

Competencies Needed for Career Growth of the Young Chinese to Work for Transnational Companies Investing in Chonburi Province, Thailand

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Abstract: *This study investigated and ranked competencies needed for the young Chinese who are planning to be professionals in transnational companies investing in Thailand. In order to respond to the objectives, the researcher employed the Iceberg Model of Competency and a quantitative approach by using structured interviews of 9 senior committee members of The Thai Chinese Association and questionnaire of 73 committee members of The Thai Chinese Association. The investigation revealed that the general competencies which the young Chinese who want to work for transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province are expected to have. These are: 1) the skills in communication, information technology, leadership and teamwork, 2) the knowledge in studying culture of other countries, 3) developing positive attitudes and high responsibilities and 4) maintaining self-motivation in working under pressure. The results also indicated that the rank of importance for needed competencies of young Chinese, from more to less were: 1) positive attitude, 2) good communication and interpersonal skill, 3) self-motivation, 4) studying culture of other countries, 5) high responsibilities and 6) working under pressure.*

Keywords: Young Chinese; Competency; Career Growth; Transnational Companies

Introduction

In today's business environment economies have become globalized and the number of transnational organizations has been increasing rapidly all over the world (Luo, 2014). Organizations already know the importance of globalization and many companies are expanding beyond their national borders and entering novel markets. Transnational companies need people with specific competencies and talents to overcome the problems of doing business in new places. In today's globalized world, the competitiveness of corporate advancement is dependent on talent.

Thailand is a middle-income developing country with liberal national economic policy which is export-oriented. Thailand has an open market economic policy and has encouraged foreign investment since 1961. An increasing number of transnational companies are planning to invest in Thailand. Chonburi Province, located to the southeast of Bangkok, and is the first area of industrial developments of Thailand (Su, 2008). Office of the Board of Investment (BOI) supports transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province at the industrial estates.

With the rapid development of bilateral relations between China and Thailand, the two countries continue to strengthen cooperation in the field of education. There is an upward trend in China for the number of Chinese students come to Thailand to study. According to Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office of the Embassy of the People's Republic of

China in the Kingdom of Thailand statistics (2015), it is predicted that Chinese students coming to Thailand could reach 30,000 people in 2016 and continue to keep the highest number of foreign students, and about 20% of Chinese students will stay in Thailand after graduation. As more young Chinese choose to work or do business after graduation in Thailand, and so improving their ability to keep competitive becomes the biggest pressure for young Chinese, so, the young Chinese intention to improve their competencies will be discussed in this paper. This study reviews the competencies needed for the young Chinese to be professional for transnational companies in Chonburi Province, Thailand.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to investigate the competencies needed and rank the importance of those competencies needed for the young Chinese planning to be professional for transnational companies in Chonburi Province. Thus, the research objectives were as follows:

1. To investigate competencies needed for the young Chinese planning for career growth in transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province.
2. To explore the rank of competencies needed for the young Chinese to work for transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province.

Research Questions

The following research questions were postulated:

1. What were competencies needed for the young Chinese planning for career growth in transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province?
2. What was the rank of competencies needed for the young Chinese to work for transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province?

Benefits of the Study

The results of the study can provide useful information for young Chinese who want to work for transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province, Thailand. The research can help the young Chinese to understand which competencies are needed to work for transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province and to improve their competencies to be professionals in transnational companies investing in Thailand.

Literature Review

Definition of Young Chinese

The word “youth” does not offer distinguished boundaries. Different historical conditions, environment, economy, culture and the social system will produce different views to the definition. Biology and medicine are based on physical development to identify young or not; psychology divides the young and children based on traits of character, cognitive competency and social attitude; sociology divides the age of young from the socialization process, social responsibility and independent living skills. In this paper we are interested in people beginning their work careers, so the definition of the young people through the early development in China includes anyone 18 to 29 years old (Xi & Xia, 2006).

Career Growth

Career growth is important to all people, but the definition of career success takes on different meanings for everybody. Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert, and Hatfield (2006)

defined career growth is the process of designing and implementing targets, plans and strategies that enable human resource professionals and managers to satisfy workforce needs and allow individuals to achieve to the career objectives. To be successful in the career of young people, the young have to balance of relationship between the desire for career growth and the attitudes toward to current organizations. In more detail career growth is define as the process by which individuals develop insight into themselves and environment, formulate career goals and strategies, and acquire feedback regarding career progress (Eby, 2009).

Competency

A competency may include skill, job attitude, and knowledge which is reflected in job behavior that can be observed, measured and evaluated. Rankin (2004) defined competencies as, in essence, indicators of expected performance that, taken as a whole, should provide users with the complete picture of the most valuable behaviors, values and tasks required for their organization's success. Cooper and Graham (2001) identified 57 core competencies needed to be successful; their list became an integral knowledge base on identify competencies. Their study also compared the perceptions of each group toward the level of importance of each competency. This study follows with the 57 core competencies and the Iceberg Model (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). However a review of job advertising in newspapers to found requests for six of the competencies: good communication and interpersonal skill, studying culture of other countries, high responsibilities, positive attitude, working under pressure, and self-motivation. These six competencies were used for the questionnaire.

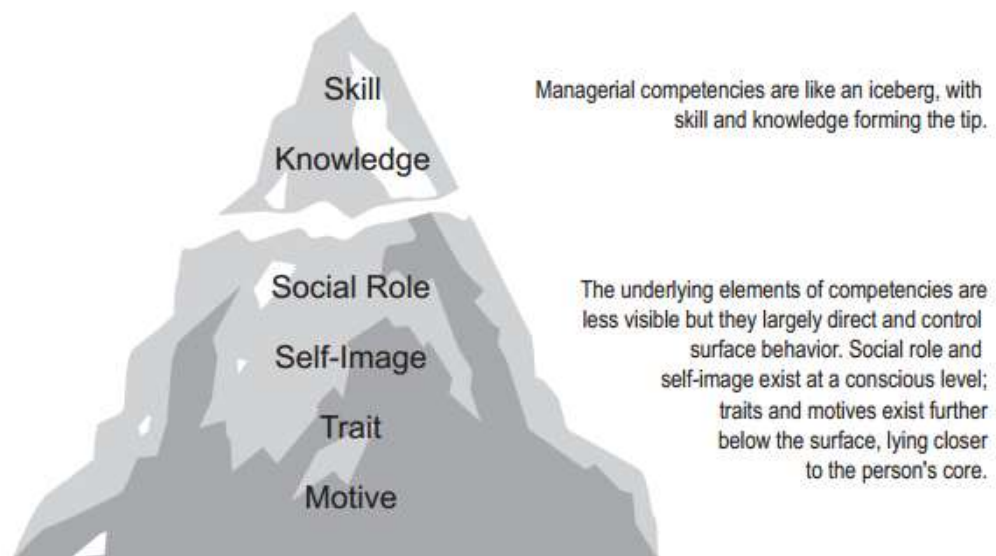


Figure 1 The iceberg model of competencies

Iceberg Model. Spencer & Spencer (1993, p.3) proposed the "Iceberg Model" to divide underlying personal characteristics which caused behaviors and performance in a job into six categories.

1. Skills are the things that people can do well, such as computer programming.
2. Knowledge is what a person knows about a specific topic, such as a computer language.

3. Social Role is the image that an individual displays in public; it represents what he or she thinks is important. It reflects the values of the person, such as being a diligent worker or a leader.

4. Self-image is the view people have of themselves. It reflects their identity, such as seeing oneself as an expert.

5. Traits are enduring characteristics of people. They reflect the way in which we tend to describe people (e.g., “she is reliable” or “he is adaptable”). These characteristics are habitual behaviors by which we recognize people.

6. Motives are unconscious thoughts and preferences, which drive behavior because the behaviors are a source of satisfaction (e.g., achievement drive and wanting to do better).

Transnational Companies

A transnational corporation (TNC) is a body that has an integrated philosophy encompassing domestic and global operations. The term is interchangeably used with transnational enterprise (MNE) or transnational company (TNC) (Hofstede, 1997). With the fast development of the domestic economies, many companies are facing a global challenge. The companies not only face the nation competitor, but also face international competitor (Porter & Mckibbin, 1998). An increasing number of transnational companies are planning to invest in Thailand, such as China, Korea, Japan and so on. Transnational companies choose Thailand as their target oversea land for investing by considering to the changing global economic circumstance and strategic requirements in the future (Mai, 2013). Thailand is a popular choice for transnational companies to invest. Thai government has policies to develop Chonburi on the Eastern Seaboard into a new economic zone. The Board of Investment Office support transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province at the industrial estates.

Methodology

Population

The data was collected from committee members of Thai Chinese Association in Bangkok. There were approximately 90 committee members in the population for this study. There were 9 senior committee members included in the approximately 90 committee members itself.

Sample

The participants of this study were committee members of Thai Chinese Association in Bangkok. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) came up with a table for determining sample size for a given population for easy reference.

The sample size can be determined from the table. The table shows that a good sample of 90 people would be 73 responses for questionnaire. The participants in structured interview of 9 senior committee members of Thai Chinese Association were selected by purposive sampling. The 9 senior committee members were the whole of the senior committee members in Thai Chinese Association.

Research Instruments and Data Collection

This study used the questionnaire and structured interview to collect data. Four experts were requested to evaluate each item in the questionnaire and structured interview questions on the appropriateness of the content areas. The researcher revised the questionnaire and structured interview questions according to suggestions from the experts.

This study used content analysis for the questionnaire and structured interview data. SPSS program was used for survey data. Respondents' answers were counted and ranked. Responses were saved on the researcher's personal computer or laptop. Data were entered in to SPSS for review by advisors and for analysis.

1. Questionnaires

The questionnaire was analyzed by using SPSS to determine the frequency, percentage and rank. The 15 items in the questionnaire were designed based on the information from the literature review and related research about competencies needed. The Chinese version of the questionnaire was sent to a Chinese expert. The Chinese expert reviewed the accuracy of the Chinese translation of the questionnaire.

2. Interviews

The interviews data analysis was conducted with the data obtained from structured interviews. The 3 questions in the structured interviews were designed based on the information from the literature review and related research about competencies needed. The recorded data from the interviews were translated, transcribed and categorized (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

Data form the Structured Interviews

For the first objective: *“to investigate competencies needed for the young Chinese planning for career growth in transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province.”*

1. What kind of competence do you think is important for young Chinese planning for career growth in transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province? And why?

Chinese culture is different from other cultures, so you must study behavior, habit and culture of other countries when you might work and live in foreign. If you don't understand Thai culture then you can't do anything in Thai. Leadership is a necessary management skill for any position and any management person. It can help young Chinese get a huge upside potential in the job. Every employer likes employee teamwork. Teamwork is a necessary condition for the success, if young Chinese understand teamwork so that they will work very well with a team. Employers don't like individual heroism, because it can't be successful. (P1)

Computer skill is a basic skill in the work. Now, almost all the work needs to use computer to do anything. If you don't understand computers then you can't to do any job. Computers are present everywhere in our lives. Good communication skills can improve to the relationship between you and others, let others think you are not strange. We can talk with others to understand the people's hobbies, personalities and so on. Culture includes language, religious beliefs, behavior, customs and so on. Language is an important tool when you study and work in a foreign country. When you understand the culture of Thailand that it can expand your knowledge, help you make good communication and business cooperation with the local peoples and help you to get a better life in Thailand. (P3)

Young Chinese study Thai culture for the benefit of their communicate with locals, so they can be integrated into the local life and respect the local customs, culture and religion, to think from point of view of the locals and is good for work. If young Chinese want to get a good career they need leadership skill, their business, task or their employee to be successful. Enhance the leadership skill by maintaining a positive attitude and improving communication

skill. With a positive attitude you are looking at the bright side of life. Communication is also a core competency for leadership. (P5)

To summarize, it is clear that the needed competencies are 1) Communication skill, 2) Leadership skill, 3) Teamwork and 4) Information technology skill.

2. Why do you think the young Chinese have to develop themselves to work in transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province?

Young Chinese who improve their competency can help to better adapt to life, finish the work, to improve work efficiency and realized value to get a better living environment, and reduce the pressure from the work, life and family. (P5)

Recently, Thailand is more popular in China, and Thailand is near to China, so more and more Chinese go to study and work in Thailand. There are Chinese competition will be more and more powerful, in a highly competitive market and this will make a lot of young people lose their own personality, so they must enhance their competency and personal charm to stand out in the highly competitive environment. (P6)

No matter who or where, we need to increase our competency and keep our value, something like this we don't be eliminated by the society. No matter our work or life, we like make friends or to do business with people who have strong competencies than you, if you don't increase your competencies that you can't get established in society. (P7)

Working for transnational companies needs skill for work and social roles, the participants ideas for development were 1) Young Chinese need to enhance their competencies and personal charm to keep up with the development of society and stand out in the highly competitive environment; 2) Development work efficiency and realized value in further are necessary and 3) Environment, life and family are the foundation for competencies improvement.

3. How can young Chinese plan and develop the competencies needed for career growth to work in transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province?

To set a goal that you want and the firm for which you work the goal for work, life and self. Through the accumulate knowledge and experience to achieve the goal. (P2)

Self-knowledge that you want to be what kind of person, and make an assessment to yourself to summarize the advantage and disadvantage and keep the advantages and improve the disadvantages. (P6)

Set a goal for work, life and self and finding the approach and preparing to face every challenges. (P8)

Finding individual strengths and weaknesses. And find a job that you like, and try hard to work. (P9)

For planning and developing themselves, the young Chinese had to 1) set a goal for work, life and self; 2) make a career planning; and 3) develop a self-assessment.

More Data form the Questionnaires

For the second objective: *“to explore the rank of competencies needed for the young Chinese to work for transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province.”*

Table 1 The importance of rank orders of the competencies

Competencies	(N=73)		
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Rank
Good communication and interpersonal skills	208	19.00	2
Studying culture of other countries	172	15.71	4
High responsibilities	162	14.79	5
Positive attitude	229	20.91	1
Working under pressure	149	13.61	6
Self-motivation	175	15.98	3
Total		100	

Table 1 indicates that positive attitude rank is first and received 20.9% of choices; good communication and interpersonal skills is second and accounted for 19.0% of all choices; rank of self-motivation is 3rd and received 16.0%; studying culture of other countries is 4th and shared at 15.71%; rank of high responsibilities is 5th and share at 14.79%; rank of working under pressure is 6th being chosen as more important in 13.6% of choices.

Conclusions and Discussions

In conclusion, for planning and developing themselves, the young Chinese had to 1. Set a goal for work, life and self; 2. Make a career planning; and 3. Develop a self-assessment.

The results indicates that the rank of importance for competencies needed of young Chinese were 1. Positive attitude, 2. Good communication and interpersonal skill, 3. Self-motivation, 4. Studying culture of other countries, 5. High responsibilities, and 6. Working under pressure.

Young Chinese need a healthy attitude to face the work and life abroad. Attitude is the key factor for everything. This result was consistent with Zhao (2013) that the attitudes and behaviors of employees affect not only their ability to effectively implement the project, but also the quality of their own lives while they are abroad. Ahmed (2011) states that we start seeing things more positively enabling us to handle workplace problems more easily, increasing and enjoying productivity; and better health. A positive attitude enhances leadership skills and helps in teamwork.

Good communication and interpersonal relationships are closely related to career. Abbe (2008) stated that building interpersonal relationships across cultural boundaries has implications for overall mission success, even after the particular individual has left the area

of operations. Hogan (2004) states that language is another aspect of communication and it is necessary.

Self-motivation is important when young Chinese seek to work for transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province. Self-motivation can improve their self-confidence and help them relieve the pressure of work and live in Thailand. Sean (2010, p.9) also suggested that being motivated to meet our goals means that we are able to improve our self-confidence; enhance our self-discipline; set examples for ourselves of what we can achieve; challenge ourselves to stretch beyond our perceived limits; reward ourselves for reaching our goals; and enjoy the recognition or perks associated with reaching our goals.

Young Chinese need to learn local culture and language from books, language classes and make friends with locals. Cultural competency is a concept that evolved from earlier ideas of cultural sensitivity and awareness. Williams (2001, p.4) argues that cultural competency enables individuals and organizations to work or respond effectively across cultures in a way that the values, beliefs, traditions and customs are recognized. Earley (2002, p.279) states that cultural knowledge and awareness are necessary but not sufficient for performing effectively in a cross-cultural setting, because an individual must also have the motivation to use the knowledge available. Logue (2001) stated that learning the native language, at least enough for day-to-day activities, can greatly increase interaction, partnership building, and trust.

Responsibility is the principle ability for young Chinese to work for transnational companies investing in Chonburi Province. This result was consistent with Jenkins (2008) when the employee feels personally responsible for her job performance, she shows up on time, puts in her best effort and completes projects to the best of her ability.

When the pressure coming that young Chinese can control emotional response, stay focused and maintain work/life balance. Ivancevich (2008, p.224) defined work pressure as the programmed response of the individual towards a group of threats called stressors. According to Brown and Harvey (2006) that the interaction between the individual and the environment which as a result may affect his mental and physical conditions.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the young Chinese studying and planning to work for transnational companies.

1. Communicating with the local people to work in Thailand or any countries.
2. Studying culture of other countries by reading, listening, speaking and practicing other languages. It helps to understand the characteristics of local culture.
3. Being responsible to understand work, strengths, personal advantages and disadvantages.
4. Having a positive attitude to find out about work or life, then adaptation and submission to in the environment.
5. Working under pressure help young Chinese make a reasonable plan, to understand the importance of work and which task is the most important work. To improve the efficiency in the work, make it effective and rapidly complete the work. To communicate with work teams and be rational to allocate resources, complete the work in a planned and orderly manner.
6. Gaining self-motivation and leadership helping young Chinese get a huge upside potential to work for transnational companies.

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