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Academic administration network in Military Nursing Colleges

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were to investigate an academic administration network in Military Nursing Colleges namely, the Royal Thai Navy College of Nursing, the Royal Thai Army Nursing College, and the Royal Thai Air Force Nursing College. This research consisted of five steps process 1) the study of pattern, conditions and challenges related to the academic administration in each college 2) the study on the academic administration conducted at Boromarajonani College of Nursing under Praboromarajchanok Institute of Health Workforce Development, Ministry of Public Health where the academic administrative network has been applied effectively and successfully, 3) a study of the effective patterns of academic administrative network conducted at the Military Nursing Colleges , 4) A Focus Group Discussion to test the patterns, and 5) A modification and improvement as suggested by experts. Mixed methods which involved questionnaires, interviews, and observations were used to collect the data. Percentage, Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation and Content Analysis were used in analyzing the data. The research findings were as follows: 1) Military Nursing Colleges had not been implemented the academic administration network fully and effectively. 2) the results reveal that an effective and suitable pattern of academic administration network were a clear policy, an agreement and a mutual understanding between the executives and staff on the objectives and implementation of the network and the academic administration, 3) sufficient supports in terms of budget, information technology and together with the activities continuously conducted to strengthen the network.

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1. Introduction

The rapid changes of the world today are the results of the information technology advancement. The new competition reflecting the academic advances leads to an enormous number of the organization's workload. The needs of the organization adjustment hence are inevitable in order to be able to mobilize and employ the necessary managerial resources into organization. Therefore, networking has become an important aspect of working as seen in Joint United Nation Program on HIV/DIDS or UNAIDS of which network spreads around the world and headquarters is located in Geneva. Some examples of systematic networking in Thailand are Asia Harm Reduction Network and Uni Net (University Network).

The Royal Thai Armed Forces is a non-profit military organization aiming at maintaining stability and security of the country as a primary mission. The military also provides various professional education to support the forces' development. In terms of nursing study, there are the Royal Thai Army Nursing College, the Royal Thai Navy College of Nursing, and the Royal Thai Air Force Nursing College responsible for educating and producing professional nurses to the forces. Since the beginning, though the colleges share the same nursing education principles, they have operated separately producing nurses specializing in the fields needed for each force. Therefore, in the current age of constant change which constrains the use of limited resources, to be able to maintain the quality of the nursing graduates and effectiveness of nursing services, there is hence a strong need for networking implementation especially in academic administration of similar jobs and subjects. The so-called academic administration network has not been implemented before in nursing colleges under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Defense. The closest one was exchanging of nursing instructors between forces which will occur at times but it still cannot be defined as networking. From the mentioned significance and necessity, the researchers are interested in studying the academic administration network of the Military Nursing College in order to gain knowledge that can be further applied to educational management.

2. Research Objective

To study the academic administration network of the Military Nursing College namely, the Royal Thai Army Nursing College, the Royal Thai Navy College of Nursing, and the Royal Thai Air Force Nursing College.

3. Methods

3.1. The Sample

The samples were 123 executives, nursing instructors, and educational staff from the Royal Thai Army Nursing College, the Royal Thai Navy College of Nursing, and the Royal Thai Air Force Nursing College randomly selected by using Stratified Random Sampling and Simple Random Sampling which 49 samples were from Royal Thai Army Nursing College, 38 from Royal Thai Navy College of Nursing and 36 from Royal Thai Air Force Nursing College.

3.2. The research process consisted of five steps:

Step 1 a study of conditions and challenges of academic administration in each college under the Ministry of Defense

Step 2 a study on the academic administration conducted at Boromarajonani College of Nursing under Praboromarajchanok Institute of Health Workforce Development, Ministry of Public Health where the academic administration network has been applied effectively and successfully

Step 3 a study on the effective patterns of academic administration network conducted at the Military Nursing College

Step 4 a Focus Group Discussion to test the patterns

Step 5 a modification and improvement as suggested by experts.

3.3. Research Instruments

3.3.1. Quantitative data collection was done by using the questionnaire designed by the researchers aiming at collecting information related to opinions on the problem condition, needs to change the pattern of academic administration, and professional networking.

3.3.2. Qualitative data collection was done by using the observation form designed by the researchers based on concept of Kast and Rosenzweig (1985) which consisted of 5 subsets which were a subset of aim, a subset of technology, a subset of social psychology, a subset of structure and a subset of administration and management. The tool was designed aiming at investigating the problem conditions of academic administration in each college under the Ministry of Defense. The data collection was conducted in 6 months which was given to each college for 2 months.

3.4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using package program to find Frequency and Percentage. The content analysis was conducted for data which were open-ended questions.

The quantitative data was analyzed using Methodological Triangulation followed by content analysis.

4. Conceptual Framework

The study was based on the concepts of academic administration presented by Campbell (1983: 122-128) which could be classified into 5 aspects: 1) course related services, 2) teaching and learning management, 3) teaching and learning aid services, 4) supervision of teaching and 5) evaluation and assessment services. The study was also based on the concept of networking presented by Wayne E. Baker (1994: 59) which were composed of 1) aims, 2) leader and member, 3) resources, budget and materials, 4) connections using activities, information technology and knowledge exchange arenas, and 5) network administration and management.

5. Research Results

Basic Data of the Sample Group

The majority of the respondents were female (97.4%) and the age of most of them ranged from 31-40 years old (39.7%). The respondents' highest education level was at Master's Degree (81.0%). Most of them had the working period more than 20 years (31.0%), had been in the current position for 2-5 years (31.9%) and were the nursing instructors (68.1%).

In terms of academic administration, it was found that the coverage of teaching and learning management was the highest (99.1%) and followed by the course administration (94.8%). The success evaluation of academic administration was conducted mostly by investigating the students' achievement (92.2%). Technology (computer, software and so on) was the top instrument applied to assist in academic administration (62.9%) and every organization was equipped mostly with facility for academic administration in terms of teaching and learning management (87.9%).

Studying the problem conditions and needs to change the academic administration based on concept presented by Kast and Rosenzweig, 1985, and analyzing of the specific and overall data gained from field study, it was found that all three nursing colleges under the Ministry of Defense shared the same objectives in producing the qualified professional nurses. The colleges had executives and nursing instructors who loved and dedicated themselves for the organizations. They all had resources, materials and budgets to freely administer and manage under the government's regulations. They also had built connections using activities, information technology and knowledge exchange arenas. All three colleges had independent internal administration and management.

From the overall analysis, it was found that the three nursing colleges under the Ministry of Defense had not seriously joined to construct the connection in terms of academic administration; they did not share the resources

and there was no collaborative administration and management. Even though at times there were knowledge exchange arenas among the colleges, there was no serious discussion and the executives were lack of opportunity to conduct activities which were focus-based and promoted collaborative academic administration.

6. Discussion

From the findings, it was found that in terms of problem conditions and needs to change the academic administration at the nursing colleges under the Ministry of Defense, the colleges had shared similar circumstances, background, policy, aims and objectives in producing professional nurses, academic administration, and responsibilities which corresponded to the concept presented by Edward and Gary (2002). It was stated that a good academic administration must comprise of course administration, teaching and learning management, management of audio-visual equipment, supervision of teaching, and assessment and evaluation. In the light of course administration, all nursing college provided the Bachelor's Degree in Nursing that complied with the country's educational policy and need of nurses in the market. According to the standards of Thailand Nursing and Midwifery Council, the course was required to be reviewed in every 5 years to ensure the relevance and validity of the content in respond to the constant changing of environment. Focusing on teaching and learning management, the three nursing colleges managed the teaching and learning plan in accordance with the course structure which promoted appropriateness and relevance of the subjects. In managing the course provided in the nursing colleges, the essence of the subjects and the students were taken into consideration. As it was a student-based learning, the students' interest and ability would be observed. All three colleges had personnel responsible for planning the course to guarantee the variety of subjects; the instructors employed for teaching in each nursing colleges were qualified and was the expert in particular fields taught at the colleges. In terms of the management of audio-visual equipment, the nursing colleges developed appropriate teaching and leaning media for both theoretical and practical classes. All of them had qualified personnel and spaces to maintain the equipment. The colleges encouraged and supported the use of teaching media to maximize the teaching ability by providing the training for developing knowledge and skills in using and maintaining the equipment.

In the light of assessment and evaluation, it was found that the three nursing colleges had the same subject system with similar evaluation conduct which were criterion-referenced and norm-referenced. Qualified and experienced nursing instructors at the three colleges were assigned to be part of the assessment and evaluation committee within each college which complied with many theories. However, problems arose when some colleges had insufficient number of qualified and experienced personnel and their assessment and evaluation tools were not yet effective. In terms of the executives and instructors, the three nursing colleges had the leaders and nursing instructors who had visions, accepted changes, possessed relevant knowledge and ability, gained experiences, devoted and sacrificed for the organization. Focusing on organization's structure, it was the key component assisting in promoting collaboration as all three nursing colleges shared the similar government's organizational structure and had clear chain of command which led to the discipline imposition in subordinates and eased the changes enforcing by the superiors.

Studying the academic administration conducted at Boromarajonani College of Nursing under Praboromarajchanok Institute of Health Workforce Development, Ministry of Public Health where the academic administration network has been applied effectively and successfully, it was found that the key factor led to the success was sharing of the resources which eventually created the maximum effectiveness which in here was the country's largest number of nursing graduates who successfully passed the nursing and midwifery license examination and the college was also granted a 5-year quality assurance from Thailand Nursing and Midwifery Council. The key success factor was the policy from the highest level of executives who had visions, leadership, clear objectives and appropriate and sufficient amount of budget to systematically manage the established network.

For academic administration, the important and unavoidable factors were as following.

1. **Leader with visions** who have clear policy in promoting and supporting the networking and have members who understand how networking works. Even though the three nursing colleges are all under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Defense, there is no networking system yet. When the members have clear understanding of the network and a clear policy from the leaders has been provided, the networking will be easily successful. This is due to the facts that the three colleges have strong disciplinary system; the

members always eager to follow the superiors' order and the seniority system that has long become the culture of the organizations.

2. **Shared objectives of networking** are of paramount importance in identifying the working directions by establishing the expected outcomes together with developing of teamwork using the shared goal approach.
3. **Information technology, budget and resources** are required for members to be able to implement the networking method. The members need to be equipped with skills to retrieve information from the information technology and communication and to be able to exchange the experiences with other members via effective networking system such as World Wide Web, the organization's intranet, electronic mails, and weblog. The ample and appropriate amount of budget and up-to-date materials was another requirement for a successful network.
4. **Network activities** are for stimulating groups of people by assigning activities for the groups. The academic administration networking hence needs assigning a variety of activities to the groups.
5. **Network Administration and Management** was a key principle for success in networking. The relationship and collaboration between institutes are needed to organized with the focus on mutual understanding of individual behaviors and administration process together with the continuous activities to maintain the good relation between the colleges. The most important point is that each of the college needs to be aware of its own and other colleges' weaknesses and strengths.

7. Recommendation

Recommendations in terms of policy

1. The executives should have clear and applicable policy and plan of academic administration network.
2. There should be a campaign to promote and motivate the nursing instructors and related staff to be aware of and have knowledge and understanding on networking.
3. The executives have to take a lead to persuade the members to willingly participate in the networking according to their role and responsibilities.
4. The follow-up and evaluation of the networking needs to be seriously and continuously done.

Recommendation in terms of practices

1. There should be a clear assignment of personnel responsible for providing knowledge support on networking to ensure the effective operation.
2. Thoroughly publishing of the networking information together with the campaign raising the awareness, knowledge, and understanding of members is required.
3. A development of instructional manual should be conducted to form the framework of the networking.

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