4.49	.556	0.1955	2
Brand image	3.77	.492	4.49	.585	0.1942	3

Each component of school branding was then being examined in detail. Table 8 shows the top five greatest gaps between the current conditions and the desirable conditions for brand awareness.

Table 8: Overall Need Assessment Index of Brand Awareness

Brand Awareness Components	Need Assessment Index				PNI modified	Ranking
	Current conditions		Desirable conditions			
	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD		
Encouraging school graduates to further their study in famous institutes.	3.59	.662	4.51	.668	0.2582	1
Providing informational service to communities.	3.59	.698	4.50	.643	0.2521	2
Obtaining standard status and well accepted by the communities.	3.65	.681	4.56	.614	0.2489	3
Providing facility services to the communities continuously.	3.61	.696	4.50	.643	0.2461	4
Having collective leadership and allowing teachers to lead and take equal chance of capacity development.	3.64	.635	4.52	.642	0.2402	5

The following component of school branding to discuss was brand assets. Table 9 shows the top five greatest gaps between the current conditions and the desirable conditions for brand assets.

Table 9: Overall Need Assessment Index of Brand Assets

Brand Assets Components	Need Assessment Index				PNI modified	Ranking
	Current conditions		Desirable conditions			
	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD		
Any performances of teachers, administrators, and students that obtaining international recognition.	3.65	.660	4.43	.688	0.2149	1
Any performances of teachers, administrators, and students that obtaining national recognition.	3.67	.682	4.43	.704	0.2088	2
High emphasis on hygiene and safety of the school environment.	3.78	.694	4.51	.665	0.1918	3
Curriculums are up-to-date and responsive to the needs of the service users.	3.74	.626	4.45	.669	0.1917	4
Maintaining a high level of relationship with the parents.	3.91	.690	4.63	.615	0.1848	5

The final component of school branding to discuss was the brand image. Table 10 shows the top five greatest gaps between the current conditions and the desirable conditions for brand image.

Table 10: Overall Need Assessment Index Of Brand Image

Brand Image Components	Need Assessment Index				PNI modified	Ranking
	Current conditions		Desirable conditions			
	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD		
School's academic excellence at the international level is well recognized by the communities.	3.63	.676	4.41	.701	0.2137	1
School's management profession is well recognized by the communities.	3.73	.677	4.47	.667	0.1975	2
Schools are well-accepted by the	3.82	.630	4.55	.635	0.1913	3

Brand Image Components	Need Assessment Index				PNI modified	Ranking
	Current conditions		Desirable conditions			
communities.						
Students, parents and the community trust the school.	3.81	.633	4.53	.664	0.1874	4
School's success in management and teaching profession is well known among the communities.	3.84	.588	4.54	.650	0.1820	5

Qualitative Results from Specialists' Discussion

Qualitative results are derived from the five specialists' opinions. The five specialists shared with researchers on how to practice autonomous management in terms of the four significant components namely academic management, budget management, personnel management, and general management associated with school branding. This is followed by debating the unique ways to respond to these challenges of autonomous management in order to successfully creating school branding. Once, they found the solutions for the school branding problems and proved that primary school headmasters can create some kinds of creative approach, researchers could accumulate them and consider as several approaches. The followings are the qualitative findings regarding the approaches needed for propelling a school toward autonomy as listed below:

• Academic management

The following factors are found to be significantly associated with academic management development in an order of the most to the least importance:

1. Effective school's internal guidance system that can generate a positive impact on educational change [8].

2. Positive learning atmosphere and integration of local curriculum and parental networks for the creation of a learning community [9].

3. Systematic internal supervision process development to ensure plurality in instructional methods.

4. Systematic academic and occupational guidance and their integration into the student support system.

5. Involvement of the school committee in the establishment of the schools' goals, mission, and moral requirements following an analysis of the national core curriculum.

6. Collaborative research and dissemination of the schools' academic performance.

7. Establishing and developing learning resources.

8.   Creating an educational guidance system based on the school to school and the school to educational service areas network.

9.   Investigating the community's academic support needs and providing relevant academic support.

•   Budget management

Results of specialists' discussion revealed that there is no significant requirement on any specific approaches related to budget management. This is because the current budget management in the study schools has been strictly exercised to comply with the monetary regulations. It is notable that the PNI modified value was less than 0.3 while the needs for budget management in the following three approaches were relatively high. For example,

1.   The creation of an information technology system and fundraising plan for the students;

2.   The creation of an information technology system about budget expenditure plan and the reporting of the plan to the school committee and educational service areas, and

3.   The implementation of money storage, money expenditure, and the money monitoring system based on the annual operation plan.

•   Personnel management

Results revealed that the schools need to carry out the following approaches for personnel management as follows:

1.   The school implementation for allocating new education positions within the school after obtaining an attorney status quo under the authorization of the provincial education office;

2.   The right to provide approval to the resignation of teachers and educational personnel, and

3.   A power to form an investigating group of a committee for the trial of a comprehensive dispute that is raised between educational personnel.

Moreover, results indicated the importance of primary school headmasters and the officers at the educational service area level to have assessment literacy [10].

•   General management

It was found important for the schools to have effective networking that fosters the continuity of personnel development. The schools need to encourage personnel to conduct research and apply proper technology into their routine work. The schools need to survey the needs particularly in the four components namely, academic management, personnel management, budget management, and general management.

•   School branding

In addition, results revealed that primary school headmasters are advised to integrate the following approaches in order to create their school branding as follows:

1.   Becoming academically outstanding school that is well accepted by the community;

2.   Having outstanding instructional methods that are more internationalized;

3.   The school's personnel possess high academic proficiency and are more internationalized, and

4.   Being successful in fostering the students to pursue higher education in outstanding schools or institutions.

DISCUSSION

The major aim of this study was to examine the need assessments on autonomous management components, namely academic management, budget management, personnel management, and general management toward the creation of school branding for basic primary school organizations. The quantitative results revealed that academic management was found to have the greatest gap between the current conditions and desirable conditions. This is followed by general management and personnel management. The least gap has appeared at budget management. This implies that primary school headmasters have to pay more attention and priorities to academic management and play their major role to create school branding. Budget management seemed to be the least capacity among the four components of autonomous management partly because they are provided with many existing expenditure procedures and monetary regulations. Nevertheless, headmasters are found to have important responsibilities and should lead their teachers in creating school branding.

Qualitative results imply that primary school headmasters should collaborate closely with the educational service areas officers in order to help in establishing autonomy with school-based management. The school development project should be well designed with a clear statement of rationale, objectives, process, and indicators. This result is in accordance with [3] and

[9]. There should be a development of an assessment system which makes it necessary for the primary school headmasters to have assessment leadership. The results from the assessment should be used for future development of teaching. It is important to exploit different assessment techniques to be responsive to different school localities as mentioned by [8]. There should be a supervisory to monitor the instructional development so as to create a school image. This result is supported by

[4]. According to [4], school branding is an effective way for a school to build its identities, create opportunities for academic improvement, and create a sense of pride by the communities. Moreover, a clear specification of the structure and roles of the school board and how to develop the members of the board should be included in the school administrative guidelines.

On this line of reasoning, researchers would like to suggest to Thailand Ministry of Education to conduct training which incorporating the four components of autonomous management, namely academic management, budget management, personnel management, and general management to encourage primary school headmasters particularly and school administrators in general to create school branding. Our results suggest that human resource department at the Ministry of Education needs to recruit school administrators who have potential to be independent in managing the four components as a means to facilitate school branding issues of primary schools in Thailand. Other practical consideration may involve the facilitation of an increasing understanding and appreciation of research evidence to help basic primary school headmaster on how to create school branding as the fact that school branding is only effective if the entire school and leadership committed to the brand promise [6].

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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