Attributes of Business Administration Graduates from Stakeholder Perspectives: Case Study of Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus

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Abstract

Unemployment of new graduates remains because of a mismatch between employer demands and graduate attributes. To reduce the skills gap, the study programs need to know what attributes are required by stakeholders. This study aims to identify the attributes of business administration graduates based on the requirements of stakeholders, and to determine the importance of the attributes of business administration graduates. The qualitative data was collected from stakeholders consisting of 17 internal stakeholders and 29 external stakeholders. Based on qualitative data analysis approach, the data was analyzed and thematically categorized by researchers. The study found that the importances of both generic and specific attributes of graduates were mentioned by stakeholders. The attributes of business administration graduates include 36 generic attributes and 3 specific attributes. This study suggested that the study programs should integrate the attributes of graduates into curriculum design and provide students with teaching and learning activities that enable them to develop the expected attributes. However, this study investigated graduate attributes specifically for the Bachelor of Business Administration Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus. The results of the study may not be generalized to other programs of study or other areas because the required graduate attributes in a specific area can be different than others.

Keywords: Bachelor of Business Administration, Generic Attribute, Specific Attribute, Stakeholder

Introduction

The skills gap between graduates and industrial requirements occurs in many countries (Al Hinai et al., 2020). In Thailand, new graduates remained unemployed by a 10.04% year-on-year rise (Therapat & Arunmas, 2021). Unemployment of new graduates

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was caused by coronavirus pandemic, economic recession (Reuters, 2021), and a mismatch between employer expectations and graduate attributes (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021). To respond to multiple demands, universities have increasingly shifted to "market-oriented educational enterprises" that aimed at preparing students ready for future employment (Maxwell & Armellini, 2019).

According to changing world of business in the 21st century, employers are seeking for employees with the right attributes (Tempone et al., 2012). This seems like higher education institutions as well as business curricula play a key role in improving graduates' employability (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021). Business administration graduates are expected to demonstrate the ability to perform a real-world task and the ability to cope with uncertain work environment (Bajada & Trayler, 2013).

From a higher education institution's point of view, the requirements of stakeholders need to be concerned to ensure that the university's business curricula are up-to-date and relevant to the needs of stakeholders (Poon et al., 2011). Therefore, a well-designed business administration curriculum focuses on integrating stakeholders' expectations into program learning outcomes (Bajada & Trayler, 2013). This is in line with the educational standards at regional level (e.g. the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance: AUN-QA) and global level (e.g. the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business: AACSB) that focus on enhancing graduate employability and achieving learning outcomes (AUN-QA, 2020; AACSB, 2020). Whereas a business administration curriculum has multiple stakeholders, it should know which graduate attributes are really important in order to develop the appropriate graduate attributes linked to the current and future job markets (Winfield & Ndlovu, 2019).

Universities that failed to provide qualified and competent graduates will not achieve a competitive advantage, compared to those universities that can meet the needs of stakeholders (Oosthuizen et al., 2021). While business environment has changed over time and it affects the way business organizations are managed (Nudurupati et al., 2021), the challenge of a business administration curriculum is how to justify which attributes are most important to business administration graduates at the present time (Brauer, 2021). In this study, the theoretical underpinning of graduate attributes and stakeholder requirements is based on the two theories, namely the resource-based view and the alliance theory. This is because the theories emphasize market-oriented education and the demands of stakeholders.

However, the required graduate attributes in a particular study program or a specific area can be different than others. Whereas the research on graduate attributes in a specific area is still limited, this study aims to investigate the graduate attributes specifically for the Bachelor of Business Administration Program (B.B.A. Program), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Pattani Campus,

located in Southernmost Thailand. The research results will be useful for curriculum design of the B.B.A. Program to meet the requirements of stakeholders.

Objective

1. To identify the attributes of business administration graduates based on the requirements of stakeholders.

2. To determine the importance of the attributes of business administration graduates.

Literature review

In this study, graduate refers to a student who completed a bachelor's degree in business administration (Davids-Latief, 2016). Graduate attributes are defined as "the qualities, skills and understanding a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution" (Donleavy, 2012). A graduate's attributes reflect his or her capacity to get job and to perform job-related tasks (Tempone et al., 2012).

Graduate attributes are the qualities that enable graduates to meet the employer expectations and to be lifelong learners who are ready for professional development throughout their life-span (Tempone et al., 2012). The study programs are supposed to promote the readiness of graduates (e.g. develop their knowledge, skills, abilities, etc.) to match the requirements for future jobs (Al Hinai et al., 2020). Thus, the university's curricula should pay attention to getting a better understanding of the appropriate graduate attributes to meet employer expectations (Al Hinai et al., 2020). The examples of graduate attributes are critical thinking, problem-solving skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, business awareness, managerial skills, time management, team skills, leadership capabilities, and social responsibility (Tempone et al., 2012).

From theoretical perspective, the resource-based view and the alliance theory are applicable to this study. The two theories are then discussed.

1. Resource-Based View

The resource-based view has been widely applied to the strategic management of firms that has aimed at accomplishing a sustainable competitive advantage (Gaya & Struwig, 2016). Since universities tend to transform into "market-oriented educational enterprises" (Maxwell & Armellini, 2019), the resource-based view is applicable to the context of higher education institutions as well.

An organization's success mainly depends on its internal resources and capabilities (Daud et al., 2011). Likewise, the university's curricula that effectively use their resources to produce marketable graduates and to meet the demands of stakeholders will remain competitive (Daud et al., 2011). Therefore, the appropriate graduate attributes should be developed. A resource based approach stated that

student development and success are derived from both students' self-management (focuses on what students can do for themselves) and the support provided by others (the study programs, universities, etc.) to assist them to develop further (Hitch et al., 2012).

2. Alliance Theory

Alliance is not a new concept in business sector (Suherlan, 2017). The alliance is a form of partnership between companies or organizations (Suherlan, 2017). Alliance theory can be applied to higher education institutions because they recently have operated under uncertain environment and complex competition, similar to those companies (Suherlan, 2017). Based on alliance theory, higher education institutions need to have a strong alliance with industries so that they can gain access to the information about the requirements of stakeholders (Daud et al., 2011). The collaboration between higher education institutions and industries is supposed to benefit both parties. It can help universities to produce graduate attributes matched with the demands from industries (Suherlan, 2017).

According to the theories mentioned above, a guiding framework of this study was developed. The independent variable is "requirements of stakeholders" while the dependent variable is "attributes of business administration graduates" (figure 1). However, the purpose of this study is not to examine the relationship between independent variable and dependent variable, but it aims at investigating the facts of what graduate attributes are required by stakeholders and how these attributes are important.

Independent Variable   **Dependent Variable**
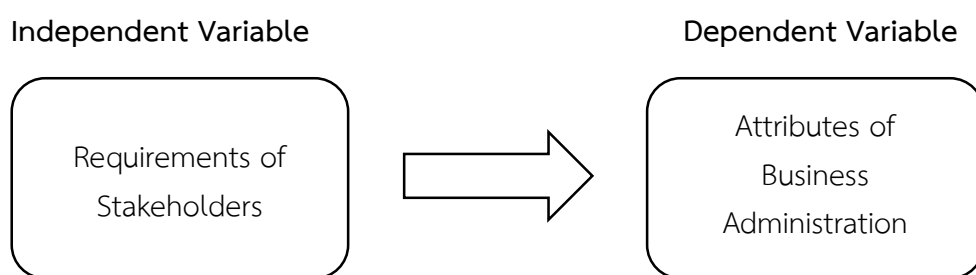
Figure 1 A Guiding Framework

The past study of employability in higher education from key stakeholders' perspectives by Cheng et al. (2022) maintained that higher education institutions can enhance graduate employability through exploring the expectations from key stakeholders such as government, higher education institutions, students, and employers. Likewise, this study identified key stakeholders for data collection.

This study presents a case study of the B.B.A. Program that is offered by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus,

Thailand. The B.B.A. Program was first established in 2005 to respond to the needs of stakeholders in the Southern Border Provinces, including Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun, and Songkhla, who required a workforce and entrepreneurs with the capability to perform business operations corresponding to both local and international contexts (Bachelor of Business Administration Program, 2020).

Methodology

In this study, a qualitative research approach is adopted in order to gain insight into the attributes of business administration graduates required by stakeholders (Cassell et al., 2006). A qualitative research approach is used to discover an individual's ideas and to provide a deeper understanding of a particular event (Cassell et al., 2006).

The participants of this study are stakeholders of the Bachelor of Business Administration Program (B.B.A. Program), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University (Pattani Campus), Thailand. The stakeholders are divided into two groups: internal (e.g. students) and external stakeholders (e.g. employers). This is consistent with a study in higher education institution (HEI) by Soewarno and Tjahjadi (2020) which indicated the stakeholders of the HEIs including students, employers, employees, alumni, government institutions etc. Besides that, Thailand Quality Award (TQA) emphasizes the importance of listening to the voice of customer (Thailand Quality Award, 2022). Thus, this study views students as customers who should be participated in the study although they are not in the workforce.

The purposive sampling is appropriate for this study as it is commonly used to select the key informants who are able to give the relevant information (Lubbe, 2014). The stakeholder representatives were chosen from stakeholders who have constant or frequent contact with the B.B.A. Program or with Prince of Songkla University (Kantanen, 2012). The brainstorming technique was adopted to develop the list of key informants (i.e. participants) because it is known as a useful technique to summarize the key points (Wu et al., 2013). The administrative committees of the B.B.A. Program were invited to participate in brainstorming session for identifying the list of stakeholders.

This study adopts in-depth interview for data collection because it provides a rich source of data (Cassell et al., 2006). The consent form with the confidentiality statement and the explanation of the interview process has been sent to the participants. The interviewees were asked a range of questions about their ideas and opinions about the required attributes of business administration graduates. The questions for in-depth interview are based on the research questions and objectives of this study (Cassell et al., 2006). The samples of questions used as a guideline for the interview are as follows:

1. Explain the essential attributes of business administration graduates who completed the study offered by the Bachelor of Business Administration Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus

2. How is the importance of each attribute of business administration graduates (the attribute as you mentioned earlier)?

The linkage between the interview questions and the research objectives are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The Linkage between the Interview Questions and the Research Objectives

Research Objective	Interview Question
1. To identify the attributes of business administration graduates based on the requirements of stakeholders.	1. Explain the essential attributes of business administration graduates who completed the study offered by the Bachelor of Business Administration Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus
2. To determine the importance of the attributes of business administration graduates.	2. How is the importance of each attribute of business administration graduates (the attribute as you mentioned earlier)?

Consistent with the past literature, the scope of questions about ideas and opinions on the required attributes of business administration graduates is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Scope of Questions about Ideas and Opinions

Interview Question	Scope of Questions
1. Explain the essential attributes of business administration graduates who completed the study offered by the Bachelor of Business Administration Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus	Attributes of graduates include knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and other qualifications which are essential for graduates for pursuing their work.
2. How is the importance of each attribute of business administration graduates (the attribute as you mentioned earlier)?	The importance of each attribute for graduate, organization, and society.

Based on the purposive sampling whereby the key informants are selected by the researchers, the stakeholder representatives include 17 internal stakeholders and 29 external stakeholders (Table 3). Overall, 46 Stakeholders were interviewed. In this paper, the names of respondents are not shown. Codes are used for their privacy protection.

For stakeholder analysis, a grid map of stakeholders by Mendelow (1999 as cited in Oxford College of Marketing, 2018) was applied. The grid map has been adapted by

Prince of Songkla University and it is useful for stakeholder analysis at program level (Prince of Songkla University, 2022). This study categorized internal and external stakeholders into 4 groups that are: 1) high power-low impact (HPLI) (stakeholders who have high power towards the B.B.A. Program but they are low impacted by the B.B.A. Program), 2) high power-high impact (HPHI) (stakeholders who have high power towards the B.B.A. Program and they are high impacted by the B.B.A. Program), 3) low power-low impact (LPLI) (stakeholders who have low power towards the B.B.A. Program and they are low impacted by the B.B.A. Program), and 4) low power-high impact (LPHI) (stakeholders who have low power towards the B.B.A. Program but they are high impacted by the B.B.A. Program) (Table 3).

Table 3 Internal and External Stakeholders of the B.B.A. Program

Groups of Stakeholders	
Internal Stakeholders	External Stakeholders
1. B.B.A. lecturers (8 respondents) (HPHI)	1. High school students (2 respondents) (LPHI)
2. B.B.A. students (8 respondents) (LPHI)	2. New graduate (1 respondent) (LPHI)
3. Human Resources Management Office, PSU Pattani (1 respondent) (LPHI)	3. Alumni (7 respondents) (LPHI)
	4. Governmental organizations (3 respondents) (2 LPLI, 1 LPHI)
	5. State enterprises (4 respondents) (2 LPLI, 2 LPHI)
	6. Companies (10 respondents) (1 HPHI, 5 LPLI, 4 LPHI)
	7. Entrepreneurs (2 respondents) (LPLI)

The qualitative data were analyzed, thematically categorized, and put in a table form by researchers. The key themes were identified and they were refined several times to become accurate themes.

Results

This section presents the results of the study based on the research objectives and it aims to answer the following research questions:

Question 1: What are the attributes of business administration graduates required by stakeholders?

Question 2: How are the attributes of business administration graduates important?

According to the opinions of respondents, the attributes of business administration graduates were categorized by researchers. The respondents also expressed the importance of attributes of business administration graduates (Table 4).

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Table 4 The Attributes of Business Administration Graduates

Code	Attributes of Business Administration Graduates	Generic Attribute	Specific Attribute	Importance of Attributes of Business Administration Graduates
T1	Visionary	/		Employee's vision is required for working with a company. *External stakeholder: Company1*
T2	Attitude	/		A positive attitude encourages individuals to deal with problems. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2019* *External stakeholder: New graduate1/ Company2/ Company3/ State enterprise1*
				A positive attitude is important to pursuing work related to customer interaction. *External stakeholder: New graduate1/ Company2/ Company3/ State enterprise1*
				An individual's positive attitude leads to career success and happiness at work. *External stakeholder: New graduate1*
				Growth mindset assists a company to move forward. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2020*
T3	Self-efficacy	/		A person's self-efficacy enables him or her to courageously invest in a business and do everything to achieve success. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2021*
T4	Acceptance of failure	/		An acceptance of failure allows a person to resolve the problems. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2018* *External stakeholder: Company4*

Code	Attributes of Business Administration Graduates	Generic Attribute	Specific Attribute	Importance of Attributes of Business Administration Graduates
T5	Change	/		Employees should be able to change any ineffective regulation which thwarts a company's growth. *External stakeholder: Company5*
T6	Decision making	/		People with a good decision-making can overcome the crisis. *External stakeholder: Alumni 2014-BKK*
T7	Determination and tolerant	/		Determination and tolerant enables people to deal with problematic situations. *External stakeholder: Company6*
T8	Risk taking	/		Characteristics of risk taking are important because business organizations operate under uncertain environments. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2018* *External stakeholder: Company1*
T9	Love to work	/		If people love to work, they are more likely to have passion for their work. *External stakeholder: Alumni 2016-BKK*
T10	Knowledge of business administration		/	Knowledge related to business administration can help graduates to gain more career opportunities. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer*
				Graduates who have knowledge of business administration would achieve career success. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2018* *External stakeholder: High school student*
				Graduates with business administration expertise are

Code	Attributes of Business Administration Graduates	Generic Attribute	Specific Attribute	Importance of Attributes of Business Administration Graduates
				different than those from other fields of study. *External stakeholder: Company5*
T11	Variety of knowledge	/		Multiple knowledge and skills are important in changing world of work. *External stakeholder: Company1*
T12	Applying knowledge of business administration		/	Graduates should be able to apply knowledge of business administration to deal with changing and challenging environments. They would achieve career growth. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer*
				Graduates who are able to apply knowledge of business administration can give advice to others. They would be positively recognized by their peers. *External stakeholder: Governmental organization1*
T13	Problem solving	/		Problem-solving skills are required when pursuing the real-world tasks. *External stakeholder: Entrepreneur1/Company1/New graduate1*
				Problem-solving skills are useful for conflict management at work. *External stakeholder: Company7*
T14	Language and communication	/		Communication skills enhance graduates' employability. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer*
				Language and communication skills allow individuals to have a good relationship with others. *External stakeholder: Alumni 2014-BKK*

Code	Attributes of Business Administration Graduates	Generic Attribute	Specific Attribute	Importance of Attributes of Business Administration Graduates
T15	Analytical thinking	/		Workers with analytical thinking can help their organization to attain the goals. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer*
				A company requires employees who have critical, systematic, and strategic thinking. *External stakeholder: Company1*
T16	Calculation and numerical analysis	/		Calculation and numerical analysis are useful for pursuing work in an organization. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer/Student 2019* *External stakeholder: Governmental organization2/Governmental organization3/State enterprise1*
T17	Planning	/		Both short-term and long-term planning are important to individual and organizational success. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer* *External stakeholder: Alumni 2016-BKK*
T18	Responsibility	/		An individual's responsibility allows him or her to experience career success and happy life. *External stakeholder: New graduate1*
T19	Technology	/		Graduates with information technology skills gain more career opportunities and they are ready to work with a company. *External stakeholder: Company8*
				Technology is essential for today's working world because working space has shifted from onsite to online platform. *External stakeholder: Alumni 2014-BKK/Alumni 2016-PN*

Code	Attributes of Business Administration Graduates	Generic Attribute	Specific Attribute	Importance of Attributes of Business Administration Graduates
T20	Interpersonal relationship	/		Good interpersonal relationship contributes to teamwork in an organization. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2018/HR-PSU PN* *External stakeholder: Alumni 2014-BKK/Alumni 2015-SRT/Entrepreneur1/Company4*
T21	Emotional management	/		Emotional management reduces stress, and it allows people to effectively deal with problematic situations. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer* *External stakeholder: Alumni 2014-PN/Alumni 2015-SRT*
T22	Self-development and learning	/		Graduates who are actively involved in self-development and learning would become qualified members in an organization. *External stakeholder: Entrepreneur1*
T23	Professionalism	/		Professional workers can effectively do all work processes. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer* *External stakeholder: Company9*
T24	Capability of managing business organization		/	Graduates who have capability of managing business organization would be able to produce a high productivity and achieve a competitive advantage. *External stakeholder: Company9*
T25	Creativity	/		Creativity skills are important to creating new products or services. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer*
T26	Work design	/		Design thinking is helpful to improve work performance. *External stakeholder: Company1*
T27	Organizing work	/		People who systematically organize their work would be able to control work outcomes.

Code	Attributes of Business Administration Graduates	Generic Attribute	Specific Attribute	Importance of Attributes of Business Administration Graduates
				External stakeholder: Alumni 2015-SRT/Company6
T28	Merit and ethics	/		Work ethics enable employees to accomplish long-term success. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer External stakeholder: Company10*
T29	Leadership	/		People with leadership skills can motivate others to work towards the goals. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2020 External stakeholder: Company4*
T30	Personality	/		Graduates with good personality traits such as confident and sociable traits are more likely to achieve career success than others. *External stakeholder: Alumni 2015-SRT*
T31	Adaptability	/		Graduates should be able to adapt to changing work environments to overcome any barrier. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer External stakeholder: Alumni 2015-SRT/Alumni 2014-PN/Governmental organization2/State enterprise2/Company9*
				Graduates should be able to adapt to diversity at the workplace (such as cultural diversity). So, they would effectively work with others. *External stakeholder: Alumni 2014-BKK*

Code	Attributes of Business Administration Graduates	Generic Attribute	Specific Attribute	Importance of Attributes of Business Administration Graduates
T32	Alertness to information and opportunity	/		Employees who are actively involved in information seeking can learn a new thing daily, which in turn could lead to long-term organizational development. *External stakeholder: Company5*
				Graduates should be able to see an opportunity in uncertain circumstances. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2020* *External stakeholder: Company8*
T33	Systematic and reasonable thinking	/		Systematic and reasonable thinking allows employees to work effectively. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2019* *External stakeholder: Alumni 2015-SRT*
T34	Prudence	/		Employees with prudence can avoid any mistake at work. *Internal stakeholder: Student 2018* *External stakeholder: Alumni 2015-SRT*
T35	Strategy formulation	/		Graduates should be able to formulate business strategies to attain the goals. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer/Student 2020*
T36	Situation and trend assessment	/		The ability to assess business trends and situations leads to organizational success. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer/Student 2019* *External stakeholder: Entrepreneur1/Company1*

Code	Attributes of Business Administration Graduates	Generic Attribute	Specific Attribute	Importance of Attributes of Business Administration Graduates
T37	Public consciousness	/		A company requires employees with public consciousness who serve the public interest. *Internal stakeholder: Lecturer* *External stakeholder: Governmental organization3/Company5*
T38	Time management	/		Time management enables individuals to complete the tasks on time and allows them to experience work-life balance. *External stakeholder: Alumni 2016-BKK*
T39	Acceptance of rules and regulations	/		A company requires employees who follow the rules and regulations to avoid incorrect and ineffective performance. *External stakeholder: Company6*

Table 4 presents 39 attributes of business administrative administration graduates as mentioned by stakeholders and the importance of each attribute based on their opinions. The attributes of business administration graduates are then discussed in the next section.

Discussion

According to research objective 1, which aims at identifying the attributes of business administration graduates based on the requirements of stakeholders, the graduate attributes are classified into two types: generic and specific attributes. Jones (2010 as cited in Tempone et al., 2012) states that the two terms, "generic skills" and "generic attributes" can be used interchangeably. Therefore, this study maintains the interrelation between "skills" and "attributes" by defining all generic skills as generic attributes and all specific skills as specific attributes (Tempone et al., 2012). Generic attributes include transferable knowledge, skills, and abilities which are applicable to broader contexts (McLean, 2010). Specific attributes refer to specific knowledge, skills and abilities which are related to a specific area (Heymann et al., 2022).

The research findings showed that 39 attributes of business administration graduates were required by stakeholders. Based on the definitions of generic and specific attributes mentioned above, the attributes of business administration graduates can be

divided into two groups consisting of generic and specific attributes. It was found that most attributes mentioned by stakeholders were generic attributes while only three attributes were specific attributes.

Generic attributes of business administration graduates include 36 items: 1) visionary, 2) attitude, 3) self-efficacy, 4) acceptance of failure, 5) change, 6) decision making, 7) determination and tolerant, 8) risk taking, 9) love to work, 10) variety of knowledge, 11) problem solving, 12) language and communication, 13) analytical thinking, 14) calculation and numerical analysis, 15) planning, 16) responsibility, 17) technology, 18) interpersonal relationship, 19) emotional management, 20) self-development and learning, 21) professionalism, 22) creativity, 23) work design, 24) organizing work, 25) merit and ethics, 26) leadership, 27) personality, 28) adaptability, 29) alertness to information and opportunity, 30) systematic and reasonable thinking, 31) prudence, 32) strategy formulation, 33) situation and trend assessment, 34) public consciousness, 35) time management, and 36) acceptance of rules and regulations.

Specific attributes of business administration graduates are composed of 3 items: 1) knowledge of business administration, 2) applying knowledge of business administration, and 3) capability of managing business organization.

However, different stakeholders may value different attributes of graduates. Hence, the universities or the study programs need to identify which attributes are the most important for stakeholders (especially those who affect or who are affected by the study programs) so that they would put an effort into building the respective attributes of graduates (Songsom & Khitmoh, 2021; Songsom et al., 2021).

Based on research objective 2, which aims to determine the importance of the attributes of business administration graduates, stakeholders explained how the attributes of business administration graduates are important (Table 4). Their explanations are useful for integrating the significant attributes of graduates into curriculum design. For instance, stakeholders maintained that "interpersonal relationship" is one of important graduate attributes because "good interpersonal relationship contributes to teamwork in an organization". Therefore, business administration students should acquire interpersonal skills before their graduation. Priyadarshini (2022) states that interpersonal skills are crucial for all tasks and all management levels to achieve career success as well as leadership role. In line with the resource-based view, universities should effectively manage their resources to assist students to develop necessary attributes matched with the demands of stakeholders, while they can also encourage students to actively develop the expected attributes by themselves (i.e. self-management) (Daud et al., 2011).

It can be noticed that stakeholders are more likely to place a value on generic attributes than specific attributes. This is consistent with the past study by Verma, Nankervis, Priyono, Salleh, Connell and Burgess (2018) that views generic attributes of

graduates as "work-readiness" factors because graduates are expected to have skills, knowledge, and attitudes which enable them to be more productive at work. Transferable skills (e.g. general communication, problem-solving skills, teamwork, and learning how to learn) allow graduates to easily move across industries (Verma et al., 2018).

Furthermore, specific attributes of business administration graduates comprising 3 items demonstrate the differences in competency levels. Firstly, "knowledge of business administration" can be seen as knowledge-focused (understanding level). Secondly, "applying knowledge of business administration" emphasizes graduates' ability to apply knowledge to the real-world tasks (applying level). Thirdly, "capability of managing business organization" reflects graduates' capability to design their work or to run a business (creating level). This seems like students are needed to reach the third level (creating level) before graduation because stakeholders confirmed that "graduates who have capability of managing business organization would be able to produce a high productivity and achieve a competitive advantage" (Table 4). To gain a deeper understanding of the graduate attributes required by stakeholders, alliance theory should be applied in higher education institutions because a stronger alliance with industries would lead to more accessibility to the information on the needs of stakeholders (Daud et al., 2011).

Conclusion

Based on an investigation into the requirements of stakeholders, it was found that both generic and specific attributes of business administration graduates are indicated. Most attributes of graduates mentioned by stakeholders are generic attributes. This reflects the importance of transferable skills in the future of work. The study programs which have been heavily focused on producing specific skills of graduates are supposed to increasingly emphasize generic skills or transferable skills. However, this study identified the graduate attributes specifically for the B.B.A. Program. The results of this study may not be generalized to other programs of study or other contexts.

Suggestion

Research Implications

Whereas the research on the attributes of graduates in a particular program of study was limited, the research findings on the attributes of business administration graduates which collected data from stakeholders of the B.B.A. Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus in Southernmost Thailand fulfill the gap of knowledge on this issue. The findings could be useful for curriculum design of the B.B.A. Program or any other similar program of study. The attributes of graduates should be integrated into the B.B.A. Curriculum and learning

activities to produce the attributes of graduates corresponding to the requirements of stakeholders. Additionally, the findings provide the contribution to the readers, for example, job seekers who search for the information on what attributes are required by employers so that they could improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities matched with the demands of employers.

Recommendations to Future Researchers

Since this study adopted a qualitative approach to explore what and how attributes of business administration graduates are important, it did not statistically measure the degree to which each attribute is valued by stakeholders. Future research may pay attention to quantitative examining the levels of requirements of stakeholders towards 39 attributes of business administration graduates.

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