

A DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP ROLES OF ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract: This research was focused on developing strategies for enhancing the roles of English newspapers. The researcher determined the roles of English newspapers from documentary research, questionnaire and focus groups. The results were synthesized to develop strategies for enhancing the roles of English newspapers in sharing educational leadership knowledge. The expected roles of newspapers were categorized into ten groups. The results were ranked as following: 1. to inform people about political, economic and social conditions, 2. to provide useful and helpful information for people's everyday lives, 3. to provide people with information on the ultimate meaning and significance of events, 4. to transmit values and social norms to the public, 5. to create awareness and educate people about various aspects of both material and social innovation, 6. to create awareness among people about the significance of ongoing and lifelong learning, 7. to create linkage in joining different elements of society, 8. to motivate and inspire people on favorable aspects, 9. to entertain audiences with entertainment news and stories, 10. to communicate and influence people to accept or adopt certain messages or ideas. From the analysis of English newspapers' content, it was found that most of the content concerned fostering the learning and teaching followed by the content promoting the knowledge in community, providing knowledge on performance improvement for working people, instilling moral & value and presenting research findings and theories, respectively. The opinions of newspaper readers towards the current content of English newspapers showed that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The three areas of content considered knowledgeable were on effective methods and strategies in terms of problem solving, ethical and critical reasoning for performance improvement, providing knowledge of successful management and career accomplishments, and providing guidance, success criteria and effective strategies for personal development and self-enrichment. Another three interesting areas were the features on how to learn and share knowledge among people in a society, sharing knowledge and methods to improve teaching and learning and supporting and encouraging the concepts of building up a learning society. The proposed strategies for newspapers to improve their content in order to achieve the roles of educational leaders were as follows: 1. newspapers should develop themselves from within by strengthening their strong positioning and get their editorial and sales & marketing teams must work closer and share ideas openly among themselves; 2. adding a new section for providing content based on knowledge base in educational leadership

was believed to be a crucial value added for the newspapers. Yet the style of presenting the knowledge content must be practical and creative in order to draw attention from a new group of younger readers; 3. Inviting readers to engage in developing and sharing content. Engaging audience could be both on-line and print media in order to facilitate readers to participate easily and freely; 4. Collaboration among all possible parties involved: media firms, educational institutions, private sectors, government, and the community, should be developed so as to be an active part in building up learning and knowledge sharing community.

Introduction

Throughout the year 2006, Shafer (2006) stated that there was speculation that "newspapers are dying" until the World Association of Newspapers (2006) had to step forward and dissented that "the demise of the newspaper has been greatly exaggerated" (p. 9) but suggested newspaper publishers developed new strategies to survive. The re-development of newspaper content was one of them.

Tracing back the emergence of newspapers shed some light on what roles newspapers should perform. Newspaper is regarded as a pre-eminent branch of the mass media the main function of which is mass communication comprising six roles: informing, educating, communicating, motivating, entertaining, and creating discontent through the forms of printing and broadcasting (Kumar, 1998). Gilbert (1952, as cited in Dominick, 2007) stated that the communication of mass media and how well they function affect each and everyone in a society. Dominick (2007) added that mass communication, encompassing all types of the media including newspapers, television, and radio, has assumed significant roles of inspectors (surveillance), interpreters, linkage creators, values transmitters and entertainment providers.

Kumar (1998) stated that mass media also played a social role as it has power to reinforce and transmit values to people in society. Therefore, the use of mass media becomes a tool not only "for cultural transmission but also for cultural change" (p. 160). He also believed that mass media are considered social learning agents, who enable the public to achieve common understandings and hold certain values. Lazarsfeld and Merton (1960) coined the term "status conferral" to define additional function of mass media. From a vast number of studies that Kumar (1998) synthesized, it can be concluded that social learning occurs from the informal use of mass media. Primary role in educational experience is the use of the printed media, for the printed world retains the main aid to the teaching-learning process. The printed word provides a permanent record which may be consulted over and over again. Its use can be highly

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individualized according to the needs of an individual reader. (Kumar, 1998, p. 170) The mentioned printed media generally refer to “newspapers.”

Stensland (1954, as cited in Dominick, 2007) believed that the use of newspapers, or “the living textbook,” which is considered the only available and easily accessible textbooks from which people could acquire education everyday but yet often neglected in formal education. Rucher (1968) supported that newspapers are a medium that helps educate people in a society in all various aspects necessary to their livings. Bond (1955, as cited in Dominick, 2007) also strongly believed that newspapers acted as a university for the public from where they could obtain education in all subjects covering history, politics, science, business, economics, psychology, physical education, biographies of important individuals and diplomatic relations with other countries. Based on the research findings of Pollagun (1974, as cited in Kulsiri, 1985), the major roles of newspapers are to enlighten people and provide significant information boosting their intellect.

Apart from the roles of informing, communicating, motivating, entertaining, and creating discontent, nonetheless, the role in educating has been an idealistic value that newspapers probably underplay. Referring to the research findings on the roles of daily newspapers in Thailand contributing towards education, to begin with, Thongsavet (1975) found out that there were not enough educational content while there were too much social, entertainment and criminal news. The researcher put forth the active cooperation between Ministry of Education and mass communication institutions in Thailand to join forces in improving and developing the role of newspapers in national education. Some of the readers believed newspapers did not perform their duty well enough in terms of social responsibility (Ninnathanon, 1984) and did not place an importance to educational news that much (Suwanachaisak, 2002).

Siebert & Schramm (1971) stated that newspapers were established by people in a society with an ambitious intention to respond to the public’s needs and serve them useful food for thoughts, so-called knowledge. It is believed that education through newspapers is more effective than formal education, which is too inflexible and hard to adapt to changing environment (Suwanachaisak, 2002). This could be supported by the study of Suwannasorn (1972, as cited in Suwanachaisak, 2002) concluding that out of all the media newspaper is a most effective and useful medium for education. Pertaining to the Thai National Education Act of B.E. 2542 (1999), it defines the term “education” as following: “Education means the learning process of personal and social development through imparting of knowledge; practice; training; transmission of culture; enhancement of academic progress; building a body of knowledge by creating a learning environment and learning society and the availability of factors conducive to continuous lifelong learning.”

Capabilities development of people requires lifelong learning and ongoing acquisition of education (UNESCO, 2008; World Bank, 2002). Education should not be obtained only through formal academic system but rather exploitation of indirect, non-formal or informal educational instruments to enhance the overall knowledge of people in a society for living desirable lives.

As we are approaching knowledge economy (Allee, 2003) newspapers rather than being information providers that seem to considerably weight down readers with information overload, it is well-timed to fine-tune their content directions and bring them into line with the educating role. Taking the lead in promoting a lofty role for newspapers as educational leadership knowledge sharers could create a significant paradigm shift in the development of both the mass media and education. Therefore, newspapers as “living textbooks” are crucial instruments to develop visions mobilizing a society for a better change and that is how Bennis and Nanus (1985) defined the function of leadership. Should newspapers step forward and enhance their roles as educational leadership knowledge sharers, it will affect greatly to educational development. Taking such roles is regarded as new future educational leadership for they have ability to share knowledge, enable ongoing learning, develop an environment that supports and guides thinking, intellect, emotional well-being, trust, and responsibility (Owen, Hodgson & Gazzard, 2004). Referring to the knowledge base in educational leadership of Fulmer, C. and Muth, Rodney (2004), it covered five crucial areas of knowledge sharing in society, which are 1. Discipline-based knowledge (encouraging more development of theories and conducting useful research in educational institutions), 2. Morals and values (generation of knowledge for and in practice of good morals and values in schools and society), 3 building knowledge in community (promote learning communities, encourage collaboration among responsible parties – composed of administrators, teachers, parents, and community members, for knowledge generation and sharing), 4. accomplishments as a reframing concept concerning performance improvement and 5. accomplishments as a reframing concept concerning fostering learning and teaching.

As aforementioned grounds, this research was focused on developing a strategic plan for enhancing the roles of English newspapers in accordance with the five perspectives of knowledge base in educational leadership under the context of informal education for readers.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the roles of newspapers in sharing educational leadership knowledge
2. To explore the extent of which English newspapers provide educational leadership knowledge in their current content
3. To develop strategies to enhance educational leadership roles of English newspapers

Scope & Significance of the Study

The research reviewed a number of documents through textbooks, journals, reports, research and newspapers, which concerns roles of newspaper in educational knowledge sharing. The sources were mainly available in the libraries of Assumption University including its online databases and of Chulalongkorn University located only in Bangkok. The subjects of this study were English newspaper readers as well as a group of editors and sales & marketing management teams of newspapers, who were available to attend focus group sessions. Experts for content validity and for strategies verification are experts with extensive knowledge and working experience in journalism, newspaper business development, educational research and educational leadership.

This research intended, first of all, to provoke newspaper publishers into pondering over enhancing their roles as educational leadership knowledge sharers. It was also aimed to delineate the roles of English newspapers in providing people in a society with educational leadership knowledge and they needed to adapt themselves to be “living textbooks,” which will be of great significant source for greater intellect of people in a society. In addition, this research aimed to raise the awareness of how crucial newspapers have to combat complacency and to create urgency of enhancing their roles, as additional values, for their future survival. The role of educational leadership knowledge sharing would help create a favorable paradigm in both educational development in a society and particularly newspaper itself. The newspaper readers would benefit to quite an extent if English newspapers enhanced their roles in sharing educational knowledge useful for their personal and career development. Therefore, a development of strategies for newspapers would be a useful means to enhance their leadership roles in knowledge sharing effectively.

Research Design and Methodology

The researcher determined the expected and current roles of English newspapers in sharing educational leadership knowledge. The expected roles of newspapers were ascertained from textbooks, related research and journals available in the libraries and online databases. For the current roles and functions of English newspapers, the researcher extracted from the content in English newspapers through semantical content analysis. The results were synthesized to develop strategies for enhancing the roles of English newspapers in sharing educational leadership knowledge.

This research was conducted based on descriptive research method. The researcher used content analysis approach to synthesize the expected and current roles of English newspapers in sharing educational leadership knowledge. Newspaper content was analyzed to examine to what extent the English newspaper provided content based on knowledge base of educational leadership. The major sources of data were from textbooks, journals, research and content in English newspapers. Questionnaire

was used to probe into the opinions of English newspaper readers towards the roles of newspapers including strategies proposed that newspapers could apply to enhance their roles as educational leadership knowledge sharers. There were two parts. Part I was questions encompassing opinions towards expected, current and desirable roles of English newspapers in sharing educational leadership knowledge. Part II was the profile of respondents. Focus Group was used to probe into opinions from editors and sales & marketing team with regard to the current roles of English newspapers in sharing educational knowledge. They were asked to provide inputs on how to enhance their roles in sharing educational leadership knowledge and to determine effective strategies to achieve such role.

In order to ensure the quality of instrument, content of a questionnaire was validated by experts before it was distributed to the samples. The researcher approached three experts who had extensive experience in the field of educational research and graduated in Ph.D. level. A pilot testing was conducted in order to ensure reliability of a questionnaire. Five per cent of the samples, approximately twenty graduate students, were enquired to fill in a questionnaire. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to estimate internal consistency.

The population of this research comprised four groups as follows: The researcher reviewed documents about roles of newspaper in educational leadership knowledge sharing through textbooks, and related research within a limited of time from 50 textbooks and 6 researches. English newspaper readers were asked to complete a questionnaire. The researcher sought inputs from these five groups of English newspapers readers through questionnaire.

The researcher distributed 1,000 sets of questionnaire to educational institutions, international schools, public and private organizations and they were 650 sets returned. Some of them were incomplete; so, 568 sets were used in data analysis. In holding sessions of focus group, the researcher divided the sessions into two groups: editors and sales & marketing. The data in questionnaires were keyed in and coded by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for window. The data from focus group were analyzed further for a development of strategies.

Findings of the research

The expected roles of newspapers that the researcher found from the content analysis of various sources were categorized into ten groups. These roles were used in the questionnaire to probe into what roles the readers considered expected it to be the most important role. The results were ranked as following: 1. to inform people about political, economic and social conditions, 2. to provide useful and helpful information for people's everyday lives, 3. to provide people with information on the ultimate meaning and significance of events, 4. to transmit values and social norms to the public, 5. to create

awareness and educate people about various aspects of both material and social innovation, 6. to create awareness among people about the significance of ongoing and lifelong learning, 7. to create linkage in joining different elements of society, 8. to motivate and inspire people on favorable aspects, 9. to entertain audiences with entertainment news and stories, 10. to communicate and influence people to accept or adopt certain messages or ideas.

The analysis of English newspapers' current content from September 2008 to March 2009 found out that only 1.07% concerned educational knowledge. Most of the content concerned fostering the learning and teaching followed by the content promoting the knowledge in community, providing knowledge on performance improvement for working people, instilling moral & value and presenting research findings and theories, respectively. The opinions of newspaper readers towards the current content of English newspapers according to the knowledge base in educational leadership showed that the readers showed that the newspapers paper could perform at an average level. They were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the current content in terms of knowledge base in educational leadership.

The readers were asked to suggest the newspapers to improve their content in order to better provide knowledge base in educational leadership. The first three areas of content that the readers believed knowledgeable were on effective methods and strategies in terms of problem solving, ethical and critical reasoning for performance improvement, providing knowledge of successful management and career accomplishments, and providing guidance, success criteria and effective strategies for personal development and self-enrichment. Another three interesting areas were the features on how to learn and share knowledge among people in a society, sharing knowledge and methods to improve teaching and learning and supporting and encouraging the concepts of building up a learning society.

In order to achieve the suggested roles for English newspapers, the readers believed that the newspapers should call for support from the Ministry of Education to encourage the use of English newspapers as educational medium for learners. Besides, teachers should also learn how to make use of newspapers in fostering teaching and learning. Yet English teachers should be trained of how to use English newspapers in classrooms effectively. The learners themselves also needed to be instilled with the values of reading English newspapers for further their education, career advancement and self enhancement.

For the results obtained from focus groups of editors and sales & marketing people, it reflected that there were four main phrases they should do. Firstly, developing from within, the newspapers should strengthen their strong points in order to maintain their current readers. Both editorial and sales & marketing teams must work closer and share ideas openly among themselves. Secondly, adding a new section for providing content based on knowledge base

in educational leadership was believed to be a crucial value added for the newspapers. Yet the style of presenting the knowledge content must be practical and creative in order to draw attention from a new group of younger readers. Thirdly, inviting readers to engage in developing content could be key to help editors to gain insights and better understand the needs of readers. Engaging audience could be not both on-line and print media in order to facilitate readers to participate easily and freely. Fourthly, collaboration among all possible parties involved: media firms, educational institutions, private sectors, government, and the community, should be developed so as to build up learning and knowledge sharing community.

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