

HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to present the present Thailand HR professional accreditation system and the status of the project for revision of the accreditation system. The paper is divided into five parts: (1) introduction; (2) the concept of professional; (3) HR professional accreditation system in selected countries; (4) HR professional accreditation system in Thailand; (5) discussion; (6) conclusion and recommendation. A comparison of four major components of HR Accreditation system in four countries including Canada, Singapore, The United States and Thailand were made. The certifying body in Singapore and Thailand is similar as the accreditation is performed by an organization extended from the national HR professional association. In Canada the roles of provincial HR associations are highly recognized by linking their activities with the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA) and Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP). In the United States there will be two separated certifying bodies from 2015 onward, HR certification Institutes (HRCI) and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Regarding the credential provided, all three countries have separate levels of credential i.e. Professional, Senior Professional and Global Professional except in Canada where there is no distinction of credentials given. For examination and testing the accrediting organization in these three countries conducts the examination and testing except in Canada where the examination and testing is a national examination. All three countries use functional competencies as the main framework for examination and testing except in the case of SHRM where integrated competencies will be utilized. Only Canada emphasizes Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness while SHRM includes ethics in the competencies model. Canada and Singapore give first priority to ethics in the process while SHRM includes ethics in the competencies model. HRCI and IHPD in Thailand did not explicitly identify ethical issues in the process. Accreditation helps promoting HR practitioners to be more recognized by their peers and stakeholders. In Canada HR practitioners who are accredited receive higher pay and get promotion faster than those who are not. HR practitioners are playing more critical roles in both organizations and national development. Therefore, accreditation should be promoted and expanded. Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness should be included in the examination and testing framework as this function is normally reporting to the HR Department. In order to be able to supervise this function effectively HR professionals must

pass examination and testing in this area. In addition, ethics is an integral part of any profession so it should be an integral part of an HR professional accreditation process in any country.

Keywords: professional, human resource professional, accreditation system, human resource certification

INTRODUCTION

The Human resource (HR) profession nowadays has become the backbone of organizations no matter if it is in the government or private sectors. HR has become a major source of organizations' competitive advantage. In order to win in a stiff competitive business world today an organization must manage its human resources properly. Human resource management (HRM) is not a kind of back office work and doing hiring and firing at best costs a great deal (Christensen, 2006). The roles of the HR Department and HR practitioners have been changed dramatically from that of merely being the gatekeeper or purchasing role (Christensen, 2006) in the past to becoming a strategic partner and leader in organizations (Ulrich, 1997; Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). HRM has now become strategic human resource management (SHRM) which is a "strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued assets-the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives" (Armstrong, 2006, p. 3). It has become an international human resource management (IHRM) as more and more companies are expanding globally to take part in the global market. HR professionals have to deal with an international workforce including the parent country, host country and third country nationals. These changes lead to a lot of changes in HR professional competencies. The HR jobs become more demanding requiring higher quality HR professionals with new skills, knowledge, and traits (Christensen, 2006). To ensure that HR professionals are able to cope with these new requirements an HR professional standards and testing system has been established and implemented in many countries such as Canada, Singapore and the United States. Those who have passed the test are accredited and provided with certification and become certified HR professionals. Thailand by the Institute for Human Resource Professional Development (IHPD), the Personnel Management Association of Thailand (PMAT) has also established its accreditation system and is now undergoing a revision of its HR professional standards and testing system.

The objective of this paper is to present the present Thailand HR professional accreditation system and the status of the project for revision of the accreditation system. The paper is divided into 5 parts: (1) introduction; (2) the concept of a professional; (3) HR professional accreditation system in selected countries; (4) HR professional accreditation system in Thailand; (5) discussion; and (6) conclusion and recommendation.

THE CONCEPT OF A PROFESSIONAL

One of the greatest challenges to human resource practitioners is professionalism. As mentioned by Werther and Davis (1993) some argue that HRM will never become a profession because there is no common body of knowledge in this field. The term “professional” indicates that a professional must be a member of a profession. It also indicates that in order to become a member of such a profession the person must be well prepared with standards of education and training with the particular knowledge and skills necessary to perform the role of that profession (“Professional Definition”: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional>). In addition “most professionals are subject to strict codes of conduct enshrining rigorous ethical and moral obligations. Professional standards of practice and ethics ... are typically agreed upon and maintained through widely recognized professional associations” (“Professional Definition”: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional>) According to Steiner and Steiner (1994) “professional people have strongly internalized ethical codes that guide their action ... It holds that you should do only that which can be explained before a committee of your peers” (p. 225). According to Joungrakul and Allen (2012), ethics is an indispensable component of a professional and Bowie (1991, p. 19) states that “the chief function of a professional is ... to use her specialized knowledge to protect ignorant clients from being exploited from others.” This is one of the major distinctions of a profession from other trades or occupations.

However, certain definitions of "professional" limit this term to “those professions that serve some important aspect of public interest” (Harvey, Mason, Ward, 1995, cited in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional>), and “the general good of society” (Sullivan, 2005; Gardner & Lee, 2005, cited in “Professional Definition”: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional>). At the same time, in some cultures, “the term is used to describe a particular social stratum of well-educated workers who enjoy considerable work autonomy and who are commonly engaged in creative and intellectually challenging work” (Gilbert, 1998; Beeghley, 2004; Eichar, 1989; Ehrenreich, 1989, cited in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional>). At present HRM could be included in this type of definition.

According to Marston (1968, cited in Pace, Smith, & Mills, 1991) to become a profession the following criterion are required: (1) a defined area of competence; (2) an organized and important body of knowledge; (3) identified with a career field; (4) competence individuals enter the profession by controlled access; (5) principles and practices supported by research; (6) involvement of working professionals in academic programs; (7) program of continuing education; (8) graduates who exercise independent judgment. In 2006, Joungrakul (2006) added two more components into Marston’s existing model making it comprising of 10 major criterion of a professional: (9) a code of ethics; (10) an academic journal. This revised model has become the basis for the existing Thailand HR Professional Accreditation System.

THE CONCEPT OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is “a process in which certification of competency, authority, or credibility is presented... The accreditation process ensures that their certification practices are acceptable, typically meaning that they are competent to test and certify third parties, behave ethically

and employ suitable quality assurance.” (Accreditation: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accreditation>). Accreditation of a professional is normally performed in those professions clearly defined by law i.e. engineer, architect, doctor, nurse, etc. Although HRM at present cannot be counted as a full profession and “certification does not make HRM a profession” (Werther & Davis, 1993, p. 55) many countries have an accreditation system to certify HR practitioners as HR professionals.

The HR Accreditation benefits various groups of stakeholders including employers, individual HR practitioners and society. For employers, it provides a source of high quality of applications for recruitment of HR staff i.e. HR specialists, Managers, Directors or Vice Presidents, etc. It helps ensuring that the HR staff recruited are well qualified and are able to perform their roles as expected by the company and the demands of business. For individual HR practitioners, it helps raising their standards and professionalism. It also helps them to gain respects in an organization, industry and society (SHRI: <http://www.shri.org.sg/>). In Canada, it was found that those HR practitioners who were accredited got more promotion and received better pay than those who were not accredited, for example a survey by Payscale in 2012 found that 45 per cent of HR generalists with Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) become HR managers in five years compared to only 21 per cent of HR generalists without the CHRP (CHRP: <http://www.chrp.ca/>). For society, it helps attracting foreign investment for example in the case of Singapore. It helps brand Singapore as a Human Capital hub where Singapore can further develop its human capital industry. In addition, it facilitates HR to play an important role in driving national initiatives. It assists HR to play a critical role in human capital development (SHRI: <http://www.shri.org.sg/>).

HR PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

To understand the process of accreditation of HR profession a brief review of accreditation system in selected countries will be presented in this section. It will include the certification system in Canada, Singapore and the United States.

CANADA

The HR accreditation in Canada is performed by Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA) by The Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP). CHRP did not designate a different level of certification but requires all applicants to pass a National Knowledge Exam (NKE) to be eligible for accreditation. The content of the NKE comprises seven parts: (1) Professional Practice; (2) Organizational Effectiveness; (3) Staffing; (4) Employee and Labor Relations; (5) Total Compensation; (6) Organizational Learning, Training and Development; (7) Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness. Those who fail the examination for 3 consecutive sessions are not allowed to take the next examination for one year before taking the fourth examination and in the case of the fifth examination application it must be approved by the specific Provincial HR Association (CCHRA : <http://www.chrp.ca/>; PMAT, 2014).

The content of each part can be summarized as follows: (1) Professional Practice in Human Resources includes: Human Resources Information Systems-HRIS; organization design; diversity management; systemic discrimination; fixed costs; (2) Organizational Effectiveness

includes: employee motivation and satisfaction; organizational productivity; human resources planning and corporate strategic planning; Trend analysis; Job analysis; forecasting labor demand; employee performance; Performance appraisal methods; Quality circles; (3) Staffing includes: the recruitment and selection process; a practice that promotes positive; non-discriminatory recruitment perceptions; Employment interviews which includes non-directed or unstructured interviews; Structured interviews; Panel interviews; Behavioral interviews; (4) Employee and Labor Relations; effective disciplinary systems; union organizing; Business unionism; collective bargaining; The collective agreement provisions; The pattern bargaining area, The bargaining zone and The deadlock bargaining area; strike activity; (5) Total Compensation; a method used to analyze whether a lead, lag, or match compensation-level strategy; method of job evaluation; pay equity law; compensation policy of the organization; Labor market conditions; Employer's ability to pay; job classification systems; incentive compensation programs; Employee Stock Ownership Plan-ESOP; flexible benefit programs; pension plans; Defined benefits plans; Contributory plans; Non Contributory plans; Defined contribution plans; effective compensation systems; reward strategies; Work motivation; (6) Organizational Learning, Training and Development; The criteria for evaluating the effectiveness and results of corporate training programs; evaluation methods organizations; Managers plans and employees' career planning and goals; organizational training investments; social learning theory; Self-directed learning; Job instruction training; Role plays; Behavior modeling; The training culture; The culture for transfers; (7) Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness; workplace hazardous materials; Accidents resulting in property damage; Accidents resulting in lost-time injuries; effective evacuation plans (CCHRA : <http://www.chrp.ca/>; PMAT, 2014).

The process of accreditation comprises seven steps as follows: (1) Eligibility: HR practitioners with minimum education of a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with a minimum three years of experience in HR fields (retroactive to 10 years) who are member of a Provincial HR association are eligible to apply for accreditation; (2) National Knowledge Exam-NKE: Those who pass the eligibility check in step one are eligible for applying for NKE. Registration which must be made at least 60 days before the examination date; (3) Preparation for NKE: The applicants will prepare themselves for NKE by studying the Required Professional Capabilities (RPCs®) and do a Sample NKE Quiz; (4) CCHRA National Code of Ethics: Ethical check according to CCHRA National Code of Ethics will be accomplished; (5) Review of NKE and CCHRA National Code of Ethics check. A review of the results of NKE and CCHRA National Code of Ethics check is conducted; (6) Professional Activities: Those who pass all the assessments in step five and those who have been holding the certificate of accreditation for three years must participate in professional programs organized by the specific Provincial HR Associations with a full score of 100 marks; (7) Renewal of Accreditation Certificate: Those who are holding accreditation certificates must renew their certificate every three years. They are required to participate in professional programs organized by the specific Provincial HR Associations and pass the NKE and CCHRA National Code of Ethics check every three years (CCHRA : <http://www.chrp.ca/>; PMAT, 2014).

SINGAPORE

In Singapore the HR professional standards and professional qualification is developed by the Singapore Human Resource Institute (SHRI) while HR accreditation is performed by SHRI Academy Pte.Ltd., according to the Singapore HR Accreditation Framework. There are three levels of accreditation status; (1) Human Resource Associate (HRA) with the following required competence: Performs an executive role in an organization's HR functions; possesses the competencies and knowledge to perform either simple activities in a number of HR processes, or specialized activities in selected HR processes and activities; possesses understanding of most key related functions. An HRA candidate should hold the title of HR Assistant / HR Executive / HR Officer and have less than two years of working experience. The candidate may also be a fresh graduate with sufficient HR knowledge and the awarding institute is recognized by SHRI (2) Human Resource Professional (HRP) with the following required competence: Performs an executive, managerial or specialist role in an organization's HR functions; Possesses the competencies and knowledge to perform either complex activities in a number of HR processes, or in specialized and complex activities in selected HR processes; possesses substantial understanding of most key related functions. An HRP candidate should hold the title of HR Executive or HR Manager and have less than 10 years of working experience. (3) Senior Human Resource Professional (SHRP) with the following required competence: Performs a strategic role in an organization's HR function; possesses the competencies and knowledge to perform either: strategic activities in a number of HR processes, or specialized and strategic activities in selected HR processes; possesses strategic understanding of most key related functions (SHRI: <http://www.shri.org.sg/>; PMAT, 2014).

The process of HR accreditation in Singapore comprises five major steps as follows: (1) A candidate submits an application to the HR Accreditation Ethics and Appeal Panel for assessment; (2) Applications of those who passed the ethical assessment will be submitted to the Assessment Panel; (3) The Assessment Panel will consider the applications and conduct interviews with candidates and assess the candidate according to the Singapore HR Accreditation Framework and submit the applications of those who pass the assessment to the HR Accreditation Board ; (4) The HR Accreditation Board accredits those candidates who pass the assessment; (5) Those who are accredited must renew their accreditation every three years with the HR Accreditation Secretariat (SHRI: <http://www.shri.org.sg/>; PMAT, 2014).

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The HR accreditation In the USA has been performed by the HR certification Institutes (HRCI). The HRCI “was established in 1976 as an internationally recognized certifying organization for the HR profession. The Institute has certified more than 130,000 HR professionals in 100 countries. HR certification represents a high level of professional achievement valued by employers and organizations across the globe” (HRCI, 2014). However, from 2015, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) will commence its own HR Accreditation Program with the two credentials of SHRM Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) and SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP). Although “SHRM created HRCI over 40 years ago, SHRM and HRCI have always been, and still remain,

separate and distinct organizations. The HRCI certifications (e.g., PHR, SPHR, GPHR, HRBP and HRMP) are owned and controlled by HRCI, not by SHRM. The new SHRM Certifications are separate from these HRCI certifications” (SHRM: <http://www.shrm.org/pages/default.aspx>).

HRCI provides five credentials for accreditation: (1) Professional in Human Resources (PHR) is credential for technical or operational level of HR practitioners; (2) Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) is a credential for senior HR practitioners who deal with Strategic/HR Policy Issues of organizations; (3) Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR) is a credential for HR practitioners who perform Global/International HR functions and are responsible for HR functions in several countries; (4) Human Resource Business Professional (HRBP) is a credential for those HR practitioner at the PHR level who perform HR functions outside the United States; (5) Human Resource Management Professional (HRMP) is a credential for those HR practitioner at the SPHR level who perform HR functions outside the United States. The HRCI accreditation program is based on Experience-based Knowledge (HRCI, 2014; PMAT, 2014). The distribution of testing contents is displayed in Table 1.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF TESTING CONTENT OF EACH HRCI HR PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS

	PHR	SPHR	GPHR
Business Management and Strategy	30%	11%	-
Workforce Planning and Employment	17%	24%	-
Human Resource Development	19%	18%	-
Compensation and Benefits	13%	19%	-
Employee and Labor Relations	14%	20%	-
Risk Management	7%	8%	-
Strategic HR Management	-	-	25%
Global Talent Acquisition and Mobility	-	-	21%
Global Compensation and Benefits	-	-	17%
Talent and Organizational Development	-	-	22%
Workforce Relations and Risk Management	-	-	15%
Total	100	100	100

Source: Adapted from PMAT, 2014.

Table 1 shows the distribution of testing content of each HRCI HR Professional Credentials. The same testing framework with different areas of focusing is used for PHR and SPHR levels. For PHR, it focuses on Business Management and Strategy (30%), Human Resource Development (19%), and Workforce Planning and Employment (17%) respectively. At the same time for SPHR, the test focuses on Workforce Planning and Employment (24%), Employee and Labor Relations (20%), Compensation and Benefits (19%), and Human Resource Development (18%) respectively. However, for GPHR level a different testing framework is used. The test focuses on Strategic HR Management (25%), Talent and

Organizational Development (22%), and Global Talent Acquisition and Mobility (21%) respectively.

The process of HRCI accreditation comprises six steps as follows: (1) Applicant submits application to HRCI; (2) Applicant prepares for examination; (3) Applicant takes examination; PHR examination stresses technical aspects and operations, SPHR examination stresses policy and strategy while GPHR stresses on International HR; (4) Those who pass the examination will be given credential certification by HRCI; (5) The certified HR professionals must renew their accreditation status every three years by taking an examination and participating in HR professional activities as specified by HRCI; (6) Those who pass the conditions in step 5 will be given a renewal of certification for another three years (PMAT, 2014).

The SHRM accreditation program is based on a HR Competency Model developed by SHRM which comprises nine core competencies as follows: Competency 1: Human Resource Expertise: The ability to apply the principles and practices of human resource management to contribute to the success of the business. Sub-competencies (competencies related to and/or subsumed by the relevant general competency) comprise: Strategic Business Management; Workforce Planning and Employment; Human Resource Development; Compensation and Benefits; Risk Management; Employee and Labor Relations; HR Technology; Global and International Human Resource Capabilities; Talent Management; Change Management. Competency 2: Relationship Management: The ability to manage interactions to provide service and to support the organization. Sub-competencies comprise: Business Networking Expertise; Visibility; Customer Service (internal and external); People Management; Advocacy; Negotiation and Conflict Management; Credibility; Community Relations; Transparency; Proactivity; Responsiveness; Mentorship; Influence; Employee Engagement; Teamwork; Mutual Respect. Competency 3: Consultation: The ability to provide guidance to organizational stakeholders. The sub-competencies comprise: Coaching; Project Management (Vision, Design, Implementation, and Evaluation); Analytic Reasoning; Problem-solving; Inquisitiveness; Creativity and Innovation; Flexibility; Respected Business Partner; Career Pathing/Talent Management/People Management; Time Management. Competency 4: Leadership and Navigation: The ability to direct and contribute to initiatives and processes within the organization. Sub-competencies comprise: Transformational and Functional Leadership; Results and Goal-Oriented; Resource Management; Succession Planning; Project Management; Mission Driven; Change Management; Political Savvy; Influence; Consensus Builder. Competency 5: Communication: Verbal Communication Skills; Written Communication Skills; Presentation Skills; Persuasion; Diplomacy; Perceptual Objectivity; Active Listening; Effective Timely Feedback; Facilitation Skills; Meeting Effectiveness; Social Technology and Social Media Savvy; Public Relations. Competency 6: Global and Cultural Effectiveness: The ability to value and consider the perspectives and backgrounds of all parties. Sub-competencies comprise: Global Perspective; Diversity Perspective; Openness to Various Perspectives; Empathy; Openness to Experience; Tolerance for Ambiguity; Adaptability; Cultural Awareness and Respect. Competency 7: Ethical Practice: The ability to support and uphold the values of the organization while mitigating risk. Sub-competencies comprise: Rapport Building; Trust Building; Personal, Professional, and Behavioral Integrity; Professionalism; Credibility; Personal and Professional Courage. Competency 8: Critical

Evaluation: The ability to interpret information to make business decisions and recommendations. Sub-competencies comprise: Measurement and Assessment Skills; Objectivity; Critical Thinking; Problem Solving; Curiosity and Inquisitiveness; Research Methodology; Decision-making; Auditing Skills; Knowledge Management Competency 9: Business Acumen: The ability to understand and apply information to contribute to the organization's strategic plan. Sub-competencies comprise: Strategic Agility; Business Knowledge; Systems Thinking; Economic Awareness; Effective Administration; Knowledge of Finance and Accounting; Knowledge of Sales and Marketing; Knowledge of Technology; Knowledge of Labor Markets; Knowledge of Business Operations/Logistics; Knowledge of Government and Regulatory Guidelines; HR and Organizational Metrics/Analytics/Business Indicators (SHRM: <http://www.shrm.org/pages/default.aspx>).

The certification program will begin in 2015. It is based on detailed competencies and one of the core competencies is ethical practice.

HR PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEM IN THAILAND

Thailand began its HR Professional Accreditation Program in 2011 by the Institute for HR Professional Development (IHPD), an independent organization under the patronage of the Personnel Management Association of Thailand (PMAT). The IHPD proposed three levels of credential: Professional Human Resource (PHR); Senior Professional Human Resource (SPHR); Global Professional Human Resource (GPHR). However, at present the IHPD is able to certify only one level which is Professional Human Resource (PHR). Accreditation of the Senior Professional Human Resource (SPHR) will be accomplished later. For the Global Professional Human Resource (GPHR) level, IHPD plans to cooperate with HRCI to accredit this level of professional. SHRM was contacted and discussion was made for future cooperation of accrediting other levels of professional as well.

IHPD HR professional competencies comprise generic/managerial competencies and functional/technical competencies as specify in Table 2.

TABLE 2: THAILAND HR COMPETENCY MODELLING AND PROFILE

1. Generic / Managerial Competency	
1.1 Business Effectiveness	1. Business Acumen 2. Strategic Acumen 3. Environment Scanning and Trend Analysis
1.2 Organization Effectiveness	1. Change Management 2. Collaboration 3. Counseling
1.3 Personal Effectiveness	1. Leadership 2. Communication & Presentation 3. Cognitive Flexibility
2. Functional / Technical Competency	
2.1 HR Competency for HRM)	1. HR Planning 2. Recruitment and Selection

	3. Compensation Management 4. Employee Relation
2.2 HR Competency for HRD	1. Training, Development & learning 2. Career Development 3. Organization Development 4. Performance Management

Source: Adapted from PMAT, 2014.

Table 2 shows Thailand HR competency and modeling profile. The model is divided into two parts: generic/managerial competency; and functional/technical competency.

The process of accreditation by IHPD comprises seven steps as follows: (1) Applicant submits an application to IHPD; (2) Qualification checks conducted by IHPD; (3) Eligible applicants take written examination; (4) Those who pass the written examination will be interviewed by Interviewing Panel; (5) Those who passes the interview will be accredited; (6) Certificate of accreditation is valid for three years and recertification is required upon the expiration of the current certification (Joungtrakul, 2014).

To promote HR professionalism in Thailand the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute (TPQI) an independent governmental organization under the Prime Minister's Office has extended its support both in terms of technical and financial support to PMAT. An MOU was signed and followed by a one year contract which began from 1 August 2014 to be ended on 31 July 2015. The project is to develop competencies and determine the levels of credentials for Thai HR professionalism. It is expected that the credentials could be divided into 4 levels: beginning; operational; professional; and senior levels. The present professional level will be revised to be in line with the other three new developed credentials. The accreditation of GPHR and other similar credentials will be done with HRCI or SHRM as the case may be (Joungtrakul, 2014).

DISCUSSION

Based on a briefly review of the HR professional accreditation system in four countries including Canada, Singapore, The United States and Thailand four major components of the accreditation system in each country can be identified and compared as display in Table 3.

TABLE 3: FOUR MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE ACCREDITATION SYSTEMS IN FOUR COUNTRIES

Country	Accrediting Body	Credentials	Examination and Testing	Accreditation Process Highlight
Canada	CCHRA by CHRP	Not separate into different	Passed National Examination.	-National Code of Ethics check and

		level	Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness are highlight	participate in provincial HR association activities -Valid for three years
Singapore	SHRI by SHRI Academy	HRA, HRP, Senior HRP	HR Accreditation Framework,	Ethical check, interview by assessment panel and approved by HR Accreditation Board -Valid for three years
The United States	SHRM by HRCI and both from 2015 onward	HRCI: PHR, SPHR, GPHR SHRM: SHRM-CP, SHRM-SCP	HRCI: Functional Competency Model SHRM: Integrated Competency Model with emphasis of Ethics	-HRCI: Examination -Valid for three years -SHRM; Examination with the emphasis of ethical competencies
Thailand	PMAT by IHPD	Present: PHR, SPHR, GPHR Future: Four Levels plus GPHR	Functional competencies and interview	Final approval by IHPD Board -Valid for three years

Table 3 illustrates a comparison of the four major components of HR Accreditation in four different countries including Canada, Singapore, United States and Thailand. The certifying body in Singapore and Thailand are similar as the accreditation is performed by an organization extended from the national HR professional association. In Canada the role of provincial HR associations are highlighted by linking their activities with the CCHRA and CHRP. In the United States there will be two separate certifying bodies from 2015 onward, HRCI and SHRM. Regarding the credentials provided by the certifying body of each country all three countries have separate levels of credential i.e. Professional, Senior Professional and Global Professional except in Canada where there is no distinction of credentials given. For examination and testing the accrediting organization conducts the examination and testing except for the case of Canada where the examination and testing is a national examination. All three countries use functional competencies as the main framework for examination and testing except in the case of SHRM in the United States where integrated competencies will be utilized. Only Canada emphasizes Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness in the examination and testing while SHRM in the United States includes ethics in the competencies model. Canada and Singapore give first priority to ethics in the process of accreditation while SHRM includes ethics in the competencies model. HRCI in the United States and IHPD in

Thailand does not explicitly identified ethics in the process of accreditation. Accreditation is valid for three years in all countries studied.

Accreditation is normally conducted for those professions that are controlled under the national laws for the best interests of the countries i.e. engineer, architect, doctor, nurse, etc. However, the definition of professional is extended to those professions that require high education and skills. Based on the professional definition by Marston (1968, cited in Pace, et al., 1991) HR cannot be considered as a profession as it does not meet all the eight criterion requirement of the professional. The major criteria that would be very difficult for HR to fulfill is that the “graduates who exercise independent judgment”. As HR practitioners have very limited absolute authority in making people decision due to the fact that people decisions are made by line managers and top management. Werther and Davis (1993) argue that certification does not make HR a profession. They further argue that some argue that the field will never become a profession because there is no common body of knowledge and it is not a clearly separate discipline like law, medicine or economics” (p. 55) as it “draws on a variety of disciplines” (p. 55). Whether HR will become a profession or not it appears that HR is playing a pivotal role in any organization no matter if it is private or public, profit on non-profit organizations. The role of HR today is not limited in an organizational level but it is extending to industry, national and international levels (Armstrong, 2006; Christensen, 2006; Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2011). As human resources becomes a major competitive edge of any country in the global market and economy HR practitioners are increasingly playing important roles in organizations and in national development. Although accreditation will not make HR a profession it helps HR practitioners to be able to play more critical roles in organizations, and in national and international contexts (SHRI: <http://www.shri.org.sg/>; (PMAT, 2014).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

HR professional accreditation may not make HR to become a profession. However, it does no harm to the community, society or country. In contrast, it helps promoting HR practitioners to be more recognized by their peers and stakeholders. In Canada HR practitioners who are accredited receive higher pay and get promotion faster than those who are not. HR practitioners are playing more critical roles in both organizations and national development as mentioned earlier. Therefore, HR professional accreditation should be promoted and expanded. Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness should be included in the examination and testing framework of a HR professional accreditation system. Although, in Thailand there is a system of certifying Safety Officer under Safety and Health laws this function normally reports to the HR Department. In order to be able to supervise this function effectively HR professionals must pass the examination and testing in this area as well. In addition, ethics is considered as an integral part of any professional including HR. Thus ethics should be an integral part of any professional accreditation process including HR professional accreditation process in Thailand.

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