Thaksin University ’s Supporting Staffs
Self-development Needs

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Abstract
The objective of this survey study was to assess needs for development of supporting personnel of Thaksin University. The study used a questionnaire of two equivalent forms to collect data from 230 subjects. The data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The needs indexes were arranged according to the needs for improvement. The results of the study revealed that supporting personnel of Thaksin University’s needs for development were in: knowledge about techniques for building up encouragement, skills in using English in their work, and attitudes towards change management. They placed emphasis on self-development through in-service training, and study visits to other organizations.

Key word: needs, self-development, supporting personnel, Thaksin University

Background
The most important factor affecting organizational management for efficiency and prosperity is “people factor” because people are involved in financial factors, materials, tools, equipment and the management methods that facilitate management conditions. If an organization has knowledgeable and competent human resources, the organization has good opportunities to easily manage the organization efficiently. This is why an organization needs to have personnel who are very knowledgeable and competent. One way of getting competent personnel is through human resource development (Sukhothai Thammathirat University, 2010). Personnel in all organizations must be competitive in terms of knowledge as we are in a knowledge-based society. People who are more knowledgeable or more intelligent are more advantageous and tend to be more successful in their work (Chuchai
“People” is an intellectual capital depending on behavior and performance, and therefore, many organizations try to develop their employee’s potential and competence so that they can do their work more efficiently. Employees are important driving forces for the organization’s desired achievement (Arporn Phu withthayaphan, 2005). The goals for people development are to develop people and the community, to solve poverty problem, to make the economic structure balanced and sustainable, and to develop good governance systems for the public, private, and people sectors. At the same time, higher education is also involved in the development goals, especially in developing people, knowledge, and the role of higher education in the country’s overall economic development (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2008).

Thaksin University is the first higher educational institution in the southern part of Thailand to become an autonomous university in 2008. The university is, therefore, independent in management of academics, finance and personnel making it necessary for the university to have highly efficient organizational management and development. It is challenging for the university administrators and all its employees to create a unique selling point in academics and management that is different from other universities for its survival and sustainable independence. The vision of the university is “Thaksin University is a country’s leading university with excellent personnel and social development integrating the bodies of knowledge, intelligence and ethics that can be incorporated and continued for good quality of life and society.”, (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2011). Thus, personnel development is very important for Thaksin University because its success in operations and creation of a learning organization depend on personnel who can translate the action plans into reality. If Thaksin University personnel are well-equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes that are suitable for their work, the university operations will proceed smoothly. Hence, personnel development plays a crucial role in increasing, improving and changing knowledge, skills and attitudes of personnel to fulfill the university’s vision, goals and operative strategies that correspond to Thaksin University Personnel Development Plan B.E. 2553-2557 (A.D.2010-2014). The plan attaches importance to personnel development in terms of knowledge, competence, skills, and good attitudes towards the university and work. Moreover, it places emphasis on increasing personnel ability to be competitive and adaptive to change under the following related strategies. Strategy 1: Promote and support personnel development for all groups and levels of personnel continuously and appropriately,
and Strategy 2: Promote and support cooperation in building personnel development networks between the university and all its divisions (Thaksin university, 2011).

Nevertheless, regardless how much promotion and importance the organization gives to personnel development, if what the organization sees do not correspond with the personnel’s needs, the development cannot be efficient or achieved. This is supported by Suwimon Wongwanit (2005) who states that if an organization provides or organizes any project without taking into account the needs for it by its personnel either at the personal level or at the group level, there will be endless problems in implementation of the project as well as other problems. As a result, due to a lack of cooperation, the project will not be successful; will not achieve its objectives; will be delayed, and it will only be a waste of resources for the organization.

Thaksin University personnel data reveals that 56.61 percent of its personnel are academic personnel who play a very important role in supporting work of the university in teaching and learning, research, academic services, art and culture nourishments, and management so that the university operations proceed efficiently and effectively. The researcher, therefore, thought of the other important group of personnel that is the supporting personnel, and was interested in investigating the needs for self-development of supporting personnel of Thaksin University so that the results of the study could be applied in the university work plan that corresponded with the personnel’ needs for development in the situation where there are increasing changes and competition in order to prevent a loss of resources used in operations that have not been analyzed.

Objectives/Research Questions

To investigate the needs for self-development of supporting personnel of Thaksin University in three areas: knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Research Methodology

1. The population of the study was 535 supporting personnel of Thaksin university (Thaksin university, 2011) and the subject size of the study was determined using Yamane’s method with 95% confidence and 5% sampling error. The subject size determined was 230 and simple random sampling with the drawing technique was the last step employed.

2. The instrument of the study was a questionnaire adapted from Rattanakon Phuchenchop’s (2008) and Dowrung Innok’s (2009). The instrument was tested for its
content validity by experts and Cronbach’s alpha was used to test its reliability and the value of the alpha coefficient was 0.9604. The questionnaire consisted of three parts as follows:

Part 1: Questions about personal factors: gender, age, educational level, work experience, position, and income. The question types were multiple choice and blank filling.

Part 2: Questions to assess the needs for self-development in three areas: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The questions were in two-equivalent-form questions with a 5 level rating scale. The questions in this part were further divided into two parts. Part one contained questions assessing existing knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and Part two contained questions assessing expected knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The questionnaire respondents answered specifying the level that represented their needs from 1, the lowest to 5, the highest levels.

Part 3: Questions about the needed development methods divided into two types: personal and group.

3. Data collection was carried out by the researcher herself according to the names that have been drawn.

4. The data were analyzed using a computer application program to determine the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Findings

1. The subjects of the study consisted of 230 subjects, most of whom or 70 percent were females; 56.6 percent were between 31-40 years old; 67.8 percent had a bachelor’s degree; 47.8 percent had a work experience of 6-10 years; 49.6 percent held a position of administrative officers; 55.7 percent had a monthly income of 10,000-15,000 baht.

2. Regarding knowledge, the supporting personnel of Thaksin University had the highest needs for self-development in knowledge about the techniques for building up encouragement, followed by knowledge about the organizational management techniques, and the need for knowledge in organizing 5-S activities were the lowest.

3. For skills, the supporting personnel of Thaksin University had the highest needs for self-development in skills in using English in their work, followed by the skills for being a speaker for training programs. The need for computer skills was the lowest.

4. For attitudes, the supporting personnel of Thaksin University had the highest needs for self-development in change management, followed by building a professional team and
leading the team to the highest point of the organization. The need for building good attitudes towards the organization was the lowest.

5. The supporting personnel of Thaksin University had the highest needs for individual self-development through in-service training, through self-study programs for individual learning, and through computer simulation programs, respectively.

6. The supporting personnel of Thaksin University had the highest needs for group self-development through study visits to other organizations, followed by further study, touring visits, demonstrations, business games, being equipped with work manuals, role plays, situational simulations, and behavioral models, respectively.

Discussions

1. Regarding the needs for knowledge development, it was found that the supporting personnel of Thaksin University needed the techniques for building up encouragement as the first priority. This is because encouragement is very important and related to people, work, and the organization. Thaksin University is an autonomous university that is self-governing and independent in terms of organizational management including financial, academic and personnel management. Therefore, the university must have its own style of management in order to develop the organization efficiently, and one essential management aspect that is urgent for the administrators to develop is knowledge in building encouragement for personnel because this knowledge is an essential element that will enable the organization to achieve its objectives efficiently. Moreover, it will give satisfaction to personnel when they have good encouragement which results in good attitudes toward the organization. Consequently, they will be happy and commit themselves to the organization. As a result the loss from personnel resignations will be reduced as Thawisak Thukthai (2002) claims that encouragement for personnel is of crucial importance to the organizational achievement and success that contributes to personnel loyalty, enthusiasm, and cooperation. In addition to this, encouragement can result in pride of the work. Chanchai Achinsamachan (n.d.) states that encouragement gives courage to personnel to work with good attitudes towards their responsibilities and their organization. Under the context of Thaksin University, the researcher saw the differences in moral support given to academic and supporting personnel. The university provides more opportunities and moral support to academic personnel. Therefore, knowledge about building encouragement techniques is what the supporting personnel needed. They also wanted to know what moral support the university would give
them so that they could work for the organization without worries but rather with all their potentiality.

2. Regarding the needs for skill development, it was found that the supporting personnel of Thaksin University had the need for skills in using English in their work because nowadays English is a very influential language used in communication and learning. People with good command of English have better opportunities in their work than people who are not good at English. English also helps with learning about a lot of things and it is needed for searching information on the Internet. Thus, the supporting personnel of Thaksin University needed language development in order to work with more efficiency in the ASEAN Community in the near future. This is confirmed by Prasit Sutthiwara (2004) whose study on the needs for personnel development: A case study on local exchange of metropolitan 2 of TOT Corporation Public Company Limited which revealed that the average level of the need for skills in English was very high in addition to the needs for information technology, general knowledge, mental health and entertainment. The study also corresponds with a study by Thasphan Phongphetra (2002) which found that personnel of most offices of inspections had the needs at a very high level for personnel development in planning, implementations and reports of inspections, complaints inspections and follow-ups of financial cases or corruptions, inspection reporting system, operations of the central information center, knowledge of technology, English, and academic knowledge. Under the context of Thaksin University, it can be seen that ASEAN Community which will take place in the near future is realized and the university is getting ready for it, particularly, skills in the English language which is the official language for the ASEAN Community (Department of ASEAN Affairs, 2011).

3. Regarding the needs for attitude development, it was found that the supporting personnel of Thaksin University needed attitude development in change management. This might be because there had often been changes in the university in terms of management structure, rules and regulations, requirements, operations and the chain of command. When such changes took place, they were not widely known among the supporting personnel and this might be due poor communication. As a result, personnel were confused about their work. Therefore, it is necessary for the supporting personnel to have good attitude towards change and be ready for it. Phusadi Khetsamut (2002) also found that the perceiving of the following, namely change management, the perceiving rate among personnel knowing about the change, seminar and training, perceiving of change and cooperation in policy forming.
These were at the level of belief that the change would be complicated and personnel would be forced to do certain work in a certain way. Personnel need to understand the change so that they would cooperate in the change. Natthaphan Khechoranan (2005) proposed six ways to reduce resistance to change: 1) Education and communication through reports or explanations to the group can reduce resistance to change; 2) Participation of people who would be affected by the change can reduce resistance to change because people do not usually resist what they are participate in, and participation can also help increase the efficiency of the decision to make the change; 3) Facilitating and supporting can reduce resistance to change, for example, giving advice and organizing training; 4) Negotiation can reduce resistance to change because negotiation is an exchange of something valuable. For example, if resistance is from only a few people such as supervisors, rewarding them with more subordinates for their new jobs may reduce their resistance; 5) Intervention and involvement can reduce resistance to change. Intervention is to embellish or distort facts to make the change more interesting, and at the same time, information or messages against the change, and rumors should be obstructed in order to make personnel accept the change. Involvement is a method that incorporates intervention and participation in which what the group leader says is not important and participation is only by name. These two ways of reducing resistance to change are with low costs and it is possible to gain support from the opposite party. However, if the opposite party knows that they are being used as a tool, discreets may take place; and 6) Forcing and using power to threaten is another way of reducing resistance to change. This method is the use of force and power with the resisting people directly, such as no promotion, being moved to another place, assessed with lower level than the actual performance, and issuing a recommendation letter stating the their work performance is poor, etc.

4. The supporting personnel of Thaksin University needed self-development in the form of training as their first priority. The study revealed that 47.5 percent of them had work experience between 6-10 years, and 49.6 percent held the position of administrative officers. They can be assigned to do many different types of work and to learn the work by themselves. However, in-service training is a type of training that provides trainees with direct experience in real situations and the teaching methods can be chosen to suit the objectives of the work. Personnel can be rotated, changed, and substituted in their work. Furthermore, they can do the work as an assistant where advice can be provided for them or they can learn from observations (Samit Satchukorn, 2004). The reason that the supporting
personnel of Thaksin University chose study visits as one way for self-development might be because study visits had been organizational practicing culture of the university. Moreover, study visits give them opportunities to exchange their ideas and experience with people who do the same types of work in other organizations and they could apply what they learned from their study visits to improve their work. In addition, study visits can provide opportunities to build networks and open up their world and see what and how other people work. Nathithip Praphanwit (2009) found that the overall need for study visits was at a high level for supporting personnel of Uttaradit Rajabhat University. The first priority was given to a study visit in the country every year. A study by Chalo Suebsak (2006) also found that the overall expectation for personnel development was at a high level; personnel development in the administration process was at a high level for three aspects, namely training, study visits, and development by the work process, respectively.

**Recommendations**

1. **Recommendations for policy**

   1) The university should have short-term and long-term plans for personnel development systematically and continually so as to develop supporting personnel to be most efficient according to their positions and professional paths because it is one way to increase encouragement and moral support to them.

   2) The university should organize activities to link and to be in line with the organizational strategies requiring participation of personnel.

   3) The basic competency system of personnel should be developed emphasizing building of a learning organization in order to increase personnel’s potential and competencies so that they become the most valuable resources of the organization.

2. **Recommendations for practice**

   1) Knowledge about giving encouragement and moral support for supporting personnel should be urgently provided so as to make personnel proud of their work, and work with all their potentiality.

   2) The English language skills development should be provided to supporting personnel in order to prepare them for the ASEAN Community.
3) Activities promoting personnel development should be timely organized when there is change in the university so that personnel have good attitudes towards the university. The aim is to change personnel behavior until it becomes organizational culture.

4) In-service training should be organized according to the types, positions, and responsibilities of work. How skilled and expert personnel work should be observed and followed by others who should do their work according to advice given by the skilled and expert personnel. This will provide personnel with knowledge and skills in their work that will enable them to work efficiently, correctly and with less errors as well as with safety in work. Personnel with expertise and those who are not yet expert can work together and review their work concepts and correct their attitudes towards their work.

5) An annual study visit to other organizations with the same or similar kinds of work should be supported and promoted so that personnel can apply what they learn from the study visit with their own work.

3. Recommendations for further studies

1) Needs analyses classified according to professional positions should be carried out in order to determine the causes of the problems and to find more solutions to the problems.

2) Needs analyses should be carried out with personnel participation classified according to professional positions in order to obtain more information that is relevant to the needs.

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