

A Study on The Situation and Direction of Human Resource Development in The Thai Government System

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Abstract

Human resource development (HRD) in the public sector is one of the most important factors in driving the government forward to be more adept in a fast-changing world. The administration and management of Thailand's cabinet is divided into 20 ministries, with human resources in each ministry being the driving force in the missions assigned by the government for the best public interest. The HRD in each ministry is therefore of great importance, especially for the personnel to be highly competent in the modern world. This study aimed to explore the current situation, as well as the direction of HRD in the Thai government system. Key informants, personnel from the 20 government ministries of Thailand, were interviewed and the data retrieved were then analyzed using the software QDA Miner Lite. It was found that several different departments are currently responsible for the HRD in each ministry, but most of them are under the Office of the Permanent Secretary. The HRD can be divided into 4 paradigms – (1) personnel development, (2) human resource development, (3) strategic human resource development, and (4) human capital development – with self-development of the personnel being the most chosen approach and 6 HRD innovations also found. As for the directions of HRD in the future, it was found that self-development is the direction that each ministry seems to prioritize the most.

Keywords: situation; direction; human resource development (HRD); Thai government system

Introduction

When considering human resource development (HRD), it can be viewed through various dimensions either as a broad or narrow picture. For a broader perspective of developing human resources, Goulet (1971) stated that HRD is a process which enables people to achieve their ultimate goals. This means achieving the shared values of development consisting of (1) a state of sustenance, (2) a state of having self-esteem, and (3) a state of having freedom from servitude. For a narrower perspective of HRD at the individual and organizational level, Leonard Nadler defined it as “a series of organized activities, conducted within a specialized time and designed to produce behavioral changes” (Nadler and Nadler, 1989:1-3). This concept has been widely accepted including in Thailand where it is applied in both private and public sectors. However, one of the most comprehensive and clear definitions of HRD summarizing both perspectives was suggested by McLean (2006) who defined HRD as any organized process or activity, either short-term or long-term, which contributes to the development of work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity, and satisfaction, whether for personal gain, or for the benefit of an organization, community, nation, or even mankind.

In the Thai government system, one key agency responsible for human resource management of the government is the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC). As a

primary agency for administration and development of the civil service, the OCSC understands the importance of having an established strategy for civil service development and proposed the first civil service development policy to be approved by the Cabinet in 1989. When Thailand underwent a major reformation in its government system in 2002, the OCSC then developed another strategy for the development of civil servants in 2004 to be in line with the newly reformed government system and to be used by government agencies as guidelines for the development of civil servants. However, the later enacted Civil Service Regulations Act B.E. 2551 had a new major intention to change the direction of the civil servant development system, from the original focus on developing civil servants' specific expertise to developing them as government officials with all-round yet deep knowledge who can be a driving force for the success of the organization. Subsequently, the strategy was then revised again, resulting in the Civil Service Development Strategy 2009-2013 being enacted to support the 20-year national strategy. The Public Human Resource Management Strategic Framework by the OCSC (2017-2036) has set out to enhance prestige and quality of civil servants by stipulating projects such as Competence Development for Government Officials 4.0 and the Talent Intelligence and Management system.

As for the forms of HRD, since the civil service development policy was approved in 1989, there has been an awakening of the public sector in placing importance on the development of civil servants. This can be seen from a rise in training and seminar activities, improvement and promotion of training organizations' status to be specialized institutions, an addition of HRD officers, as well as a substantial increase in the training budgets of various government agencies. According to a study by Yavaprabhas (2005), it was found that the forms of HRD used by the public sector were training models focusing on providing knowledge for trainees to apply in performing official duties under the framework of government policies, laws, regulations. It also found that since 1997 several tools have been integrated in the public HRD which might be due to the government system reformation in 2002, and the government has had to adjust to work faster, more efficiently, and more effectively, with more emphasis on the satisfaction of the service recipients (Wedchayanon, 2013).

However, the government system is often seen as an organization that does not keep up with change – with minimum inter-department information exchange, an emphasis on process over results, and adherence to the authority framework according to law (Office of the Civil Service Commission, 2017). Yet changing social, economic, political and technological factors are having a profound impact on work going forward. Such changes including the use of automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI), as well as the transition to an aged society, are a few of many challenges in government work, especially when a large number of civil servants at the senior management level will retire at the same time, making it difficult to develop skills of new personnel in time to step into positions that require high responsibilities.

However, Brack and Kelly (2012) pointed out that there are not enough Gen X people to close the gap left by the Baby Boomers, therefore Gen Y or millennials are needed in helping to fill it in. It is estimated that by 2025, millennials will be fully engaged in the workforce (Hartford Business, 2014) and because this generation is molded in modern technology in the era of automation and modern worldviews, it is even more essential for the government agencies to adjust themselves and their work processes to be in line with the aforementioned changes.

From the above, HRD is therefore an important and necessary process at both domestic and international level. The public and private sectors have also shown how the knowledge body of HRD has developed and changed rapidly, especially with fluctuations from disasters,

wars, pandemics, etc. – all of which are situations that can lead to a crisis in government administration. In such conditions, there is an even bigger push towards the HRD body of knowledge and, in particular, the Virtual HRD at the international level. It is therefore essential to explore and apply the research findings to the HRD of the Thai government system as it has also inevitably entered this paradigm. This is to find appropriate approaches and to improve the HRD of the Thai government system to be up to date and consistent with current situations.

In order to gain insights within each ministry, a qualitative research method was used to obtain information from the sample population who had experience as well as in-depth and comprehensive knowledge of HRD issues in each government ministry. This is to find solutions through consideration of all dimensions of the actual HRD work environment in the ministries, in order to find correlations between the situations and the work environment. In-depth interviews were used as the primary instrument for data collection, while analytic induction was used for data analysis. This was to find out the current situation of HRD in the Thai government system and to explore the possible directions of its HRD in the future. This information on HRD could be useful to both academic and practical applications, especially in policy making, HRD training course design, and creation of HRD innovations. It should also help prepare human resources in the government to have characteristics that are consistent with and suitable for future changes.

Literature reviews

The concept of human resource development (HRD) has been around for a long time, but it has become more apparent in practice since the early 1960s with the work of Schultz (1961) being regarded as an important spark for the concept of HRD. However, Schultz's work focused mainly on education, bringing up the debate of whether education is a form of consumption or an investment. Schultz leaned towards the belief that education is an investment, believing that education will help improve the quality or ability of people and that an increase in human resources quality will have a continual effect on the development of various areas including the economic growth of the country. Denison (1962) supported the work of Schultzby, as his study revealed that both quantitative and qualitative increases in human capital were key factors determining economic growth, particularly of the country he studied, the United States.

Becker (1964) believed that it is not only education that has an effect on the personnel quality and their income, but also work training. He viewed human capital as one of the physical production tools like factories and machines and believed that outcome is partially dependent on the rate of return on human capital itself. Therefore, human capital is one of the tools of production that, when invested in, produces greater outcomes. Mark Blaug (1967) shared a similar opinion, believing that although education can give people knowledge and higher income, it is on-the-job training and work experience that make people more capable and self-reliant, as well as have initiative and ability to resolve problematic situations and to adapt to various environments. Harbison and Myers (1964) pointed out that important questions in HRD include how to solve the shortage of high-level manpower with skills and abilities and how to reduce human resources that are too abundant or cannot be fully utilized.

The importance and role of human resources has been studied periodically since the 1960s, leading to continuous studies on this subject. As for the relationship between HRD and economic growth, there have been debates over which one is the cause and which is the effect. On one hand, HRD creates more productive workers, resulting in higher national incomes. On the other hand, as a country grows more economically, it results in an increased investment in

HRD. Statistical data from several countries shows that countries with high economic growth tend to spend more on HRD (McClery, 2000).

The science of human resource development (HRD) has been recognized as an academic discipline since 1970. Swanson (2001) stated that HRD as an academic discipline has been in existence for over four decades and still continues to evolve. This is due to a variety of factors that contribute to development foundation and techniques that have changed with the times, in order to develop knowledgeable and capable personnel who are a valuable asset for the organization. In addition, Clareth Hughes and Marilyn Y. Byrd (2015) believed that HR developers must be able to communicate these philosophies and theories to the organization's stakeholders to make them understand that HRD is a necessity to the organization. Without pushing or giving priority to HRD projects, they might not be taken as part of the organization. Hence, HR developers should try to bridge this gap between theory and practice.

For HRD paradigms, Swanson and Holton (2001) stated that paradigms are important because individuals develop their own personal belief systems in choosing a paradigm or a combination of paradigms to guide their performance. Therefore, paradigms are one of the most important factors for HR developers as they encourage people to develop their own belief system to decide which paradigm will be used as a tool to guide their work. The study of Nisachon Prommarin (2009) "The Evolution of Public Administration Paradigms in Thailand during 1955-2008 A.D." found that the topic with the most interest for public administrators was personnel development. For articles published in 1958-1997, personnel training was the most common topic, being found in 12 Thai public administration articles. During 1998-2008, there was only one publication on training as there was a more popular trend to focus on human resource development, a topic which was found in as many as 11 articles. In recent years, the mainstream trend of personnel management in the Thai public sector and case studies shows not much difference from the articles on general principles of personnel management. Personnel development is still ranked first in the topics that public administrators paid attention, with as many as 20 specific cases for this topic. When considering subtopics of HRD, training in government agencies was still found as the subject that was studied the most, accounting for half of all topics.

For the study of HRD paradigms, Andrew Christopher Hurt (2010) whose study was "Exploring Paradigms of Human Resource Development" used the cubic model of HRD to synthesize research articles published by the Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD). 16 articles were randomly sampled and analyzed by the model to analyze the focus of their content on principles, research, or practice. It was found that most research articles focus more on practice than research and principles. The study also found that out of 16 articles, there were at least 18 HRD paradigms for the future. As for defining new HRD paradigms, Elwood F. Holton, III and Bogdan Yamkovenko (2008) in their study "Strategic Intellectual Capital Development: A Defining Paradigm for HRD?" stated that the performance paradigm of HRD is applicable to field practice, especially in improving the results and relevance of HRD practices. However, the article also discussed improving the aforementioned paradigm by defining a new paradigm called Strategic Intellectual Capital Development (SICD). SICD was created by combining two research concepts, human capital theory and strategic human resource management. The development of human capital theory can be traced to an expanded understanding of intellectual capital theory, while the argument for a strategic human resource approach comes from the strategic HRM literature. This perspective of SICD was proposed as a strong and inclusive concept essential for HRD in providing intellectual stimulation for organizations to meet their strategic objectives.

As for the organizational structures of HRD agencies, Jamnean Joungrakul (2020) has divided them into 5 forms – (1) HRD as an independent department (future form), (2) HRD as an agency in HR (common in Thailand), (3) HRD as the main department with HR being a part of it, (4) HRD being a main department, and (5) HRD being two divisions (dividing HRD work into two parts: training and product development).

Methods

Research guidelines

The qualitative research approach was used to explore the current situation and direction of HRD in the Thai government. Data collections were done in the form of case studies, a research method that is frequently used in qualitative research (Yazan, 2015) and is the most popular academic method for researchers interested in qualitative research studies (Baskarada, 2014). Case studies are used in exploring, pioneering, or understanding phenomena, people or situations in-depth (Merriam and Grenier, 2019) as they are the only form of research approach that allows researchers to collect various forms of data, including observations, interviews, literature reviews, etc. (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

Key informants

Key informants of the study were 31 government officials working in the field of civil servant development in the 20 government ministries of Thailand. The sample population was selected using purposive sampling from officials with experience in civil servant development at the ministry level for at least 5 years. The key informants from each ministry could be classified into 3 main groups, senior management officers (high-level executive officers), division directors (high-level directors) and heads of department or HRD officers. The details of key informants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Details of the key informants, government officials working in civil servant development in the government ministries of Thailand

Key informant group	Position	Ministry	Quantity
1. Senior management officers (High-level executive officers)	1.1 Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Education (1 person) Ministry of Natural Resources (1 person)	2
	1.2 Deputy Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (1 person) Ministry of Justice (1 person)	2
	1.3 Advisor to the Ministry	Ministry of Commerce (1 person) Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (1 person)	2
2. Division Directors (High-level directors)	2.1 Division Director	Ministry of Finance (1 person) Ministry of Commerce (2 people) Ministry of Public Health (1 person) Ministry of Labor (1 person) Ministry of Culture (1 person) Prime Minister's Office (2 people) Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (1 person) Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (1 person) Ministry of Defense (2 people) Ministry of Interior (1 person)	13
		Ministry of Energy (1 person) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1 person) Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (1 person) Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (1 person) Ministry of Tourism and Sports (1 person) Ministry of Industry (1 person) Ministry of Transport (1 person) Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (2 people)	9
3. Heads of Department/HRD Officers	3.1 Human Resources Specialist	Ministry of Finance (1 person) Ministry of Higher Education Science, Research and Innovation (1 person) Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (1 person)	3
	3.2 Human Resources Professional	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (1 person)	1
Total			31

Research instrument: In-depth interviews were used to collect data through questions

covering HRD issues at the ministry level in Thailand. The 2 main issues include – (1) the situation of HRD at the ministry level and (2) the direction of ministry-level HRD in the future.

Data collection

After the study had been approved by the Committee for Research Ethics (Social Sciences), Mahidol University (Approval certification No. MU-SSIRB:2019/303(B2)), letters requesting cooperation were sent in the name of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University to the permanent secretaries of all 20 ministries for permission to collect research data through interviews with government officials working in the field of civil servant development at ministry level. The data collection process began after receiving permission from the Permanent Secretary of each ministry.

Data analysis

The collected data from the in-depth interviews were analyzed to find answers to research questions on the HRD issues of the government ministries in Thailand using QDA Miner Lite software. Key messages were extracted, coded, and categorized into coding groups in order to gather information and to reach a conclusion for possible HRD guidelines at the ministry level of Thailand.

Results

The current situations and possible directions of HRD at the ministry level as retrieved from the key informants at 20 ministries were analyzed and synthesized into these issues:

Current situations of HRD of the government ministries of Thailand:

1) ***Overview of the ministry HRD:*** The Office of the Permanent Secretary of each ministry was found to play an important role in ministry-level HRD, especially in stipulating policies and plans on personnel development in the ministry. Several departments under the supervision of the Office of the Permanent Secretary could be found under various names, including central divisions, personnel divisions, or specifically set up departments for HRD in the ministry. Specialized institutions established for HRD were found in – (1) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Devawongse Varopakarn Institute of Foreign Affairs), (2) Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (Kasetrathikarn Institute), (3) Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (Phra Prachabodi Institute), (4) Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Human Resource Development Institute), (5) Ministry of Commerce (Krom Phra Chanthaburi Naruenat Institute), (6) Ministry of Interior (Damrong Rajanuphap Institute), (7) Ministry of Justice (Institute of Human Resource Development). Some of the Offices of the Permanent Secretary were also found to oversee the HRD of ministries with established authority at the provincial level.

The HRD at the department level, however, was found to be the responsibility of each department itself, through the use of juristic persons to help develop human resources in accordance with the specific expertise of each department, in which the central authority did not have expertise. Therefore, the ministry's central authority is not involved in the department-level HRD but oversees overall HRD information, including HRD budgets. Nonetheless, some ministries, especially small ministries such as the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Ministry of Energy were found to be responsible for the HRD of organizations under the ministries, including state enterprises and public organizations.

Apart from developing personnel within the ministry, some ministries also provide

training courses or lessons to external personnel from other government ministries, as well as the general public and entrepreneurs, based on the knowledge and expertise of each ministry, a concept which has begun to be widely found in many ministries. In addition to having the ministries' own HRD agencies playing the main role in HRD, there were also professional organizations or professional councils found being responsible for supervising or supporting the HRD of various positions in ministries such as the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, etc.

2) HRD paradigms in the ministries

The HRD paradigms found at the ministry level of Thai government could be divided into 4 paradigms – (1) personnel development, (2) human resource development, (3) strategic human resource development, and (4) human capital development as shown as in Table 2.

Table 2: HRD paradigms in the government ministries of Thailand

HRD paradigm in the ministries	Detail	Example of excerpts from key informant interviews
1. Personal development	This paradigm considers HRD as an expense rather than income, which can be seen from how HRD is strongly related to the ministry's budget allocation.	<p><i>"In the government, human development is not an important matter, because they see it as an expense, not a way to make money. That's why we don't go anywhere. When the COVID-19 outbreak happened, the personnel development budget got cut first as it's not viewed as something important."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports)</p> <p><i>"The first budget that gets cut, no matter what happens, is the training budget. We're greatly affected."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Transport)</p>
2. Human resource development	This paradigm considers personnel as a valuable resource that drives the organization.	<p><i>"I attach great importance to human resource development, which is quite difficult to control, unlike development of work systems which are already in place."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Defense)</p> <p><i>"Human resources of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially diplomats in particular, are a very valuable resource."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)</p> <p><i>"Humans are viewed as strategy. Actually, we, the Office of the Permanent Secretary, focus on quality personnel."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives)</p>
3. Strategic human resource development	This paradigm considers HRD as a strategic partner of the organization. HRD is a driving force of the organization's strategies, while HRD must also be in accordance with the organization's strategies and goals.	<p><i>"Humans are viewed strategically too, like personnel consideration [and] personnel placement. Strategies must be considered as well."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security)</p> <p><i>"Humans are viewed as a strategy as they want the ministry's personnel to have more modern perspectives."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Energy)</p> <p><i>"The Ministry of Interior's human resource development operation uses the Strategic Human Resource Development approach."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Interior)</p>
4. Human capital development	This paradigm considers human resources as capital to invest in and increase the value. When the value of human resources is increased, it will increase the value of the organization as well.	<p><i>"Humans are one of the productive factors that must be invested in, to increase their value."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Commerce)</p> <p><i>"It starts with viewing humans as capital, then a strategy."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Agriculture)</p> <p><i>"Actually, the ministry sees it as human capital. The ministry also invests in scholarships."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Finance)</p>

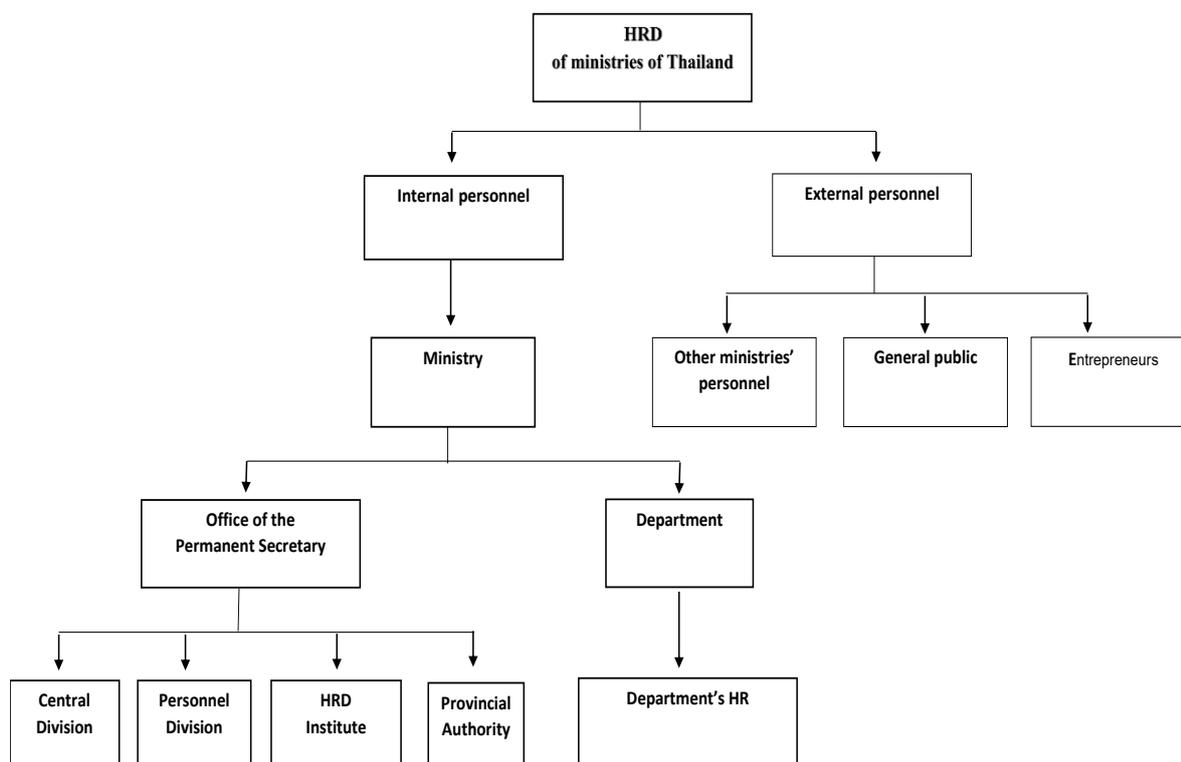


Figure 1: Overview of HRD at the ministry level of Thailand

3) HRD methods in the ministries

The HRD methods used with the civil servants working at the ministry level of Thailand can be divided into 2 main parts: (1) HRD methods at the individual level – in which the ministries encourage government officials to develop themselves through self-learning and (2) HRD methods at the ministry level whereby the ministries develop the ministry government officials by arranging various projects or activities – i.e. training, workshops, seminars, and online training sessions. Examples of HRD methods retrieved from key informant interviews are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Detail of HRD methods in the ministries

HRD method in the ministries	Detail	Example of excerpts from key informant interviews
1. Self-development	Self-development is a way for personnel to develop themselves through seeking knowledge from outside of classroom training.	“The development methods used were self-learning, studying on the internet, then summarizing it to the leader.” (Key informant, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives) “Self-development using learning networks, especially online learning platforms, is encouraged.” (Key informant, the Ministry of Interior)
2. Online Training	A system in which training sessions are provided online through the use of software systems.	“It’s like, online teaching is also available. There’s the use of media, online media, clips, narration, and then clips as supplementation. This helps to make it not too boring.” (Key informant, the Ministry of Industry) “Most of the time, we will organize online meetings. We do training and lectures. We also do exams on Zoom. We have adapted to use digital media in teaching.” (Key informant, the Ministry of Defense)
3. Training	This includes classroom-style workshops and seminars.	“We mostly focus on development and training.” (Key informant, the Office of the Prime Minister) “We use classroom-style training.” (Key informant, the Ministry of Commerce)

Table 4: Details of HRD innovations

HRD innovations	Detail	Example of excerpts from key informant interviews
1. Creating new forms of personnel	Creating new forms of personnel (Ministry of Defense) – i.e. civil servants and volunteer soldiers – This was used to solve human resource management problems in the ministry.	<i>“Because with soldiers, salary is also about rank. Now, we’ve started this new thing. We employ a certain group of people as volunteer soldiers using employment contracts. This is our 2nd year and these temporary volunteer soldiers will be in service for 4-8 years. Once their contract is up, they’ll be paid a lump sum enough to live on or find a new job. This could be called an innovation of the Ministry of Defense.”</i> (Key informant, Ministry of Defense)
2. Using entry exams to recruit personnel to match job requirements	Using entry exams to recruit personnel to match job requirements (Ministry of Defense) – Vibhavisai Exam helps determine candidates’ character tendencies.	<i>“When the Air Force recruit their people, they use this exam called Vibhavisai. This exam is used to predict the candidates’ possible behavioral tendencies, their preferences. It’s a pilot exam. But now, when recruiting [other] personnel, they have to take this exam as well. It will gather information to determine what their character is likely to be. We’ve been doing it for many years, but I’m not sure if [the results] are seriously used or not. This is for us to be able to choose the right person for the job. I think there’re maybe 10-20% who’re serious about this.”</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Defense)
3. Competency tests	Competency tests (Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives) “Smart Officer” tests are used to measure personnel competency.	<i>“The Ministry of Agriculture has its own competency test called the “Smart Officer” test. It’s used to measure competency in order to see what aspects a person lacks. If executives or chief officers see this information, they will see what their subordinates are lacking, so they can be developed properly.”</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives)
4. Expert directories	Expert directories (Ministry of Commerce) – Internal speakers are trained to become expert speakers and enter into the expert directory. This achievement can be used in supporting advancement in their career.	<i>“The best knowledge must come from within. This is because in the past, we used to invite external speakers to come, but they only knew the basics. They couldn’t do it in-depth. So, we thought that it’s better to make our own speakers, making it into an expert directory. This can be used in future promotion assessments.”</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Commerce)
5. Development coupons	Development coupons (Ministry of Education) are given to government teachers to participate in training courses of choice for self-development before advancement of academic standing.	<i>“I, myself, as a teacher, if I still want to renew my professional certificate, I have keep training. There is a coupon system for teachers to join training courses. This is getting better and better in terms of self-development.”</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Education)
6. Training Road Map	Training Road Map (Ministry of Energy) is a 6-level training road map for HRD.	<i>“We’re fortunate that our management is very focused on this. We are probably the first agency to create a training road map. The levels start from the entry level, and there are 6 levels. Starting the job, then training. After working for 3 years, there’ll be more levels of training. Since the establishment of the ministry, this is the 18th year of this.”</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Energy)

Directions of future HRD in the Thai government

As for the future of the Thai government HRD, several possible directions were found, including prioritization of personnel self-development, an increased need of technological

personnel, creation of a learning culture, and management of organizational knowledge. It was also found that the direction of HRD in each ministry would be based on their own plans or those of the central authority. The details on future directions of HRD are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Details of future HRD directions

Future direction of HRD	Detail	Example of excerpts from key informant interviews
1. Personnel self-improvement	The human resources of each ministry must mainly focus on self-improvement.	<p><i>"I want to see civil servants who are committed to their profession and develop themselves all the time without needing to be forced by rules."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Education) <i>"In most cases, we develop them to become an expert. It means whatever your duty is, you should be an expert on it."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society) <i>"The old idea that money is needed to provide training has to be changed. It's better to use your frontline work to improve [yourself]. There should be more self-responsibility. It is not the duty of the organization to tell you to improve certain things."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Public Health) <i>"I would like to see them develop themselves, encouraged to learn by themselves first."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Transport) <i>"Find more sustainable HR development models or methods other than training, something that does not require a budget, allowing for self-development."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports)</p>
2. Development based on the plans of the central HRD authority	Each ministry will develop according to the guidelines of the central authority on personnel management, such as the National Strategic Plan of the OCSC.	<p><i>"We have a central authority that formulates the policies, with a main policy specifying what the development approach should be or which direction it will take in these 5-10 years. The government agencies then create a guideline to go along with it."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Finance) <i>"I plan development directions based on the OCSC, in which they've already figured out about the 21st century skills and other things. We have to look in that direction as well."</i> (Key informant, the Office of the Prime Minister) <i>"HR must listen to the OCSC because they are the ones who set the rules."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Labor)</p>
3. Development according to the Ministry's plan	Each ministry will develop human resources based on their own development plans.	<p><i>"We actually have a three-year human resource development plan, but we have to emphasize keeping up with the changing contexts. We have to keep pace with them, with technology, strategic plans, or reforming plans. We have to be in line with the changes."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Commerce) <i>"I look forward to following our plans."</i> (Key informant, the Ministry of Defense)</p>

Discussions

Current situations of HRD of the government ministries of Thailand:

1) Overview of the ministry HRD

The results of the study reveal Thai government attempts to separate the HRD departments as shown in the establishment of specialized HRD institutions within some ministries. However, HRD in some ministries was still operated under the Human Resource Management (HRM) within the ministry. Regarding this issue, Pareek and Rao (1975) stated

that the first priority of HRD intergration within an organization must be to establish a dedicated HRD department with full-time staff. In addition, Pace, Smith et al. (1991) also proposed an organizational structure for HRD agencies, recognizing the importance of HRD agencies working with frontline workers in an organization, as well as the management at all levels. HRD work plans are programs used to directly improve the productivity of the organization.

However, this study found that the establishment of separate HRD institutions did not result in any tangible effects on the development of civil servants in that ministry. It should also be noted that institutional segregation is a way to create a new organizational structure to facilitate more executive positions. Furthermore, it was also found that the efficiency and effectiveness of HRD was not correlated with the organizational structure, but with the systematic relationship and cooperation network between the three parties – the Policy and Planning Department, HRM, and HRD.

2) HRD paradigms in the ministries

A paradigm is a set of concepts that encourages people to develop their own belief system, urging them to choose which paradigm to use as a guide to action (Swanson and Holton, 2001). HRD paradigms found in this study are consistent with the views of several scholars including McCracken and Wallace (2000) who divided HRD into 3 concepts: (1) training, (2) human resource development – pointing out that businesses and organizations are beginning to focus on human resources and need to develop, and (3) strategic human resource development – organizations must view human resources as the main strategy of the organization as they are innovators, leaders of change, and promoters of a culture of learning. The HRD framework of Fajana (2002) proposed systemic HRD processes, including steps such as Labor Administration, Personnel Administration, Personnel Management, Human Resources Management, Strategic Human Resources Management, and Human Capital Management. Thai scholars seem to have adopted these concepts from Western scholars, but still combine the use of the 4 paradigms in each ministry, making it impossible to clearly distinguish which ministries use which paradigm.

For the HRD paradigms, it should be noted that due to rapid technological development and the pressure from the COVID-19 outbreak, organizations have to abruptly adjust their working style, resulting new forms of working including working from home, teleconferences, or working on new platforms. This greatly affects the development of human resources, as there are needs in building and developing digital skills, monitoring performance, supporting self-development, etc. These factors have become the driving force for a paradigm shift from traditional HRD to a new paradigm which will be referred to as “Virtual HRD” (VHRD) in this article. This VHRD involves the use of an integrated technological environment to increase the learning capacity and efficiency of individuals, groups of individuals, work processes, and organizations (McWhorter and Delello, 2015). It includes the use of the internet or web technologies to increase the effectiveness of individuals, teams, and organizations through training and self-development, organizational development, and professional development (Wang, 2012). This paradigm is consistent with the second phase of South Korea's Human Resource Development Plan (2020-2022), which has shifted from the one-on-one HRD approach into a more virtualized form, also known as a new HRD paradigm for the Post-COVID-19 era (Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM), 2021).

3) HRD methods in the ministries

This study found that the most common HRD methods used by Thai ministries were self-development and online training. This might be due to the main issue of inadequate HRD

budgets, resulting in the ministries having to minimize spending. Changes in technology combined with the COVID-19 outbreak might also be causes for all government agencies to adapt and adopt more HRD methods in these forms. This is consistent with a study by Bennett (2009) which predicted that Virtual HRD or VHRD will play an increasingly important role. The study's vision of VHRD includes an environment full of media and websites that are relevant to everyday life, enhancing knowledge, expertise, performance, innovation, and the creation of learning communities. Both formal learning and informal learning are also perceived as important processes for VHRD (Bennett, 2014) with informal learning being a better format. Nonetheless, this change to VHRD might transform the traditional paradigms of HRD, as it will drive the idea of better learning environments and knowledge management for the traditional HRD paradigms.

4) HRD innovations

The study results found that the Ministry of Defense has used an innovation, creation of new forms of personnel – i.e. civil servants and volunteer soldiers, to solve human resource management issues. It should be noted that having civil servant positions in the Ministry of Defense is good for developing human resources that are not tied to a military rank system. This allows for recruitment of experts in certain fields without them having to be enlisted in the military service, resulting in more flexibility for further development. As for the recruitment of volunteer soldiers, it is done similarly to outsourcing by signing the soldiers through employment contracts in order to facilitate the ministry's management of personnel and budget. Another innovation used by the Ministry of Defense is the use of the Vibhavisai Exam to help create a repository of expertise which can be retrieved later to complement individual development. For the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, there is a self-developed competency test called "Smart Officer", not unlike that of the Ministry of Defense but with clearer assessment criteria and test results that were found tangibly used in practice. The Ministry of Commerce has established an expert directory by training internal speakers to become expert speakers, as well as integrating this system with performance appraisals to motivate personnel to develop themselves. The Ministry of Education was found using "development coupons", allowing flexibility for public teachers in choosing training courses to participate in to develop themselves before advancing in their academic standings. The Ministry of Energy, on the other hand, was found to have a "training road map" to lay down the direction of personnel development in the ministry. It can be seen that the aforementioned solutions are innovations that recognize the importance of HRD, and it is necessary for organizations in this era to change their perspectives and use innovations to help in organizational transformation and development (Drucker, Christensen, and Govindarajan, 2013). Thus, if each government agency has creative initiatives that do not adhere to a centralized legal framework, it can result in the creation of more HRD innovations. In addition, it can be seen that the current COVID-19 situation has put pressure on organizations to innovate, especially in the field of HRD (Zimmerling and Chen, 2021). By developing human resources, in turn it will also contribute to the development of organizational innovation (Tripathi and Dhir, 2022).

Directions of future HRD in the Thai government

Self-development was found as the most common direction of HRD at the ministry level in Thailand, consistent with self-development being the preferred method of HRD of various ministries. However, this might be due to the collection of data being done in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak, leading to the study results coming out in the same way, that HRD should be primarily self-improvement as personnel were unable to attend training courses in the workplace. The results of this study are consistent with the study by Vieira da Cunha, Joao

& Antunes, Anabela (2022) which predicted that self-improvement will play an important role in both personal and professional development processes in the future. Another HRD direction, the HRD having to adhere to a plan and wait for authorization of the central HRD authority's policies, might be challenged by these 4 possible situations – (1) increasing changes in the external environment, (2) globalization leading to the need for more cross-border workforces, (3) the importance of high-potential personnel affecting the competitiveness of the organization, and (4) an increase in higher skills from the rise of technology creating larger skill gaps. These four trends result in the need for HRD to be more appropriate, more flexible, and quicker to adapt in response to rapidly changing situations, all of which do not agree with the HRD having to wait for central authority planning, a direction that contradicts the changing dynamics of the world (Store, Ulrich, and Wright, 2019). This contradiction does not only exist in Thailand, as Lawler and Boudreau (2015) stated that HRD has changed very little over the past 20 years, and there were also mentions of traditional administrative activities, compliance with rules, and government systems consistent with the results of this study.

There are possible HRD approaches for the Thai government system that should lead to HRD policy formulation and practice. (1) Executives, the most important factor in policy making, must place importance on the development of human resources in government agencies. (2) Sufficient and suitable budget must be allocated for the implementation of various projects related to HRD in each government agency. (3) The development model must be developed in accordance with the established strategy, with the development method being in line with the needs of the national strategy. (4) Government agencies must have a personnel development strategy that requires personnel to follow the goals and necessities of the organization in order to drive the organization towards its target results. (5) The concept of HRD should cover competency development, career development, growth mindset, digital skills, and self-development. All groups of personnel in the organization should be developed thoroughly and continuously. There should be full sessions for upskilling and reskilling provided by professional speakers both inside and outside the organization. (6) The HRD system should be comprehensive and effective to link the evaluation system to individual performance. (7) The HR departments in government agencies must be knowledgeable. They should know their own human resources and be able to provide clear processes for HRD, set goals for personnel competency, collect necessary human resource data, and have various mechanisms to appropriately support the development and learning of personnel in the organization.

Therefore, for the Thai government system to move from the old paradigms to the VHRD paradigm, old values and cultures must be adapted to accommodate redesigned organizations and current situations. The management must mobilize values that will move the organization forward, while all parties must also realize that they are part of the organization's success. However, HRD agencies are no longer expected to be the primary agencies for promoting learning and development among employees, and HRD has been distributed and integrated into a variety of leadership and governance roles with more personnel being responsible for learning and development (Torraco and Lundgren, 2020). Nonetheless, it is the main duty of the HRD departments to design curricula that create patterns of desirable behaviors for organizational success and to shape the organizational culture of learning in this era of Virtual Organization & HRD following the third phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand. It is important to note that this organizational culture design must not devalue humanity and must allow for creative initiatives, while also discouraging partisan systems and overadherence to rules. There must rather be promotion of collective society and world society values, so the Thai government will be more accepted for its all-round development.

Conclusions

Overall, for the current HRD situation, the HRD of each ministry in Thailand is under the responsibility of various different agencies, with the majority being under the Office of the Permanent Secretary. Four HRD paradigms were found among the ministries – (1) personnel development, (2) human resource development, (3) strategic human resource development, and (4) human capital development. However, it is possible that the arrival of the Virtual HRD paradigm will bring more changes to the attitudes and methods of HRD in each ministry. Although self-development of the personnel was found to be the most chosen approach of the government ministries, there were actually 6 innovations found to facilitate the work in HRD. As for the directions of HRD in the future, self-development was found to be the direction that each ministry considers most important.

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