

Core Competency of Public Universities Supporting-Line Administrators in Thailand

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Abstract: This study aimed to analyze and determine the core competency, methods of developing core competency and the structure of a program for developing the core competency of public universities supporting-line administrators by examining the core competency that is required for administrators to properly perform their tasks. The research includes a thorough study of 5 components necessary for successful job performance and is applicable to agencies in Thailand or a foreign country. Three mixed methodologies were used in conducting the study: Document syntheses, quantitative research and qualitative research. The results of all 3 methodologies revealed the following: The core competencies necessary for public universities supporting-line administrators in Thailand consisted of 5 aspects in order from the highest to the lowest mean: Teamwork, planning and management, leadership, creative thinking and ethics. With respect to the techniques used to develop these 5 core competencies, 9 techniques in order from the highest to the lowest percentage were apparent: Workshop, training, lecture, supplementary activities, management games, recreational activities, role playing, brainstorming and field trips. For the structure of the program for developing core competency, which was obtained from in-depth interviews with experts by using a structured-interview form, it was found that the experts opined about guidelines, methods, contents of development and methods of assessing all the 5 core competencies. Additionally they felt that a wide variety of different methods should be included in the new program. The experts felt that the contents must cover all competencies by training continuously in the form of 9 learning units for a total of 180 h or approximately 5 weeks of training. In development, there must be an emphasis on leading to real practicability and there must be a variety of methods of assessing development as assessed by superiors, subordinates, work peers and self-assessment both before and after training. Also, there must be assessment criteria.

Key words: Core competency, supporting-line administrators, public universities, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Developing competency of personnel in an organization is regarded as one of the important missions of every organization. Competency is a significant factor in the development of an organization's personnel. Administering a university in accordance with its mission requires its administrators to have vision, knowledge, ability and skills in administration. Supporting-line administrators are important mechanisms within the university that help coordinate administration tasks and lead higher educational institutions to academic excellence and long-term self-reliance. Presently, however, it can be said that some supporting-line administrators have not continuously developed themselves. Developing competency of personnel in an organization is regarded as one of the important missions of every organization. Competency is a significant factor in the development of an organization's personnel. It directly

relates to the quality and efficiency of task performance by personnel in the organizations administrative branch. In Thailand, nobody studies on developing the core competency of public universities supporting-line administrators.

With respect to the lack of development problem of personnel in the position of supporting-line administrator previously discussed. Thus, the researcher became interested in conducting a study on developing the core competency of public universities supporting-line administrators by analyzing the core competency of supporting-line administrators. The findings can be used to improve the efficiency and core competency of supporting-line administrators in public universities in Thailand and other country.

This study aimed to analyze and determine the following components: Core competency, methods of developing core competency and the structure of a

program for developing the core competency of public universities supporting-line administrators in Thailand.

Theoretical conceptual framework: The researcher studied applicable concepts and theories and used them as a research conceptual framework. The framework was made up of 5 parts: Part 1 was the 6 key managerial competencies of Hellrigel *et al.* (2001) comprising Communication competency, Planning and administration competency, Teamwork competency, Strategic action competency, Global awareness competency and Self-management competency. Part 2 was the concepts involved 5 factors of competency of comprising skill, knowledge, self-concept, trait and motive. Part 3 was the 3 concepts involved the competency of the department level administrators of Delmont (2002) comprising leadership, human relations and management. Part 4 was the 5 concepts involved in developing the core competency of the Office of the Civil Servant Commission (2005) comprising achievement motivation, service mind, expertise, integrity and teamwork. Part 5 was the 4 concepts involved in the development of the core competency of the Office of the Teacher Officials and Educational Personnel Commission (2006) comprising achievement motivation, teamwork, service mind and self-development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The population and sample: For quantitative data collection, the population from whom the researcher collected data consisted of a group of executive administrators and a group of public universities supporting-line administrators from 24 universities in the former group of universities under the direction of the Ministry of University Affairs with a total of 920 administrators. The sample size was determined by using the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) and the questionnaire respondents were selected using the purposive sampling technique with 15 administrators from each university, classified into 6 executive administrators from each university (3 vice presidents and 3 deans or office directors or institute directors or center directors) with a total of 120 administrators and a group of public universities supporting-line administrators, 9 administrators from each university (4 division directors and 5 faculty secretaries or office secretaries or institute secretaries or center secretaries) with a total of 180 administrators, totally 300 administrators. A questionnaire on the core competency necessary to determine the performance of supporting-line administrators, techniques and methods, which should be used for developing core competency of supporting-line administrators, consisted of 50 items with a reliability (alpha coefficient) of 90. From

300 copies of the questionnaire mailed to the sample, 242 copies were returned, so the sample consisted of 242 administrators.

For in-depth interviews, a 42-items, 3 parts in-depth structured-interview form was used for the interview. The interviews were conducted by experts in developing personnel's competency involving core competency necessary for public universities supporting line administrators, contents of development and methods, which should be used for development and methods of assessing development of core competency in each aspect. The researcher coordinated directly with the experts, or through secretaries of some of the experts. A total of 11 experts served as interviewees. The experts were interviewed by the researcher himself from August to September 2007.

Data analysis: The collected data were analyzed by the use of a computer program. The statistics used were percentage, mean and standard deviation. The data collected by using the interview form were analyzed and grouped according to contents. For the rating-scale data, means were interpreted (Srisa-ard, 2003) as follows:

- 4.51-5.00 means necessary at the highest level.
- 3.51-4.50 means necessary at a high level.
- 2.51-3.50 means necessary at a medium level.
- 1.50-2.50 means necessary at a low level.
- 1.00-1.50 means necessary at the lowest level.

RESULTS

For the results of discovering the core competencies of public universities supporting-line administrators from synthesizing the concepts of important persons or agencies in Thailand and foreign countries, 10 necessary core competencies were obtained. The researcher had the sample assess the 10 core competencies to determine the levels of necessity of each competency and then determined the means and standard deviations. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations and ranks of core competencies of public universities supporting-line administrators

Core competency necessary to have	Mean	S.D.	Level of necessity	Rank
Expertise	4.48	0.58	High	6
Achievement intention	4.48	0.53	High	6
Conceptual thinking	4.42	0.53	High	10
Communication and coordination ability	4.46	0.56	High	8
Teamwork	4.67	0.48	Highest	1
Service mind	4.45	0.53	High	9
Ethics	4.55	0.53	Highest	5
Leadership	4.65	0.50	Highest	3
Planning and management	4.66	0.48	Highest	2
Creative thinking	4.56	0.57	Highest	4

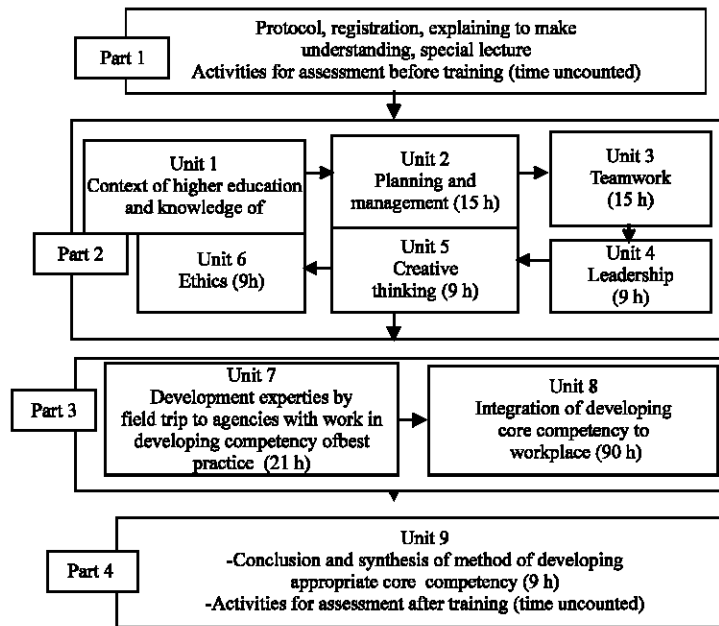


Fig. 1: Structure of the program for developing core competency of public universities supporting-line administrators in Thailand

From Table 1, the sample opined that there were 5 core competencies that are necessary to have at the highest level and 5 competencies at a high level. The core competencies that are necessary to have at the highest level were in this order from the highest to the lowest mean: Teamwork, planning and management, leadership, creative thinking and ethics.

For the results of examining the structure of the program for developing core competencies of public universities supporting-line administrators in Thailand, from in-depth interviews with experts in developing personnel's competencies, their opinions could be summarized that the constructed training program must have contents, which cover development of all the 5 core competencies of public universities supporting-line administrators consisting of teamwork, planning and management, leadership, creative thinking and ethics. Continuous training must be conducted in the form of 9 learning units for a period of 180 training hour or for approximately 5 weeks in developing with an emphasis on leading to real practicability and must have various methods of assessing development as assessed by superiors, subordinates, work peers and by themselves both before and after training and there must also be criteria for assessments, details are shown in Fig. 1.

DISCUSSION

There must be 5 necessary core competencies of public universities supporting-line administrators in this

order from the highest to the lowest mean: Teamwork, planning and management, leadership, creative thinking and ethics.

For core competency in teamwork, current management under changing conditions in this age of globalization, work with more competitions and having to rely on positive coordination, these can cause teamwork to play its important role and to be accepted as a model of management that originates benefits to persons and their organizations the most. Thus, it is necessary for public universities supporting-line administrators to have knowledge and understanding of the principles of teamwork, techniques of teamwork, organizational communication, coordination, training in thinking together and participation in problem-solving. The strengths of teamwork are transparency, trust in teamwork and origination of sharing learning in the team. Teamwork is better than working alone. Supporting-line administrators must be teamwork models and leaders in building organizational culture of teamwork, must be able to communicate, to build teamwork, to build participation, to build the climate for teamwork, to use their own strengths in work development, self-development and profession development. This is in accordance with Wright (2001), who studied HR competencies: Getting them right, he found that important strategies for follow-ups and being important successful drivers of an organization were working skills between persons or teamwork and with Meisinger (2003), who studied Adding competencies,

adding value and she found that 1 of 5 important competencies was the strategy for helping one another in the team.

For core competency in planning and management, planning is an intelligence process, which considers determining a guideline for task performance. It has a foundation of decision-making based on the purposes. Knowledge and critical prediction can be the best selection of task performing method to determine the purposes, to make task performance projects; to determine guidelines, policy and guidelines for task performance including techniques of operation to lead to achievement of the future organizational purposes. The findings are in accordance with Boselic and Paauwe (2005), conducted a study entitled Human resource function competencies in European companies. The study findings can be summarized that those with expertise and capability of strategic management can lead to efficient management and can cause their agencies to be successful. The findings are congruent with Ozcelik and Ferman (2006), who studied Competency approach to human resource management: Outcome and contributions in a Turkish cultural context. They found that appropriate competency management could create work and could achieve needs of the organization and of persons.

For core competency in leadership, the leader is an important factor of partly helping the organization to be successful or to fail and to be able to whether compete with other organizations or not. At present, if any organization has a leader or an administrator with leadership, knowledge, ability, high experience and high expertise, that organization can compete with other people/organizations and can be successful in achieving the established goals. Therefore, public universities supporting-line administrators must have quality of a good leader. Having leadership can very well link other competencies. Those with leadership can build faith, thrust and acceptance to originate in their organizations. Leadership is a matter of the art of using influence or the process of using influence on other people to make them willing and enthusiastic about their performance until success is achieved according to the group purposes. It is in congruence with Sunburg (2001), who studied On being a department chairperson. The study revealed that competency, which was an important characteristic of the administrator, represented the leadership of the administrator.

For core competency in creative thinking, promoting everyone to have thinking development in order to be able to think, to think the right direction and to think creatively to use the thinking process to be useful to development of different tasks in planning, decision-

making. Problem-solving and developing work systems or products for such outcomes to have more values and qualities, which can affect increment of organizational potentials and increment of abilities to compete with other organizations. Creative thinking, which means ability to think to find out new answers and the ability of man to lead to new things including concepts, theories and concrete or touchable products. Such things must be beneficial to all humankind, the wider circle, the better. Core competency in this aspect is greatly necessary to administration of public universities supporting-line administrators. They must learn the principles of creative thinking and applications of creative thinking concepts to generate utmost achievement. In the process of thinking training, they must focus on new methods of improving themselves and create innovations in accordance with their thinking time. Therefore, universities should prescribe stimulators of creative thinking, which include recognition, appreciation and rewards.

For core competency in ethics, ethics is an important core competency for administrators at every level. Ethics is defined as a system of principles governing morality and acceptable conduct and it is a requirement for those who wish to be recognized as successful in their work, in making a living and being approved of by people and society as a whole. Ethics is regarded as a very important matter. Whenever a person, a group of people, society and the country confront problems of people who lack ethics and morality, different problems arise. Public universities supporting-line administrators are personnel with important roles in supporting university executive administrators to be able to manage their universities at full efficiency. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for the personnel in this group to be persons with high morality and ethics in performance, which will result in a university administration that is immaculate, fair and transparent according to good governance.

For the structure of the program for developing core competencies of public universities supporting-line administrators as viewed by experts who recommended guidelines, methods, programs, contents of development and methods of evaluating all the 5 core competencies, it was found that the model of development should have various methods, the contents should cover all competencies by training in continuity in the form of 9 learning units for 180 h or approximately 5 weeks. The experts expressed their opinions involving the program for developing these core competencies that the program should be divided into modules or learning units and that there should be field trips that could lead to real practicability in the agency. An appropriate period of time for training should be 5 weeks. The program should be

divided into learning units, beginning from studying general basic principles to cover all the contents. This might be learned from resource persons or e-learning in intensive training by dividing into topics for a period of approximately 7-10 days. After that, there should be a period when they have to learn by themselves, which might be in the form of shadowing or integration into real practices at some agencies for a period of approximately 2-3 weeks. Also, there should be field trips to agencies of best practices in terms of developing personnel's competencies. After that, there should be organization of summary and compilation of conceptual knowledge or synthesizing the body of knowledge gained. The body of knowledge should be presented to share learning in the group of trainees. There should be a variety of methods of development such as training in teamwork, determining simulations, coaching stories, field trip, workshop, sharing learning and other methods. As for the methods of evaluating development of the diversity of methods are, for example, authentic evaluation, evaluations by superiors, subordinates and work peers in the 360° form and observations of behaviors before and after training.

CONCLUSION

Competency is an important factor of developing persons to be able to perform their tasks to achieve the goals. Many universities still have problems developing capable supporting-line administrators. The findings can be used to improve the efficiency and core competency of supporting-line administrators in public universities in Thailand and other country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be research studies of other models of developing other competencies such as regular work-line competencies of personnel as supporting-line administrators and personnel in other university work-lines or agencies under other attachments.

- There should be research studies of development models and methods of evaluation of each core competency, or regular work-line competencies of the personnel in other different groups at universities or agencies.

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