

# HR Trends in Thailand 2017

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## Abstract

This study was conducted in 2016 with four main objectives: (1) to review HR trends from 2015-2017 in a global context, (2) to review future contexts in Thailand that might impact HR practices, (3) to examine HR trends in Thai leading industrials, and (4) to provide HR practitioners with recommendations for preparing for future changes and to suggest future research needs to academics in HR. A survey was distributed online and via e-mails to HR practitioners in 15 industrials with 546 responses. Nine HR functions identified by SHRM (2008) were covered: workforce planning, recruitment and selection, employee relations, compensation and benefits, performance management, training and development, career planning and development, organization development, and CSR (corporate social responsibility). The data were analyzed within each industry and then summarized across industries. The top three increasing trends were performance management, employee relations, and organization development. Under future contexts in Thailand (considering the government policy, Thailand 4.0; the Gig economy; the aging society; and artificial intelligence technology) innovative organization development and workforce planning surfaced as major roles. How to prepare and develop the workforce to support this OD approach needs more discussion among HR practitioners and researchers.

**Keywords:** Human Resources, Trends, Thailand, Workforce Planning, Organization Development

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## แนวโน้มงานด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์ปี พ.ศ. 2560

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### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้จัดทำขึ้นในปี พ.ศ. 2559 โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์ (1) ทบทวนแนวโน้มในงานด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์ช่วงปี พ.ศ. 2558-2560 ภายใต้บริบทโลก (2) ทบทวนบริบทในอนาคตของประเทศไทยซึ่งอาจมีผลกระทบต่องานด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์ (3) สำรวจแนวโน้มงานด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์ในอุตสาหกรรมชั้นนำของไทย และ (4) ให้ข้อเสนอแนะกับผู้ปฏิบัติงานด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์ในการเตรียมความพร้อมรับการเปลี่ยนแปลง และแนะนำหัวข้อวิจัยให้กับนักวิชาการในสายงานทรัพยากรมนุษย์ แบบสำรวจได้ถูกจัดทำขึ้นส่งทางออนไลน์และอีเมลถึงผู้ปฏิบัติงานด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์ใน 15 อุตสาหกรรมชั้นนำ โดยได้รับผลตอบกลับ 546 ชุด ทั้งนี้การสำรวจอยู่ภายใต้งานด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์ 9 ด้านที่กำหนดโดยสมาคมการจัดการด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์ของสหรัฐอเมริกา หรือ SHRM (2008) ข้อมูลถูกวิเคราะห์ภายใต้กลุ่มอุตสาหกรรมและสรุปภายใต้ภาพรวมของ 15 อุตสาหกรรม ผลการศึกษาพบว่าสามารถอันดับแรกของแนวโน้มที่เพิ่มขึ้นคือ งานบริหารผลการปฏิบัติงาน งานแรงงานสัมพันธ์ และงานด้านการพัฒนาองค์การ หากแต่ภายใต้บริบทอนาคตของประเทศไทย (นโยบายประเทศไทย 4.0 เศรษฐกิจแบบรับงานชั่วคราว (Gig Economy) สังคมผู้สูงวัย และเทคโนโลยีปัญญาประดิษฐ์) ทำให้เห็นได้ว่าการพัฒนาองค์การมีแนวโน้มมุ่งสู่การเป็นองค์การแห่งนวัตกรรม และการวางแผนกำลังคนในอนาคตเป็นบทบาทที่สำคัญ เพื่อสนับสนุนการพัฒนาองค์การ ซึ่งทำให้เห็นความจำเป็นที่ต้องมีการอภิปรายกันมากขึ้นในกลุ่มผู้ปฏิบัติงานและนักวิจัยด้านทรัพยากรมนุษย์

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## Introduction

Studying human resource (HR) trends in Thailand was initiated as an annual series of studies in 2008 (Sritanyarat, 2008). Trend studies allow researchers to compare changes from one-time period to another (Bartlett, 2005). The HR Trends survey has been conducted every two years since then (Akaraborworn, 2011, 2013, 2014) to create a sense of urgency for HR practitioners and academics and to guide HR researchers.

## Problem Statement

In 2016, the fifth HR Trends in Thailand survey was conducted under the new flagship of the Thai government policy, Thailand 4.0, which was developed as the master plan to free Thailand from the middle-income trap, making it a high-income nation by 2020. Besides Thailand 4.0, a new economic model called the Gig Economy which can be a new economy risk for workforce planning, Aging Society which has become a long-term country burden and Artificial Intelligence (AI) which is a challenge for both the employers and many careers. Thus, it is interesting to explore how HR practitioners react to these events.

## Survey Purposes and Objectives

The purposes of the survey were to examine HR trends in Thai leading industrials and to provide recommendations for HR practitioners and academics to prepare for future changes and to suggest needs for future research.

## Research Questions

1. What are the top HR Trends in Thailand in 2017?
2. How the top HR Trends react to the national master plan and other challenges from economic, society, and technology.

## Significant of the Study

The survey result can create discussion among HR practitioners and also create a sense of urgency for them regarding their practices might not reflect what happens in the national and global trends. The researcher in the area of HR can use the survey result as a guideline for their future study.

## Literature Review

The literature review was conducted by searching under the keyword of HR trends, future organization, and global trends. Articles published in peer-reviewed articles since 2010 were included. Once the articles were identified, the titles and abstracts were reviewed for relevance. The topics that surfaced in the literature review include global trends from 2015-2017 and future contexts in Thailand.

### HR Global Trends 2015-2017

There are several HR organizations conducting HR Trends in the global context. To form the questions for this study, only three organizations were selected based on the biggest in numbers of country members and the sample size in their studies. They are (1) CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personal and Development), the oldest not-for-profit HR professional organization, having more than 140,000 members across the world, (2) SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management), the world's largest HR membership organization, representing more than 275,000 members in over 160 countries and (3) Deloitte, a consulting company, conducting annually global human capital trends based on more than 7,000 responses in over 130 countries around the world.

CIPD (2017) presented winter 2016-2017 edition of HR Outlook: Views of the profession survey report which is designed to provide the commentary and insight about the trends and challenges facing HR profession both now and in three years. Cost management, increasing organization agility/flexibility, talent management and productivity are top list of future priority. The main difference is that innovation has become an increasing trend this year.

Table 1: Future Organization Priorities, by Sector (%) (CIPD, 2017, p. 8)

Future priority (In 3 years)	All (base: 629)	Private (base: 347)	Public (base: 189)
Cost management	45	37	<b>62</b>
Increasing agility/flexibility of organisation	42	38	<b>48</b>
Talent management	41	<b>45</b>	35
Productivity	34	37	33
Adopting new technology	30	33	28
Innovation	30	32	27
Increasing customer focus	27	26	27
Growing the domestic market	21	<b>29</b>	5
Growth through merger and/or acquisition	19	<b>23</b>	14
Entering new markets	17	<b>23</b>	6
Risk management	15	13	<b>20</b>
Increasing global presence	14	<b>20</b>	6
Significant refocus of business direction	13	10	<b>17</b>
Corporate responsibility	11	9	15
Other	2	1	<b>3</b>

Q. Looking to the future, which, if any, of the following do you think will be key priorities for your organisation in THREE YEARS' TIME? Please tick up to FIVE options. (***Bold italic*** signifies a statistically significant difference between sectors.)

SHRM (2016) reported the top trends affecting the workplace and the HR professional according to SHRM special expertise panels and each panel is made up of 15 SHRM professional members who each serves a one-year term (up-to two terms). The top ten trends are (1) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainability: competing for and retaining top talent, (2) Employee health, safety and security: focusing on both virtual and physical threats to employee well-being, (3) Employee relations: using the performance review and ways in which the process can be made more effective for the employee, the team and the organization, (4) Ethics: balancing the competing interest of bottom-line results, legal obligations and employee demands when making ethical decisions in all aspects of the employment life cycle, (5) Global HR: facing more with mergers and acquisitions across countries, (6) Labor Relations: being influenced by globalization, trade agreement and

global labor standards, (7) Organization Development: expecting five generations in the workforce, (8) Staffing management: using new and effective Web 2.0 recruitment methods to create a solid selection strategy, (9) Technology HR management: influencing everything from HR communications to recruiting talent and measuring outcomes, (10) Total rewards/Compensation and benefits: expecting mandated paid sick leave/disability leave and employee status consideration, (11) Workplace diversity and inclusion: enhancing cultural diversity program.

Deloitte presents the Global Human Capital Trends 2016 (Bersin, et.al. (Eds.), 2015) which is the survey report the theme of “The new organization: Different by design”. The survey found that after three years of struggling to drive employee engagement and retention, improve leadership, and build a meaningful culture, executives see a need to redesign the organization itself, with 92% of survey participants rating this as a critical priority. To lead this shift toward the new organization, CEOs and HR leaders are focused on understanding and creating a shared culture, designing a work environment that engages people and constructing a new model of leadership and career development. The ten trends were ranked in order of important as presented in Figure 1.

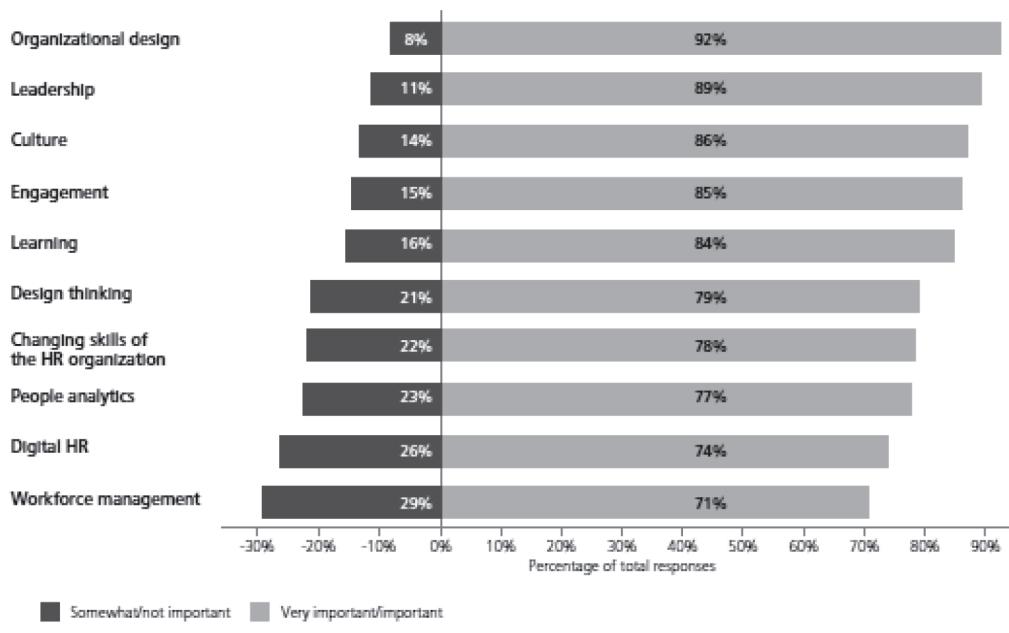


Figure 1: The Ten Trends Ranked in Order of Important (Bersin, et al., 2015, p. 4).

It seems that these three organizations predicting increasing trends of HR in 2016-2017 differently. However, they all can benefit for developing the questions for the HR Trends 2017 survey in Thailand.

### Future Context of Thailand

The researcher selected four major changes of Thailand under political, economics, society and technology (PEST) context in the next five years, which are Thailand 4.0 as a new government policy and a new economic model, the Gig Economy as a new economy risk for workforce planning, Aging Society as a long-term country burden and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a challenge for both the employers and many careers.

Thailand 4.0 was launched by the Thai government on 1 July 2016 as a new direction of the country and economic model aimed at pulling Thailand out of the middle-income trap, and developing it as a high-income country (The Government Public Relations Department, 2016). The first model, Thailand 1.0, emphasis was placed on the agricultural sector. The second model, Thailand 2.0, focused on light industries, which helped upgrade the country's economy from the low-income to middle-income status. The third model, Thailand 3.0, the country is currently emphasizing heavy industries for continued economic growth. Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha has cited this policy as the new direction of the country. (The Government Public Relations Department, 2016). This policy seeks to promote creativity, innovation, and the application of technology in various economic activities. Thailand 4.0 is a new economic model to develop Thailand into a value-based economy. The new model will change the country's traditional farming to smart farming, traditional SMEs to smart enterprises, and traditional services to high-value services. This model will be carried out along with the 20-national strategy and economic reform through the mechanism of "Public-private-people partnership." It will transform Thailand's comparative advantage into competitive advantage. Ten target industrial groups will become new engines of growth which they are Aerospace, Agro Processing, Automotive & Robotics, Automotive, Digital, Electrical & Electronics, Medical, Petrochemicals, Textile & Garment and Tourism (TIR, 2017). There are eight target industries included in this survey.

Thai organizations have been facing with the high turnover rate of young generations. However, this problem has happened in the Western countries long before Thailand and it creates the new platform of working which is called 'The Gig Economy'. It was established among American workers due to a third of the working population is already working in some sort of gig capacity (Friedman, 2014). According to a study of Harvard and Princeton academics, workers in "alternative" employment such as on-call workers, temp-agency workers and independent contractors, accounted for a much larger share of the workforce in 2015 than they did in 2005 (Floyd, 2016). Thus, in a gig economy, temporary, flexible jobs are commonplace and companies tend toward hiring independent contractors and freelancers instead of full-time employees. This gig economy undermines the traditional economy of full-time workers who rarely change positions and instead focus on a lifetime career (Investopedia, 2016). The major factor contributing to a gig economy is the digital world. The industries that have been most affected from this gig economy include education, health, public administration, transportation, retail and manufacturing (Floyd, 2016). Friedman (2014) observed that the rise of this 'gig' economy is praised by some as a response to the wishes of a more entrepreneurial generation, it is more likely that it is driven by the concerns of businesses to lower wages and benefit costs during business down-turns while also reducing their vulnerability to unfair dismissal lawsuits. The rise of gig labor calls for new initiatives in social policy because it shifts more of the burden of economic risk onto workers even while removing gig workers from many of the employment-bound New-Deal-era social insurance programs. The researcher has observed this new platform of working in Thai workforce however many organizations still take the cause of turnover rate as generations stereotype rather than the new form of hiring and quality of work life for any employees in every generation.

One of the reasons that Thai workforce might get into the Gig Economy higher than expectation due to the Aging Society. Thai people have culture of family and parent responsibility. Some of the employees might need more leave time from work to take care of their old parents. So they might prefer to work part-time or flexible time. From the World Bank's report in 2016, the Thai population is aging rapidly and the Thai aging was one of the societal situation that affect economic growth. As of 2016, 11% of the Thai population (about 7.5 million people) are 65 years or older, compared to 5% in 1995. By 2040, it is projected that 17 million Thais will be 65 years or older-more than

a quarter of the population. Together with China, Thailand has the highest share of elderly people of any developing country in East Asia and Pacific. The primary driver of aging has been the steep decline in fertility rates, which fell from 6.1 in 1965 to 1.5 in 2015, as a result of rising incomes and education levels and the successful National Family Planning Program launched in 1970. The working age population is expected to shrink by around 11% as a share of the total population between now and 2040—from 49 million people to around 40.5 million people. This decline in working age population is higher in Thailand than in all other developing East Asia and Pacific countries, including China.

Due to the new platform of working and aging, Thailand has reached the lowest unemployment rate for over a decade, thus, the challenge for many organizations is how to manage and recruit enough workforce. Artificial Intelligence (AI) might be the other alternative for these organizations. AI is considered as one of the technology approaches impacting on the workforce. AI was defined as a machine mimic “cognitive” functions that human associate with other human minds, such as “learning” and problem solving” (Russel and Norvig, 2003, p.27). However, there is an argument if AI can be as a positive or negative factor in global risk (Yudkowsky, 2008).

These future contexts are used for discussion under the research findings along with the other HR Trends from the other countries around the world.

## **Research Methodology and Methods**

This study adopted the survey research methodology, the most frequently used approach for assessing phenomena that are not directly observable (Barlett, 2005). Bartlett (2005) suggested a five-step process for conducting survey research in organizations: (1) define the survey purpose and objectives, (2) determine the sample, (3) create and pretest the instrument, (4) contact respondents using the survey process, and (5) collect, reduce, and analyze the data. These are described in the subsections that follow.

### **Population and Sample**

HR practitioners in 15 leading industries were selected for this study as shown in Table 2. A stratified sample was used to allow for sufficient representation from each industrial. Samples were drawn from each industrial proportional to the number of firms within each industrial to total 1,000. Total respondents were 546 for a response rate

of 54.6%. Fowler (2002, cited in Bartlett, 2005) stated that the size of the sample should be based on the purpose and objectives of the survey and the plans for how the data are to be analyzed to determine the minimum number of respondents. The underlying aim in selecting a sample size is to focus more on accuracy than the need for a large sample size.

**Table 2:** Samples from Each Industrial and Response Rates

Industrial	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
1. Automotive	49	9
2. Oil & Gas	32	6
3. Telecommunication	57	10
4. Food	30	5
5. Hospital	60	11
6. Restaurant and Food Service	30	5
7. Hotel	83	15
8. Logistics	23	4
9. Property	20	4
10. Banking (Private)	10	2
11. Insurance	13	2
12. Textile	26	5
13. Electrical	52	10
14. Information Technology	30	5
15. Consumer Goods	31	6
TOTAL	546	100

The majority of respondents were HR practitioners from the service industrial (56% with 306 respondents) and the production industrial (44% with 240 respondents).

### Instrument

The survey questions were developed from the instruments and findings of HR Trends in 2014-2015 (Akaraborworn, 2014). Fifteen executive students from the Human Resource and Organization Development (HROD) master's degree program teamed up to

review these survey questions, select appropriate items, and develop new items based on their perceived applicability in the Thai context. A limit of 5-6 questions per HR function was set to limit the survey length to impact response rates (Roth & BeVier, 1998, cited in Bartlett, 2005, p. 108).

The survey was composed of three parts:

- a. Respondent demographics and organization information (7 questions).
- b. HR trends covering nine functions (48 questions). The main question was “How important will this HR practice be to your company in the near future?” rating from 1 to 5 (not important at all to most important).
- c. Open-ended questions to obtain more information not covered in the survey.

### **Content Validity**

The questions were assessed as having content validity by using the index of item-objective congruence (IOC) (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977), a process in which content experts rate individual items on the degree to which they do or do not measure specific objectives listed by the test developer. Each content expert evaluated each item by giving the item a rating of 1 (for clearly measures), -1 (clearly does not measure), or 0 (degree to which it measures the content is unclear) for each objective. Twenty-eight HR practitioners from 15 industries participated in this content validity. The final 48 questions were adjusted based on the IOC results of 0.87.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The surveys were distributed to HR practitioners by the 15 executive master's students. Each student was assigned to collect the data via both personal contact and via on-line and e-mail. The respondents were asked to select the answer under three options: increasing trends, decreasing trends and not change (or the same).

### **Data Analysis**

After two weeks of data collection, the surveys were reviewed. Only completed surveys were selected for data analysis. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data, such as frequency and percentage. In this paper, the percentage was summarized from the frequency of respondents who selected ‘increasing trends’ as the answer only. Only the

top three increasing trends in each HR function are reported in this paper. Then the highest percentage was ranked from one to nine in order to compare the HR Trends among the industrials.

## Findings

The research results of nine HR functions summarized in percentage of increasing trend based on each industry is presented in Table 3 and nine HR functions ranked in order of increasing trends based on each industry is presented in Table 4.

**Table 3:** Nine HR Functions Summarized in Percentage of Importance by Industry

HR Functions	Automotive	Oil & Gas	Textile	Food	Hospital	Hotel	Restaurant	Logistic	Property	Banking	Insurance	Consumer	Electronic	IT	Telecom
Performance Management	90.61	90.62	71.93	81.33	82.9	80	65.5	86.56	96	100	100	70.77	75.4	56	74
Employee Relations	89.9	83.34	71.93	71.76	81.1	41.9	83	79.03	91.08	83	87.1	76.92	68.6	49	79
Organization Development	78.57	78.12	80.71	69.71	78.8	66.9	75.5	84.84	82.59	91	75.3	69.23	69.5	57	69.15
Training and Development	90.67	85.71	64.92	80.49	78.9	81.5	66.3	77.25	88.38	91	85.3	65.93	73.1	52	74.58
Compensation & Benefit	81.63	72.5	77.2	73.15	65	43.6	72.9	79.25	85.62	86	87.1	72.31	68.1	50	73
Workforce Planning	84.94	76.05	59.65	68.75	81.3	78.3	75	79.53	75.58	80	82.9	67.69	67.9	44	59.6
CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility	79.18	62.5	64.92	56	63.7	68.3	68.6	64.22	80.68	92	81.5	32.86	70.8	48	64.6
Recruitment and Selection	78.78	79.37	49.13	73.15	64.7	48.6	75.7	65.16	77.58	92	82.8	66.15	71.2	45	62
Career Planning and Development	69.96	72.5	68.43	49.33	48.7	79.8	64.3	80.76	76	92	77	64.62	55.8	51	66.4

**Table 4:** Nine HR Functions Ranked in order of Importance Based on Each Industry

HR Functions	Automotive	Oil & Gas	Textile	Food	Hospital	Hotel	Restaurant	Logistic	Property	Banking	Insurance	Consumer	Electronic	IT	Telecom	RANK
Performance Management	2	1	4	1	1	2	8	1	1	1	4	1	1	2	1	1
Employee Relations	3	4	4	3	4	5	1	7	2	8	6	2	2	5	1	2
Organization Development	7	3	4	6	3	7	2	2	3	3	9	6	6	1	5	3
Training and Development	1	2	3	2	5	4	9	6	4	3	4	8	4	4	8	4
Compensation & Benefit	5	5	2	5	8	6	6	5	8	7	6	7	8	6	3	5
Workforce Planning	4	6	7	9	2	3	4	4	9	9	3	3	5	9	7	6
CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility	8	9	7	8	6	1	3	9	6	2	2	5	7	6	6	7
Recruitment and Selection	5	7	9	4	7	9	5	8	5	5	5	9	3	8	9	8
Career Planning and Development	9	8	1	7	9	8	7	3	7	5	8	1	9	3	3	9

## Discussion

Overall HR Trends in Thailand 2017, ‘Performance Management’ has the highest rank of HR function and this research result is similar to the HR Trends in Thailand 2012-2013 (Akaraborworn, 2013). The following trends are Employee Relations (Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>), Organization Development (Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>), Training and Development (Ranked 4<sup>th</sup>), Compensation and Benefit (Ranked 5<sup>th</sup>), Workforce Planning (Ranked 6<sup>th</sup>), CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility (Ranked 7<sup>th</sup>), Recruitment and Selection (Ranked 8<sup>th</sup>) and Career Planning and Development (Ranked 9<sup>th</sup>). Under each HR Trends, only top three increasing trends under each HR function are discussed.

### ● Performance Management (PM)

#### Rank 1: Performance Management

1	Try to link the reward and pay with performance evaluation (1) Performance-based Pay (2) Competency-based Pay (3) Job-based Pay
2	Provide feedback after performance evaluation
3	Align corporate performance with individual performance by goal-setting
3	Performance evaluation has an impact on employee engagement

The HR trends in Thailand 2017, performance management was ranked as top three increasing trends in 9 industrials: Oil & Gas, Food, Hospital, Logistic, Property Banking, Insurance, Electronic, IT (Ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), Automotive, Hotel, Telecom (Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>). The ‘*performance evaluation*’ still plays the major role in PM. The terms of performance management and performance evaluation were used interchangeable in many organizations that the researchers have experienced running the workshops on the strategic performance management.

‘*Performance-based pay*’ is the trends for HR practitioners to reward and pay based on the performance evaluation. It has been an attempt of HR practitioners to reward the high performers. This research result is similar to what SHRM (2016) has found the third HR Trends was using the performance review and ways in which the process can be made more effective for the employee, the team and the organization. The second trends under the PM is ‘*providing feedback after performance evaluation*’. Coaching and feedback has become an increasing trend in the last four years (Akaraborworn, 2013, 2014). However, these two PM trends reflect the two important objectives of most PM programs: (1) to acknowledge and reward past contributions and (2) to facilitate employee development. These two objectives stand in vivid contrast to how many

employees feel about their organizations' PM programs; fearful, defensive, and confused (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2014, p.3). Why Thai HR practitioners would like to reward the employees who performed well and also providing feedback after performance evaluation, these kinds of practices might come from the third trends of PM, , due to their practices on '*aligning corporate performance with the individual performance*' and also '*enhancing the employee engagement*'.

However, Harvard Business Review (Buckingham and Goodall, 2015) presented a public survey conducted by Deloitte. It found that more than half the executives questioned (58%) believe that their current performance management approach drives neither employee engagement nor high performance. In Forbes 2017, annual performance reviews evolve into more continuous reviews. Schawbel (2016) stated that one of the biggest discussions in HR circles is performance reviews, how to transform them and implement something new that serves both managers and employees. Professionals today desire instant feedback; a behavior they have adopted from the instant gratification they receive on social networks like Twitter and Facebook. Younger generations are especially impatient and are unwilling to wait a whole year to learn about their strengths and areas of improvement. A whole one-fourth of employees feel that annual performance reviews do not help improve their performance. The annual performance review is coming to an end on a global scale as generation Zs and millennials are currently receiving feedback either daily (19%), weekly (24%) or regularly (23%).

From the global employee engagement done by AonHewitt (2014), it found that HR practices was one of the key driver for employee engagement and PM is the most important key driver for this matter. So the top two the increasing trends in 2017 are performance management and employee engagement which is under the employee relations.

## ❷ Employee Relations (ER)

### Rank 2: Employee Relations

1	Use several communication channels to improve relationship with employees Channels: (1) Social Media & E-mail (2) Meetings (3) Intranet
2	Invest more facilities for work safety beyond the legal requirement
3	Conduct survey on employee engagement with the reasons for employee relation and motivation Key Drivers: (1) Career Growth (2) Salary & Benefit

ER was the second rank in HR Trends in Thailand 2017. It was ranked as top three increasing trends in 7 industrials: Restaurant, Telecommunication (Ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), Property, Consumer Products, Electronic (Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>), Automotive and Food (Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>). The most increasing trends of ER is Thai HR practitioners '*using the several communication channels to improve relationship with employees*'. The most used communication channel is 'social media' such as group line and e-mail. However, there is no research study in the Thai context on how effective of using social media as a channel for improving employee relations.

The second rank of ER, '*investing more facilities for work safety beyond the legal requirement*', is similar to the second HR Trends report by SHRM in 2016, employee health, safety and security: focusing on both virtual and physical threats to employee well-being. The safety becomes a basic need as organizations' facilities, especially for the industrials in the exporting businesses. They are required by the mother companies to comply their practices with the international standard.

The third rank of ER, '*conducting employee engagement survey*', was required more in many industries due to high turnover rate among the talents and high employee expenses in many industrials. WillisTowersWatson (2016) showed the highest turnover in Thailand were Transportation and Logistics as well as Electronics Manufacturing at 16%. The Lowest turnover was in Life Insurance, General Insurance and High Tech at 10%.

AonHewitt (2014) reported trends in global employee engagement that attracting and retaining the talent needed for business performance will be challenging and making engagement happen is the ultimate objective. The key findings of employee engagement in Asia Pacific were organization reputation, HR practices, resources, safety and benefits (AonHewitt, 2014, p.7). These findings are similar to the research result of HR Trends in Thailand 2017 that '*career growth and salary & benefit*' are the key drivers for employee engagement in Thailand. Randstad, a Dutch multinational human resource consulting firm, conducted study in HR Trends and Salary Report 2016. and found that career advancement (32%) is a bigger motivator to change jobs than money (25%). The employees are motivated by being valued and recognition (30%), understanding how their role contributes to company goals (24%) and money (11%). This study also was supported by Korn Ferry Hay Group (2016) that the pay check is no longer king when it comes to sourcing, retaining and motivating talent.

## ❸ Organization Development (OD)

### Rank 3: Organization Development

1	Create a sense of urgency by communicating both internal and external changes that impact the organization
2	Try to align the HR Systems (Recruitment, evaluation and development) to support the organization to become an innovative organization
3	Encourage the employees to participate in innovative organization development

The OD in this study means a system wide application and transfer of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of strategies, structures, and processes that lead to organization effectiveness (Cummings and Worley, 2005). So it focused on the planned change intervention not just employee activities.

OD becomes the top HR increasing trends in 2017. There are seven industries having these trends one of the top three HR trends: IT (Ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), Restaurant, Logistic (Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>), Oil & Gas, hospital, property, banking (Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>). Four out of these seven industries are in the ten targeted industrial groups in Thailand 4.0 policy: Petrochemicals, Medical, Tourism, and Digital. The other five targeted industries not ranked innovative organization development as the top three trends in HR practices. They are Textile (Ranked 4<sup>th</sup>), Telecom (Ranked 5<sup>th</sup>), Food (Ranked 6<sup>th</sup>), Automotive and Hotel (Ranked 7<sup>th</sup>).

The increasing trends of OD are related to innovative organization development. The result shows '*Creating a sense of urgency reflected the internal and external changes of the organization*' in an increasing trend under the OD function. One of the major impacts on this trend is "Thailand 4.0" policy was announced on 1 July 2016 while this study was conducted. This policy is focusing on becoming a value-based and innovation-driven economy by moving from producing commodities to innovative products; emphasizing on promoting technology, creativity, and innovation in focused industries and from a production-based to a service-based economy (TIR, 2017). Actually, the '*innovative organization*' has launched in many leading organizations for over a decade such as SCG (Siam Cement Group), PTT Group (Petrochemical of Thailand Group) and CP Group (Charoen Pokaphan Group).

To become an innovative organization, the '*HR systems need to be aligned to support this organization change*' and no doubt this practice becomes the second trends under the OD function. The '*recruitment, evaluation and development*' are the HR systems that the survey found that HR practitioners pay more attention this year.

Moreover, having '*employee participation in innovative organization*' is the other increasing trends. The innovation is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in CIPD (2017) winter 2016-2017 edition of HR Outlook. CIPD has noted that the main difference is that innovation has become an increasing trend this year, 2016-2017.

#### 4 Training and Development (TD)

##### Rank 4: Training and Development

1	Increase the skill training and development Areas: (1) Technical skill (2) Technology (3) Management
2	Pay more attention on training and development in operation level Levels: (1) Operation Level (2) Supervisor (3) Management Level
3	Invest more time and money in training and development Methods: (1) On-the-job Training (2) Coaching & Mentoring (3) Job Rotation

The increasing trends of TD in 2017 was ranked as top three trends in Automotive (Ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), Oil & Gas and Food (Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>), Textile and Banking (Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>). '*Technical skill*' and '*technology training*' get higher attention than '*management skill*' and the TD is invested more in '*operation level of employees*'. These situations might reflect the quality of education in Thailand. OECD/UNESCO 2016 reviewed national policies of education in Thailand and reported that as the country aims to move beyond the "middle-income trap", it needs to build a highly skilled workforce, able to compete in the ASEAN economic community. Thailand has not received the return on its investment in education as its expectation. Thus, the organizations need to invest more on TD when these graduated students come to the workforce. This research result also is similar to the CIPD (2017) winter 2016-2017 edition of HR Outlook report that technical, financial and operational competence is higher than people management skills (p. 15).

The study also found the most increasing trends of TD method is '*on-the-job training*'. The Institute for the Study of Labor (IZD) (Almeida and deFaria, 2014) compared the practice of on-the-job training in Malaysia and Thailand and founded that the estimate the wage return to on-the-job training are 7.7% for Malaysia and 4.5% for Thailand and this wage returns to on-the-job training are higher for workers with at least secondary education. This also reflects the quality of how the HR practitioners conducting OJT in Thailand.

The second increasing trends of TD methods is '*coaching and mentoring*'. Soponkit's study of a mid-size family business found (2010) that the positive communication and

coaching skills significantly influence employee satisfaction and employee engagement. Since the previous survey results found the Thai organizations have increasing trends in performance management and employee engagement, thus it is important that the coaching and mentoring skill are needed to be trained and developed among the leaders in Thai organization.

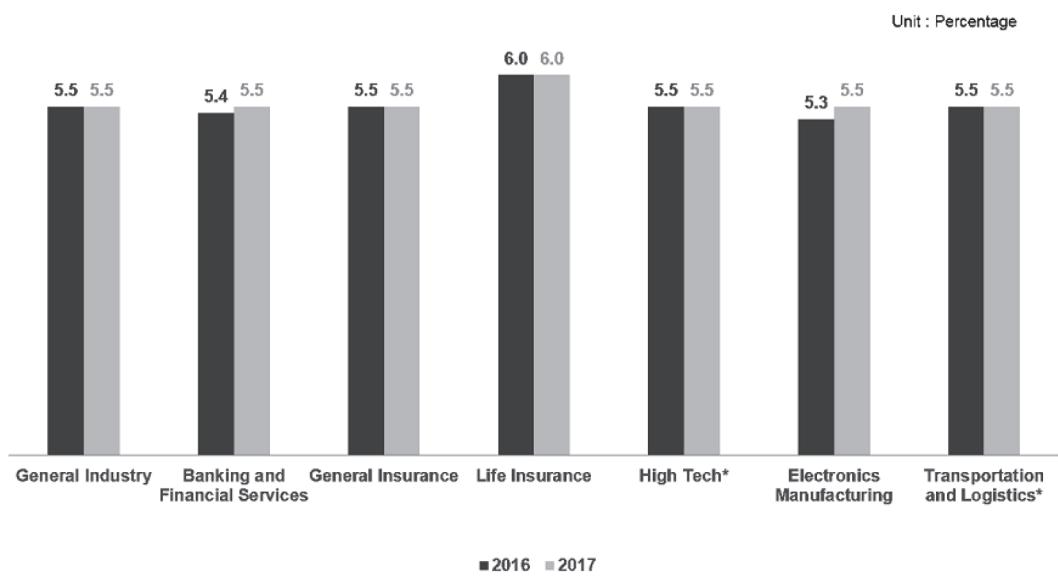
The third increasing trends of TD methods is '*job rotation*'. This trend has been increasing due to it can be used for both operation level and also the management level. It has showed in the Global Human Capital Trends in 2016 conducted by Deloitte (2016) that to teach and encourage people to work across teams, job rotation can give the teams a common understanding of each other (p.18) and also rotational programs may be an effective way to identify and develop future leaders. Stretch programs across functions and businesses, as well as in nontraditional areas (for example, the social and not-for-profit sectors), can offer opportunities to develop and test emerging leaders (p. 32).

### 5 Compensation and Benefit (CB)

#### Rank 5: Compensation and Benefit

1	Increase the compensation Due to (1) Corporate Performance (2) Business Benchmarking
2	Set up new criteria to review the merit increase and bonus payment
3	Come up with compensation strategies and policies to attract the new applicants

The survey found CB is an increasing HR Trends in Textile and Telecommunication industries (Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>). This trend has increased due to '*corporate performance*' and '*business benchmarking*'. This reflects the high competition among organizations in the same business. The salary and benefit survey of AonHewit (2016) in 174 participating organizations in Thailand and compensation survey of Towers Watson (2016) in 226 participants from 11 industries supported that salary increase around 5.5% across industry surveyed. Performance is the top factor to influence pay decisions and continues to drive pay-related decision for 95.1% of employers in Thailand (AonHewit, 2016).



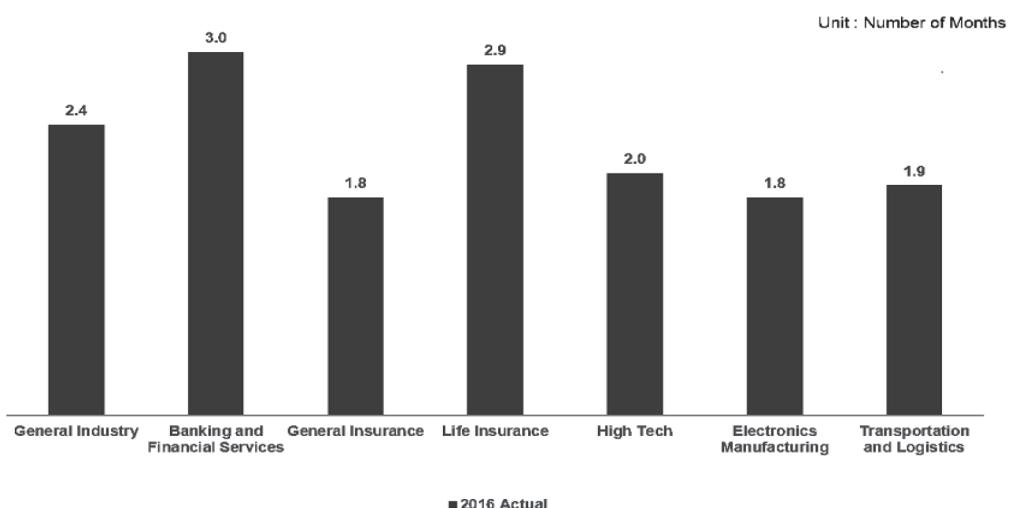
Source: 2016 Willis Towers Watson General Industry Total Compensation Survey – Thailand

\*Source: 2016 Salary Budget Planning Report – Asia Pacific (Third Quarter)

**Figure 2:** 2016 versus 2017 Thailand Salary Increases by industrial

The highest paying industries for fresh graduates are Engineering and Information Technology (THB 20,583), followed by Accounting and Finance (THB 22,000) and Legal (THB 18,000). Master's degree graduates in Technical fields (Engineering, Science, etc.) can command starting of THB 27,000, which is considered the highest of all sectors (WillisTowersWatson, 2016).

The second trends under the compensation and benefit is '*setting up new criteria to review the merit increase and bonus payment*'. WillisTowersWatson (2016) presented that variable bonuses in 2016 differ by sector, ranging from 1.8 to three months of base salary. Banking and Financial Services offer the highest bonus pay-outs with an average of three months of base salary, while general Insurance and Electronics Manufacturing give the lowest variable pay at 1.8 months of base salary.



Source: 2016 Willis Towers Watson General Industry Total Compensation Survey – Thailand

**Figure 3: 2016 Thailand Variable Bonus by Industry (No of Months)**

AonHewit (2016) stated that due to the high turnover rate among junior managers warn the Thai employers to rethink about their compensation policies in the context of their overall talent retention strategy. This survey result is similar to the HR Trends 2017 in Thailand, the second and third increasing trends of compensation and benefit which is '*review and revise the policies, strategies and criteria for compensation and benefit*'.

## ❶ Workforce Planning (WP)

### Rank 6: Workforce Planning

1	Analyze the workforce needs in order to make short and long-term plans
2	Calculate workforce planning to reach the most effective service and production
3	Prepare for many retired workforces by reviewing the HR policies and HR management systems

WP is always ranked at the bottom list in HR Trends in Thailand (Akaraborworn, 2011, 2013, 2014). This year Trends 2017, the workforce planning is ranked 6<sup>th</sup>. There are only 4 industries that the WP are priorities: Hospital industrial (Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>) and Hotel, Insurance and Consumer industrials (Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>). Based on World Bank 2016 has raised the sense of urgency for the economic reform agenda to lift Thailand's long-term growth due to the speed of demographic transition in Thailand. The mitigating the decline of the working aging population and enhancing the productivity of the shrinking labor force will be a priority

for the country. This critical issue was responded by the Labor Minister General Sirichai Distakul stated that the ministry of Labor had improved the workforces' skills to support the needs of each area, with an action plan developed to underline the 20-year people development strategies which have already been deployed. As for migrate worker management, the Ministry has devised systematic strategies including skills development through the establishment of an advanced technology institute specifically designed to support future industries, so that Thailand can continue moving forward (Ministry of Labor, 2016).

This urgency was seen as in HR Trends 2017 under the WP, '*analyzing the workforce needs in order to make short and long term plans*' is the first increasing trends and '*calculating the workforce planning to reach the most effective service and production*' the second increasing trends. The third increasing trends of WP reflected the national problem on aging society, '*preparing for many retired workforces by reviewing the HR policies and HR management systems*'. This research result reflected the quality of the workforce planning in Thailand as many HR practitioners have done more on workforce replacement rather than workforce planning (Akaraborworn, 2011, 2013)

## 7 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

### Rank 7: CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

1	Encourage the employees to participate in the CSR activities (1) Environment Issues (2) Philanthropy (3) Disability Caring
2	Plan for CSV (Create Shared Value) activities which will benefit both organization and community
3	Implement CSR as one of the strategies for building corporate image to attract the new applicants and retain the employees.

CSR was the most increasing trends in HR Trends in ASEAN 2014–2015 due to the main business in ASEAN countries is exporting so CSR became an international standard and conditions for exporting abroad (Akaraborworn, 2014). This research result was supported by the study of Virakul, Koommee and McLean (2009). The researchers studied four Thai companies receiving the 2006 SET-CSR Award and found one of the three driving forces behind CSR activities in these companies were stakeholders' expectations. Ratanajongkol, Davey, and Low (2006) studied Thai organizations and the study showed that a trend of increasing amounts of corporate social disclosure, although the five-year trends varied within different industries.

However, in HR Trends 2017 CSR was ranked seventh. There are four industries ranked CSR as top three increasing trends: Hotel industry (Ranked 1<sup>st</sup>), Banking and Insurance industries (Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>) and Restaurant industry (Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>). The American Chamber of Commerce in Thailand (AMCHAM, 2015) recognized its member companies' achievements in CSR, there are 62 recipients awarded. Many of them are in hotel, banking, insurance, and restaurant industries. This event showed how committed American companies are to investing in the communities where they live and work.

The first increasing CSR trends in this study found that '*the companies encourage the employees to participate in the CSR activities*' which are '*environment issues (Ex. Planting), philanthropy and disability caring*'. The second trend is '*the shift from CSR to CSV or Creating Shared Value which will benefit both organization and community*'. The third trend is '*implementing CSR as one of the strategies or building corporate image to attract the new applicants and retain the employees*'. These increasing trends in CSR have supported the research done by Ratanajongkol, Davey, and Low (2006) that CSR among Thai companies was found to be primary focused on human resources.

### 8 Recruitment and Selection (RS)

Rank 8: Recruitment and Selection	
1	Use many selection methods: (1) Personal Interview (2) Using Social Media (3) Conducting test
2	Use several channels for recruitment: (1) Using Social Media or Website (2) Internship (3) Use Head-hunt company
3	Spend more time for recruitment and selection due to unqualified applicants
3	Use brand strategy for recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection is in the eighth rank in HR Trends 2017 in Thailand. There is only one industry, electronic, that selected recruitment and selection as top three rank (Ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>). The increasing trends of recruitment methods that the survey found are '*(1) Personal Interview, (2) Social Media and (3) Testing. Social media*' has become an increasing trend both as a selection method and as recruitment channel.

In 2017 Trends for Hiring Managers and Recruiters reported that traditional interview formats are still and will continue to be, prevalent (Canon, 2017). However, more interactive interview styles are rising in popularity that may provide better as to if the fit is right. The Association for Talent Development (ATD formerly ASTD) conducted research from the conference board and found that 89% of business planning to use social media to aid their hiring efforts (Seabrook, 2016). The social recruitment has become a top

priority for many HR and talent professionals due to the increasing time for recruitment. The latest record for filling empty positions high of 27 days. This ATD report is similar to the HR Trends 2017 in Thailand founded that '*spending more time for recruitment and selection due to unqualified applicants*'.

In 2008, SHRM defined an employer brand is an important part of the employee value proposition and is essentially what the organization communicates as its identity to both potential and current employees. It encompasses an organization's mission, values, culture and personality. A positive employer brand communicates that the organization is a good employer and a great place to work. Employer brand affects recruitment of new employees, retention and engagement of current employee, and the overall perception of the organization in the market. In HR Trends 2017 in Thailand, '*using employer brand as a recruitment strategy was rated as the second increasing trends*' and it has been an increasing trend in Thailand since 2008 (Sritanyarat, 2008, Akaraborworn, 2011, 2013). However, in 2016, Lauby (2016) has stated that 'Employment Branding' is dead. The branding is merged together to create one company brand which will be used to attract and retain customers, candidates and employees. That means the organizations have to be same brand in the eyes of customers, potential employers and current employees.

'*Using internship*' as the other hiring tool is the new increasing trends for this year. Forbes 2015 has predicted internship as one of the 10 workplace trends for 2015. Schawbel (2015) stated that while many companies are still trying to understand and connect with Gen Y (or millennials), some companies are going to be heavily invested in the upcoming generation, Gen Z (born in 1994–2010). This is happening for two major reasons: 1) companies are trying to close the skills gap (STEM: Science, Technical, Engineering and Mathematics) and 2) companies are desperately trying to compete for the very best talent so they have to build brand awareness early and that means high school. Actually, the internship has got attention from the Thai government since 1993. The Cooperative Education or "Sahakit Suksa" was launched in 1993 and now it gets supported by three parties: a. Higher Education Committee (HEC.) under Ministry of Education (MOE.), the Federation of Thai Industrial (FTI.) and the Thai Chamber of Commerce (TCC.). This internship requires the students in junior and senior years to have at least 10-month internship in the real workplace.

## ๙ Career Planning and Development (CD)

### Rank 9: Career Planning and Development

1	Implement career development plan for not only high-level management but also other groups of employees. Target Groups: (1) Middle Management (2) Specialists (3) Operations
2	Pay more attention to talent retention
3	Identify the Talent by traits, using many tools to assess the candidates' potential Data used: (1) Performance Evaluation (2) Competency Evaluation (3) Potential Assessment

CD is in the 1<sup>st</sup> rank in 2 industries: Textile and consumer, and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank in three industries: Logistic, IT and Telecommunication.

In 2017, the 1<sup>st</sup> ranked increasing trends under CD function is '*the target group for implementing career development plan is not for management level but also for other groups of employees such as specialists and operations*'. '*Talent retention*' was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> this year but it has been the increasing trends since the first HR Trends survey in 2008 (Sritanyarat, 2008).

According to the annual Global Salary Survey from specialist professional recruitment firm Robert Walters (2015), organization in Thailand will need to look beyond remuneration in order to retain their best talent. In view of the keen competition for professionals in the market, companies are expected to think long term and increase their focus on internal career opportunities as well as training and development programs. Moreover, this survey found that hiring managers in Thailand will continue to compete for business-savvy Thai professionals with bilingual abilities and international exposure. With these professionals in limited supply, companies need to make swift decisions during the recruitment process and provide comprehensive career development, work-life balance as well as attractive compensation and benefits packages.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> rank of CD is '*performance evaluation*' was used as a tool to assess the candidates' potential. In Reinventing performance management paper in Harvard Business Review in 2015 (Buckingham and Goodall, 2015), proposed that to promote the leader, the company needs the new data set of the employees, they cannot use only the past performance of the employees. However, common practice of the Thai HR practitioners is to use the past 2 or 3 years of performance evaluation as criteria for promotion. This can be a mistaking of using a high-performing employee for a high-potential employee and it can be costly for the organization (Lagunas, 2012). Moreover, '*competency evaluation*' is the other way to identify the talent. Many companies in Thailand still have supervisors

evaluating competency which can be very subjective and invalid. Thus, to use the competency evaluation based on the supervisor judgement can be argued when the talent is selected. Last '*potential assessment*' is the 3<sup>rd</sup> tool for identifying a talent. However, the potential assessment and performance evaluation are use interchangeable in many HR practitioners in Thailand. As Vincent van de Belt, a consultant at *Cubiks*, points out, "If an organization is not able to distinguish between performance and potential, it will have difficulty identifying talent" (Lagunas, 2012).

It is interesting to see the new and old increasing trends in HR Trends 2017 in Thailand. The above discussions might have limited of sources from both practitioners' and academics' views since there is lack of academic articles in the HR field in Thailand. The researcher needs to use the 17 years of HR practice as an HR instructor, as an HR consultant for public and private sectors and also as a former dean of the school of HRD and an assistant to the president of quality development at NIDA to interpret and make this discussion. Next is the suggestions for practice and research.

### **Research limitation**

The HR Trends in Thailand 2017 has covered nine functions defined by SHRM since 2008, however the future research can define the HR function differently. Also, the samples of this study are HR practitioners working in private organizations only, so the research results cannot be generalized to the HR Trends either in public sector or in private enterprise.

### **Suggestions for Practice**

Studying "Trends" does not for any organization to benchmark with this research result but to make discussion among HR practitioners and academics. The researcher would like to propose five suggestions for HR practitioners. These suggestions can be summarized into 5Cs: Change, Context, Customer, Communicate and Collaboration.

1. Change: HR practitioners should keep up with the changes such as Thailand 4.0, The Gig workforce and employment, Artificial Intelligence and Aging society. These are the changes that can impact the workforce planning in any organization. Agility is the new corporate trend, organizations need to proactively anticipate or adapt to both internal and external changes and HR practitioners has to do so.

2. Context: The organization context is important for any HR practitioners. The research result has showed the differences in the increasing trends of HR functions in each industry. Thus, HR practitioners need to pay attention to the business and organization context so they can be able to adjust the HR practices to fit with their own context.
3. Customer: HR practitioners should treat their employees as customers. Learning about their profiles and their needs, motives and etc., so they can design the appropriate approach to response to the employee requirement. Since employee attraction, retention and engagement have become trends for almost a decade and it is still increasing trends in Thailand this year.
4. Communicate: The work of HR is quite subjective and context-based thus it might happen in some organizations that top management and line manager would like the HR practitioners in their organization to have some practices like the other organization do. Thus, communicating the principles and knowledge of HR are needed. HR-for-non-HR training under the topic of HR trends might be conducted for top management, line manager and employees.
5. Collaboration: In many HR Trends this year (workforce planning, recruitment and selection, training and development, and CSR), there are the needs for HR practitioners to collaborate with many organizations such as university, community, and government sectors in order to accomplish their works.

### Suggestions for Future Research

There are two major research suggestions for future research: suggestion for the next HR Trends study and suggestion for the research gap in HR field.

- 1 Since there are some of the limitations of HR Trends survey which the researcher started from reviewing foreign HR Trends. Thus, next HR Trends survey, the researcher might use Delphi Technique to predict the HR Trends in 2020. The Delphi technique is used mostly as a systematic way of collecting and organization the opinions of several experts into a single decision. It is a forecasting tool and is based on a consensus of a panel of experts. The consensus

arrived at tends to be much more accurate than a single expert's opinion (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

2. From the research result, there are several gaps for research in this HR field such as:
  - Under the performance management, the impact of PM and employee engagement.
  - Innovative organization is the other area of research that HR researcher might expand the study under the Thai context and under the OD intervention

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