



Comparative Study of Human Resource Management Implementation on Employees and Cooperative Education Students in a Public University *

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this survey research focused on Human Resource Management (HRM) processes implemented with the cooperative education students by workplaces. The study aims to compare recruitment, selection, training and evaluation methods companies use with students and employees. Quantitative approach was conducted by using questionnaire. With population of 275 companies in company list of one faculty in a public university that have operated the program systematically, 161 samples were chosen based on simple random sampling. The respondents are the cooperative education coordinators from the human resource department. Descriptive analysis and paired sample t-test were utilized in data analysis through SPSS program. The results showed that HRM functions are used with the employees different to the students. It revealed that the overall aspects that recruitment methods are used with the cooperative education students in low level while selection, training and evaluation methods are used with the students in the moderate level. In contrast, the overall aspects of evaluation methods implemented with the employees in moderate level while recruitment methods, selection methods and training methods are used with the students in high level. The HRM functions implementing with employees had significantly higher level of implementation than the cooperative education students.

Keyword: cooperative education, Human Resource Management (HRM), student

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INTRODUCTION

Cooperative Education (co-op) is an education system that provides students with opportunity to learn from direct experiencing at workplaces, it is also called Work Integrated Learning (WIL). “The aim of cooperative education is to alternate work experience with classroom study so that students are able to integrate theory with practice and practice with theory to enable a deeper understanding of theoretical and practical” (Cooper, Orrell & Bowden, 2010, p.51). It allows the student to learn from educational institutes and companies. The student works are matched their career fields. Students are able to adapt knowledge from classes and gain experiences and skills from the workplaces. The status of the students, during the 4-month training program, will be the same as full-time employees. They will work under the same rules and regulations that are applied to employee. As the principle of the program is to emphasize learning from work experiences, the students have to follow the processes of the management system in the organization too. One of the essential management systems in organization is Human Resource Management (HRM). The cooperative education operation standard specified that HRM is a key to manage the cooperative education program in the workplaces (Office of Higher Education Commission, 2008). The human resource department has to provide the coordinators and job supervisors who take care of the students during the cooperative education program. In addition, the workplaces have to provide job positions, job descriptions, and qualifications of the candidates, welfare, wage and etc. for the students. The students who join the cooperative education program have to follow the procedures similar to employees’ by starting from writing the resume, being selected from the company, working as an temporary employee, being evaluated, etc. (Peangchan Chringchit, 2002). Therefore, it is also expected students to undergone the same recruitment, selection, training and evaluation, which are HRM functions, as if they were ones of the employees. So far, not many companies are able to apply all HRM functions they used with their employees to the cooperative education students due to some limitations. For example, the study results of Thai Entrepreneurs’ Knowledge, Need and Expectations Regarding Cooperative Education of University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce (Rattanawadee Siritongtavorn, 2012) shows that the understandings about cooperative education objectives impact the cooperative education operation in companies. Some companies understand that cooperative education program is not different from internship. The students are not treated as the employees, but treated as the student trainees. It can imply that the HRM methods might not be applied in cooperative education students similar to employees.

One public university is selected as the area of the study. This public university is a leader in cooperative education among other educational institutes in the region. The public university has been operated the program for a long time especially Faculty A. The faculty is well-known as the faculty that operates continuously and systematically. It is also the first faculty that organizes the program in this public university.



Therefore, this study aims to investigate HRM functions companies use with their cooperative education students and compare them with those used with employees. This will provide opportunity for the educational institutes and companies to identify the gap and assist each other in improving cooperative education program so that it is near to perfect. The educational institutes will be able to conduct the results with cooperative education students. It can assist the university to prepare the students to be ready as a part of the company's systems. It will be a guideline for the companies that would like to manage or develop HRM functions with the cooperative education students.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research aims to investigate selection, recruitment, training and evaluation processes company use with the cooperative education students. It also compares selection, recruitment, training and evaluation methods companies used between cooperative education students and employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Resource Management in Cooperative Education

The cooperative education procedures and the program standards show that the program applies the Human Resource Management. It is clear that HRM is involved with the cooperative education directly. Office of Higher Education Commission (2008) releases the standard of cooperative education management for the company, so that the companies are able to support and develop the students. Two key persons at the company are cooperative education coordinator and job supervisor or mentor. The cooperative education coordinator is responsible for coordination with the educational institute. The main issues involve with job position, work period, student facilitation and academic advisor supervision. Assigning job and project, supervising, evaluation is responded by the job supervisor/mentor. The companies should also specify the jobs that related to the student study fields. Job position, job description and candidate qualifications should be notified to the educational institutes. In addition, orientation about the basic information of the company is essential such as co-worker, regulations and evaluation criterion. Including, provide the appropriate facilitations such as companies and instruments as same as the other employees. Wage and welfare are mentioned that the students should receive the payment as well.



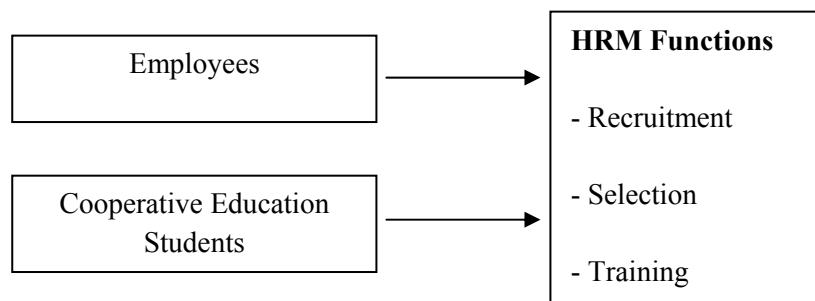
Though the program has been used in the universities for several years, there are only few researches and studies about HRM implementation in the cooperative education program. Most of the studies mentioned about it indirectly. There is only one or some methods of HRM functions are mentioned. The study results on Research report on the study of status, potential, and readiness for development and operation of cooperative education in higher education development Eastern network and company (Patchanee Nontasak & Kedsarin Imlek, 2010) shows that most of the respondents understand the cooperative education policies. This assists the companies to manage the cooperative education in the right direction. It can be implied that the understanding about the cooperative education impact to the cooperative education management level. The issues are mentioned that well organization consists of orientation, job supervisor and welfare for the cooperative education student.

Co-operative education model: the strengthening university-industry links in Thailand (Supat Chupradit & Baron-Gutty's, 2009) finding shows that the company used the HRM processes with the cooperative education students. There were some methods that used with the students similar to employees such as training methods. The workplaces applied the training courses to the students similar to their new employees. The research results also show that some selection methods that apply to the students are similar to the employees such as job application. In contrary, the students are not assigned the jobs that related to their study fields. They are only received the general administrative and office tasks. It cannot ensure that students will involve in the relevant tasks as similar as to the employees.

METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

The study compared the HRM functions namely recruitment, selection, training and evaluation between employees and cooperative education students to find out similarities and differences between them. Each function was identified the methods that have been used with the employees and cooperative education students.





Instrument

This survey research was utilized questionnaire as the instrument of the study to collect the data from the respondents. The questionnaire was created by document research. There were two parts; 1) general information of respondents' organization and 2.) HRM processes that the workplaces implement with the employees and cooperative education students separated into four categories, recruitment, selection, training and evaluation. All questions were assessed by five rating scale to find the level of implementation, which were 5 = very high, 4 = high, 3 = moderate, 2 = low and 1 = very low.

The content validity of the questionnaire was examined by instructors that experts in cooperative education program and human resource managers from the companies that have the cooperative education program. Item Object Congruency (IOC) was used as a tool to test the items in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was adjusted according to the advices from the experts. Then, 30 questionnaires were tried out with the cooperative education coordinators from the workplaces for reliability test. The try-out samples were excluded from sample group of the study. The try-out reliability was checked by using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The reliability of the questionnaire is 0.91.

Population and Sample

The 275 companies on the company list of Faculty A in a public university were chosen as population. The sample size was chosen based on Krejcie & Morgan's table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population (1970). 161 samples are randomly selected according to Simple Random Sampling. The respondents were the cooperative education coordinators from human resource department.

Data Collection

The 161 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents with cover letters and research information sheets. The respondents were required to return the questionnaires in 45 days. The questionnaires were distributed and were returned during 29 January - 14 March 2014. The respondents submitted the questionnaires by post mail, email and in-person. However, some questionnaires were not returned in specific period. The respondents were called and asked to return the questionnaires. The follow-up was done in 20 days during 15 March - 3 April 2014.



Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed by SPSS software package. Descriptive statistics and inference statistics were utilized as follows:

1. The parameters were computed to analyze general information of respondents with frequency and percentage.
2. Mean and standard deviation were computed to analyze the level of HRM implementation on employee and cooperative education student.
3. Paired sample t-test was performed to compare workplaces' HRM functions used with employees and cooperative education students (The significance threshold was set at .05).

RESULTS

1. General information of respondents' organization

Table 1 represented that there were nearly half of 161 the respondents' organizations that joining the cooperative education program for 1 year to less than 3 years (44.70 percent) while there were 38.50 percent that joining the program for 3 years to less than 5 years. 14.30 percent is the organization that joining the program for 5 years or more. The organizations joined the program less than 1 year as 2.50 percent. Most of the respondents' organizations had set the specific number for accepting cooperative education students to work in the organizations each year as 78.90 percent. In contrary, there were 21.10 percent of the organizations that did not set the specific number of cooperative education students.

Table 1: General information of respondents' organizations

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Duration of joining cooperative education program		
Less than 1 year	4	2.50
1 year to less than 3 years	72	44.70
3 years to less than 5 years	62	38.50
5 years or more	23	14.30
Limit number of cooperative education students each year		
Yes	127	78.90
No	34	21.10



2. Level of HRM implementation on employees and cooperative education students

Table 2 showed the results of overall aspects of each HRM function used with employees and cooperative education students. The overall aspects of evaluation used with employees in moderate level while recruitment, selection and training were used with the students in high level. In contrast, recruitment was utilized with the cooperative education students in low level while selection, training and evaluation were implemented with the students in the moderate level.

Table 2: Overall aspects of each HRM function used with employees and co-op students

HRM Functions	Employee			Cooperative Education Student		
	Mean	SD	Level of Implementation	Mean	SD	Level of Implementation
Recruitment	3.71	.85	High	2.38	.73	Low
Selection	4.18	.50	High	2.90	.77	Moderate
Training	4.18	.54	High	3.38	.52	Moderate
Evaluation	3.45	.79	Moderate	2.57	.57	Moderate

3. Comparing workplaces' HRM functions used with employees and cooperative education students by paired sample t-test

Recruitment

Table 3: Recruitment

Recruitment Methods	Employee		Cooperative Education Student		t	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Advertising via media or internet	3.96	.96	1.73	.90	26.49*	< .001
Announcing job announcement at the company	3.23	1.33	1.16	.48	19.52*	< .001
Joining or organizing job fair	3.39	1.33	2.65	1.43	8.29*	< .001
Contacting through educational institutes	4.25	.95	3.98	1.27	2.73	.007

*Statistical significance level of 0.05



Table 3 showed that advertising via media or internet, announcing job announcement at the company, and joining or organizing job fair were implemented with the employees different to the students. There were significant differences between implementing these methods with employees and the cooperative education students ($p < .001$). Contacting through educational institutes was also implemented with the employees different to the students. It was implemented with employees ($\bar{X} = 4.25$, $SD = .95$) more than with the cooperative education students ($\bar{X} = 3.98$, $SD = 1.27$); $p = .007$. It was most implemented with both employees and cooperative education students.

Selection

Table 4 represented that considering details of cover letter and resume as preliminary selection, considering letters of recommendation as preliminary selection, using employment test and panel interview were implemented with employees different to the cooperative education students ($p < .001$). However, the methods were most implemented with the employees and the students were considering completed application form as preliminary selection and one-on-one interview. Considering completed application form as preliminary selection was implemented with the employees ($\bar{X} = 4.75$, $SD = .55$) higher than with the co-op students ($\bar{X} = 3.80$, $SD = 1.12$); $p < .001$. The workplaces implemented using one-on-one interview method with the employees ($\bar{X} = 4.75$, $SD = .55$) more than with the students ($\bar{X} = 3.90$, $SD = 1.18$); $p < .001$.

Table 4: Selection

Selection Methods	Employee		Cooperative Education Student		t	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Considering completed application form as preliminary selection	4.75	.55	3.80	1.12	10.80*	< .001
Considering details of cover letter and resume as preliminary selection	4.71	.56	3.70	1.12	11.16*	< .001
Considering letters of recommendation as preliminary selection	3.63	1.11	2.39	1.10	13.72*	< .001
Using employment test	4.05	.93	1.98	.96	25.76*	< .001
Using one-on-one interview	4.75	.55	3.90	1.18	8.56*	< .001
Using panel interview	3.19	1.06	1.66	1.02	17.51*	< .001

*Statistical significance level of 0.05



Training

Table 5 represented that coaching, classroom training, training by assigning special job and holding conference or discussion group training were implemented with employees different to the students ($p < .001$). However, orientation was implemented with the employee ($\bar{X} = 4.66$, $SD = .73$) more than with the students ($\bar{X} = 3.97$, $SD = 1.20$); $p < .001$. Training by utilizing job instruction was implemented with the employees ($\bar{X} = 4.80$, $SD = .49$) higher than with the cooperative education students ($\bar{X} = 4.30$, $SD = .75$); $p < .001$. The workplaces implemented mentoring method with the employees ($\bar{X} = 4.53$, $SD = .60$) more than with the co-op students ($\bar{X} = 4.40$, $SD = .62$); $p = .016$. Training by mentoring was most applied on the cooperative education students. In contrast, training by utilizing job instruction was most implemented with employees.

Table 5: Training

Training Methods	Employee		Cooperative Education Student		t	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Orientation	4.66	.73	3.97	1.20	9.05*	< .001
Training by coaching	4.58	.61	3.60	.98	13.17*	< .001
Training by utilizing job instruction	4.80	.49	4.30	.75	8.90*	< .001
Training by mentoring	4.53	.60	4.40	.62	2.43	.016
Training by assigning special job	4.58	.67	3.97	.86	10.40*	< .001
Training in classroom	3.35	1.26	1.73	.87	16.34*	< .001
Training by holding conference or discussion group	3.10	1.20	1.71	.85	16.04*	< .001

*Statistical significance level of 0.05



Evaluation

Peer evaluation, rating committee and 360 degrees feedback were implemented with the employees different to the students ($p < .001$). However, evaluation by supervisor was the most method that was implemented with the employees and cooperative education students. It was implemented with the employees ($\bar{X} = 4.84$, $SD = .40$) more than with the cooperative education students ($\bar{X} = 4.66$, $SD = .54$); $p < .001$. Self – evaluation was the second method that was most implemented with both employees and co-op students. It was implemented with the employees ($\bar{X} = 3.99$, $SD = .98$) higher than with students ($\bar{X} = 3.08$, $SD = 1.06$); $p < .001$.

Table 6: Evaluation

Evaluation Methods	Employee		Cooperative Education Student		t	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Evaluating by supervisor	4.84	.40	4.66	.54	3.57*	< .001
Peer Evaluation	3.12	1.37	1.75	.98	11.72*	< .001
Self – Evaluation	3.99	.98	3.08	1.06	9.78*	< .001
Rating Committee	3.03	1.48	2.05	1.23	10.60*	< .001
360 degree feedback	2.21	1.20	1.30	.63	10.98*	< .001

*Statistical significance level of 0.05

DISCUSSION

1. The overall level of recruitment implementation on cooperative education is in low level. When look into each component, contacting the education institute is most implemented, while other methods were implemented in lower level. The finding is consistent to the operation standards of the cooperative education standards (Cooperative Education Curriculum and Training Kit Development Committee, 2013). The education institutes notify the workplaces that there will be the students joining the cooperative education program with the workplaces. The workplaces are contacted to provide the job positions, job descriptions and etc. that appropriate for the needs of the educational institutes to recruit the cooperative education students. The education institutes recruit the students according to available positions from the companies. Thus, the workplaces support the recruitment processes indirectly. Comparing the implementation on employees, the recruitment implementation by the workplaces is least utilized on the cooperative education students.



2. Three methods in selection function are implemented in the high level which are using one-on-one interview, considering completed application form as preliminary selection and considering details of cover letter and resume as preliminary selection. The study results are consistent to the selection operation processes of the workplace (Thai Association of Cooperative Education, 2013). The workplaces are encouraged to select the students by themselves. Thus, the workplaces can use the selection methods according to their consideration but they are required to notify the methods that will be applied to the students to the educational institutes. Besides, the study results are also support the finding of Supat Chupradit & Baron-Gutty's (2009) that student's cover letter, resume or CV is also play important role in the selection process. Normally, the workplaces primary considered the applicants by application forms and resumes. These documents are chosen and sent to the workplaces by the educational institutes. The students are not allowed to submit the documents directly to the workplaces. After the primary considers the documents, the workplaces may require the student to have the interview with cooperative education coordinators or job supervisors. However, the implementation between the employees and cooperative education students on every method is different. The workplaces are encouraged to select the students by themselves but the educational institutes will preliminary select the best candidates for the particular positions. Then, the list of appropriate applicants will be proposed to the workplaces with their relevant documents. It may conclude that the applicants are chosen by the educational institutes at the first place, therefore the selection methods for the cooperative education may not necessary to be implemented as same as the employees.

3. In training function, mentoring is most implemented with the students. The finding supports the study of Supat Chupradit & Baron-Gutty's (2009) on the topic "Co-Operative Education Model: The Strengthening university-industry links in Thailand". Their researches mention that the mentor or the job supervisor is the key person to train the cooperative education students. The job-supervisor will be the mentor that brief in and coach the students during the program. The cooperative education policies are specified that the workplaces should provide job supervisor to be a mentor for the students. The job supervisor has responsibility to guide, assist and suggest the students while they work at the workplace. However, Supat Chupradit & Baron-Gutty's (2009) study results also mentioned that the workplaces applied the training courses to the students similar to their new employees. It contradicts to the results of the study as the implementation of training methods between the employees and the students are different. Although, the cooperative education students are the temporary employees of the workplaces, they work at the organizations in a short period comparing to the employees. It may imply that the organizations may use the methods that suitable for the time frame of the program or adjust the level of implementation of those particular methods to be fit with the cooperative education students.



4. Evaluation by supervisor is most used with the cooperative education students by the workplaces among other evaluation methods. The results support the evaluation processes of the cooperative education program (Thai Association of Cooperative Education, 2013). The program suggests that the immediate job supervisor should be the person who evaluates the co-op students' work performance including their projects. The educational institutes provide the evaluation form for the job supervisor to evaluate the students during and after finish the program.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, although, the cooperative education students are treated as employees of the organizations, the level of HRM implementation between them are utilized differently. The HRM implementations of the workplaces on the students are under the control of the cooperative education policies and standards. However, it is still essential to use the HRM functions as much as possible to the cooperative education students.

Suggestions for educational institute

The cooperative education policies emphasizes that the educational institutes have to recruit the available companies and job positions for the students. The educational institutes are the main channel that the students communicate for the available positions, so they should cooperate with the companies continuously. The educational institutes should increase the numbers of the company on their list as it will increase advantageous positions for the students. Besides, to expand opportunity for the student to get the right job, the educational institutes should recruit the companies that match to the students' professional fields. The educational institutes should also prepare the necessary information about the possible jobs for the companies, so that the companies can identify the appropriate positions for student.

According to the cooperative education standard and policies, the educational institutes should encourage the companies to select the students by themselves. As the results showed that various methods were used with the students, the educational institutes should reaffirm with the companies that they are capable to use every available method depending on their decisions. In addition, the educational institutes should explain the selection methods that frequently used by the companies to the students. They might also prepare the techniques or courses relating to selection process such as application and resume writing or stimulating the interview section, so the students can be able to get ready for this section.



Job supervisor or mentor is a key person who will be both trainer and evaluator for the cooperative education students. The educational institutes should emphasize the companies to provide the job supervisor who has sufficient time, experiences or knowledge to train and evaluate the students. The educational institutes might cooperate with the companies about the area that job supervisor can train and evaluate the students, so that the students can receive new knowledge and adapt their knowledge from classes in work effectively.

Suggestions for company

Companies should increase their opportunities to recruit, select, train and evaluate the co-op candidates by using various methods based on the cooperative education policies. The company is usually recruited by the educational institutes. The strong and continuous corporation with educational institutes will assist the companies to recruit the right pool of candidate. The companies that maintain their relationship with the educational institutes will have more chances to recruit the students matching to their needs. If they can be in the top of company ranking, they will have more opportunities to be the first company to select the right applicants before others.

Various selection methods should be used to select the right co-op candidate as there is not any particular requirement from the educational institutes. Besides, using employment test should be considered to apply with the students too. The employment test will assist the companies to see whether the students have relevant knowledge. The companies will be able to see whether the students are good at their study fields. This will increase opportunities to get the best cooperative education candidates.

The companies should provide the right job supervisor or mentor for the students. The job supervisor is the person who works with the students from the start, so he or she will understand and see the progress in students' performance. The companies should notify the job supervisor about their duties during work with the cooperative education students in advance, so they can work and train the students in the right direction. The companies should also provide job supervisor who have experiences in particular fields relating to students' professional.

Suggestions for further study

1. This research was adopted quantitative method which utilized questionnaire to collect the data. Therefore, the further study might use qualitative methods such as interview to get more information about each HRM function that use with the cooperative education students in details.
2. The further study should concentrate on the factors or obstacles that impact on implementation of HRM on cooperative education students by the organizations.



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