

Current Status of Access to Information on Health and Education Services of the Population (A Case Study of Yen Dung District, Bac Giang Province)

Pham Vo Quynh Hanh

MA., Academy of Journalism and Communication

Email: hanhhvbc@gmail.com

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Abstract: *Since the renovation process in the direction of industrialization modernization, our country after more than 30 years has achieved great achievements in all aspects. Social security is always paid attention, the quality life of people is improved... The State is always active in ensuring the provision of basic social services for people including health services and educational services. These are two of the basic social services that the Party and the state devote much attention to in order to ensure that people have a fuller, happier and social balance. So people want to get the most out of health and education, they need to first have access to information about those services. This article describes the current status of access to information on health and education services of the population through empirical research in terms of: content, frequency of access to information; channel access to information and purpose access to information.*

Keywords: Information, Access to information, Health services, Education services

1. Introduction

Nowadays, as society develops, the important role of information is increasingly aware of. Information has become a necessity in almost every activity of social life. In society, those who hold information will take advantage over those who don't. Information has eventually become an exceptionally significant asset of mankind. Only when

people are able to access to information in a full, accurate and timely manner, can they acquire sufficient knowledge to exercise their rights. Under the epoch of changing integration, the right to information access in all aspects of life will help citizens understand their rights, interests and obligations. Access to information on health and education services will help people be entitled

to full benefits of these services. This article analyzes the current status of access to information on health and education services of the people, a case study of Yen Dung district, Bac Giang province^(*).

The data were collected in 2018 using simple random sampling method. This method was also used for selecting the two survey sites of Neo town and Tan Lieu commune (Yen Dung district, Bac Giang province). Neo town which is 15 km south-east of Bac Giang city plays as the economic and political center of Yen Dung district. It has an area of 6 km² and the total population of 7,023 people with the population density of 881 people per km². Its major economic activities include handicrafts, trade, services, and tourism, which have progressed significantly in recent years. The management of urban planning is paid adequate attention while culture and social aspects are also taken care of with social security policies.

Tan Lieu commune is about 6 km away from Neo town. It has a population of 6056 people on the area of 8.66 km², making a population density of 562 people per km². Tan Lieu people's living conditions remain undeveloped, depending mainly on cultivation and animal husbandry. These two survey sites are different in geographical,

economic, and social characteristics. While Neo town represents the urban population, Tan Lieu commune is more rural. This helps the author understand better about people's perceptions as they live in contrasting conditions.

There were 400 research objects representing 400 households in each surveyed area, adding up to a total of 800 households in Yen Dung district. In addition, the research team also conducted in-depth interviews with a total of 20 local residents and 10 officials in Neo and Tan Lieu in order to answer the research questions and support better the quantitative study results. The gender structure is 386 males and 414 females.

2. Some key findings

2.1. Content and frequency of access to information on health and education services

Health services

According to the report of Yen Dung district, the local authority has directed the implementation of summer disease prevention; intensifying the prevention of whooping-cough, dengue fever and rabies; implementing activities to respond of the Action Month for Food Safety in 2017; developing and implementing the prevention and control of A influenza (H7N9) in human; and planning to coordinate and monitor food safety for 2017-2020. In terms of population and family planning, the local authority continued to direct and implement policies, programs and projects on population; strengthen

^(*) The article is a part of the research "*Access to fundamental social services of people today (A case study of Yen Dung district - Bac Giang province)*" done by the author of the article (2018).

the coordination of inter-branch communication to avoid selecting gender of fetus; and pay adequate attention to communication and counseling for people of reproductive age to apply contraceptive methods, reproductive health care, and family planning (Yen Dung Commune PC, 2017: 12).

Health services include a number of contents; however, within the framework of this study, the author is using 10 important indicators to measure the accessibility to information on health services, which comprises health insurance, medical check-up, service costs, epidemic prevention, vaccination, service quality, government policies on medical examination and treatment, medical facilities, and doctor quality.

Table 1: Health service indicators accessed by local residents (%)

Health services	Percentage
Health insurance	87.3
Medical check-up	76.8
Health service costs	52.5
Epidemic prevention	52.3
Vaccination	45.6
Service quality	41.3
Government policies on medical examination and treatment	38.8
Medical facilities	34.8
Doctor quality	34.0

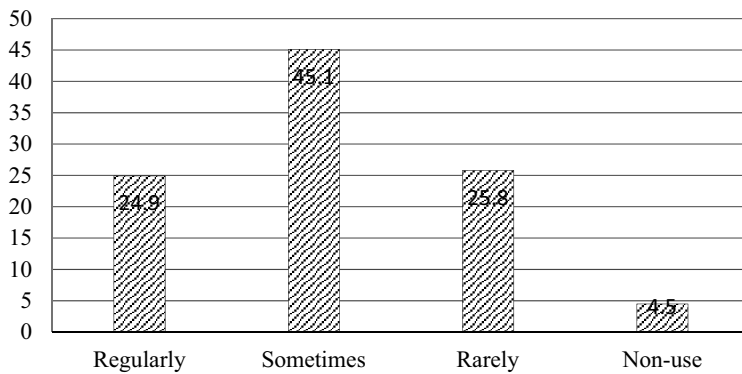
The results of our survey show that information on health insurance was the most accessible to people, accounting for 87.3% of the sample; followed by medical check-up, representing 76.8%; and medical service costs (constituting 52.5%) (Table 1).

Local residents had very little access to information on doctor quality. Only 34.0% of the respondents confirmed their access to this type of information. Only 34.8% of the respondents had access to medical facilities. This implies that information on local health services is not available to the residents.

It is evident that people pay special attention to information on health insurance. They have the need and desire to participate in health insurance to save costs of medical treatment, and protect their health as well as their families' health. When asked about communication on health insurance, local officials said, "The locality has actively implemented policies on health insurance, contributing to improvement of welfare quality; also helped individuals fully understand and actively participate in health insurance. It is a practical task not only in medical examination and treatment, but also in general health care for development of individuals and society" (Female, 42, local official).

When considering the frequency of access to health service information, statistics shown in Figure 1 reveals that the percentage of residents who had access to health service remained relatively large. 95.5% of 800

Figure 1: Frequency of access to health services (%)



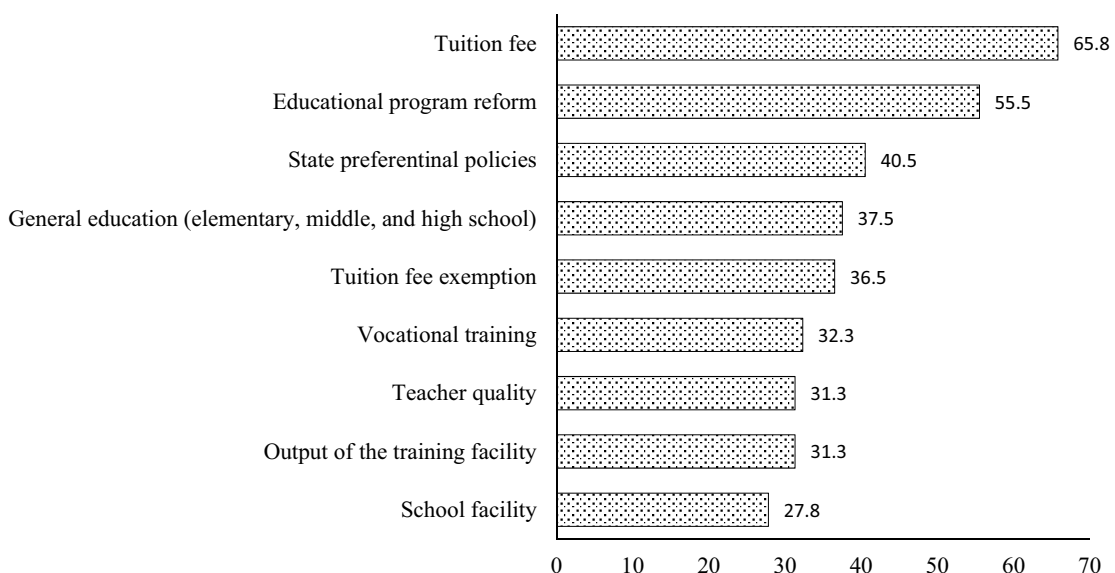
respondents had access to health service information; only 4.5% of them did not have any access to such information. The frequency of access to health service information saw an uneven pattern. According to the survey data, 24.9% of respondents had access to information “regularly (i.e. several times a week)”, 45.1% of them responded “occasionally (i.e. several times a month)”, and 25.8% said “rarely (several times a year)”. Basically, local residents have been aware of searching for health service

information; however, the access frequency is not regular, which means that they did not pay adequate attention to the information on health services.

Education services

Over the past decades, Vietnam’s education has developed with remarkable achievements, contributing to improving the people’s knowledge and training human resources for the development, protection and renovation of the country. The Party and the State have continuously improved education quality, and provided education information to all regions and people. Based on the survey conducted in Yen Dung district, some information of education sector accessed by local residents is described in Figure 2 as below:

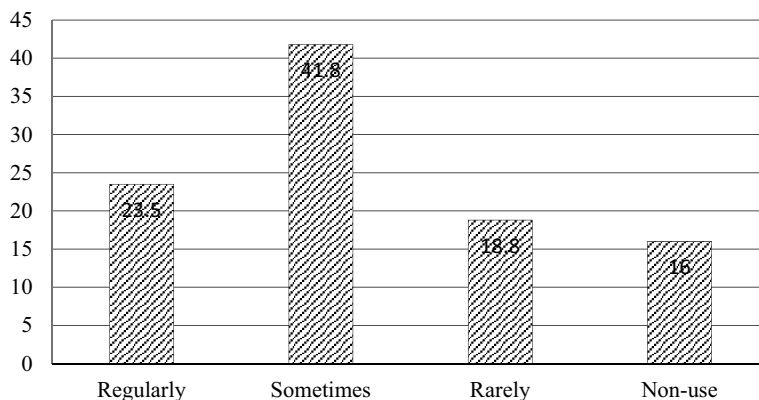
Figure 2: Access to education service information(%)



In the education service survey, the most frequently accessed information is tuition fee, accounting for 65.8% of response, followed by educational program reform, representing 55.5%. Local residents had very little information on school facility, making up the smallest percentage of 27.8% of response. Sharing similar issues as in access to health service information, local education information is not available to the entire local residents. The people do not have access to the information on education services in a comprehensive manner. The majority of those having access to this type of information included pupils, students and their parents.

In recent years, communication of educational policies and activities has been increasingly paid attention to. According to statistics shown in Figure 3, it is noticeable that the percentage

Figure 3: Frequency of access to education services (%)



of local residents having access to education information was relatively large. About 84% of 800 respondents claimed that they had access to education information whereas only 16% of them

did not have any information. Sharing a similar pattern with the frequency of access to information on health services, the frequency of access to information on education services underwent an uneven pattern. According to the statistics, 23.5% of respondents had “regular” access to education information (several times a week); 41.8% of them said “occasionally (several times a month); and 18.8% of them gave the answer of “rarely (several times a year)”.

Looking at the content and frequency of access to information on health and education services, it is noticeable that the proportion of access to information on these services is relatively high. However, the frequency of people’s access has not been regular and continuous. It might disrupt the information reception. People should be more proactive in the process of accessing and searching information on health and education services in order to maximize their benefits from these services.

2.2. Information channels for health and education services

Health services

Social media plays as the most effective channel for people to learn

about health knowledge and protection. Media also helps raise the voice for more attention and investment in health care from authorities, ministries, and sectors. The communication on health care for

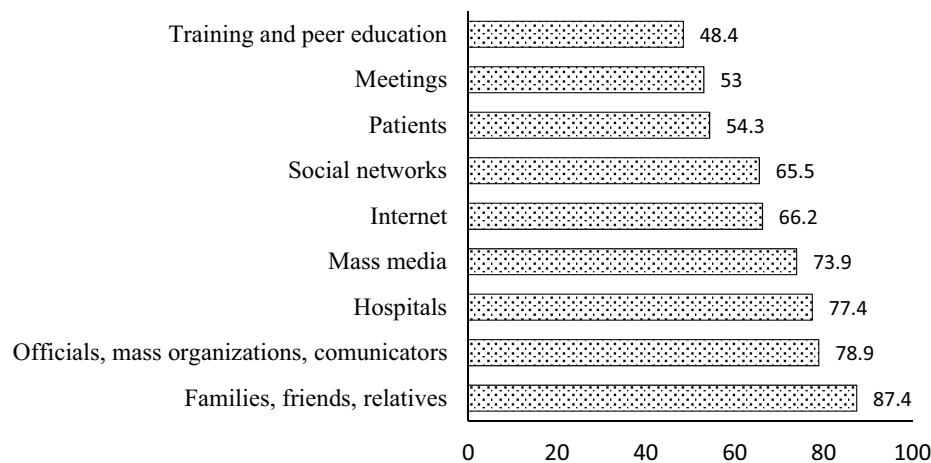
people in recent years has been paid attention to by authorities and unions at all levels. The Ministries of Health and Information and Communications jointly issued the Program 1050/Ctr-BYT-BTTTT on October 9, 2014 on the coordination of providing information and communication on health protection, care and improvement for people in the period 2014-2020. Under the introduction of the program, many coordination activities have been implemented effectively.

In order to learn about people's access to health services, a number of possible information channels were introduced for the survey. There were 87.4% of people knowing about health services through "families, friends, and relatives". This is the most popular channel since it is based on information

the actual communication situation at local level, which is reflected through the in-depth interview with a local official. "In general, all policies are disseminated in meetings. People are always timely informed of programs set by higher governments and there are monthly propaganda programs also. I notice that the educational promotion programs are more often focused on" (Female, 42, local official).

Access to health information through hospitals made up of 77.4%. It is because when people have health check at hospitals, they are provided with information of health services. On the contrary, those who are less likely to visit hospitals would have fewer opportunities to access information through this channel.

Figure 4: Information channels for health services (%)



sharing between family members. The second most popular channel is "officials, mass organizations, and communicators", accounting for 78.9% (Figure 4). The result is also in line with

Training activities and peer education are the least popular channels while mass media (television, radio, newspaper, books, pamphlets, banners, and leaflets), accounting for 73.9%, is one among

effective channels for people's health information.

"I mainly access information through the ward's loudspeakers and through my company for health insurance service. Sometimes, I am given leaflets when my children have vaccination, or informed through banners hanging at crossroads" (Female, 35, office worker).

The Internet and social networks are also helpful since they are popular information channels to people for quick, easy, and effective access (with 66.2% and 65.5% respectively).

Education services

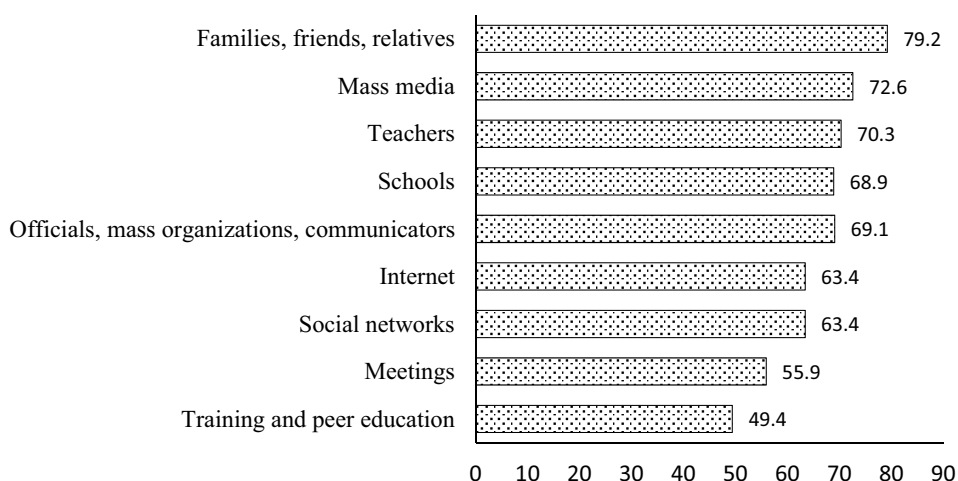
Similarly, different channels for education information access were selected to measure the frequency of people's choices for accessing information. Results show that "families, friends, and relatives" are the most popular channel for education information with 79.2%. Mass media ranked second with 72.6% (Figure 5). Other popular channels with high

proportions include teachers (70.3%) and schools (68.9%). These are two direct education information channels for parents with school-age children. The information parents received is mostly related to tuition fees. Thus, these two channels account for high proportions is a result that matches the actual situation.

People also obtain educational information through "officials, mass organizations, and communicators" (69.1%). Similarly to health care, education is paid attention and promoted by local authorities through propaganda and dissemination of related policies. "In addition to loudspeaker notification, local authorities also inform people at meetings of, for example, Veterans Association or Women's Union. Information is often sent to related organization for dissemination to appropriate audience" (Male, 55, local official).

Other channels for people to access education information include the

Figure 5: Information channels for education (%)



Internet, social networks, meetings, training courses, and peer education. Thus, there are different ways for people to obtain information about health and education services. It shows the need for information about social services in general and health and education services in particular. The results demonstrate also certain level of success in communications by Yen Dung district.

2.3. Purposes of obtaining health care and education information

People's purposes of obtaining information about health and education services are also studied besides the types of information and information channels. It is to

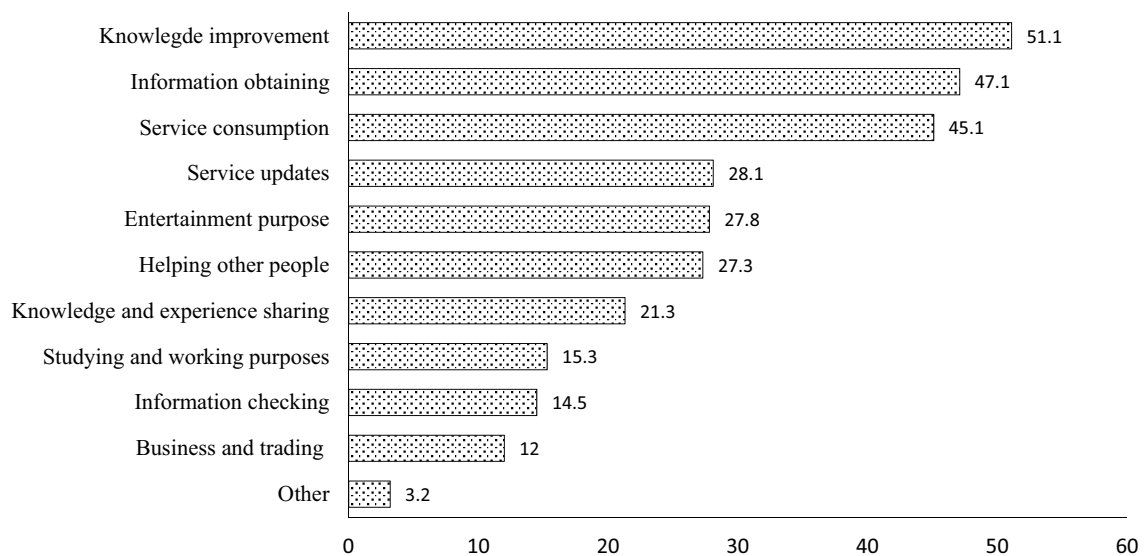
which is a good sign since it shows their awareness of equipping themselves with information about health and education services. This also facilitates people to follow the Party and Government's guidelines and policies of health care and education services.

3. Conclusion

The majority of people are able to obtain information of health and education services through various information channels. This reflects local people's awareness of the importance of obtaining information for their daily life services.

People in Yen Dung district have relatively easy access to information

Figure 6: Purposes of obtaining health care and education information (%)



understand if the search for information is to serve personal need. Figure 6 illustrates the purposes of accessing to health care and education information.

In general, people have a number of purposes in obtaining information,

through local officials, agencies, and organizations since the local authorities have performed well in communication activities. Mass media and the Internet are also effective channels for people to access information about health and

education services. However, some people are still unable to access to the information due to certain difficulties and barriers.

It is clear that people obtain information for the purpose of improving their knowledge. Thus, accessing to information is not just to serve people's basic need of having the information but also their need of enhancing knowledge and becoming knowledgeable.

The study results have pictured clearly the current situation of access to information on health and education services of surveyed people. Further studies could rely on these to design appropriate communication models in order to

maximize people's benefits of obtaining information □

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