International Conference on Education & Educational Psychology 2013 (ICEEPSY 2013)

Soft skills for private Basic Education schools in Thailand
Suravee Rongraung\textsuperscript{a,}, Kanokorn Somprach\textsuperscript{a}, Juladis Kanthap\textsuperscript{a} Junrat Sitthisomjin\textsuperscript{a,}\textsuperscript{b}

\textsuperscript{a}Department of Educational Administration, Faculty of Education, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand
\textsuperscript{b}Academic Resources Center, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand

Abstract

This research study was aimed to evaluate the soft skills for teachers in Thailand working in private Basic Education schools in Samut Prakan province and to investigate the developing methods of soft skills for inexperienced teachers. The 116 participants were selected by way of simple random sampling accordingly. Questionnaire was also utilized to survey the current situation and the need for developing soft skills for new teachers in seven aspects which were: 1) Communication skills 2) Thinking skills and problem solving skills 3) Teamwork force 4) Life-long learning, and information management 5) Innovation development 6) Ethics and professionalism 7) Leadership skills. When considering result, the specific components of soft skills, it was found that the innovation development was the skill that showed the least behavioral level. The self-evaluation shows that inexperienced teachers in private Basic Education schools in Samut Prakan, Thailand have established Teamwork force skill, Ethics and professionalism and Leadership skill in the workplace. On the other hand, Innovation, Communication and Thinking and Problem solving skills were lacking the most. From the study, it identifies that three most sought after soft skills attribute in new teachers are Ethics and professionalism, Teamwork force and Thinking and problem solving skills.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd.
Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Cognitive-counselling, research and conference services (c-crcs).

\textsuperscript{*} Corresponding author. Tel.: +668-9096-9292; fax: +662-702-8404.

E-mail address: suravee@kkumail.com
Keywords: Academic library staff; soft skill; innovative development

1. Introduction

The world of rapid change, in the age of globalization and technology, the society calls for young generation of citizens to be capable of working in a type of environment characterized by complexity and diversity. The education system has been placed with a challenging task of producing students and graduates with competent skills and knowledge to navigating the emerging labor markets. Schools and colleges are generating important assets for every nation thus the urgent need for appropriate educational reform is not only necessary but essential (Fly, 2002). The key factors affecting quality educational reform involves development of teachers who transform children into graduates and facilitates them in the learning process (DC&I, 2000). Hence helping teachers gain knowledge, necessary skills and opportunities creates equally significant increase on the quality of education.

Despite having pedagogical capability, soft skills are also necessary for the improvement of teacher quality and promoting professionalism. These soft skills are various competencies including communication and interactive skills, problem solving skills, and behavioral abilities which are necessary in order to apply pedagogical skills and knowledge at a workplace (Weber, et al, 2009). Many institutions search for prospective employees who display soft skills and they recognized these are attributes of 21st century citizens (Dixon, J et al, 2010). Whereas hard skills are defined as techniques and essential know-how necessary to operate specific professions which can be quantified and measured. On the contrary, soft skills are skills which facilitate the relationship building between individual and working community. Hard skills can be acquired explicitly through learning and training; while, soft skills are naturally developed through personal experience and reflection.

Teachers play major role in fostering students, creating foundation for the development of intelligence, physique, emotion, social responsibility and ethics. Teachers’ traits such as expertise and motivational skills that encourage students to reach their full potential, are key to achieving educational planning objectives. Having pedagogical skills and knowledge is the bare minimum requirement for teachers nonetheless in today’s world the expectation on educators of our children are exceptionally high. School teachers should also have personal interactive skills that is regarded as a key component for working in the school. A firm grasp on communication skill improve the transfer of knowledge from teachers to students. A good relationship skill leads to a deep understanding of students which in turns create a pleasant learning environment. A strong ethics upholding is an importance basis on which teachers should build moral ground. From reviewing the literatures, it shows that the components relating to the development of soft skills for school teachers consists of Communication skills (Cheng, 2009; Stephens, 2013; Hodge & Spoor, 2012; Promís, 2008), Thinking skills and problem solving skill (Stephens, 2010; Promís, 2008), Teamwork force (Cheng, 2009; Promís, 2008), Life-long learning, and information management (Stephens, 2013), Innovation development (Stephens, 2010; Promís, 2008), Ethics and professionalism (Promís, 2008; Hodge & Spoor, 2012), and Leadership skills (Cheng, 2009; Crosbie, 2005). School teachers are required to acquired and enhances these seven soft skills.

The objective of this study is to investigate soft skills and to study the method for developing soft skills for inexperience teachers in private Basic Education school located in Samut Prakan province, Thailand.

The research questions were:

1. What are the essential soft skills for the teachers in private Basic Education school?
2. How to develop the method to enhance soft skills?
2. Methods

The study was conducted on new teachers with teaching experience less than two years, in service at private schools teaching basic education (children aged between 6-15 years), located in Samut Prakan province, Thailand. The samples were selected by method of simple random selection technique. Thus the number of teacher samples that met this criteria from 81 private schools within the vicinity of Samut Prakan were 116. The questionnaire was administered to survey the current situation and the need for developing soft skills for teachers in private Basic Education school in seven aspects which were: 1) Communication skills 2) Thinking skills and problem solving skills 3) Teamwork force 4) Life-long learning, and information management 5) Innovation development 6) Ethics and professionalism 7) Leadership skills. The questionnaire contained the conditional information of the respondents by evaluating the behavioral level of their soft skills which showed the at .95 (cronbach alpha = .95). For the qualitative data obtained from interviewing the teachers, it involved the process of the developing requirement of soft skills and the components of developing the program to enhance soft skills.

3. Data analysis

This study examined the current situation for the teachers in private Basic Education schools in Samut Prakan, Thailand and the need for developing soft skills teachers by analyzing the data with a basic statistical method in order to illustrate the details of the respondents.

The self-assessment of behavioral level of soft skills was a 5-scale rating. This was designed by using the multi-attribute value technique. NSW of 7 soft skills were calculated by using the weight of skill from the report presented by Zaharim et al (2012). NSW was calculated by using equation (1) to evaluate the score and the second equation was derived using NSW adapted from Fishburn (1967) and Keeney & Raiffa (1976).

\[
NSW_n = \frac{X_n}{\sum_{n=1}^{N} X_n} \times 100 \quad (1)
\]

where

- NSW - Normalized Skill Weight
- \(X_n\) - Weight of skill
- \(i\) - Number of skill (i = 7)
- \(n\) - \(n^{th}\) term

\[
\text{Soft Skills Score} = \sum_{n=1}^{i} (V_n \times S_n) \quad (2)
\]

where

- \(V_n\) - Value of Normalized Skill Weight
- \(S_n\) - Score of skill (Mark / full mask)
- \(i\) - Number of skills (i = 7)
- \(n\) - \(n^{th}\) term

Soft Skills Score = (13) \(S_1 + (13) S_2 + (16) S_3 + (15) S_4 + (12) S_5 + (16) S_6 + (15) S_7\)

The order of significance of soft skills that was chosen by the samples was analyzed by using mode, frequency, and percentage.
4. Findings

The following are the findings of the study:

This study examined the current situation of soft skills and the need for developing soft skills for teachers in private Basic Education schools in Samut Prakan, Thailand. The results show that most of the participants were female whose ages were ranging from 26-30 years old, graduated with bachelor degree, and mostly having at least one year of teaching experience. Exactly half the sampled teachers, 58 people were in charge of lecturing more than one subject disciplines. The majority of these young teachers had attended some form of professional development programs.

Table 1. Self-Evaluation of Behavioral Level of Soft Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft Skills</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>Full marks</th>
<th>People 13</th>
<th>People 18</th>
<th>People 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking skills and problem solving skills</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork force</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-long learning, and information management</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation development</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics and professionalism</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>73.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of self-evaluation shows the samples of teachers according to a different level of preference (1-40 points). Table 1 shows the examples of score of soft skill for seven soft skills belongs to three teachers. The total mark, percentage (71.89), and mean (35.95) score were equal for these three people though some skills they have different corresponding scores. The equation 2, the soft skills score gives different values for these three people – 13, 18 and 21- based on the coefficients of NSW assigned to each skill. Only when the scores of soft skills of different people are compared categorically the result has enough informative power to determine who has superior soft skills. The coefficient shows that Teamwork force (13.75) the skills with the strongest effect on the people.

Table 2. Presents a Basic Statistical Data and the Order of Significance of Soft Skills Chosen by the samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft Skills</th>
<th>(Full Marks)</th>
<th>$\bar{X}$</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Mode (The most frequently selected)</th>
<th>Frequency (N=116)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>The order of significance (Considering from mode and frequency)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.13</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20.70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking skills and problem solving skills</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.60</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork force</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.75</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.90</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-long learning, and information management</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.78</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24.10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation development</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.14</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.60</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics and professionalism</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.74</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.60</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.97</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22.40</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>77.67</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 is used to explain the needs assessment of the soft skills that new teachers in private Basic Education schools want to acquire and enhance. The study points out that Teamwork force, Ethics and professionalism and Leadership skill are the skills that most teachers possess, scoring on the behavioural level (\( \bar{X} \)) equals to 13.75, 13.74 and 11.97 respectively. On the other hand, Innovation, Communication and Thinking and problem solving skills are the skills that teachers lack the most. Innovation development was the skill which showed the lowest behavioural level (\( \bar{X} = 7.14 \)). The order of significance, i.e. skills development needs, derived from the study was able to identify that new teacher mostly sought after attributes in Ethics and professionalism, Teamwork force and Thinking and problem solving skills.

5. Discussion & Recommendation

The study points out that Innovation development is the skill with lowest behavioral level and is a concern that need addressing swiftly as today’s rapidly change society demands teachers to creating innovative means to educate our children. From the finding, the self-evaluation shows that inexperienced teachers in private Basic Education schools in Samut Prakan, Thailand have established Teamwork force skill, Ethics and professionalism and Leadership skill in the workplace. These are soft skills crucial in 21st setting, especially relevant for educational human resource (Crosbie, 2005; Tang, 2012). In order to equip new teacher with the mentioned skills, the schools management can create a breakthrough training package for inexperienced teachers that incorporate all skills that this study indentifies as most significance. Alternatively, the package can be designed to enhance a subset of skills per development cycle, for instance a technology training coupled with communication skill in the form of ICT workshop for new teachers.

The management of private schools need to recognize the current state of workload assigned to new teachers in probation period and in their early part of their career. The settlement into new working environment to some degree create stressful atmosphere for young teachers on a steep learning curve. Management can ease the burden and smoothen the transition for new teacher by creating an organizational structure and processes that decrease the responsibility while maintain the efficiency thus allowing teachers room to gradually grow professionalism and offer them opportunity to learn and self-improve.

Some principles of action research and operational research can be applied to create a professional development program for teachers to infuse all seven soft skills into the culture of the education institution. This is seen as an effective method of creating and sustaining high level of soft skills for teachers in modern society. Good education is vital component of strong foundation on which the society and economy expand. The adults of tomorrow is a direct product of today’s teachers. It is hoped that this study provide the basis and paved the way of further research effort related to the building capabilities of good teachers through soft skills.

References


libraryeducation/887745272/office_hours_heretical_thoughts.html


