

## **THE DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES FOR WORKING EFFICIENCY OF ASEAN EMPLOYEES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this research were 1) to examine opinions regarding the desirable characteristics, working efficiency and 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills of employees in the selected ASEAN-employee organizations according to the organization's perception and employee's self-assessment, and 2) to review relationships between desirable characteristics and working efficiency as well as relationship between 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills and working efficiency. The study area included the organizations located in Bangkok, Thailand. Purposive sampling method was employed in this study in order to select participants from the ASEAN-employee organizations. The data were collected with questionnaires distributed to 80 managers and 400 employees from eight selected organizations. The findings indicated the levels regarding the working efficiency and employee's working skills were found indifferent in the views of the organization's need and , employee's self-assessment. For the desirable characteristics, it was found that the employees evaluated themselves higher than what the managers had perceived. Also, the desirable characteristics had a significant relationship with the working efficiency (R = .573 for managers, R = .725 for employees). Lastly, the 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills had significant relationship with the working efficiency (R = .405 for managers, R = .499 for employees) at the statistical significance level of 0.05.

**Keywords:** Performance efficiency, desirable characteristics, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

## Introduction

Entrepreneurs these days need to adjust themselves to trends while implementing new business strategy in order to keep up with products and services' standard. At the same time, cost should be maintained at low level in order to gain advantage over competitors. Unfortunately, one significant factor to success is "employees" who were difficultly found in the labor market. Thus, most organizations call for a great number of skillful, yet affordable, employees as their performance efficiency with professional moral could pave the way to success. Thangpreechaparnich (2012). In 2015, Thailand joined ASEAN community with Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) that allowed certain professions to voluntarily transfer within member countries. So far the agreement has been applied to 7 professions: engineer, medical, nurse, architect, physician, dentist and accountant. (Chula Uniresearch, Chulalongkorn University, 2015). With free trade, skilled labors would be able to migrate within ASEAN countries. It was expected that once Thailand joined ASEAN community, foreign skilled labors from other member countries would be able to work despite the differences in language, culture and levels of work performance. Organizations must adjust themselves with this new environment for more human resource practice efficiency in order to have an approach to skillful employees (Vichiennoi, 2015).

With diversity in races and cultures, it was a challenge for human resource management under new circumstance, changing economy, politics and technology in modern days in order to acquire the personnel who were efficient at work. However, each employee held different thoughts and attitudes towards organization managements. The study; therefore, aims at studying the guidelines for optimizing performance efficiency of ASEAN employees regarding their working efficiency, desirable characteristics, and 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills. Organizations hiring ASEAN employees which were situated in Bangkok were selected to be further explored. Findings will become a guideline for schools to produce eligible graduates who fit employers' needs.

## Research Purpose

1. To study the opinion levels regarding working efficiency, desirable characteristics and 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills measured by both selected ASEAN-employee organizations' need and employee's self-assessment.
2. To study relationship between desirable characteristics, 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills and working efficiency which meets the expectation of the selected ASEAN-employee organizations located in Bangkok.

## Research Hypothesis

1. Performance efficiency, desirable characteristics and 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills of staff in ASEAN-employee organizations measured by organization's need and employee's self-assessment are indifferent.
2. The employee's desirable characteristics and 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills have an effect on their performance efficiency in ASEAN-employee organizations.

## Literature Review

### Performance efficiency concept

Thanawangnoi (2012, p.170) explained that personnel was the key to the success of organization. It was generally accepted that human was the most valuable and important factor of the management principle. Reinforcing working requirement to employee would increase employee's positive working attitude and devotion for company's progressive success. It was essential for the executive to take the ultimate efficiency into consideration as there were theories regarding employee's motivation that focused on means to get employee's devotion, responsibility and attention leading to loving, positive relationship and loyalty towards the organization.

In other words, personnel needed a lot of factors: knowing time management, having ways to increase confidence, being a good team player, working morally with positive attitude, to work efficiently from his or her potential and to stick to the goal. In addition, work system of organization

with solid management policy plan and systematic management would also facilitate the faster and more efficient working process.

**The concept of employee’s desirable characteristics**

Although plenty of studies have described desirable employee’s characteristics of various professions, there was not yet a direct study regarding ASEAN employees who could be massive and different in each organization. However, significant desirable characteristics could be referred to in some vocations as following;

Brown (1989, pp. 89 cited in Chueasraku, 2008) had summarized the service staff’s characteristics into 3 categories;

1. Staff who displays courage and out-going personality has self-confidence and determination to complete jobs given.
2. Staff who is able to enthusiastically adjust himself to others with flexibility in interpersonal interaction is able to deal with tasks tactfully.
3. Staff who is compassionate is essential, and the service staff should be amicable and carry courtesy while handling customers.

The characteristics mentioned above reflected service staff’s “attitude” during their proper interaction with clients and could predict behaviors in selecting services afterwards. The service provider business grew once their staff delivered service that met the client’s expectation. Therefore, an organization would look for new recruits with working talent, responsibility and service mind to raise the possibility to success.

Joseph (1983, p. 11 cited in Chueasraku, 2008) studied consumer’s perception and suggested 5 characteristics every service provider’s organization should possessed as follows; 1) pleasant attitude, 2) giving responsive and correct answer, 3) being well-equipped, 4) being skilled and trained and 5) punctuality.

Chueasraku (2008) had divided characteristics of service staff into 2 categories which were personal characteristic and professional characteristic. For instance, personal characteristics referred to bright personality and “service mind” while professional characteristic was related to “knowledge”, “skills” and “working abilities.”

**21<sup>st</sup> century working skill concept**

According to studies and articles regarding 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills (Tisana Khammani, 2002; Wichan Panich, 2002 cited in Thanormchayathawat, 2016), educational challenges in 21<sup>st</sup> century prompted the students to adjust themselves to changing environment and to dwell with “learning skill” as it has been the age of studying strategically by building patterns and guidelines to strengthen the learning management capability. Students would be encouraged to build knowledge, skill and expertise to dwell in modern days. Partnership For 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills ([www.p21.org](http://www.p21.org)), or P21 network in short, also suggested a “model” for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning that integrated knowledge, specific skills, and proficiency for both working and living aspects.

Researchers would like to summarize literature review as below.

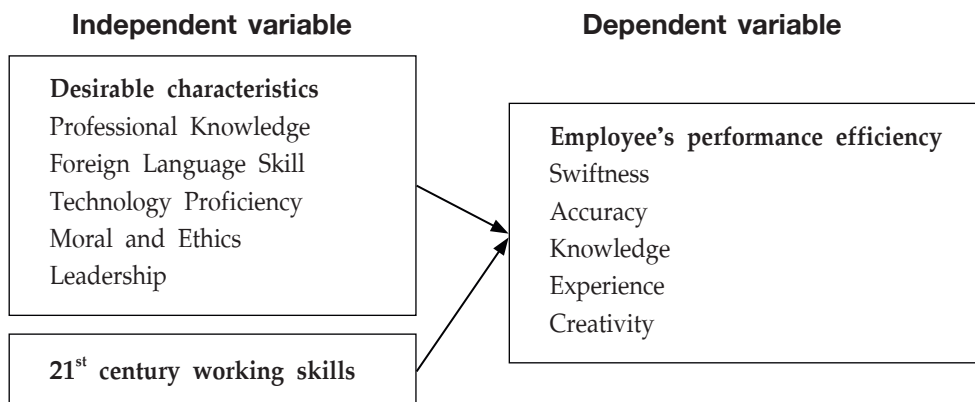


Figure 1 Research framework

## Research Method

This is a Quantitative Research using Survey Research Method in which information was collected in the form of questionnaire.

### 1. Population and sampling

Executives and staff in eight selected ASEAN-employee organizations in Bangkok represented 8 different industries which included 1) agricultural and food chemistry, 2) fast moving consuming goods industry (FMCG), 3) financial institutes, 4) industrial goods, 5) real estate business, 6) resource business and (7) technology service cooperation 8) Technology corporation. Purposive Sampling and Quota Sampling were used to select 80 executives (10 of each selected organization) and 400 staff (50 of each selected organization). The total number of the sampling was 480.

### 2. Research tools

Questionnaire was distributed and concepts and theories were analyzed from related documents and studies to cover the research concepts. The questionnaire was also presented to 3 professionals to assess content validity using the index of item-objective congruence measure as well as to assess reliability of each variable with Cronbach's coefficient alpha.

## Research Findings

### Part 1 Finding of general survey response analysis

For executive profile, most of them were women aged 25-35 years, single, and having bachelor's degree, and their entry level was manager in an organization with over 201 employees. They had 5 - 10 years of work experiences in Thai organizations in agricultural and food chemistry, fast moving consuming goods industry (FMCG), financial institutes, industrial goods, real estate business, resource business and technology service cooperation and earned 20,000 - 25,000 baht a month.

For staff profile, most of them were women aged 25-35 years, single, having a bachelor's degree and earning 20,001 - 25,000 baht a month in an organization with over 201 employees. They had 11 - 15 years of work experiences in Thai organizations in agricultural and food chemistry, fast moving consuming goods industry (FMCG), financial institutes, industrial goods, real estate business, resource business and technology service cooperation.

**Part 2** Performance efficiency, desirable characteristics and 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills in ASEAN-employee organization.

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of staff's performance efficiency level perceived by manager versus employees in the selected ASEAN-employee organization's self-assessment.

Work efficiency	Manager		Employee		t value
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1. Swiftness	3.89	0.55	3.92	0.54	- 0.4071
2. Accuracy	3.77	0.49	3.78	0.53	- 0.1521
3. Knowledge	3.89	0.50	3.93	0.54	- 0.5964
4. Experience	3.99	0.55	3.96	0.57	0.4068
5. Creativity	3.75	0.55	3.82	0.58	-0.9491
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.86</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>- 0.3822</b>

In conclusion, managers preferred staff with experience, swiftness and knowledge respectively while staff from the staff's self-assessment ranked experience the first which was followed by knowledge and

swiftness. T-test result turned out to be less than t critical value ( $t_{.05,478} = 1.96496$ ) as manager's perception towards work efficiency was not different from employee's self - assessment either.

Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of staff's desirable characteristics perceived by managers versus employees in the selected ASEAN-employee organization's self-assessment.

Desirable characteristics	Manager		Employee		t value
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1. Professional knowledge	3.00	0.57	3.92	0.57	- 12.0428
2. Foreign language skill	2.20	0.67	3.58	0.74	- 15.3540
3. Technology Proficiency	2.50	0.70	3.91	0.71	- 15.0269
4. Moral and Ethics	2.75	0.60	4.14	0.64	- 17.2728
5. Leadership	2.50	0.67	4.10	0.64	-17.8621
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>- 16.9919</b>

Table 2 revealed that all of t-statistic was higher than t critical value since staff seemed to rate themselves higher than what manager had perceived. However, manager favored staff with experience the most, followed by moral and ethics, technology proficiency and leadership while foreign language

skill was ranked the last. Meanwhile, employee's self-assessment suggested that employees highly rated their desirable characteristics in all aspects such as moral and ethics, leadership, professional knowledge, technology proficiency skill and foreign language skills, respectively.

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation of 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills perceived by managers and employees from the selected ASEAN-employee organization's self-assessment.

Working skills	Manager		Employee		t value
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1. Reading and Comprehension Skill	3.69	0.82	3.86	0.79	-1.5474
2. Writing for Organizational Communication Skill	3.75	0.77	3.90	0.77	-1.4534
3. Mathematics Skill	3.60	0.82	3.76	0.81	-1.4560
4. Judgmental Thinking Skill	<b>3.66</b>	0.73	<b>3.88</b>	0.73	-2.2486
5. Systematical Analysis Skill	<b>3.73</b>	0.73	<b>3.97</b>	0.69	-2.4544
6. Personal Problem Solving Skill	3.76	0.73	3.95	0.74	-1.9417
7. Work Problem Solving Skill	3.88	0.68	4.01	0.72	-1.4255
8. Cooperative Working Skill	4.00	0.80	4.12	0.73	-1.1202
9. Team Working Skill	3.98	0.73	4.12	0.69	-1.4317
10. Leadership Skill	3.91	0.60	4.04	0.64	-1.6154
11. Supporting Skill	3.91	0.62	4.01	0.66	-1.2025
12. Technology Proficiency	3.93	0.67	3.88	0.70	0.5565
13. Various Technology llikS	3.70	0.74	3.88	0.72	-1.8154
14. Computer Literacy	3.80	0.83	3.99	0.75	-1.7096
15. Learning Skill	3.95	0.69	4.05	0.71	-1.0810
16. Creative Thinking Skill	<b>3.76</b>	0.73	<b>3.97</b>	0.71	-2.1470
17. Inventive Management Development Skill	<b>3.75</b>	0.75	<b>3.97</b>	0.73	-2.1892
18. Stress Management Skill	3.71	0.83	3.91	0.78	-1.7990

Table 3 According to manager's expectation for staff's 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills which ASEAN-employee organization's executive prefer were put into categories, the most favorable skills were cooperative working skill (4.00), team working skill (3.98) and learning skill (3.95) consecutively while the least expected skill was mathematics skill (3.60). At the same time from employee's self-assessment results, team working skill was ranked first (4.12) followed by learning skill (4.05) and leadership skill (4.04).

Also, Table 3 indicated that most t-test results were lower than t critical value ( $t_{.05,478}=1.96496$ ) implying that the perceived 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills by employers and employee's self-assessment were not different except for judgmental thinking skill, systematic analysis skill, creative thinking skill and inventive management development skill.

Part 3 Desirable characteristic factors and 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills affect staff's performance efficiency in ASEAN-employee organization in Bangkok.

Table 4 Findings of coefficient of multiple correlation of staff's desirable characteristics versus their performance efficiency.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Manager	0.573	0.328	0.283	0.326
Employee	0.725	0.526	0.520	0.297

Next, the desirable characteristics and staff's work efficiency based on manager's perception exhibited R = 0.573 with forecast possibilities when all five desirable characteristics combined at 28.3% while

those from employee's perspective demonstrated R = 0.725 with forecast possibility when all five desirable characteristics were combined at 52.0%

Table 5 Findings of coefficient of multiple correlation of 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills versus staff's work efficiency.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Manager	0.405	0.164	0.154	0.354
Employee	0.499	0.249	0.247	0.372

Table 5 displayed the relationship between 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills and staff's work efficiency based on manager's perception, and R equals 0.405 with forecast accuracy of 15.4% and the relationship between 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills and staff's work efficiency based on employee's self-assessment, and R equals 0.499 with forecast accuracy of 24.7%

It was discovered that *performance efficiency* from manager's perception and staff's self-assessment were in high level and were indifferent in every aspect in accordance with Yuenyong (2014) who pointed that there was no different among employee performance despite being diverse genders, age, status and education. The research on desirable characteristics found that employees evaluated themselves higher than that of managers' perception which was not consistent with Thangpreechapharnich (2012). Thangpreechapharnich studied desirable characteristics of accountants and advised that all organizations needed staff with professional background and basic knowledge such as language and technology

## Discussion and Analysis

**Hypothesis 1** Performance efficiency, desirable characteristics and 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills of staff in ASEAN-employee organizations measured by organization's need and employee's self-assessment are indifferent.

proficiency to gain advantages in work performance. In 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills aspect, both managers and employees were like-minded except for judgmental thinking skill, systematic analysis skill, creative thinking skill and inventive management development skill in which employees assessed themselves higher than what managers had perceived.

**Hypothesis 2** Employees' desirable characteristics and 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills have an effect on their performance efficiency in ASEAN-employee organizations.

**Hypothesis 2.1** Employee' desirable characteristics affect their performance efficiency in ASEAN-employee organizations.

From the coefficient of multiple correlations of employees' desirable characteristics and performance efficiency from manager's perception, it was found that in general the efficiency perceived by the managers was 0.573 while that of employee's self-assessment was 0.725.

When each aspect was identified separately, the desirable characteristics from manager's perception towards employee's professional skill altered their performance efficiency of experience and creative thinking skill and the desirable characteristics in technology proficiency affected knowledge efficiency by 0.05 while employee's self-assessment demonstrated that all desirable characteristics (professional knowledge, foreign language skill, technology proficiency, moral and ethics and leadership) had an impact on performance efficiency at 0.05. The finding supported Krootboonyong (2014) who observed that with rapid changes in economy and society, Thai labor market required candidates with higher professional skills to compete with other countries. Development in education model management entailed more educated, skillful candidates with experience in accordance with organizations in which there was still the lack of employees with foreign language skill.

**Hypothesis 2.2** employees' 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills affect their performance efficiency in ASEAN-employee organizations.

The coefficient of multiple correlations of employees' 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills and performance efficiency

perceived by managers was 0.405 while that of employee's self-assessment was 0.499.

Both manager's perception and staff's self-assessment on 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills and performance efficiency endorsed Phetchara (2015) who mentioned that 21<sup>st</sup> century working skills were not only for professors and students but could also applied to all staff who attempted to strengthen their skill to get accepted among working society and to continue living in modern days. The finding also aligned with the study from Thanormchayathawat (2016) that it was crucial that schools getting prepared to foster their students to be able to handle their future living and career among current challenges in 21<sup>st</sup> century advanced education development. 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Recommendation

### 1. Recommendation from this research

#### 1.1 Employee's performance efficiency aspect

The results of both managers and employee were generally satisfied. However, it is even better for employees to adjust themselves to have higher performance efficiency and to increase organization's competitiveness. Moreover, organization should be on alert on circumstances that would enhance employee's performance efficiency such as initiating working motivation and task appreciation, giving appropriate compensation, developing self-development encouragement and authorization. Such suggestions would result in employee's devotion leading to higher performance efficiency.

#### 1.2 Employee's desirable characteristics

The employee's overall desirable characteristics was at the moderate level. Employees should realize and develop their foreign language skill, technology proficiency and leadership to advance their own advantages in the labor market although the manager's perception of which was still minor. It could be staff's additional learning or organizations could arrange internal training sessions or provide qualified instructors to improve employee's talent. It is also inevitable for employees to be able to adopt technology to both their daily and working life for increasing their technology proficiency

aspect. Organizations should arrange an orientation regarding technology tasks for the new recruits in order to familiarize themselves with technology and to be able to perform accurately.

The desirable characteristics from employee's self-assessment issued in high rating and this could be comprehended into 2 directions : In case of a valid statement, it was positive that employees were so confident in their own potential that they could overcome challenges efficiently. Thus, organization should provide advance support of specific field for employee's career path. In case of exaggeration, staff recognize their performance to be higher than that of reality, and this could cause concerns within organization's personnel management since it would alter employee's self- acknowledgement and satisfaction towards compensation. To prevent such circumstances, organization should directly tell employee that there was the correlation between performance efficiency and compensation and should justify why assessment system is important because it indicates levels of performance efficiency and its explanation could also build employee's confidence.

### 1.3 Employee's working skill

Both manager's perception and employee's self-assessment were appraised as high score in terms of employee's working skill with must-have abilities. However, employees should improve their abilities in accordance with organization's expectation for the higher performance efficiency. In Leadership aspect, most organizations distribute authorization to entry level managers (horizontal authority) for flexibility in running operation. Consequently, it is essential to have employees with leadership skills in most organization to initiate and complete task rather than waiting for leader's order and they should be able to understand their role appropriately. Also, manager could specifically identify employee's role in order to root their confidence when running operation. Manager could even encourage staff's leadership skill by giving them opportunities to make their own judgments as well as cheer them up and support their decision.

In At the present time, Thai schools prioritize student's talent development before graduation for

their future career to catch on to organization's expectation and life. Skills that are necessary for work nowadays are life and career skills which could be further studied from 21<sup>st</sup> century learning management concept (P21, 2015)

## 2. Recommendation for future research

2.1 This research engaged factors of desirable characteristics and working skills to examine employee's performance efficiency. In the future, there might be other factors such as motivation, stress, conflict, awareness of organizational support, bonding within organization and so forth that have an impact on employee's performance efficiency for better understanding. Also, study regarding new innovation to boost performance efficiency would be beneficial.

2.2 This research was conducted within Bangkok. Therefore, future research could compare employees' performance efficiency and management's expectation from different areas.

2.3 This research used quantitative method. Consequently, future research could add some qualitative approach using in-depth interview or open-ended questions for deeper understanding towards manager's expectation or different context in a wider organization category.

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