Sharing Professional Viewpoint:
What Graduates Need in Entering the Job Market

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1. Introduction

What Graduates Need in Entering the Job Market

Generally known, all higher education institutions have developed their graduates with good technical competencies through various programs for preparation in entering the job market. However, those educators concerned are well aware that only technical skills cannot help their graduates to do well at work, but need to be equipped with appropriate human skills or soft skills. It is true that when employees begin to develop further, more soft skills competencies can be trained via mentoring and development (Weber, Crawford, Lee & Dennison, 2013). Still, this is a critical issue because technical skills can be developed within the timeframe of a program, whereas soft skills take more time through the work process of an organization culture and human interactions to attain the expected levels (Wetsanarat, 2021).

the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Standards mainly identify soft or human skills, like information technology literacy, communication skills, language abilities, initiative and creativity, life skills management, stress management, and flexibility or willingness to adjust and cope with change. These identified standards are integrated into the vocationally-oriented programs in Thailand (Office of Standards for Vocational Education and Profession, 2008; Office of the Vocational Education Commission, 2008a, 2008b). In this regard, all higher education institutions in Thailand have prepared their graduates, typically by means of interim projects on soft skills development, followed by a series of lectures and workshops prior to or as part of final orientation.

In this brief professional viewpoint paper, the author would like to focus on three dimensions leading to graduates' soft skills development to enable them to fit in and do well in their selected organizations. These guiding points are derived from the author's work experience and the findings obtained from research on technical and soft skills of the workforce in ten occupations, conducted in 2016-2017. The three major dimensions are work attitude, time management and essential soft skills required at work.

2. Work Attitude

Work attitudes generally refer to how we feel about different aspects of work environment. Most people talk about work attitudes in terms of job satisfaction and organizational commitment as the most relevant to important outcomes of work performance (https://efrontlearning, 2022). It is a big question on what would lead an employee to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. First of all, an employee's attributes and personal attitudes toward the work environment will determine optimism or positive thinking toward people in the work environment with a realistic perspective. These thinking aspects include willingness to learn new things, perceiving opportunities to make

good progress at work while offering opportunities to other colleagues. It is also important to be assertive but not aggressive in suggesting opinions that would bring about constructive change in the organization, not to create conflict, if not necessary. An employee needs to understand organizational goals, observe organizational culture, and become aware of one's strengths and limitations when executing the assigned job. Working independently is a desired ability, but one must be able to work collaboratively in a team by establishing interrelationships with colleagues in the perspective of leadership and followship. At the end of the work process, one should seek

feedback from the team and reflect upon what has been done in completing the tasks for further improvement (Pholsward, 2017).

3. Time Management

People have equal time of 24 hours per day and they individually vary in the way they manage their time. When working for an organization, a person needs to consider a good balance between work and life (Latthasaksiri, 2021). It is possible to manage time in terms of proportion, like if you give 60% to work, think how you can allocate 40% to ensure quality of life. To alleviate stress at work, you should not allocate more than 80% to work; this is to avoid high anxiety and heavy stress that can ruin your personal life, especially it would definitely affect your health. To reduce stress, it is advisable to give priority of tasks to be completed from the most important or urgent to the least important or delayable. One can save time if knowing how to use human or data resources to facilitate the work process and completion. It is true that certain people are fast workers in certain areas; therefore, you need to know the areas you can speed up. When collaborating with others in the team, you need to give time to those to deserve attention from you—be it a colleague/ a friend/ a customer/ a family member. In this regard, time management does not solely deal with time, but its other related human factors need to be taken into consideration.

4. Soft Skills Development

When dealing with human skills or soft skills, human resource developers tend to focus on digital skills or Information Communication Technology (ICT) required on the job and for personal development in self-learning via online learning and information search. Testa & Sipe (2012) emphasized that soft skill competencies are needed in frontline employees to provide an impressive service and experiences for customers and keep them loyal to the company. Weber, Crawford, Lee & Dennison (2013) asserted that soft skills competencies can be trained via mentoring and development.

Communication skills are not easy to master to appeal to those in verbal interactions. Vitally important are the use of voice pitch/ volume/ pace/ when speaking to superiors, subordinates and customers in particular contexts. It is advisable not to be abrupt. Politeness is the key in communication, but not too polite to reflect somewhat insincerity (Pholsward, 2018).

English language proficiency represents the main facilitator in communication and expressing thoughts and creativity. English serves as the main tool to access knowledge and relate to others. To master the language, users need to improve vocabulary pertinent to assigned tasks, and particularly formulaic expressions used in different language

functions—greetings, telephone conversation, and opening and closing conversation techniques used in small talks and business talks (Pholsward, 2017).

Problem-solving skills are valuable in various work assignments and contexts. Such abilities are rather difficult to develop in a person; however, work experience and willingness to listen to others for various options in executing specific tasks can help a person perceive how the best option in problem-solving tasks can be reached. In working for a solution to any specific task in an assigned project, one needs to be aware of rapid change that has emerged and accelerated into disruption; mental readiness for change and adjustment to perceived and foreseen change can be a great advantage to one's planning and work operations (Kusorukov, Murakov & Bagisbayev, 2016).

Desired soft skills include good emotional control as well as the ability to manage stress or anxiety (Pholsward, 2017; Latthasaksiri 2021). One needs to know to stop or abort an argued point or conflict that could harm interpersonal relationships. Politeness, integrity and appropriate social manners can help ease up tension in interpersonal relationship. Presentable personality with appropriate attire can support the organization in earning respect from its guests or customers. In addition, one needs to pay attention to health for the good of the mind and the body to be able to serve and contribute well to the organization. With all these aforementioned points, graduates from higher education institutions already equipped with technical competencies can expect to work with confidence as assets of their selected organizations.

5. Conclusion

In preparing graduates for the job market, higher education institutions in Thailand have followed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Standards which signify soft or human skills—mainly information technology literacy, communication skills, language abilities, initiative and creativity, life skills management, stress management, and flexibility or willingness to adjust and cope with change. This brief professional viewpoint paper was meant to clarify the main aspects of human skills or soft skills to be developed for success in an organization—for now and the foreseeable future. Despite difficulties involved in soft skills development for its upstream move against one's original attributes and identity, employees in the current trend have no any other choices but sensitizing and integrating the required soft skills into their self-development not only for the benefit of oneself but also for many others that share the organizational goals of one's affiliate.

6. The Author

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