



Determining the Readiness of University Supportive Staff to Adopt the Future Work Skill 2020 at the International Level

Pasara Namsaeng^{1*} and Sutida Ngonkum²

¹International Relations Officer, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University

²PhD, Lecturer, Department of English, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University

*Corresponding author, E-mail: pasana@kku.ac.th

Abstract

Since the shift of the university's status from a public university to be a half-private university, the working nature of the supportive staff's skills is changed accordingly. The future work skill 2020 provided by the University of Phoenix Research Institute (2011) helps the employer from over the globe foresee the direction of the work skills that the employee should be equipped. The current study aims to investigate the readiness of the supportive staff in one of the famous university in Thailand as well as to explore the attitude of the administrators towards the supportive staff's current work skills, which and how those missing skills should be promoted, and how working skills should be adjusted to serve international working atmosphere. The findings found that the supportive staff think that they ready to work at an international level as well as have the high working skill as the average score at 3.99 out of 5. However, when the time changes, they keep themselves updated by attending training and learning new innovation according to their needs, expertise, and career pathway. Moreover, English as an international language as well as the information sciences and technology are also important skills for working at an international level.

Keywords: Work Skill, University Supportive Staff, International Level

Introduction

Most of the universities in Thailand have shifted their status from public universities to autonomous public universities. The staff are also changed their status

from the government servant to be the university's employee. As a consequence, some of welfares and supports provided by the government are deducted. Thavaraputta (2015) studied the undergraduate teaching and its preparedness evaluation prior to university privatization: a case study of History Department, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University and found that the university privatization can urge the university to maximize their capability in terms of budget, the quality and effectiveness of the subsectors inside the university. Thus, it is necessary to do a survey of the consequences of university privatization before taking actual action.

In the social sciences aspect, the effect of university privatization is the change of staff working habits. Due to the change of bureaucracy to be the half-private sector, the staff cling to the traditional ways of working. In the bureaucracy, there are a lot of steps, procedures, crosschecks, and time-consumption for the staff and service users. To privatize, the university staff need to transform their working habits by reducing the procedures and time and increasing work effectiveness and efficiency. To do so, the competencies and skills of the staff must also be brushed up. In short, the competencies or skills needed of the university staff for government sector maybe not inadequate for the "autonomous public university".

To work as support staff in the university in Thailand, the employees are required to meet certain competencies and skills specified by each university so that the employee can perform the assigned tasks effectively. The common core competencies can be teamwork, leadership, innovation, integrity, etc.

Table 1 Core competencies of the university in Thailand

	NIDA (Songsil, 2008)	Khon Kaen University (2011)	Kasetsart University (2016)	Chulalongkorn University (2017)	Mahidol University (2019)	Thammasat University (2020)
Core Competency	Sense of accountability, Non-stop improvement, Result oriented, Social responsibility, Knowledge acquisition and transfer, and team spirit	Service, Mind, Expertise, Achievement, Motivation, Teamwork, and Integrity	Innovation, Achievement, Motivation, Kasetsart, Engagement, Self-Development, Ethics, Teamwork	Team Spirit, Excellence, Integrity, and Social mindedness	Mastery, Altruism, Harmony, Integrity, Determination, Originality, Leadership	Thammasat Spirit, Unity, Leadership, Innovation, Benevolence

Table 1 presents the sets of core competencies provided by different universities of Thailand such as NIDA, Khon Kaen University, Kasetsart University, Chulalongkorn University, Mahidol University, and Thammasat University (Chulalongkorn University, 2017; Kasetsart University, 2016; Khon Kaen University, 2011; Mahidol University, 2019; Songsill, 2008; Thammasat University, 2020). As we can see that each university sets different competencies in order to meet its own standard, their own nature, and their own organizational culture. Thus, the staff of the university must have these competencies and skills as a fundamental qualification.

Currently, Thailand has more than 10 per cent of the elderly population, which is a great sign of ageing society (Joans, 2018). Compared with the overall population in Thailand, the ratio of the student population is decreased, meaning that there are lesser students who study in higher education. While the students have many more choices of continuing their higher education, the studying programs have to offer special deals in order to attract them into their own university. Doing so, the studying programs offered by the university must develop themselves to be able to compete with other universities, to be accepted widely as an international level, and to never stop improving themselves.

To develop the best studying programs offered by the university, it is required to have quality staff both academic and non-academic. Main duties of lecturers are to teach and to do research, while the supportive staff are responsible for the rest. The supportive staff must support all related matters that facilitate the service users for both Thai and international staff and students. For examples, the supportive staff are required to have foreign language knowledge, to have higher qualifications, and to deal with the difficult task. Lately, the supportive staff are also encouraged to do research as well. The results of having great supportive staff can be seen through the multilanguage university website, dual-language internal forms, international conferences or an international event hosted by the faculty, new innovation, etc. It indirectly represents the potential of the studying programs, faculties, and universities.

Institute for the Future for the University of Phoenix Research Institute (2011) proposed Future Work Skills 2020. The ten skills for the future workforce of 2020 were recently suggested, which include 1) sense-making, 2) social intelligence, 3) novel & adaptive thinking, 4) cross-cultural competency, 5) computational thinking, 6) new-media

literacy, 7) transdisciplinarity, 8) design mindset, 9) cognitive load management and 10) virtual collaboration.

Objective

Regarding the current core competencies of the university supportive staff, the current study 1) investigates the university supportive staff's perception about the future work skills in international level, and 2) explore the administrators' attitude towards the supportive staff's current work skills. Determining the readiness of university supportive staff to adopt the future work skill 2020 at the international level is conducted in order to raise the awareness of the university supportive staff as well as the university administrators about the adjustment of working skills in order to serve international working atmosphere, to step out from the traditional working habits, continually improve their competencies, and compete with other universities internationally.

Method

Participants and settings

The participants are from the faculties in social sciences field including the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Business Administration and Accountancy, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of Law, College of Graduate Study in Management, College of Local Administration, Faculty of Economics, except International College at the university located in a north-eastern university of Thailand. The first type of participants is 61 universities supportive staff: 45 females and 16 males. There are 11 positions in total which are International Relations Officer, Policy and Planning Officer, Administrative Officer, Director of the Faculty, General Management Officer, Academic Support Officer, Finance and Accounting Officer, Procurement Analyst, Computer Specialist, Audio-visual Technology Officer, and Gardener. The duration of their working experience was various from one year to more than twenty-five years. Out of 61 participants, there are 25 supportive staff who have one-to-five years, and 13 supportive staff have six-to-ten year experience and 25 supportive staff who have more than 10 years of working experience.

The second type of the participants is three authorized administrators or the head of the department who are partially responsible for stipulating rules and

regulations of the faculty. They all have at least ten-year working experience as supportive staff. The nature of work of the organization is found to be bureaucracy, there are many steps to follow, crosscheck, and get approval by the authorized person. Once it is approved, another working action can process further.

Research Instrument

Questionnaire

The Future Work Skill 2020 Self-Assessment Questionnaire was deployed to measure the university supportive staff's perception about future work skills at the international level. The first part was the general information (such as gender, name of the position, age, working experience, and self-assessment of their overall working skills), and the second part was the thirty items of the self-assessment questionnaire asking about their future work skill 2020. The thirty questionnaire items were created according to the ten aspects of future work skills (sense-making, social intelligence, novel & adaptive thinking, cross-cultural competency, computational thinking, new-media literacy, transdisciplinarity, design mindset, cognitive load management, and virtual collaboration). There are three items in each aspect. Then the questionnaire was checked its validity by the five experts before distributing to the participants. After that, the participants were asked to rate their level of work skills from 1 to 5. The Likert rating score was used (5= very high, 4= high, 3= medium, 2= low, and 1=very low).

In-depth interview

The other one is an in-depth interview. Three administrators were interviewed for about 20-30 minutes each. Both prepared and unprepared set of questions are asked so that both interviewer and interviewee have a free chance to get into deeper details.

Data collection

Research Instrument Validity

The researchers created the questionnaire and have five experts checked its validity and reliability by using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). All experts have at least ten-year working experience as university supportive staff. There were two items which were less than 0.5; however, they were revised according to the experts' suggestions. The average IOC score was 0.79 which higher than 0.5 meaning that this questionnaire was valid.

Table 2 IOC score by five experts

Items	Future Work Skills	IOC Scores from 5 Experts
1-3	Sense-making	0.53
4-6	Social intelligence	0.87
7-9	Novel & adaptive thinking	0.87
10-12	Cross-cultural competency	0.87
13-15	Computational thinking	0.93
16-18	New-media literacy	0.87
19-21	Transdisciplinarity	0.60
22-24	Design mindset	0.73
25-27	Cognitive load management	0.93
28-30	Virtual collaboration	0.67
The average IOC score		0.79

Table 2 shows the average IOC score.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to all participants to collect the quantitative data. Then, the researchers made an appointment with three administrators and/or the head of the department of the faculty in order to collect the qualitative data from the in-depth interview. The administrators were interviewed for about 20 minutes each. Both prepared and unprepared set of questions are asked so that both interviewer and interviewee have a free chance to get into more details.

Data analysis

For quantitative data analysis, the statistical data analysis is used such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, etc. For the qualitative data analysis, the content analysis is used.

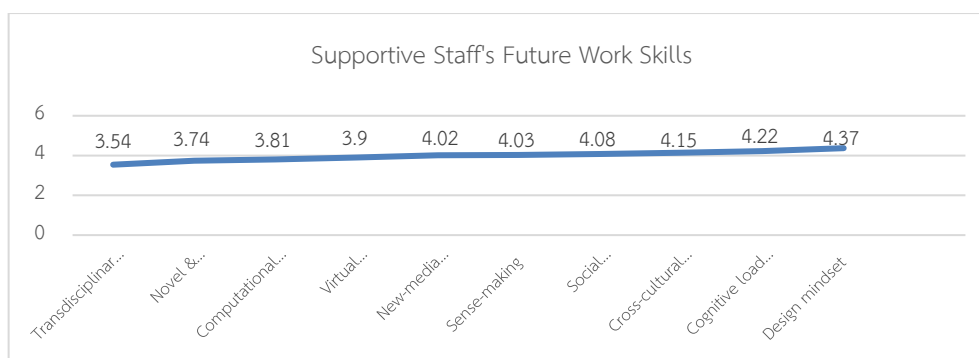
Results

In order to respond to the first purpose of the study, “to investigate the university supportive staff’s perception about the future work skills in international level”, the result from the questionnaire was used.

Results from the Future Work Skill 2020 Self-Assessment Questionnaire

After asking the supportive staff to measure themselves in the Future Work Skill 2020 Self-Assessment Questionnaire, the results showed that the supportive staff think that they have equipped with enough future work skills at the mean score of 3.99 which was accounted for 79.8%.

Figure 1 Ten Future Work Skills of Supportive Staff



According to Figure 1, out of ten skills, it is found that the first three skills that the supportive staff rated themselves highest are design mindset, cognitive load management, and cross-cultural competency. While, the three skills that supportive staff rated themselves the least are transdisciplinarity, computational thinking, and novel & adaptive thinking.

Results from the in-depth interview

And in order to respond to the second purpose of the study, “to explore the administrators’ attitude towards the supportive staff’s current work skills”. The result of the in-depth interview was analysed.

Table 3 The administrators’ attitude towards the supportive staff’s qualification

Attitudes	Supportive staff’s qualifications
Administrator 1	All employees are hired because each position they meet the standard qualification set by the university in the initial hiring process already. Once they become the university’s staff, they can add their additional skills by attending the training or autonomous learning to help them go beyond the standard.
Administrator 2	Before being accepted as one of the supportive staff, they met the entry’s levels of education as well as working experiences required by the university already. However, the current needs maybe not compatible with the old skills when accepted such as the new innovation.
Administrator 3	All employees working as supportive staff are already qualified in the process of recruitment.



Table 4 The administrators' attitude on how to increase international working skills

Attitudes	The need for international working skills
Administrator 1	For the missing skills, the supportive staff can be clustered according to their expertise and their needs. Then they will get trained separately for each group. In this regard, the task would be the human resource's burden to set the roadmap of supportive staff's progress both short-term and long-term goals as well as to provide the training for each cluster. After getting trained by the cluster of positions, each of supportive staff can share and exchange their ideas of how that trained knowledge can fit their work's nature.
Administrator 2	(Provide new kinds of training which can strain their trained skills)
Administrator 3	(n/a)

Table 5 The administrators' attitude towards the supportive staff's needs for international working skills

Attitudes	The need for international working skills
Administrator 1	However, technology, promptitude, and adaptive skills are the main things that the supportive staff need to keep updated. Personally, one of the administrators thinks that the supportive staff are ready for these new skills. Anyhow, they should not stop developing themselves, especially in term of soft skills.
Administrator 2	She thinks that all support staff have the future skill 2020 since it is allocated in the university's competencies. She added that there are two types of supportive staff's evaluation which are performance and competency. Regarding the supportive staff's competency, almost all supportive staff get full scores. However, she rejected that the supportive staff are ready for wringing at international level since there is no indicator at the moment. Also, there is the English language getting involved. There used to have English language training provided before; however, it is not that efficient as expected. The major problems of English language training and the supportive staff are to have no time for studying, practising, and using in a real setting. Finally, they forgot what they had studied leading to unconfident to produce the language just like before.
Administrator 3	All supportive staff have basic skill for particular positions in the very beginning stage already. She thinks that future work skills are found in all supportive staff, but everyone may not cover all future work skills. Some may have two or three skills of the future work skill 2020; however, it is difficult to determine which skills they are equipped unless we have tools to measure them. The skills that the supportive staff lack is unable to detect unless we have a chance to work with them individually. Basically, she indicated that the more experience the supportive staff have, the more they have the higher skills. Thus, experience provides the whole picture of the work scope. Anyhow, she insisted that the supportive staff here is certainly not ready to step to the international levels in terms of language as well as the supportive system. Right now, we are facing with the problem about the database because the university does not have the effective main-database system. Each faculty must develop their own websites which lack the



Table 5 (continued)

Attitudes	The need for international working skills
	<p>ability to connect the information together with the whole university. Similarly, in terms of language, not only the supportive staff lack English language skill so that the faculty is unable to support international students or teachers, but also, they cling to the traditional working atmosphere. There are only a few supportive staff who can speak English in each faculty. Since the foreigners coming from different parts of the world to study here, the number of supportive staff who is responsible for this matter is not enough. Apart from the English language, foreigners have different concepts of ideas, so the staff cannot provide the services as if they are Thais. The faculty has an idea of being in the international's level, but the way we work is not corresponding to our intention. To conclude, we do not yet prepare ourselves to be at the international level at all. The urgent need is the staff who can speak English as well as the staff who are responsible for the information science system.</p>

Table 3, 4 and 5 showed the administrators' attitude towards the supportive staff's current work skills. The three aspects were constructed according to the collected content. The administrators' attitude includes the supportive staff's qualification, the need for international working skills, and how to increase the international working skills? In the view of the administrators, they all agreed that the supportive staff meet the qualification required by the university; however, they still need international working skills such as the English language, innovative and technology training, and information sciences skills.

Discussion and Conclusion

Most of the supportive staff are confident that they are equipped with future work skill 2020 and being to perform their task effectively and internationally. However, according to the administrators' attitude, there are some areas that the supportive staff needs to upgrade their skills. Since the core competencies are likely not corresponding to the international working skills, the supportive staff are still required additional training to be at an international standard. The international working skills can be developed by attending the training according to their expertise by grouping similar positions together. Additional training programs must go along with the three skills that they have the least (transdisciplinary, computational thinking, and novel & adaptive thinking). Another aspect is that the English language training that is believed to be effective may be not that efficiency due to the limitation of time and busy schedule. Since they have to work eight



hours per day, time is considered to be the precious thing of their life. As mentioned, the supportive staff lack the English language skills and information science skills, and the traditional English language training is not effective. However, the English language in the supportive staff is still required to work at an international level. Thus, the English language must be promoted in other motivated ways.

To conclude, though the staff believed that they are ready for working at the international level as well as equipped with future work skill 2020; however, the English language seems to be the big burden for them. It is likely that the supportive staff can improve English skills by themselves; however, to do it without having nothing in return, they can be demotivated. So, it is required the organizational supports. For example, English language skill can be included in one of the criteria in year-end evaluation that the supportive staff must pass the certain level of English language, and the special remuneration will be provided for the supportive staff who have English language proficiency test. These solutions can cause additional payment for the organization so that it is necessary for the faculty to judiciously considerate before goes through the stage of the policy-making process.

References

- Chulalongkorn University. (2017). *Core Competencies*. https://www.hrm.chula.ac.th/newhrm/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/core_compotecies_print_v8_-1-V1-1.pdf.
- Joans, Puangchompo. (2018). Aging Society: Business Opportunity and Challenge. *Business Review Journal*, 10(1), 1-6.
- Kasetsart University. (2016). *Kasetsart University Announcement about University Staff's Evaluation 2016*. http://www.person.ku.ac.th/new_personweb/kucompetency/kucom-dic.pdf.
- Khon Kaen University, (2011). *Khon Kaen University Announcement Vol. 4/2554*. https://hr.kku.ac.th/wphrdkku/?page_id=1502.
- Mahidol University. (2019). *Core Competency*. <https://www.eg.mahidol.ac.th/office/hr/images/%E0%B8%A74065.pdf>.
- Songsill, Warangsiri. (2008). *Modeling of Employee Core and Managerial Competencies : A Case Study of NSK Bearings Manufacturing (Thailand) Co., Ltd*. Human Resource and Organization Development, National Institute of Development Administration <http://library1.nida.ac.th/termpaper5/hrd/2550/19324.pdf>



มหาวิทยาลัยหาดใหญ่
HATYAI UNIVERSITY

Thammasat University. (2020). *Competency, Thammasat University Library*.

<https://library.tu.ac.th/sites/default/files/2020-02/COMPENTENCY.pdf>.

Thavaraputta, Supavit. (2015). The undergraduate teaching and its preparedness evaluation prior to university privatization: case study of History Department, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University. *Journal of Liberal Arts Thammasat University*,15(1), 91-107.

University of Phoenix Research Institute. (2011). *Future Work Skills 2020*. http://www.iftf.org/uploads/media/SR-1382A_UPRI_future_work_skills_sm.pdf.

Appendix A: The Scores of Future Work Skill 2020 Self-Assessment Questionnaire



Future Work Skills	No.	Details	IOC Score	Future Work Skills of Supportive Staff
Sense-making	1	I think I am able to identify either it is a fact or an opinion.	0.53	4.03
	2	I think I am a logical person.		
	3	I think I understand the hidden meaning of the utterance.		
Social intelligence	4	I think I have interpersonal skills.	0.87	4.08
	5	I think I am good at approaching other people.		
	6	I think I understand the reaction of the interlocutor.		
Novel & adaptive thinking	7	I think I am good at solving the problem.	0.87	3.74
	8	I think I am judicious when solving the problem.		
	9	I think I am good at planning		
Cross-cultural competency	10	I think I am good at adapting myself into new settings.	0.87	4.15
	11	I think I am open-minded for the ways of thinking, behaving, and working that are different from mine.		
	12	I think every culture is equal.		
Computational thinking	13	When receiving a lot of data, I think I can come up with a brief summary.	0.93	3.81
	14	I think I am able to sort the data into different categories.		
	15	When seeing the graph, diagram or table representing some information, I can understand it easily.		
New-media literacy	16	I prefer to present my idea using the diagram, photo, or analyzed data rather than using only words.	0.87	4.02
	17	I think I like to use technology to assist my work.		
	18	I like to attend the computer program's training which I think it will be beneficial for my work.		
Transdisciplinarity	19	Without background knowledge, I think I can understand the concept of the new things.	0.60	3.54
	20	I like to integrate my work with other section. <i>(Revised: I can easily understand other working disciplines.)</i>		
	21	I think I prefer to work with other sections because it makes the greater outcomes.		
Design mindset	22	I think I like to do something step by step systematically.	0.73	4.37
	23	I will not stop to develop myself.		
	24	I like to put a lot of effort on work.		
Cognitive load management	25	I think prioritizing workload is importance.	0.93	4.22
	26	I think I have many methods to complete tasks.		
	27	I think I am good at management.		
Virtual collaboration	28	I think I like to work in team.	0.67	3.9
	29	I like to present my ideas in the meeting.		
	30	I think I produce the quality work. <i>(Revised: Working with people helps me produce the higher-quality work.)</i>		
The average score			0.79	3.99