

# Human Resource Development Interventions and Employability Enhancement: A Perspective of the Thai Public Sector on Government Employees\*

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## **Abstract**

*The objectives of this research were to identify the expected and perceived employability of Thai government employees and to analyze the effect of human resource development interventions on employability. The primary data were mainly based on the cross-sectional data collected from a unit consisting of 127 departments and 60 organizations at the departmental level. The representation of each organization was a person whose position was director of a human resource management department. The findings showed that the highest scores on expected employability were responsibility (personal qualification), teamwork, and interpersonal skills (people-related skills). The findings also indicated the lowest score was expected and perceived employability, especially regarding fundamental and conceptual thinking skills. The findings further showed that among the HRD factors, training and organization development (OD) had positive and significant effects on employability. When including the control variables (total number of workforce,*

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*total number of contract employees, education and experience of the contract employees), it was seen that the effect of the OD was persistent while the effect of the training was greatly reduced. Surprisingly, the study found that career development (CD) had no effect on employability at all. Since there has been no research supporting the direct association between OD and employability, the effect of OD on employability theoretically contributes to the fields of human resource development and employability.*

**Keywords:** *Human Resource Development, Employability, Short-Term Employment, Public Sector*

## การพัฒนากรัพยากรบบบุษย์กับการส่งเสริม ความสามารถในการมีงานทำ: มุ่งมองของภาครัฐต่อระบบพนักงานราชการ\*

สุนิสา ช่อแก้ว\*\*

### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อระบุความคาดหวังและการรับรู้ถึงความสามารถในการมีงานทำของพนักงานราชการ และเพื่อวิเคราะห์ผลกระบวนการพัฒนาทรัพยากรบบบุษย์ที่มีต่อความสามารถในการมีงานทำของพนักงานราชการ โดยเก็บข้อมูลจากส่วนราชการระดับกรมจำนวน 127 หน่วยงานและหน่วยงานที่มีระดับเทียบเท่าอีก 60 หน่วยงาน ในแต่ละหน่วยงานมีตัวแทน คือ ผู้อำนวยการกองการเจ้าหน้าที่ ผลการวิจัย พบว่า ความคาดหวังอันดับแรก คือ การคาดหวังให้พนักงานราชการมีความสามารถของตนที่ดี ถือว่าเป็นคุณสมบัติส่วนบุคคล อันดับรองลงมา คือ มีทักษะการทำงานเป็นทีมและทักษะการมีปฏิสัมพันธ์ ซึ่งถือว่าทักษะที่เกี่ยวกับการทำงานร่วมกับผู้อื่น ผลการวิจัยยังชี้ให้เห็นถึงปัญหาของความสามารถในการมีงานทำ โดยเฉพาะความคาดหวังที่มีต่อทักษะพื้นฐานในการทำงานและทักษะการคิดรวบยอดของพนักงานราชการ นอกจากนี้ ผลการศึกษา ยังพบว่า การฝึกอบรมและการพัฒนาองค์การ มีผลเชิงบวกต่อความสามารถในการมีงานทำให้กับพนักงานราชการ แต่เมื่อรวมปัจจัยควบคุม (จำนวนอัตรากำลังคนทั้งหมด จำนวนพนักงานราชการ ระดับการศึกษา และประสบการณ์ของพนักงานราชการ) พบว่า การพัฒนาองค์การมีผลต่อความสามารถในการมีงานทำให้กับ

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พนักงานราชการได้มากกว่าการฝึกอบรม ขณะที่การพัฒนาสายอาชีพไม่มีผลต่อความสามารถในการมีงานทำของพนักงานราชการ ทั้งนี้อิทธิพลของการพัฒนาองค์การที่มีต่อความสามารถในการมีงานทำของพนักงานราชการถือเป็นข้อค้นพบใหม่ที่ต่อยอดแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับการพัฒนาทรัพยากรัฐมนุษย์และความสามารถในการมีงานทำ

**คำสำคัญ:** การพัฒนาทรัพยากรัฐมนุษย์ ความสามารถในการมีงานทำ การจ้างงานระยะสั้น  
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## Introduction

Since 2002, the concept of New Public Management (NPM) has increasingly dominated the Thai public sector. It was developed in the 1980s in the United Kingdom, and the first two countries that adopted this model were Australia and New Zealand (Barzelay, 2001). Seven elements of the NPM are: professionalism, performance stands and measures, result-oriented management, breaking up the public sector into corporatized units, competitive pressure within the public sector, using management techniques and practices from the private sector, and cost-cutting (Hood, 1991). During the 1990s, Osborne & Gaebler (1992) proposed another compatible concept, namely “reinventing government.” This concept nicely emphasizes the entrepreneurial style, which is result-oriented and mission-driven. Nevertheless, scholars have argued that implementing NPM results in the reduction of the workforce and an increase in contract employees, who are less likely to be loyal to the organizations (O’Brien & O’Donnell, 1999; Yates, 1998; Aucoin, 1995; Slattery, Selvarajan & Anderson, 2006).

In the Thai context, the government launched public sector reform in 2002 by enacting two important laws. The first one, the Act of Amending the Ministry, the Sub-Ministry, and the Department B.E. 2545, resulted in bureaucratic expansion instead of the reduction of public organizations. The number of the ministries has increased—from 14 ministries to 20. The second was the Royal Decree on Criteria and Procedures for Good Governance B.E. 2546, underpinned by the concept of NPM, especially with the idea of result- and performance-based management, being mission driven and effective, and with a decrease in unnecessary steps of work. According to the Royal Decree on Criteria and Procedures for Good Governance, the Cabinet resolution on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2003 passed a proposal for using the term “government employee” instead of using “permanent employees” or ‘temporary employees.’ The types of manpower in the Thai civil service, therefore, had changed in number and form of employment (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Number of Civil Service Manpower in the Thai Public Sector**

Types of Manpower	Number of Manpower (Million Persons)							
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Government officials (Civil servants)	1.21	1.22	1.26	1.28	1.27	1.28	1.29	1.27
Permanent employees	0.27	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.24	0.22	0.21	0.21
Temporary employees	-	0.44	0.20	0.20	0.28	0.28	0.38	0.48
Government employees (Contract employees)	-	0.06	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.12
Local temporary employees	-	-	0.11	0.12	0.15	0.15	0.12	0.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.48</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>1.92</b>	<b>1.94</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>2.11</b>	<b>2.26</b>

Source: data from the Office of Civil Service Commission (OCSC 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011)

The Office of Civil Service Commission mentioned in the document “Civilian Workforce in Thailand of the year 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010” that, in the near future, there would be a trend of increasing numbers of government employees. It can be said that short-term and various forms of employment illustrate incrementally-transforming careers in the Thai public sector. Career has moved from hierarchical to multidirectional paths by which the workers can pursue a higher position in their current organization or move to another one. In the public sector, short-term employment, increasing flexibility of the organizations, and decreasing security of employment are by-products of NPM. To alleviate such negative impacts, employability is a solution, as some scholars in career theory (Baruch, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Hallier, 2009; Ghoshal et al., 1999) argue that since organizations have tried to become more flexible and effective, employment security tends to be replaced by the employability. This trend includes the use of knowledge workers (Neumark & Reed, 2002).

The employability concept has been examined at different levels, i.e., the individual, organizational, and national, by different academic disciplines such as human resource management, human resource development, psychology, and educational science (Thijssen, Heijden & Rocco, 2008). Human resource development (HRD) is a concept with a win-win situation between the individual and the

organization (Nadler & Wiggs, 1986; Smith 1988; Nadler & Nadler, 1989; Garavan, 1991; Harrison & Kessels, 2004; McGoldrick et al., 2002; Jones, 1981) as a systematic expansion of people's ability to focus on the attainment of both organizational and personal goals (Jones, 1981). This study, therefore, particularly emphasizes HRD practices and their impacts on the employability of government employees. Within the scope of the above-mentioned concept, a theoretical linkage between employability and HRD, consisting of training, organization development (OD), and career development (CD) (McLagan & Suhadolnik, 1989; Swanson, 1995), is focused on.

## **Employability: What Does It Mean?**

Employability refers to skills and abilities, assisting workers in performing tasks, remaining employment, or obtaining new employment if required (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). From this perspective, the difficulty becomes the acquisition of the skills and abilities necessary for a current job, which may not satisfy a future job at the existing and/or prospective organizations.

Employability is closely related to the concept of careers, which have changed from long-term hierarchical careers and promised job security or lifetime employment to multidirectional careers that promote a flexibility and short-term contract of employment. Accordingly, employability could be developed further as the competencies of workers to perform tasks, remain and obtain new employment under multidirectional careers context (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Garavan, 1999; Fugate et al., 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).

Employability constitutes a set of work skills and competencies. International organizations, national government, and organizations have responded to the employability trend by formulating lists of work skills needed for lifelong employability (ILO, 2003). As examples of employability skill sets defined by several international organizations, the International Labor Organization (ILO) further elaborates that core work skills, such as competence in reading, writing, and computing, effective listening and oral communication skills, adaptability through creative thinking and problem solving, personal management, interpersonal skills, the ability to work in teams or groups, basic technological skills, and leadership effectiveness, have become crucial.

Another example of skills comprising employability at the national level is the series of skills defined by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA, 2012), which has established the skills necessary for employability fulfillment. The skills include basic academic skills (literacy, numeracy and IT skills) and other skills (problem solving, decision making, and better communication). Meanwhile, Clarke (1997), from the Industry and Parliament Trust, London, has asserted that the employable person is motivated, self-confident, committed, and adaptable and flexible.

The skills comprising employability can be defined with reference to the competency concept. The Conference Board of Canada (2003) has, therefore, initiated a list of the employability skills. The skill list comprises three categories of competency: fundamental, teamwork, and personal management skill categories. These competencies include communication, problem solving, positive attitudes and behaviors, adaptability, working with others, and science, technology, and mathematic skills. Coincidentally, these employability skill sets that are developed by different organizations do not differ much from their counterparts. In general, the identified employability skills comprise both soft and interpersonal skills (for example, communication, teamwork, flexibility and positive thinking) and technical skills or fundamental skills (for example, literacy, and IT skills and numeracy).

Employability is more than just having the skills to enter the workforce. It also means having the skills and abilities to progress within an organization (McLeish, 2002). From an organizational perspective, this is associated with the competency of employees to demonstrate a range of soft skills and personal competencies, such as loyalty, commitment, enthusiasm, reliability and adaptability, as well as relevant and technical or functional competencies (Dench, 1997). A compatible argument asserts that employability is seen as an outcome of professional, discipline-specific knowledge and the ability to demonstrate broader skills such as communication, problem solving and interactional skills (Leckey & McGuigan, 1997).

Another interesting study is Clarke's report on a survey of 40 companies in the UK. It found that organizations tended to see employability in terms of an employee's communication, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. Although employees have been treated with shorter-term employment contracts, they are expected to demonstrate customer-focused behavior and a commitment to the highest

quality (Clarke, 1997).

Not only the above-mentioned knowledge and skills, but some other qualifications are considered, such as reliability, punctuality, adaptability, communication skills and ability to meet deadlines (Ranzijn, Carson, & Winefield, 2002). Some researches (e.g., Ranzijn et al., 2002; Scholarios & Lockyer, 1999) have also found that, among KSAOs (knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics), employers were rather interested in “Os.” That means that skills and knowledge are necessary but not sufficient for employability.

In the discussion of skill sets and the qualifications of those that possess employability, scholars (e.g., Rousseau, 2004; Clarke & Patrickson, 2008; De Vos, et al., 2011) have focused on both generic and industry-specific skills. Having examined human resource management in Thailand, Wedchayanon (2011), on the other hand, pointed out that employability does not merely refer to technical or job-specific skills. Employability skills are rather generic in nature. Employability cuts, therefore, across all types of industries and all levels of employment. In her case study on employability (Wedchayanon, 2011), the skills comprising employability were proposed (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Skills Comprising Employability**

Definition/ Skill Set	Employability		
	Basic Academic Skills	Conceptual Skills	Personalities
Definition	The skills are baseline competences. Employees are expected to possess these skills at some minimum level of proficiency because they are needed to be ready to deal with the given tasks.	Conceptual thinking skills affect employees' work and performance. This kind of skills drives employees to control, to manage, and to improve themselves in their job roles.	Personalities or personal attributes are important characteristics enabling performance with a good relationship with others.
Skills Comprising Employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reading</li> <li>- writing</li> <li>- science</li> <li>- mathematics</li> <li>- oral communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learning</li> <li>- reasoning</li> <li>- creative thinking</li> <li>- decision making</li> <li>- problem solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- team spirit</li> <li>- social skills</li> <li>- integrity</li> <li>- cooperative inclinations</li> <li>- responsibility</li> <li>- self-control</li> <li>- honesty</li> <li>- adaptability and flexibility</li> <li>- good grooming</li> <li>- self-management</li> </ul>

Source: summarized from Wedchayanon, 2011

According to Table 2, the skills comprising employability consist of three groups. The first one is a set of basic academic skills, which is a necessary condition for basic tasks, given in a certain job role. The second one is a set of conceptual skills, which is relevant to the mentality and discipline of individuals in managing and developing themselves. The last one is personality to work with others and to be able to adapt to a changing environment.

It can be seen that all of the above-mentioned skills comprising employability are not just only skills, but also knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics. That is, when employability is mentioned, it refers to the three kinds of competency—the

competency to perform tasks, to remain employed, and to find new employment if required. And when the compositions of employability are mentioned in this research, all of the KSAOs pertaining to the three competencies are combined and captured as follows (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Composition of Employability in Transforming Careers**

Employability	Definition	KSAOs Comprising Employability	Scholars/ Organizations
Competency to perform tasks or functional competency	A set of competencies which support the successful accomplishment of the task-based activities central to any job role	Basic/fundamental skills, such as literacy, numeracy, capability to use technology and language proficiency	Gibb, 2004; Wedchayanon, 2011; WDA, 2012; the Conference Board of Canada, 2003
		People-related skills, such as communication, interpersonal, teamwork and service skills	Gibb, 2004; WDA, 2012; Fugate et al., 2004; the Conference Board of Canada, 2003; Dench, 1997; Ranzijn, Carson and Winefield, 2002
		Conceptual thinking skills, such as collecting and organizing information, problem solving, planning, thinking innovatively and creatively, and systems thinking	Gibb, 2004; Wedchayanon, 2011; Clarke, 1997; Fugate et al., 2004; the Conference Board of Canada, 2003
		Personal skills and attributes, such as being responsible, resourceful and flexible, and having self-esteem	Gibb, 2004; Wedchayanon, 2011; ILO, 2003; Fugate et al., 2004; WDA, 2012; the Conference Board of Canada, 2003; Dench, 1997

Table 3: Composition of Employability in Transforming Careers (continued)

Employability	Definition	KSAOs Comprising Employability	Scholars/ Organizations
Competency to remain employment or personal competency, especially learning and adaptability	A set of competencies to adapt to different situations and the varied demands of employment within an organization	<p>Self-management in developing strategies and learning new skills to adapt to workplace and environmental changes</p> <p>Self-promotion in obtaining and relaying information to maintain awareness of working conditions</p> <p>Learning ability, contributing to ongoing improvement in and expansion of operations and outcomes.</p>	Precision Consultancy and the Department of Education, Science and Training, Australian Government, 2006; the Conference Board of Canada, 2003; Fugate et al., 2004; Dench, 1997
Competency to obtain new employment or Personal competency, especially marketability and transferability	A set of competencies that demonstrate understanding of effective opportunity-search strategies to find new employment	<p>Ability to search for opportunity for new employment (marketability)</p> <p>Self-promotion in obtaining a new employment (marketability)</p> <p>Ability to transfer and adapt to a new workplace (transferability)</p>	Martin et al., 2008 Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Fugate et al., 2004  Precision Consultancy and the Department of Education, Science and Training, Australian Government, 2006; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Fugate et al., 2004

Table 3 illustrates employability in transforming careers. The first set is a set of competencies that supports the accomplishment of the task-based activities central to any job role. The compositions of the task-based competencies are basic or fundamental, people-related, conceptual thinking, and personal skills. Next, in order to remain employed, the set of competencies to adapt to different situations and the varied demands of employment within an organization includes self-management, self-promotion, and learning ability. The last one is the set of competencies that demonstrate understanding of effective opportunity-search strategies to find new employment, if required. The compositions of the last set of competencies are the ability to search for opportunities for new employment, self-promotion in obtaining new employment, and the ability to transfer and adapt to a new workplace.

## Conceptual Framework

Most of the employability studies, particularly on the organizational level, focus the certain or direct programs that enhance workers' employability. This study, however, expands the former research and concepts of employability by testing the linkage between the employability and the whole set of HRD practices (training, OD, and CD). The results are expected to explain whether HRD practices create a win-win situation for both workers and organizations. It assumes that during the period when an individual works with an organization, his/her ability should be improved. Especially through HRD intervention, workers should have sufficient ability to perform tasks, remain employed, and obtain new employment if required (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Garavan, 1999; Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). The results are expected to further widen the success of HRD practices, which represent a return to organizations and the ability of the workers to obtain new employment. These findings will contribute to human capital theory, by which an investment in HRD will increase the workers' employability (Garavan et al., 2001). Considering human capital from this perspective, the notion of employability plays a crucial role in the positive externalities of HRD practices.

### *Training and Employability*

Formal training activities and the participation level in the formal training activities are questionable regarding the accomplishment of employability (Van der Heijden et al., 2009; Groot & Maasen Van, 2000; De Vos et al., 2011; Van der Heijden et al., 2006). Another component measured in this study is related to networking among the participants in the formal training activities (Van der Heijden et al., 2009; Carbery & Garavan, 2005). The next two components are related to the informal training activities. One is learning the value of the job or the attainment of skills in the work process (Van der Heijden et al., 2009; Carbery & Garavan, 2005). Further, since the perspective on employability is on the government employees whose positions are not higher than the middle stage of their career, the roles of the supervisor in training activities (Van der Heijden et al., 2009), therefore, are questionable in terms of their effects on employees' employability.

### *OD and Employability*

In general, the measurement of the effects of the OD of employability and CD is classified into three sub-issues. The measurement is partly different from that classified by Cummings and Worley (2005). The first measurement is an integration of that used by Cummings and Worley (2005), called human process issues and technology and structure issues. This research uses the terms "structure and process issues," which promote continual learning for everyone in the organization and balance individual and team learning (Rampersad, 2003; Cummings & Worley, 2005; McLean, 2006; Lien et al., 2007; Gillon, 2011). The second term is "human resource issues" by which organizations are expected to align feedback and the development system and try to provide feedback on improvement actions (Rampersad, 2003; Cummings and Worley, 2005). The last one is strategic issues, which promote close commitment to a learning culture (Rampersad, 2003; Cummings & Worley, 2005; Van der Heijden et al., 2009; Gillon, 2011; McLean, 2006; Lien, 2007) and continual improvement of the job (Rampersad, 2003; Gillon, 2011). It is noteworthy that there is no learning issue required in the OD activities. All of the three issues, however, are embedded in learning issues as a central theme of OD.

### *Career and Employability*

Regarding CD, the activities that are likely to increase the desired outcomes of career development have been classified into formal and informal strategies (Barnett & Bradley, 2007). The formal strategy includes career planning, career training, a career assessment center, and career counseling programs (Barnett & Bradley, 2007; Hoekstra, 2011; Dessler, 2003; Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Rampersad, 2003). Next, the informal ones comprise support, such as providing career mentoring and career networking opportunities (Barnett & Bradley, 2007; De Vos et al., 2011; Hoekstra, 2011; Dessler, 2003). These factors support career mobility and career transition.

## **Methodology**

The units of analysis of this study are organizations in the Thai public sector. The population consists of 127 departments and 60 organizations at the departmental level (OCSC, 2009). Using a sampling formula proposed by Yamane (1967), the sample size was 127. To obtain information about the population in the public sector, this study employed a database of the Thai public sector called “GINFO.” This database was accessed through web link (<http://www.oic.go.th/ginfor/>) and retrieved on March 20, 2013. Using a simple random sampling method, all of the data about the population were arranged and organized securely into tables in a computer program. Then, the name lists of the samples were computerized.

After obtaining the number and name lists of the samples, the researcher sent the questionnaire and an official cover letter to the selected samples. The cover letter mentioned the main purpose of the study and provided the contact e-mail and phone number of the researcher. Then, the questionnaire, enclosed with a postage paid pre-addressed return envelope, was mailed to the director of the human resource management and development unit (i.e. a representative of each organization). Each respondent was instructed to reply to the questionnaire not more than one month after it was sent. Through the data-collection process, the researcher randomly called the samples and asked whether they received the questionnaire and were qualified to reply. The total number of respondents was 116.

The ratio between the total numbers of the sample and the respondents was quite high (91.34%).

As for the descriptive part, this study used observation number, mean and standard deviation for describing the demographic characteristics of the samples. Then, Pearson product-moment correlation matrices were used to examine the relationship among the independent variables.

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression was mainly used for analyzing the impacts of HRD on employability. Beck (1980) argued that the basic assumptions of OLS are: a dependent variable is a linear function of the explanatory variables of interest (linearity), all disturbance terms are independent of each other (no multicollinearity), a dependent variable is normally distributed (normality), and there is a situation in which the variance of the dependent variable is same for all the data (homoscedasticity).

This study used a number of diagnostic tests to examine the validity of the statistical inferences. White (1980) test was employed to test for heteroskedasticity, while the Jarque-Bela test (1980) was employed to test for normality. The VIF was used for testing multicollinearity. White and Jarque-Bela tests were shown in F-statistic terms, while the VIF was shown in the index. If the F-statistics of the White and Jarque-Bela tests were not statistically significant, the models were not likely to be affected by heteroskedasticity or normal distribution of the variance of the dependent variable. Regarding the VIF index, if the number was lower than 10, then the models were not likely to be affected by multicollinearity.

In addition to the models of analysis, control variables (employee education, employee experience and total numbers of workforce, and total numbers of government employees) were included into the model. The reason is that education and experience were considered as human capital factors (Becker, 1993; Berntson, Sverke, & Marklund, 2006; Van der Heijden et al., 2009) and it was assumed that they would affect employability. Further, since the unit of analysis was at the organizational level, organizational size (ratio of government employees to total employees) was assumed to have an effect on employability as well.

## Descriptive Analysis

This part presents the descriptive statistics, where the mean score and standard deviation (S.D.) were used for describing the data in response to the questions: “To what extend do you expect to employability of the contract employees in your organization?” and “To what extend do you think the contract employees possess the expected employability?”, think about the employees who have worked in your organization for at least 1 year. Their responses to the question are detailed in the following table (see Table 4).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the Employability

Employability	Expected			Perceived		
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.
<b>Competencies in Performing Tasks</b>						
1. Thai literacy	115	3.25	0.47	108	2.73	0.52
2. Numeracy	114	2.93	0.53	107	2.52	0.52
3. Technology skills	114	3.42	0.51	107	2.97	0.48
4. English proficiency	115	2.92	0.62	108	1.94	0.53
5. Communication skills	111	3.26	0.50	105	2.53	0.57
6. Interpersonal skills	115	3.54	0.53	108	2.77	0.59
7. Teamwork skills	115	3.64	0.50	108	2.76	0.64
8. Service skills	114	3.48	0.50	107	2.86	0.61
9. Collecting and organizing information skills	114	3.21	0.49	107	2.39	0.61
10. Problem-solving skills	115	3.23	0.52	107	2.47	0.57
11. Planning skills	115	3.23	0.61	108	2.29	0.53
12. Thinking innovatively	114	3.28	0.52	108	2.34	0.60
13. Systems thinking	115	3.29	0.54	107	2.28	0.53
14. Responsibility	115	3.64	0.50	108	2.81	0.60
15. Being resourceful	115	3.09	0.55	107	2.61	0.56
16. Flexibility	115	3.22	0.51	108	2.68	0.53
17. Having self-esteem	115	3.27	0.50	108	2.81	0.58
<b>Competencies for Remaining Employed</b>						
18. Ability to adapt to a changing environment	115	3.37	0.54	110	2.76	0.52
19. Ability to adapt to a rotation if required	115	3.30	0.53	110	2.53	0.60

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the Employability (continued)**

Employability	Expected			Perceived		
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.
20. Self-promotion in obtaining and relaying information to maintain awareness of working conditions	114	3.09	0.52	110	2.45	0.58
21. Learning skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion of operations and outcomes	115	3.43	0.51	110	2.54	0.59
<b>Competencies for Obtaining New Employment</b>						
22. Job search ability	115	3.24	0.55	110	2.65	0.60
23. Self-presentation skills	115	3.22	0.60	110	2.54	0.60
24. Ability to transfer and adapt to new workplace	115	3.24	0.59	110	2.53	0.57

Table 4 reports on the descriptive statistics regarding employability. In terms of the competencies required to perform tasks, the expected employability components with the highest scores were responsibility ( $\bar{X} = 3.64$ ) as well as teamwork skills ( $\bar{X} = 3.64$ ), interpersonal skills ( $\bar{X} = 3.54$ ), and service skills ( $\bar{X} = 3.48$ ). As for the lowest expected employability components, they were English proficiency ( $\bar{X} = 2.92$ ) and numeracy ( $\bar{X} = 2.93$ ). Regarding perceived employability, the components with the highest scores were technology skills ( $\bar{X} = 2.97$ ), service skills ( $\bar{X} = 2.86$ ), and responsibility ( $\bar{X} = 2.81$ ), as well as self-esteem ( $\bar{X} = 2.81$ ). As for the lowest perceived employability components, they were English proficiency ( $\bar{X} = 1.94$ ) and system thinking ( $\bar{X} = 2.28$ ).

Regarding the competencies required to remain employed, the expected employability components ranking from the highest to the lowest scores were leaning skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion of operations and outcomes ( $\bar{X} = 3.43$ ), ability to adapt to a changing environment ( $\bar{X} = 3.37$ ), ability to adapt to a rotation if required ( $\bar{X} = 3.30$ ), and self-promotion in obtaining and relaying information to maintain awareness of working conditions ( $\bar{X} = 3.09$ ). The perceived employability ranking from the highest to the lowest scores were ability to adapt to a changing environment ( $\bar{X} = 2.76$ ), the leaning skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion of operations and outcomes ( $\bar{X} = 2.54$ ), the ability to adapt to a rotation if required ( $\bar{X} = 2.53$ ), and self-promotion in obtaining and relaying information to maintain awareness of working conditions ( $\bar{X} = 2.45$ ).

As for competencies required to obtain new employment, the expected employability components ranking from the highest to the lowest scores were job search ability ( $\bar{X} = 3.24$ ) as well as the ability to transfer and adapt to a new workplace ( $\bar{X} = 3.24$ ), and self-presentation skills ( $\bar{X} = 3.22$ ). Meanwhile, the perceived employability ranking from the highest to the lowest scores were job search ability ( $\bar{X} = 2.65$ ), self-presentation skills ( $\bar{X} = 2.54$ ), and the ability to transfer and adapt to new workplace ( $\bar{X} = 2.53$ ).

Table 5 reports on the mean scores and standard deviations (S.D.) of HRD interventions (training, OD, and CD) for improving government employees' competencies. The respondents were asked, "How often do you think your organization utilizes the following HRD interventions for improving government employees' competencies?" Their responses to the question are detailed in the following table (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of HRD Interventions**

HRD Interventions	N	Mean	S.D.
<b>Training</b>			
1. In-house training program	115	2.70	0.80
2. Public training with budgeting support by the organization	115	2.25	0.83
3. Employee involvement in formal training programs provided or supported by your organization	116	2.27	0.78
4. Training programs provided or supported by your organization that encourage employees' career networks	116	2.41	0.73
5. Stretch assignment	115	2.64	0.64
6. Coaching and mentoring activities	116	2.70	0.71
7. Job rotation	114	1.96	0.66
8. Daily jobs or work processes that enable the employees to develop their talent	115	2.80	0.61

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of HRD Interventions (continued)**

HRD Interventions	N	Mean	S.D.
<b>OD</b>			
7. Obtained and developed knowledge that is continually documented and made available to everyone in the organization	116	2.74	0.61
8. Team with a balance of personalities, skills, and learning styles	114	3.01	0.62
9. Periodically giving feedback about employee performance	115	3.12	0.66
10. Performance appraisal and competence development that are explicitly linked to personal potential and ambition	115	2.92	0.64
11. Culture characterized by simplicity and opencommunication	115	2.81	0.74
12. Some being able to answer questions about their job	116	2.72	0.71
13. Urging employees to continually study how they work and to adjust their work if needed	116	2.75	0.60
<b>CD</b>			
14. Career planning program	116	2.05	0.71
15. Career training program	116	1.70	0.72
16. Career counseling for those that need to find a new job, if necessary	116	1.66	0.71
17. Career mentoring system	115	1.86	0.74
18. Career networking opportunities	116	1.72	0.68

Table 5 reports the descriptive statistics of HRD interventions. As for training interventions, the highest scores of utilization were daily jobs or work processes that enabled the employees to develop their talent ( $\bar{X} = 2.80$ ), and in-house training programs ( $\bar{X} = 2.70$ ) as well as coaching and mentoring activities ( $\bar{X} = 2.70$ ). The lowest scores of training utilization were job rotation ( $\bar{X} = 1.69$ ), public training with budgeting support by the organization ( $\bar{X} = 2.25$ ), and employees being involved with formal training programs provided or supported by the organization ( $\bar{X} = 2.27$ ).

Regarding OD interventions, the highest scores of utilization were periodically giving feedback about employees' performance ( $\bar{X} = 3.12$ ), teams with a balance of personalities, skills and learning styles ( $\bar{X} = 3.01$ ), and performance appraisal and

competence development that are explicitly linked to personal potentiality and ambition ( $\bar{X} = 2.92$ ). Meanwhile, the lowest scores on OD utilization were being able to answer questions about their job ( $\bar{X} = 2.72$ ), obtained and developed knowledge that is continually documented and made available to everyone in the organization ( $\bar{X} = 2.74$ ), and urging employees to continually study how they work and to adjust their work if needed ( $\bar{X} = 2.75$ ).

CD interventions ranking from the highest to the lowest scores of utilization were career planning program ( $\bar{X} = 2.05$ ), career mentoring system ( $\bar{X} = 1.86$ ), career networking opportunities ( $\bar{X} = 1.72$ ), career training program ( $\bar{X} = 1.70$ ), and career counseling for those that need to find a new job, if necessary ( $\bar{X} = 1.66$ ).

Next, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to explore the relationship among the independent variables (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables of Interest (Public Sector)**

Variables	Training	OD	CD
Training			
OD	0.53*** (0.00)		
CD	0.47*** (0.00)	0.32*** (0.00)	

**Note:** \*  $p < 0.10$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ . The numbers in parentheses are p-values.

Table 6 reports on the correlation coefficients of the independent variables in the public sector and the relationship among variables. All variables (training, OD, and CD) were positively correlated with each other. The correlation coefficients indicated that none of the variables were likely to be highly correlated. This indicated that the models were not likely to be plagued by multicollinearity.

### **The Effect of HRD on Employability: Findings from OLS Analysis**

The findings indicate the HRD factors affecting employability of government employees. The findings are detailed in the following table (see Table 7).

**Table 7: Effect of HRD Interventions on Employability (Public Sector)**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Training	0.60** (0.24)		
OD		0.78*** (0.27)	
CD			0.01 (0.32)
Total number of workforce	-0.22 (0.28)	-0.19 (0.27)	-0.29 (0.28)
Total number of government employees	0.21 (0.50)	-0.22 (0.50)	0.06 (0.51)
Education	-2.13 (2.07)	-1.85 (2.01)	-1.05 (2.08)
Experience	0.12 (1.51)	0.34 (1.37)	0.38 (1.44)
N	87	89	90
Standard Error of Regression	7.67	7.55	7.88
R <sup>2</sup>	0.09	0.11	0.02
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.05	-0.03
F-Statistics	1.51	2.11*	0.41
Normality	1.84	1.26	0.31
White ( $\chi^2(1)$ )	0.86	0.04	1.57
VIF	1.39	1.38	1.36

Note: \* p < 0.10; \*\* p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < 0.01. The numbers in parentheses are standard error.

Table 7 reports on the effects of training, OD and CD on employability in the public sector. The table shows that, among the three independent variables, training and OD had a positive and significant effect on employability in the public sector, as expected. Meanwhile, CD (Model 3) had no effect on employability in the public sector at all. Comparing training and OD, OD had a greater effect on employability in the public sector. Training itself had a positive and significant effect on employability in the public sector, as expected. Other things being equal, a unit increase in training was positively associated with a 0.60 unit increase in employability (p < 0.05).

When including training with the control variables, it was found that the training model (Model 1) had no effect on employability in the public sector. Meanwhile, OD had a positive and significant effect on employability in the public sector, as expected. Other things being equal, a unit increase in OD was positively associated with a 0.78 unit increase in employability ( $p < 0.01$ ). When including OD with the control variables, it was found that the OD model (Model 1) still had a positive effect on employability in the public sector ( $p < 0.10$ ). Accordingly, it can be said that the best-predicting model of employability in the public sector was Model 2.

The limitations of this study pertain to the  $R^2$  of the proposed models. The values of the  $R^2$  were quite low (0.02-0.11) since the models included the control variables. However, the models showed that the control variables did not have a significant effect on employability. This implies the significant effect of HRD interventions, especially OD and training. They have a high significant effect on employability (0.78 and 0.60, respectively).

## **Discussion and Conclusion on Expected and Perceived Employability**

### ***The Importance of People-Related Skills and Personal Skills***

Employability, in this study, was defined as the competencies required to perform tasks, to remain employed, and to obtain new employment. The findings reflect the gaps in the employability of contract or government employees in the public sector. The expected employability pertained to people-related skills (i.e., teamwork and interpersonal skills). This finding was in accordance with the study of by Clarke and Patrickson (2008), which place a great deal of emphasis on a wide variety of generic and transferable skills, such as communication skills, and teamwork and interpersonal skills. People-related skills are an emerging issue in employability since employees have to work with various stakeholders. The importance of people-related skills has been implied by many organizations (i.e., WDA, 2012; ILO, 2003; Conference Board of Canada; 2003) and scholars (i.e., Gibb, 2004; Fugate et al., 2004; Dench, 1997; Ranzijn, Carson & Winefield, 2002).

This study implies that those that can perform tasks well in the public sector are expected to have people-related (especially teamwork), interpersonal, and service

skills. This idea was supported by an interview in which scholars mentioned that the employability components needed in the public sector are coordination and interpersonal skills. The results of this study confirmed Clarke's survey of 40 companies in the UK. His argument was that both short- and long-term contract employees are expected to demonstrate customer-focused behavior and commitment to the highest quality (Clarke, 1997). In addition to the public sector, the argument to this point is that workers in the public sector are supposed to possess people-related skills since public jobs are assumed to be service jobs for the public.

Not only are people-related skills important in the perception of organizations, but personal skills are also crucial. The results revealed that the highest score of the expected employability components was responsibility. Since employability was argued to be more than just having the skills to enter the workforce, the skills and abilities to progress within an organization are argued to be important (McLeish, 2002; Dench, 1997). From an organizational perspective, soft skills and personal competencies are important as well as a set of functional competencies (Dench, 1997). The finding of responsibility with the highest expected score of employability was in accordance with the compatible argument—that employability is seen as an outcome of professional in which discipline-specific attributes are very important (Leckey & McGuigan, 1997). These findings confirmed the argument of some scholars (e.g., Ranzijn et al., 2002; Scholarios & Lockyer, 1999) that, among KSAOs, employers are rather interested in "Os" (other characteristics or qualifications of the applicants). That means that skills and knowledge are necessary but not sufficient. To fulfill employability, personal attributes have to be of concern.

### ***Fundamental Skills: A Critical Issue for the Public Sector***

Although fundamental skills are not sufficient conditions for high performance, they are necessary conditions for task accomplishment. Fundamental or basic skills such as literacy and numeracy are a condition for a country's development (Tin, 2006). It was mentioned by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA, 2012) and the Conference Board of Canada (2003) that literacy, numeracy, and IT skills are necessary for employability fulfillment. Fundamental skills are a basic part of conceptual thinking skills, such as problem solving and decision making.

Although the government employees were assessed in terms of their possession of a high level of technology skills, the worrisome issue was that the lowest scores on both expected and perceived employability, in terms of competency to perform tasks, were the fundamental skills, especially English proficiency, numeracy, and system thinking skills. As mentioned by Berntson, Sverke, & Marklund (2006), education is one of the success keys in employability. These findings, therefore, imply gaps between the education system as a medium of human resource development and the perception of organizations regarding the new generation workforce.

### ***Marketability and Self-Promotion: A Different Perception of Employability in the Thai Society***

Marketability is a concept that is seen frequently with the idea of employability. Self-promotion is one way to promote marketability, which means that employees have to learn how to evaluate themselves and how to be marketable (Clarke & Patrickson, 2008). The research findings, however, were opposite what scholars have suggested. The scores on expected and perceived self-promotion were ranked at the lowest number. It can be assumed that self-promotion is not embedded in the Thai culture. Accordingly, marketability, in terms of self-promotion, is not highly valued in the Thai context.

On the other hand, marketability can be defined as the perception that a worker is valuable to the current or prospective employer (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003). Therefore, expected employability reflects marketability. If we employ the definition of marketability as expected employability, this study implies that the contract employees that possess people-related and personal skills are marketable or are in demand by current and prospective employers.

### ***Transferability: A Gap in the Thai Context***

As for transferability, the questions were asked from two points of view. First, in an internal transferability, the question asks about the ability to adapt to a changing environment. The results showed that adapting to such an environment was ranked as the highest in the perceived competency to remain employed. However, the value of the ability to adapt was somewhat high. Second, in an

external transferability, the question asks about the ability to transfer and adapt to a new workplace. Compared with other components of competencies to obtain new employment, the result showed the highest gap in transferability. The highest scores were the ability to transfer and adapt to a new workplace, whereas the perceived ability to transfer and adapt to a new workplace became the lowest score in relation to employability. This finding implies that transferability is a problem for contract employees in the public sector. Nowadays, the transferability gap may not be a crucial problem. In the future, however, if employment is transformed into more short-term contracts, this will probably be a critical problem in the labor market.

## **Employability Enhancement and Human Resource Development: Contributions to the Public Sector**

Underpinning the research hypotheses, human resource development (HRD) was assumed to be a means that enhances the employability of the workforce. This research suggests HRD as a concept of the win-win situation between the individual and the organization (Nadler & Wiggs, 1986; Smith 1988; Nadler & Nadler, 1989; Garavan, 1991; Harrison & Kessels, 2004; McGoldrick et al., 2002; Jones, 1981). Another underpinning concept was seen in relation to human capital theory—investing in human capitals increases workforce mobility. The research findings can be seen to contribute to a theoretical linkage between HRD and employability. A discussion on the contributions follows.

### ***Informal Training and Employability***

There is a controversial issue—whether formal or informal training is most likely to contribute to employability. For example, Baruch (2004) argued that informal training programs are more workable than formal ones, whereas the study of Van der Heijden et al., (2009) found that formal training provides much more employability because of networking among the participants in the training program, supporting their ability to perform tasks and find a new job.

The statistical findings from this study imply that informal training interventions are the most preferable. The findings align with the qualitative findings from the

interview, indicating that a workable method of people development is informal training. The findings support a theoretical perspective on the advantage of informal training. Nevertheless, the total set of training interventions had a positive effect on the employability of the government employees.

### ***A Point Pertaining to Network and Contributions to Human Capital Theory***

Since employability can be explained through the human capital theory, building networks has become one of the important elements of employability. This idea is more or less underpinned by social capital theory; that is, the differences in networks produce inequality with respect to career attainment (Garavan et al., 2001).

As for the point pertaining to networks among the participants in formal training interventions, the interviewees pointed out that the interventions could not provide much of a career network for employees because the new generation employees are too young to recognize how important a network can be for their career. More importantly, building a network takes time. As a result, they have more networks than the younger generation. This finding contributes to human capital theory in the sense that networks can be accumulated through experience. Networking is considered to be valuable in terms of human capital accumulation.

### ***The Emergence of OD as a Factor Enhancing Employability***

The effect of OD on employability is a new theoretical contribution to the field of the study. Since there is not any research supporting a direct association between OD and employability, it was challenging to investigate the positive effect of OD on employability. However, the conceptualization of OD and employability is not theoretically vague—learning is a common key factor of OD and employability. OD is about managing planned change (Cummings & Worley, 1997). McLean (2006) argues that the OD affects employability in the short and long run. In the short run, it enhances knowledge, expertise, satisfaction, and productivity. In the long run, it benefits humanity.

For OD, learning means organizational learning, whereas in the sense of employability, it means individual learning. A key point is to enhance organizational

learning and to encourage an individual to learn. The benefits of OD, therefore, are assumed to affect more or less employees. This implies that organizations will be successful if their employees are able to learn quickly, which is one of the important assumptions of the OD. Organizations should encourage employees to continuously learn by developing, cultivating, and exchanging their knowledge throughout the organizations (Rampersad, 2004). On the other hand, the increase in organizational learning also reflects the increase in employees' learning and being employable. As for OD interventions, the results contribute to the OD classification proposed by the OD scholars (e.g., Cummings & Worley, 1997, 2005; McLean, 2006). The most popular method for the public sector is periodically providing feedback about employee performance.

#### ***No Significant Effect Does Not Mean That CD Is Not Important***

Among the HRD variables, CD is the most crucial variable in terms of enhancing employability. Several studies have mentioned the importance of CD in relation to employability (e.g., Garavan et al., 2001; Fugate et al., 2004; Ng et al., 2005; Burke & McKeen, 1994; De Vos et al., 2009). It can be noted that returns on investment in training and OD will increase capabilities of organizations and employees; however, returns on CD investment will rather increase competencies of individual employees than the capabilities of entire organizations. This may be a reason why the public sector does not pay much attention to CD interventions. Although the findings indicate that CD interventions do not significantly affect employability, it does not mean that CD is not totally unimportant for contract employees. In the near future, an increase of CD will probably be demanded by employees due to the increasing uncertainty of employment contracts.

### **Recommendations for the Public Sector and for Future Studies**

#### ***Recommendations to the Public Sector***

Based on the findings, the employability components with the highest expected score were responsibility, teamwork, interpersonal, and service skills. To deal with the expected or demanded skills, the public sector should intervene by encouraging HRD activities in the public organizations. The implications of HRD

should cover all types of workers. HRD interventions will play a crucial role in incentivizing since the contracts of some workers in the public sector are determined by short-term periods. However, among the four-mentioned skills, responsibility is the most difficult to be developed by organizations. For responsibility and other attributes that cannot be easily developed in the short run, the public sector should adjust to other human resource management systems.

Since the findings indicate that OD has a greater effect on employability in the public sector, one recommendation for fulfilling the gaps is to place more emphasis on OD interventions. The concept of OD is to encourage continuous learning for everyone. The increase in organizational learning also reflects the increase in employees' learning. People will learn best when they know their personal goals. That means that learning will benefit both the organization and the individual when their goals are aligned. Encouraging teams with a balance of personalities and skills and learning styles is preferable for the public sector since it was ranked with the second highest score in OD utilization.

In addition, the study further proposed other OD interventions to enhance the employee's learning and development. Those are: obtained and developed knowledge that is continually documented and made available to everyone in the organization; teams with a balance of personalities, skills, and learning styles; periodically giving feedback about employee performance; performance appraisal and competence development that are explicitly linked to the person's potentiality and ambition; cultural issues characterized by simplicity and open-communication; providing people that are able to answer questions about the job; and urging employees to continually study how they work and to adjust their work if needed.

However, a surprising finding in this study was the wide gap in fundamental skills, especially regarding English proficiency, numeracy, and system thinking skills. To deal with the problem, the public sector, educational institutions, and other partners should cooperate and share their potential to set a framework for curriculum revision. The purpose of the revision concerns how to build and enhance the fundamental skills of students.

### ***Recommendations for Future Studies***

For future research, there is a wide variety of topics relevant to employability. First, a topic can be developed from the interest in some certain HRD interventions, for example, the effect of training and OD on employability. Second, the unit of analysis can be extended to the national or international level. Another option is to take the unit of analysis to the individual level. For this aspect, the measurement has to be transformed to fit the targeted sample unit and the analysis can be based on time-series methods. Finally, based on the findings, it can be seen that the research topic—fundamental and conceptual thinking skill development and employability—is interesting, and how to cope with fundamental skill gaps is an interesting research question for future exploration.

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