Code of Ethics for HR Practitioners in the Public Sector under the Civil Service of Thailand

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Abstract. *The purpose of this study was to develop a code of ethics for HR practitioners in the public sector under the Civil Service of Thailand. Two data collection methods, document review and focused group interviews were applied in this study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for focused group interviewees and a qualitative data analysis method was employed in analysing data. As a result of this study a code of ethics for HR practitioners in public sector under the Civil Service of Thailand was developed. The code of ethics was presented in a model of "TRUSTS" comprising of: (1) T-Treating others with integrity, legality, and non-discrimination in human resource management; (2) R-reliable proficiency and continuous learning in human resource professionals; (3) U-upholding confidentiality and information sharing; (4) S-stably being role models in human resource ethics code; (5)T- thoughtfulness in handling conflicts of interest in human resource management; and (6) S- support others to have a balance of work and life. A set of expected behaviours for the code of ethics for each HR function was also developed, supplemented by a code of ethics handbook for use in implementation. A three-step approach to implementation was recommended using: (1) awareness; (2) commitment; and (3) engagement mechanisms.*

Keywords: Code of ethics; HR practitioners; civil service; integrity; legality; non-discrimination; proficiency; learning; confidentiality; information sharing; role model; conflict of interests; balance of work and life.

Introduction

A code of ethics is one of the most important components of any occupation and professional. It is a set of guidelines for conducting oneself in performing and discharging his or her duties and responsibilities according to such professional competency standards. This is to promote and maintain reputation, trust, integrity and honour of those in such professions. Civil service is considered one of the most important professions entrusted with the responsibility of national development. Civil service officials produce and deliver public services to people according to () government policies and to ensure that all the people receive fair and equitable benefits of government services.

In Thailand, in the past there was no written ethical code, but people upheld Buddhist principles and the speeches bestowed by His Majesty the King at various occasions as their standard code of conduct. These are used along with the civil service disciplinary provisions in order to promote good conduct of civil service officials for efficiency and effectiveness of their performance. Later (), the provisions the Civil Service Commission Act of B. E. 2535 (1992) prescribed that all civil service officials must comply with all government regulations and traditions including the code of ethics established according to the rule of Civil Service Commission (CSC).

The provisions of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B. E. 2544 (1997) prescribed that the state must have a political development plan, establish standards on morality and ethics of those who occupied the political office, government and employees or other types of state employees in order to prevent corruption and to create efficiency in the performance of their duties. Based on these provisions, the Ethics Promotion Centre of the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC)

encourages all government agencies to establish a code of ethics for civil service officials in their organisation to follow in the performance of their duties. The OCSC is required to support, cooperate and advise all government agencies in developing their codes of ethics.

The vision of the OCSC 2537 (1994) aimed at being a central organisation of excellence in human resource management in the public sector, with professionalism based on the principles of a merit system and the good governance of administration for the achievement of public mission and for the benefit and well being of people. Along with the policy and intention to delegate the authority to all government agencies to make a final decision on the appointment and other human resource (HR) decisions on the civil service officials at C-9 level and below to enhance the efficiency of administration. It is necessary for the OCSC to strengthen the capability in human resource management (HRM) for HR practitioners in all government agencies. So that they are equipped with knowledge and skills and become professional in HRM in order to be able to perform and achieve the objectives and goals of the strategic plan of their agencies efficiently and effectively.

To achieve such objectives and goals, it is also necessary to establish an accreditation system for HR practitioners in public sector. The OCSC has conducted some studies to develop this accreditation system and part of the system is to create professional standards for HRM in public sectors. In this connection, it was considered that code of ethics for HR practitioners in public sector is one of the most important components in HR professional standards similar to other professions such as medical doctor, lawyer, engineer and etc. In addition it is considered that the code of ethics would help in promoting and strengthening the merit system and developing of competency of HR practitioners in the public sector to be compatible to other professions both in Thailand and other countries. Based on the above rationales, it is essential to develop a code of ethics for HR practitioner in public sector under the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

Significance

This study will help in founding an initial body of

knowledge for further contribution and development towards a solid knowledge base for a code of ethics for HR practitioners in public sector under the Civil Service in Thailand. It can also be used as a ground for further studies and consistent development on the subject which will lastly add up to the diversity of literature in this field. It will also provide the basis for practitioners and academics to develop approaches to transferring the code of ethics concept into practice. Especially for Thailand, it will serve as information for the government to consider for application to reinforce productivity and efficiency in public sector. This will in turn contribute to the economic recovery and upgrading the competitive advantage of Thailand.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were: (1) to study the essential ethical concepts applicable to the practice of HR practitioners in the public sector under the CSC of Thailand; (2) to review the laws, rules, regulations, and policies related to the ethical requirements for HRM in the public sector under the CSC of Thailand; (3) to study the code of ethics of CSC, the code of ethics of selected companies in Thailand, the code of ethics of HR related and HR associations in Thailand and in selected countries, and the code of ethics of selected professions in Thailand; and (4) to develop a code of ethics for HR practitioners in the public sector of the Thai civil service.

Literature Review

The literature review in this study is divided into seven parts: (1) concept, theories and principles of ethics, (2) laws and ethics; (3) culture and ethics; (4) managing ethics; (5) code of ethics; (6) HR code of ethics; and (7) related research.

(1) Concept, Theories and Principles of Ethics Steiner and Steiner (1994, p.178) asserted that ethics "is the study of what is good and bad, right and wrong, and just and unjust." It is the "discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation. Ethics can also be regarded as a set of moral principles or values. Morality is a doctrine or system of moral conduct… refers to that which related to principles of right and wrong in behaviour" (Carroll 1993, p. 92).

Miles and Huberman (1994) maintained that

"specific ethical issues are, explicitly or not, nested in larger theories of how we decide that an action is right, correct, or appropriate." Deyhle, Hess, and Lecompte (1992, cited in Miles and Huberman 1994) proposed five general theories: (1) a teleological theory "judges actions according to primary ends, good in themselves" (p. 289); (2) a utilitarian, pragmatic approach "judges actions according to their specific consequences---benefits and costs---for various audiences" (p. 289); (3) a deontological view "invokes one or more universal rules (e.g., Kant's categorical and practical imperatives…" (p. 289); (4) a critical theory approach judges actions according to whether one provides direct benefits to those involved and/or becomes an advocate for them; (5) a conventional view "judges actions according to whether they are congruent with specific agreements made with others in trusted relationships" (p. 289).

There are two basic views of business ethics: (1) the theory of amorality, holds that "business activity should be amoral, that is, conducted without reference to ethical ideals. Managers may act according to selfish economic interests because the market mechanism distils such actions into benefits for shareholders, employees, and society at large" (Steiner and Steiner 1994, p.180); (2) The theory of moral unity, "business actions should be judged by the general ethical standards of society, not by a special set of more permissive standards. [There is] only one basic ethical standard exists, making it possible to harmonize high ethical principles with the demands of business life" (p. 180). Carroll (1993) provides three types of management ethics: (1) immoral management is "a style that not only is devoid of ethical principles or precepts but also implies a positive and active opposition to what is ethical. Here management decisions, behaviours, or actions are discordant with ethical principles" (p.101); (2) moral management "conforms to standards of ethical behaviours or professional standards of conducts. Although it is not always crystal clear what ethical standards prevail, moral management strives to be ethical in terms of its focus on ethical norms, professional standards of conduct, motives, goals, orientation toward the law, and general operating strategy" (p.102); and (3) amoral management "pursues profitability as its goal but does not cognitively attend to moral issues that may be intertwined with that pursuit"

(p. 104).

Theories can be presented in the forms of core principles to guide ethical choice (Miles and Huberman 1994) and for decision making. In general, principles of ethical conduct include: the categorical imperative, the conventionalist ethic, the disclosure rule, the doctrine of the mean, the golden rule, the intuition ethic, the market ethic, the ends-means ethic, the might-equal–right ethic, the organization ethic, the practical imperative, the principle of equal freedom, the proportionality ethic, the professional ethic, the rights ethic, the theory of justice, and the utilitarian ethic (Steiner and Steiner 1994). These principles are the basis for ethical decision making and guidelines for ethical conduct by individuals and organizations or institutions. Therefore, in developing and implementing a code of ethics these principles should be taken into account.

(2) Laws and Ethics Steiner and Steiner (1994 p. 192) asserted that "the law is a codification of customs, ideas, beliefs, and ethical standards that society wishes to preserve and enforce". The law does not "enforce all societal ethics; it simply cannot blanket every area of conduct. Law is reactive, and enactments of new statutes always lag behind the opportunity for corporate expediency" (Steiner and Steiner 1994, p. 192). Carroll (1993) argues that "the law may be seen as a reflection of what society thinks are minimal standards of conduct and behaviour. Both law and ethics have to do with what is deemed right or wrong, but law reflects society's codified ethics [and] … if a person breaks a law or violates a regulation, he or she is also behaving unethically" (p. 96). Hence, "in many respects the law and ethics overlap" (pp. 94-95). So in developing the code of ethics it should not repeat the provision of the law. However, it can be linked to the law.

(3) Culture and Ethics Hofstede (1984) defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another" (p. 21). It is "a set of traditional values, rules, or standards transmitted between generations and acted upon to produce behaviour that falls within acceptable limits. These rules and standards always play an important part in determining values, because individual stabilize

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beliefs by anchoring their conduct in the culture of the group" (Steiner and Steiner 1994, p. 191). It comprises of three layers (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998): (1) the outer layer or the explicit products … "the observable reality of the language, food, buildings, houses, monuments, agriculture, shrines, markets, fashions and art" … "the symbols of the deeper level of culture" (p. 21); (2) the middle layer of norms and values. Norms are the mutual sense a group has of what is "right" and "wrong" while values determine the definition of "good" and "bad." Norms can develop on a formal level as written laws and on an informal level as social control while values are closely related to the ideals shared by a group; and (3) the core or the central assumption about existence. Culture is closely related to ethics especially the second layer of culture, norms and values. Enforcement of ethical conduct requires change in values as no change will occur without change of values or beliefs of people (Joungtrakul 2009). So the cultural dimensions must be taken into account when developing and implementing the code of ethics especially in the Thai context where cultural values are much different from the Western and other society.

Some of the Thai cultural values that needed immediate attention include for example, the concepts of: (1) **"Kreng-Jai"** which the closest meaning is "to be considerate, to feel reluctant to impose upon another person, to take another person's feelings (and 'ego') into account, or to take every measure not to cause discomfort or inconvenience for another person… [It] refers to such attitude predisposing to one's resulting behaviour towards someone else… [It] is to be observed by all, superiors, equals, and inferiors, including intimate relationships like husband-wife, and close friends, with differences in degree... (Komin 1990, pp. 161-162); (2) Face Saving, which is an expression of the top concern for "ego" and that "whenever there is any problem to be solved that would directly or indirectly involve persons, the first criterion to consider is saving 'face'- - the 'ego' - - of the persons involved. A Thai would usually find indirect ways to soften a negative message. Most important is to avoid public confrontation, regardless of whether it involves an inferior, an equal or worse still, a superior. To make a person lose 'face', regardless of rank, is to be avoided at all cost" (p. 160); (3) Criticism avoidance, which reflects that "the Thai are very 'ego' oriented, to the extent that it is very difficult for the Thai to dissociate one's ideas and opinions from the 'ego' self. This is why strong criticism to the expressed idea is often automatically taken as criticism to the person holding those ideas" (p. 160); (4) Sympathy, which reflects that the "Thais are sympathetic to others and it becomes the nature of the Thais in general" (Joungtrakul 2009, p. 455); and (5) Compromising, which reflects that the **"**Thais are compromising in nature and it is one of the strengths of Thai people. They practice this concept in their daily lives and the phase of 'meet half way' is understandable by the Thais" (Joungtrakul 2009, p 455).

As Thai culture is considered "Thai-Buddhism culture" (Dhiravegin 1998, p. 13), Buddhist principles should also be taken into account in developing and implementing a code of ethics. Some of the principles presented by Payutto (1999) to be considered include: (1) the divine abiding: loving kindness; compassion; appreciative gladness; and equanimity; (2) The principles for helpful integration: giving; amicable speech; helpful action; and participation or to help through "contribution of money, material things, or knowledge; to help through speech; to help through physical action; and to help through participation in facing and resolving problems" (p.21); (3) The principles of success: having a hearth of zeal; doing with effort; committing oneself to the task; and using wise investigation or in short, "love of work, tenacity, dedication, and circumspection" (p.36); (4) The ten regal qualities: sharing with the populace; maintaining good conduct; working selflessly; working honestly; deporting oneself with gentleness and congeniality; rejecting indulgence through austerity; adhering to reason, not anger; bringing tranquillity through non-violence; overcoming difficulties with patience; and not doing that which strays from righteousness; and (5) The qualities of a good or genuine person: knowing principles, knowing causes; knowing objectives, knowing results; knowing oneself; knowing moderation; knowing occasion; knowing company; and knowing persons.

(4) Managing Ethics Carroll (1993) divided ethics into: individual, organizational, association, societal and international levels. Individual and organizational ethics are very important as they

are the basis for the next higher levels. According to Carroll (1993, p. 125) "personal ethics for the most part, entails making decisions. It typically confronts the individual with a conflict-of-interest situation." It is usually "present when the individual has to choose between his or her interests and the interests of someone else or some other group (stakeholders)". To manage ethics in organizations a manager must "appreciate how the organization's ethical climate is just one part of its overall corporate culture" (p. 135). Understanding of other behaviours of superiors and/or peers is essential (i.e., amoral decision making, unethical acts, behaviours, or practices) (Carroll 1993). He further asserted that "decision is at the heart of the management process" (p. 144). It relates directly to ethics. The consequence of the decision making strongly impacts on both the individual and organization both in negative and positive ways.

There are several ways to encourage ethical conduct which include ethics training, ethical advocates, ethics codes, whistle-blowing (Carroll 1993; Kreitner 1998), and disciplining violators of ethics standards (Carroll 1993). Derry (1991) suggests the removal of disincentives such as reward for quantity over quality, and at the same time build systems and positive rewards to support ethical action such as formulate and articulate ethical standards. In a programme to integrate leadership, ethics, and corporate responsibility into management education, Piper (1993) presents the following guiding beliefs: (1) ethics is as much an attitude as it is a set of skills and knowledge; (2) outstanding leaders, organizations, and practice should be emphasized; (3) the focus should be on decision making with all its complexity and ambiguity, not on issues of ethics or social responsibility in isolation; (4) immediate intervention is important; (5) a broad integrative programme is needed; (6) surround the community with opportunities to discuss leadership, ethics, and corporate responsibility; (7) faculty encouragement and development are as important as student development, at least during the first five to seven years; and (8) strong visible commitment by the dean and senior faculty leaders is essential. These principles could be used as a guideline in developing and implementing a code of ethics for organizations or institutions.

(5) Code of Ethics Kreitner (1998) asserts that

"an organizational code of ethics is a published statement of moral expectations for employee conduct" (p.148). Some codes "specify penalty for offenders" (p.148). To promote ethical conduct of their employees or members most organizations no matter whether it is a government, business, or professional association that establishes and promote codes of ethics or code of conduct (Carroll 1993; Sorell and Hendry 1994). The benefits of code of ethics include: (1) legal protection for the company; (2) increased company pride and loyalty; (3) increased consumer/public goodwill; (4) improved loss prevention; (5) reduced bribery and kickbacks; (6) improved product quality; and (7) increased productivity (Ethics Resource Centre 1990, cited in Carroll 1993).

Normally it was assumed that ethics is a matter of individual conscience (Steiner and Steiner 1994). However, most professions have "well-defined codes of ethics" (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 288). Steiner and Steiner (1994) argue that "professional people have strongly internalized ethical codes that guide their action… it holds that you should do only that which can be explained before a committee of your peers (p. 225). It applies to "doctors, engineers, architects, college professors, lawyers, and business executives in resolving the special problems of their professions and fields of interest" (p. 225).

The most frequently topics in a code of ethics include: (1) conflict of interest; (2) receiving gifts, gratuities, and entertainment; (3) protecting company proprietary information; (4) giving gifts, gratuities, and entertainment; (5) discrimination; (6) sexual harassment; (7) kickbacks; (8) general conduct; (9) employee theft; and (10) proper use of company assets (Ethics Resource Centre 1990, cited in Carroll, 1993). To be effective it must contain specific practices such as specified above and be firmly supported by top management (Kreitner 1998).

(6) HR Code of Ethics Harned (2005, p. 349) asserted that "because of the nature of the work environment, ethical decisions are a part of every HR professional's daily to-do list. HR professional have long recognized their role in determining policies, providing training, and, when required, enforcing disciplinary procedures to not only protect the organization but also provide a good place

to work." To do this HR can do the following: (1) educate senior leaders on human behaviour; (2) coach executives in ethical role modelling; (3) take the pulse of the employee culture; and (4) complement the ethics function (Harned 2005). According to Carroll (1993), HRM is not a clearly separate discipline like law, medicine, or economics as it draws on a variety of disciplines. However, to promote HR profession most HR societies establish and enforce code of ethics in their associations such as the Society for Human Resource Management (Carroll 1993).

Related Research

Prachayaprut (1999) conducted a study of the codes of ethics of 17 professions and found that the common topics in these codes of ethics were: (1) good citizenship; (2) social responsibility; (3) compliance with law; (4) compliance with professional ethics; (5) achieving professional goal; (6) non-discrimination; (7) contribution to society and peers; (8) participate in social activities and disseminate knowledge to public; (9) provide proper advice and assistance to peers; (10) refrain from creating conflict in the profession; (11) loyalty to profession; (12) confidentiality of clients; (13) commitment to concerned organizations; (14) fair treatment to all concerned; (15) code of ethics as a guideline for fairness and safety; (16) comply with moral standards, laws, rules and regulations; (17) being a role model for newcomers to the profession; (18) follow through; (19) public benefits over self benefits; (20) neutrality in performance of duty; (21) continuous learning in the profession; (22) extend cooperation to peers and all concerned; (23) refrain from plagiarism; and (24) compliance with professioned principles, moral and culture. These common features of codes of ethics are useful to this study, as they could be used as a guideline in developing the desired code of ethics.

Ariyaputhipong (2006) found that the majority of Thai office and factory workers adhered to the principles of the Buddhist Five Precepts, and that they gave alms and prayed once in a while. Very few of them practiced meditation. The relationship between Buddhist religiousness and life satisfaction was very low. It is possible that practices according to Buddhist religiousness yield results in the long run but the present cross-sectional method

of research is not capable of demonstrating the relationship. This study helps us to understand the application of Buddhist principles to be used in the development of the desired code of ethics.

Nieh and McLean (2005) found that succession planning is an effective tool for an organization to use in selecting ethical managers. It is a competitive tool for organizations to use in selecting potential managers and also retain experienced and skillful employees by providing them with many development opportunities. Moreover, ethics is an important issue when selecting managers. Because managers' behaviours are highly related to the organizational culture, there is a strong relationship between management and ethical climate. This study helps us to understand the use of ethics as important criteria for selecting manager and succession planning can be used as an HR strategy for enhancing organizational ethics.

Kamatchi and Usha Devil (2007) suggest sound business and HR practices for building up a corporate ethical house as follows: (1) To practice the core values of business for innovative performance, total quality management, integrity, customer satisfaction and social well being; (2) To develop social responsibility culture towards stake holders; (3) To develop reliability and relationship in all corporate activities; (4) To be transparent and truthful to all the business activities; (5) To recognise the concept of corporate responsibility in the widest sense with obligations to the community as well as customers and employees; (6) To develop corporate mission, long term vision, credo, state business objectives and strategies that focus on customers, government, human relations, share holders and society; (7) To optimise the core values of good citizenship in organization; (8) To adopt sound ethical business and marketing practices; (10) To create organisational culture and good governance; and (11)To adopt sound ethical business and HR practices. This study helps us to understand the relationships of ethics, culture and sound business and HR practices.

Design

Based on the constructivism paradigm (Guba and Lincoln 1989; Guba 1990; Creswell 2007), qualitative research was chosen for this study. Taking into account the flexibility of qualitative design (Patton 1990), Figure 1 illustrates the design of this study.

Figure 1: Research Design

As shown in Figure 1, the design of this study began with the proposal and approval of the research topic by the steering committee appointed by the OCSC followed by the conduct of literature review which was an on-going process. Based on the literature review, a qualitative design of this study was developed and a research proposal was presented to the steering committee for approval. Two data collection methods of document review, and focused groups interviews were used and data analysis
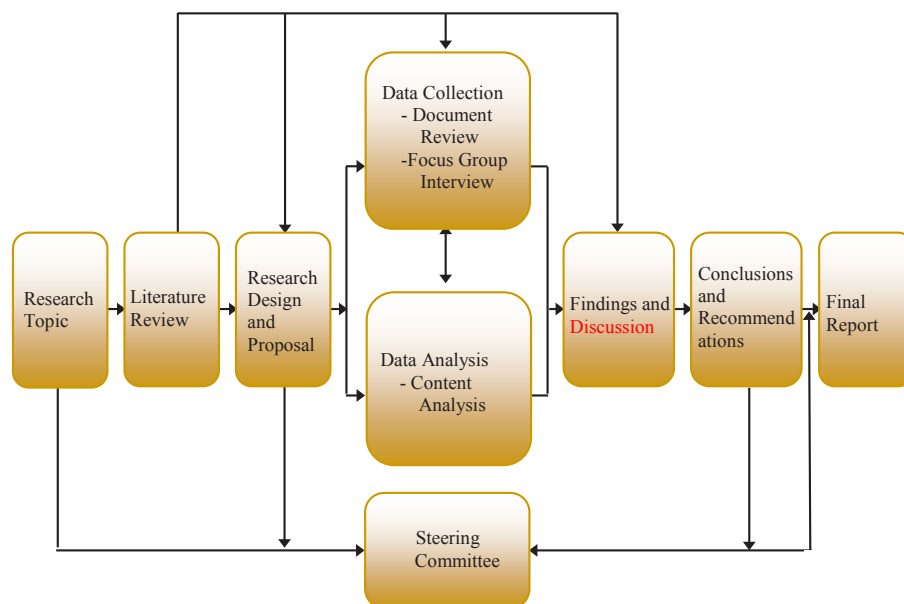
was performed in parallel with the data collection. Findings were presented and discussed, followed by the presentation of conclusions and recommendations. The study report was then presented to the steering committee for approval and final report was submitted.

Methodology

According to Silverman (2000, p.77) methodology is "a general approach to studying research topics." It defines how we will go about studying any phenomenon where a research method is "a specific research technique" (p.77). Some qualitative methods include: observation; text and documents; interviews; and audio and video recoding (Silverman 2000). Document review and interview are considered major methods of data collection in qualitative research (Creswell 2007).

Data Collection

The goal of qualitative research is to "produce high quality, meaningful and relevant data, such that it is possible to emerge valuable insights within a social context" (Whiteley 2002, p.4). The quality of the data collected and used depends on the methods used to collect such data. The researcher "should determine the most practical, efficient, feasible, and ethical methods for collecting data as the research progresses" (Marshall and Rossman 1999, p.138). Two data collection methods, document review and focus group interviews were applied in this study.

Document Review Based on discussion of the use of documentation as data by Marshall and Rossman (1999), documents review in this study was conducted in two major parts. The first part involved a review of laws, rules, regulations, and policies related to the ethical requirements for HRM in the public sector under the CSC of Thailand. The second part involves a review of the code of ethics

of CSC, the code of ethics of selected companies in Thailand, the code of ethics of HR related and HR associations in Thailand and in selected countries, and the code of ethics of selected professions in Thailand.

Focus Group Four focus group interviews were conducted with HR experts in both the public and private sectors. The focus groups were conducted according to the process presented by Stewart, Shamdasani et al. (2007).

D**ata Analysis**

Data analysis in this study was based on content analysis (Weber 1990; Creswell 2009). As stated in the research design**,** data analysis and collection were performed simultaneously.

Finding and Discussion

This section presents the discussion of findings in responding to each of the four research objectives.

Objective One: Ethics is the study of what is good and bad, right and wrong, and just and unjust (Steiner and Steiner 1994). It is a set of moral principles or values (Carroll 1993) and a part of culture (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998). It overlaps with the law as the law is what society thinks are minimal standards of conduct and behaviour. So if a person breaks a law or violates a regulation, he or she is also behaving unethically (Carroll 1993). Thus ethics is behaviours expected beyond the compliance with the law. To achieve this expectation code of ethics is developed and promoted by most of the professions. Code of ethics is a published statement of moral expectations for employee or professional conduct (Kreitner 1998). It is a component of professional requirements (Bowie 1991). HRM has not been fully recognized as a profession (Werther and Davis 1993). However, to develop and promote the profession HR code of ethics was established and implemented by most HR associations and institutions.

Objective Two: The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B. E. 2540 (1997), Article 77, prescribed that the state must have a political development plan, establish standards on moral and

ethics of those who occupied the political office, government and employees or other types of state employees in order to prevent corruption and to create efficiency in the performance of their duties. The National Administrative Act B. E. 2534 (1991), provides a framework for administering for the best benefits of the people, achieving the objectives according to the state missions, with efficiency and worthiness by good governance. Accountability, participation, disclosure of information, and monitoring and evaluation of performance as appropriate to the mission of the organization must be taken into account in administration. The Civil Service Commission Act of B. E. 2535 (1992), Article 91, prescribed that all civil service officials must comply with all government regulations and traditions including the code of ethics established according to the rules of CSC. The Royal Decree for Good Governance B. E. 2546 (1993), specified seven objectives of public administration for: (1) the best benefits of the people; (2) achieving the mission of the state; (3) efficiency and worthiness in achieving the state mission; (4) no unnecessary step in the process of work; (5) improving the state mission to cope with situation; (6) the convenience and satisfaction of the needs of the people; and (7) regularly evaluation of performance of the state services. The following principles of legality; merit, transparency, participation, accountability, and worthiness are the base for the decree. The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan B. E. 2545-2549 (2002-2006) (NESDB 2000) prescribed that the principles of good governance of legality; merit, transparency, participation, accountability, and worthiness will be applied in development administration. This is to create immunity for economic and social sectors to be able to cope with changes forced by internal and external factors. The plan aims at promoting good governance of both public and private sectors. These provisions are the basis for the need for developing and implementing the code of ethics for HR practitioner in public sector under the Thai civil service in this study.

Objective Three: A review of Code of Ethics of the Civil Service Official B. E. 2537 (1994) (OCSC 1994) found that it comprises of four parts: the code of ethics provisions toward; (1) self conduct; (2) organization; (3) superior, subordinate, and

peers; and (4) people and society. In addition, the draft of HR code of ethics developed based on the report of five seminars of HR practitioners on the HR code of ethics conducted by the OCSC (2006) was reviewed. There are nine sets of provisions as follows: (1) to behave oneself in a manner that can be trusted by others, to maintain professional reputation and dignity; (2) to comply with laws, rules and regulations with carefulness and transparency based on academic and merit principles for achieving the best benefits of the organization, people and the country; (3) to perform duty with honesty, integrity, correctly for the best of public benefits over personal benefits, avoiding conflict of interests or accepting inappropriate gratuities; (4) perform duty to maintain the rights and benefits of employees, promoting quality of life, creating morale and motivation of employees in the organization; (5) to perform duty with initiative and creativity to enhance positive changes for employees and organization continuously; (6) to provide services with fairness, polite, equity, and rapidly for all; (7) maintain confidentiality of information and information of employees in organization; (8) strive to develop professional knowledge, skills, ability and competency continuously to use as a basis for developing work to be up to date as professionalism and to assist and support professional peers; and (9) ready to be accountable for decision making and its consequences affecting HRM under his or her management.

A review of the code of ethics of a Thai company, and a multinational company was made. The major provisions found included; sexual harassment; disclosure of conflicts of interests; exclusive and confidential information; business bribery; fair treatment of customers and vendors; purchasing and selling of stocks; political support and related policies; and government official contacts.

A comparative study of the codes of ethics of an HR related and seven HR associations in six countries, Australia, Canada, Singapore, Thailand, UK, and USA was conducted. The common provisions by ranking are: (1) confidentiality of information; (2) knowledge and professional competency; (2) respect of human rights and dignity; (3) compliance with laws, rules and regulations; (4); Conflict of interests; (5) assistance and support to peers; (6) honesty and integrity. A comparative study of the codes of ethics of six professions in Thailand,

medicine, architecture, engineering, law, education, and nursing was conducted. The common provisions by ranking are: (1) conflict of interests; (2) non-discrimination; (3) confidentiality of information; (4) integrity; (5) professional competency; (6) fairness; and (7) ethics role model. These findings were used as a basis for developing the code of ethics for HR practitioners in the public sector under the Thai civil service to be presented and discussed next.

Objective Four: Based on the literature review, document review and analysis by taking into account the role of Thai culture a set of code of ethics for HR practitioners in the public sector under the Civil Service of Thailand was proposed. The proposed code of ethics was then compared and contrasted with the results of a comparative study of the codes of ethics of an HR related and seven HR associations in six countries. The proposed code of ethics was then revised and presented to the four focus groups and a revision was made again based on the results of the focus groups. The revised code of ethics was then compared and contrasted with the results of a comparative study of the codes of ethics of six professions in Thailand and found that it was congruent with the others. The revised code of ethics was then presented in a meeting of OCSC experts and the final revision was made. The final code of ethics was presented in a model of "TRUST" comprising of: (1) T-Treating others with integrity, legality, and non-discrimination in human resource management; (2) R-reliable proficiency and continuous learning in human resource professionals; (3) U-upholding confidentiality and information sharing; (4) S-stably being role models in the human resource ethics code; (5) T-thoughtfulness in handling conflicts of interests in human resource management; and (6) S-support others to have a balance of work and life.

To support the implementation of the code of ethics, a set of expected behaviours for each of the three HR functions was developed as a decision making guidelines for the HR practitioners. A selected sample of expected behaviour is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: A Selected Sample of the Expected Behaviours for a Code of Ethics of each HR Function

Code of Ethics	Recruitment and HRM	HRD	Motivation and Retention
T-Treating others with integrity, legality and non-discrimination.	Set a clear, systematic and fair criterion on manpower planning and management; recruitment and selection, job placement and assignment, transfer and promotion and make it known thoroughly.	Supervise and organize training courses according to the plans/projects in compliance with standards and regulations. Evaluate the projects with honesty and integrity without any deviations of the results.	Process the matters concerned carefully in accordance with laws, rules and regulations. Be fair to both, the complainant and the defendant. Avoid protecting the wrong-doer whose guilt is clearly proved.
R-reliable proficiency and continuous learning in HR professionals.	Study, review and understand the rules, regulations, laws and policies concerning manpower planning, recruitment, selection and placement, promotion and transfer including HRM to gain thorough knowledge and understanding and be able to apply to work appropriately and correctly.	Study, review and understand the rules, regulations, laws and policies concerning HRD, including HRM to gain thorough knowledge and understanding and be able to apply to work appropriately and correctly.	Maintain performance according to standards and professional competency in the area of PM, C&B, ER, discipline; appeals and grievances under responsibility. Always review the level of one's performance and the team regularly in order to gain current knowledge and be able to effectively develop a management plan.
U-upholding confidentiality and information sharing.	Provide suggestions, advice and assistance to others and peers of the same profession in planning and management of manpower, recruitment, selection, placement, appointments, promotions and transfers.	Refrain from giving out any information concerning the results of a survey or training needs analysis from other sections/ divisions to unauthorized persons.	Provide correct information or suggestions and advice in contacting or processing of PM, C&B, ER, discipline; appeals and grievances to the officials of different divisions/ sections / departments or other persons contacted.
S-stably being role models in the HR ethics code.	Possess knowledge of the profession's ethics and be able to act strictly and firmly to those ethics guidelines. Act as an ethics role model in the profession to be an example to staff in other divisions/ sections so that they realize and uphold as an example.	Conduct oneself under the frame of the law and the state policies related to work and try in every way to maintain rules, regulations and follow the path of justice in order to achieve objectives.	Understand the principles of ethics and be able to apply to cope with the situations that may lead to a choice of personal survival and to perform duties justly with reason and the pros and cons of the consequences.

Code of Ethics	Recruitment and HRM	HRD	Motivation and Retention
T-thoughtfulness in handling conflict of interests in HRM.	Avoid demanding any self-benefits or any exchanges from applicants or other persons in order to be selected for a job, placement, appointment, promotion, transfer, or use any information gained from the position to gain self-benefits.	Avoid assigning a person who is involves or has a business relationship with any company that has interests in a government agency in making decisions for procurements related to HRD i.e. selecting an outside training institute, facilities, equipment, instruments and others.	Immediately consult with a superior to find a solution to any problem that has or expected to have a conflict of interests which may affect the processes of the PM, C&B and ER.
S-support others to have a balance of work and life.	Plan, provide and manage time efficiently in order to balance the allocation of time well between the time at work and for private matters, or for the family. Allocate time appropriately and suitably	Be attentive to working behaviours of staff and teams. Regularly notice and ask them of their well beings, giving advice concerning the management of time, and problems resulting from their work.	Support others to realize the significance of their work – life balances, health and families.

A code of ethics handbook for HR practitioners in the public sector under the Thai civil service was developed and disseminated to all stakeholders. It is one of the documents used in training and orientation of new employees.

Conclusions

Having developed the code of ethics for HR practitioners in the public sector under the Thai civil service, a set of the expected behaviour for a code of ethics of each HR function and a handbook were developed to support the implementation. A three-step approach to implementation was recommended. First, awareness: (1) use of the handbook; (2) ethics training for executives and employees; (3) appointment of an ethics champion; (4) ethics network; (5) HR ethics hotline; (6) promote the concept of "TRUSTS" through various means such as seminars, circulars, brochures, and etc. Second, commitment: (1) establishing a follow-up and monitoring system for the code of ethics; (2) establishing a reward and recognition system for ethics behaviour; (3) integrate ethical issues in all HR activities; (4) linking of the code of ethics to disciplinary measures and related laws; (5)

establish an HR ethics centre to be managed by a third party. Third, engagement: (1) establish and implement an HR professional certification and licensing system; (2) appointment of an HR ethics auditor or committee.

Implications

This study dealt with developing a code of ethics for HR practitioners in the public sector under the Thai civil service. A set of the expected behaviour for each of the three major HR functions was also developed to be a guideline for decision making of HR practitioners. It helps extend theories in HR ethics to the operative level where HR activities are in practice. In terms of practical contribution, this study provides ethical guidelines for management and HR practitioners to be able to perform their duties efficiently and effectively. It can also be a guideline for HR commissions in other areas such as justice, university, military, police and others in developing a code of ethics for HR practitioners in those areas.

Future Research

A study of this type in HR commissions in other areas such as justice, university, military, police and others government agencies would expand the knowledge and understanding of codes of ethics as part of strategic HRM in a wider context. A quantitative study on this topic would enhance the knowledge, understanding and testing of generalizations of the theories in HR ethics in a Thai cultural context.

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