

Guideline for Developing Business Competency of Private School Administrator in VUCA world

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ABSTRACT

Thai private school system was designed to alleviate the burden of government education but now is playing a huge role in Thai education. The proportion of students in private schools to the state has increased due to the more learning effectiveness. Thai private schools are more flexible than public schools, and more competitively diversified that enhance education quality. Private schools invested huge amount of resource to attract parents and students like a business investment attracts customers. This research aimed to develop business competency of private school administrator and conducted in 2 steps: (1) document study for analysis and synthesize the business competencies for private school administrator and (2) confirmation and guidelines generation from 7 Thai private education experts. The document study revealed 5 business competencies for Thai private schools. The interview from 7 Thai education experts confirmed those competencies, which consisted of (1) Organizational alignment: Manage performance and health with equal rigor (2) High emotional intelligence (3) Team and processes: Put dynamics ahead of mechanics (4) Corporate strategy: Focus on beating the odds and (5) Education business administration. The interview generated development guideline consisting of on-the-job training, off-the-job training, and self-development. The private school administrators could finally apply this guideline for developing business competency to prevail the impact from the current VUCA world.

Keywords

Business Competencies, Private School, and VUCA world

Introduction

The recent rapid changes in many factors such as technology, competition, business environment, economy, both internally and externally, have created volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA world). The VUCA world will disrupt the old economy who is not flexible enough to adjust or adapt along the fast-moving situation. It now means all the business, including school, must find new reaction and approach with update management strategy.

Thai private schools are treated as business entities that must overcome the vulnerable situation, The schools should be flexible to tolerate each problem steadily and take that problem as an opportunity to adjust adaptively for the future challenge (Tantimangkorn, Jansila, & Chaowachai, 2020).

From any crisis, strong private schools could have found a very big opportunity in disrupting themselves and moving forward steadily. It was an appropriate time that helped to reskill their teachers. Teachers now are aware of using new technology to transfer knowledge to their students. It might be the best option just for the current situation, but at least teachers now know how to start, compare, and adjust for the better solution for the near future (Tantimangkorn, Jansila, & Chaowachai, 2021).

Private school needed a competent administrator to help passing the VUCA world. Aligning organization with appropriate strategy can enhance team and organization performance. Managing people's emotion and expectation was also a key driver to pass the VUCA world. Therefore, this research aimed to develop business competency of private school administrator.

Literature Review

Thai private school system was firstly designed in helping to partially alleviate the burden of country education that cannot be adequately provided by the government and expanding educational opportunities to cover all country areas. The Strategic Plan for the Promotion of Private Education 2017 – 2021 (Office of the Private Education Commission, 2016) has set objectives to raise private education to international standards, by increasing educational opportunities for learners to study according to their potential effectively. The goal is to measure the standards and quality of national exam results such as O-NET and educational standard assessment.

Private schools now are playing a bigger role in Thai education; the proportion of students in private schools to the state has increased due to the more learning effectiveness. Private schools' O-NET exam results are usually more superior than public schools' result (The National Institute of Educational Testing Service, 2021). Moreover, according to The Strategic Plan for the Promotion of Private Education 2017 – 2021 (Office of the Private Education Commission, 2016), Thai private schools have more advantages than public schools in the following area: alleviating government responsibility, an alternative school in urban area, more flexibility than public schools, and more competitive diversification that enhance education quality.

Although private schools' flexibility and diversification can fulfill Thai education quality gap and commonly perform better than public schools in many aspects, government agencies' intervention sometimes discourage schools'

mentality. Taking COVID-19 pandemic as an example, the new 2021 semester so far has been postponed 2 times from 17 May to 1 June and extended to 14 June (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2021), therefore students must stay home, and every school can arrange any off-site learning options. While public schools receive support from government, all private schools struggled on their own extra expense to overcome this long crisis. Not only no financial support, but the Ministry of Education also ordered schools to return money, provide discounts and allow parents to pay in instalments (The Ministry of Education, 2021). From this MOE’s order, private schools had to put a lot of time and effort to defend themselves from the uninformed fact that private schools were in much deeper crisis than what public school had.

Though both public and private schools share the same goal, which is delivering quality education to Thai students, in fact, private schools should be treated differently from public school. Private schools need to capitalize a lot of resource to attract parents and students like a business investment to attract customers. There are expenses such as property cost, operation cost, and huge some of miscellaneous cost that need to be invested to make them strong and effective, therefore Thai private schools should be operated in a business oriented (Office of the Private Education Commission, 2016).

In general, the school administrator should be mainly responsible in 4 areas: 1) academic administration, 2) budget management, 3) personnel management, and 4) general administration (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2018). However, to be able to survive in VUCA world, competitive school administrators should competently understand and adapt with agility.

Objective

The objective of this research is to develop a guideline for business competency of private school administrator in VUCA world.

Research Methodology

This research started with document study methodology to obtain the business competencies for private school administrator, later interviewed 7 Thai education experts to confirm those obtained competencies and generate a guideline to develop those confirmed competencies. The research was carried out in 2 steps:

Document Study

Document study for analysis and synthesize the business competencies for private school administrator from books, papers or journals of school administrator, business leaders, VUCA, and related research by covering at least 2 of these keywords: *Business Administrators, Business Leaders, Organization Management, or VUCA world.*

Confirmed and generated a guideline by interviews

Confirmation on the obtained business competencies by interviewing 7 qualified persons of Thai private education experts who had at least 20 years of experience in private educational administration via using the checklist asking whether the experts agreed or disagreed with each competency. The researcher later interviewed the experts to generate a guideline to develop those confirmed competencies, by an open-ended questionnaire.

Results

The document study had obtained 5 business competencies for private school administrator. The interview from Thai education experts confirmed those competencies and generated a training guideline to develop those confirmed competencies.

The synthesis result from document study

There are 5 business competencies that the researcher has found from the document study process, which are shown in Table 1

Table 1: The 5 business competencies finding from the cited references

Business Competencies	Cited References
1. Organizational alignment: Manage performance and health with equal rigor Manage personnel to suit the job and value. Create a culture where everyone feels the simultaneous to achieve goals. Design an appropriate organizational structure. Organizational alignment created frictionless and stable workplace.	(Runcharoen, 2014), (Sema, 2006), (George, 2012), (Coutu, 2002), (Coutu, 2002), and (Studer, 2021)
2. High Emotional Intelligence Manage time and energy at work, create superior leadership, self-control and able to motivate people to success.	(Siribanpitak, 2017), (Surakijbavorn, 2016), (Coutu, 2002), (Likierman, 2020), (Dewar, Hirt, & Keller, 2019), and (Studer, 2021)
3. Team and processes: Put dynamics ahead of mechanics Create a team atmosphere that synchronize together. Make timely decisions without bias. Create a well-fitted management process ensuring that everything is continuous and connected.	(Yavirach, 2017), (Krotbuntao, 2017), (Sema, 2006), (George, 2012), and (Applegate, Kraus, & Butler, 2016)
4. Corporate strategy: Focus on beating the odds	(Siribanpitak, 2017), (Runcharoen, 2014),

Business Competencies	Cited References
Envision the main goals of the organization. Construct appropriate strategy and execute at the right time. Allocate resources efficiently.	(Yavirach, 2017), (Fernández-Aráoz, Roscoe, & Aramaki, 2017), and (Studer, 2021)
5. Education business administration	(Runcharoen, 2014), (Applegate, Kraus, & Butler, 2016), (Hill, 2011), and (Studer, 2021)
Understand the business model of education, the source of income, budget finance and the proper market.	

Competencies confirmation and a development guideline

The interview from Thai education experts mutually agreed and confirmed those 5 business competencies, which are (1) Organizational alignment: Manage performance and health with equal rigor (2) High emotional intelligence (3) Team and processes: Put dynamics ahead of mechanics (4) Corporate strategy: Focus on beating the odds and (5) Education business administration.

The experts suggested development guideline to improve those competencies by 3 types of training:

- On-the-job training: Using experience as an important tool in learning and developing work skills. This is suitable for businesses that do not have high risk or does not require much specialized expertise.
- Off-the-job training: A training that may be close to the school, where the administrators are supported to learn the skills and get well equipped with the tools and techniques that are to be used at the actual workplace.
- Self-development: Administrators assess their own skills and qualities, consider their career goal to realize and maximize their potential.

The experts further suggested that each training should be conducted appropriately depends on time and experience of the administrators, mainly divided into 2 periods:

- Pre-Service period: Training provided before taking administrative position
- In-Service period: Training provide during taking administrative position

Table 2: The 3 training types with 2 different periods to develop those confirmed competencies

	Pre-Service Period	In-Service Period
On-the-job Training	- Experience-based project - Coaching / Mentoring - School visit	- Experience-based project - Networking / Coaching / Mentoring - 360-degree feedback - School visit
Off-the-job Training	- Course based learning - Group case study	- Course based learning - Seminar / Conference
Self-Development	- Self-study	- Self study - Targeted self-training

The experts elaborately advised more detail and definition of each training for each item as shown in Table 3

Table 3: Detail and definition of each training

Training Detail	Definition
Experience-based project	Group or team discussions, role-playing exercises, debates or case studies that present the real-world topic
Coaching / Mentoring	Development approaches based on the use of one-to-one conversations to enhance an administrator's skills, knowledge, or performance.
School visit	A visit to best-practice school can enhance individual's skill and knowledge.
Networking	The exchange of information and ideas among peers with a common interest.
360-degree feedback	Feedback from subordinates, colleagues, and supervisor, as well as a self-evaluation to monitor self-improvement.
Course based learning	Taking specific course/class either offline or online to develop skill and knowledge.
Seminar / Conference	Formal presentation or discussion to share information in a specific topic.
Self-study	A method where individuals direct their own learning outside the classroom, without direct supervision.
Targeted self-training	A method to train individual's behavior and mindset in order to be able to control others and team.

Discussion

The investigation from document study and the interview from Thai education experts found that there were 5 business competencies that Thai private schools need to endorse their administrator. The 5 competencies were (1) Organizational alignment: Manage performance and health with equal rigor (2) High Emotional Intelligence (3) Team

and processes: Put dynamics ahead of mechanics (4) Corporate strategy: Focus on beating the odds and (5) Education business administration.

The education experts all suggested that the development guideline should be the combination of on-the-job training, off-the-job training, and self-development, depends on the situation and timing. The degree of each training should also depend on the administrator's experience; therefore, it

should be divided into pre-service period (preparing to be an administrator) and in-service period (during on the administrator job)

The school leaders or the administrators should correctly align the organization that would be affected from the multi factors and understand what they had to do next (Deloitte, 2020). They should be able to manage people with the suitable job, create a culture with simultaneous goals, and to establish frictionless and stable workplace (Runcharoen, 2014). Aligning the organization needs a lot of experience and understanding the organization culture, hence the development should be highly weighted on the on-the-job training.

The school administrators should have high emotional intelligence, create superior leadership, self-control and able to motivate people to success. Compassionate leaders performed better and foster more loyalty and engagement by their teams (Nielsen, D'Auria, & Zolley, 2020). Emotional intelligence can be developed mainly from self-development process, but only marginally from the training, both on-the-job and off-the-job. It is a highly self-practiced improvement (Runcharoen, 2014).

The team agility can strongly influence an organization's success. The efficiency and effectiveness of an organization's core management processes also can change an organization's fortunes (Dewar, Hirt, & Keller, McKinsey & Company, 2015). To brighten the fortunes, the school administrator should build team atmosphere that synchronize together and create a well-fitted management process ensuring that everything is continuous and connected. Designing team and process is both science and art, thus the development process should be balanced by all the training and self-development.

Envision the organization goals and construct appropriate strategy can move school from being an average performer to a top-quintile performer (Dewar, Hirt, & Keller, McKinsey & Company, 2015). The odds of making the jump from average to outstanding might be long, but the administrator can greatly increase the probability of beating those odds by executing the right strategy at the right time. On-the-job training like experience-based project, networking, and coaching / mentoring greatly enhance this competency.

According to The Strategic Plan for the Promotion of Private Education 2017 – 2021 (Office of the Private Education Commission, 2016), Thai private schools should be operated in a business oriented, so the business administration competency should be included into the administrators' skill. Understanding the business model of education, the source of income, budget finance and the proper market is the must to manage the school effectively (Runcharoen, 2014). Learning those technical skills (business model, income source, finance, marketing) should be major on both self-development and off-the-job training, then apply more practice on-the-job training.

Recommended Future Studies

There should be at least 2 additional studies to advance this guideline for developing business competency of private school administrator in VUCA world.

Qualitative study on actual administrator samples

This is to qualitatively check whether this guideline is well effective and sufficient.

Creating a model of business competency for private school administrator in VUCA world

This is to complete the whole process of developing the business competencies for private school administrator, by obtaining statistical data from 7.1

Conclusion

The school administrators should be resilient, flexible, and adaptive. They needed to resiliently accomplish the vulnerable situation, like COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The schools should be flexible between the short-term and long-term goals to overcome each problem steadily and they should also take the crisis as an opportunity to learn adaptively, so that the schools would be ready for the current VUCA world (Tantimangkorn, Jansila, & Chaowachai, 2020).

In conclusion, there are 5 business competencies for administrators that are required to operate Thai private schools effectively in the recent VUCA world. They more likely rely on managing organization strategically and self-management. The development guideline is based on 3 types of training: on-the-job, off-the-job, and self-development.

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