

**GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY: ENHANCING SOFT SKILLS
THROUGH STUDENT-LED VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES
IN A UNIVERSITY**



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entitled

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GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY: ENHANCING SOFT SKILLS THROUGH STUDENT-LED VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES IN A UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions worldwide have recognized countless benefit of volunteering towards graduate's skill development. Besides, improving student's morality and civil responsibility, volunteering had help to develop essential soft skills and prepare them for future career.

In Thailand, many higher education institutes develop policy and practice to increase number of students in the community services activities and student-led volunteering activities. The policy received both positive and negative criticism as many educators believe in order to develop skills for students the volunteering projects should be in a form of voluntarily basic rather than to meet university's requirement. Furthermore, not all students perceive their working experience in student-led volunteering organization as an approach to develop employability skills. It is so unfortunately that such a meaningful experience that students invest their time and energy for, can benefit to certain group of student. In order to provide evident-based support for the benefit of student-led volunteering activities towards the extent of graduates' employability, this research aims to examine what are the soft skills that students and graduates can gain through their participation in volunteering activities and to identify appropriate learning approach to develop their soft skills effectively in future.

The research applied qualitative methodology to gain in-depth information and found that student able to develop key skills even they have limited experience to design effective learning process through volunteering activities. The paper offer in-depth information on the factors that influence effective learning process as well as recommend approaches that the university, policy makers and student-led volunteering organizations can work collaboratively to improve the experiential learning process to enhance graduates' soft skills and prepare them to be ready for future employment.

KEY WORDS: Graduates' Employability / Soft Skills /Student-led Volunteering /
Experiential Learning

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ทักษะการทำงานในศตวรรษที่ 21 สำหรับบัณฑิต: การพัฒนาทักษะการทำงานร่วมกับผู้อื่นผ่าน
กระบวนการอาสาสมัครที่มีนักศึกษาเป็นผู้นำกระบวนการในมหาวิทยาลัย

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VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITIES IN A UNIVERSITY

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บทคัดย่อ

สถาบันการศึกษาทั่วโลกต่างตระหนักถึงความสำคัญของงานอาสาสมัครที่มีต่อการพัฒนาทักษะจำเป็น
ของบัณฑิตในศตวรรษที่ 21 นอกจากงานอาสาสมัครจะมีส่วนช่วยส่งเสริมจริยธรรมและความรับผิดชอบต่อสังคม
ของบัณฑิตแล้ว ยังมีส่วนช่วยพัฒนาทักษะอันจำเป็นในการทำงานและเตรียมความพร้อมนักศึกษาก้าวเข้าสู่โลก
การทำงานได้ดีมากขึ้นอีกด้วย

ในประเทศไทย สถาบันการศึกษาหลายแห่งได้พยายามพัฒนานโยบายและกระบวนการทำงานที่จะ
ช่วยสนับสนุนนักศึกษาให้เรียนรู้ผ่านกิจกรรมเพื่อสังคม นโยบายเหล่านี้ได้รับทั้งเสียงชื่นชมและข้อโต้แย้ง ว่างาน
อาสาสมัครเพื่อสังคม ควรให้นักศึกษามีความสนใจทำกิจกรรมนั้นเอง มากกว่าจะถูกกำหนดโดยสถาบันการศึกษา

นักศึกษาโดยทั่วไปยังไม่เห็นความสำคัญของการเรียนรู้ผ่านกระบวนการทำงานอาสาสมัครรวมถึง
ไม่ได้คาดหวังว่างานอาสาสมัครนั้นจะช่วยพัฒนาทักษะอันจำเป็นสำหรับการทำงานในอนาคตได้อย่างไร นับเป็น
เรื่องที่น่าเสียดายเป็นอย่างยิ่งที่กิจกรรมที่มีคุณค่าเช่นนี้ ไม่ได้รับการยอมรับว่าสามารถเป็นแหล่งเรียนรู้และบ่มเพาะ
ประสบการณ์ที่จะมีประโยชน์ต่ออนาคตการทำงานของนักศึกษา

งานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพฉบับนี้มุ่งหวังที่จะศึกษาประสบการณ์ของบัณฑิตที่เคยเป็นสมาชิกของกิจกรรม
ชมรมบำเพ็ญประโยชน์ เพื่อทำความเข้าใจว่ากิจกรรมอาสาสมัครมีส่วนช่วยพัฒนาและเตรียมความพร้อมบัณฑิต
เหล่านี้ให้เข้าสู่โลกของการทำงานอย่างไรรวมถึงศึกษาถึงกระบวนการที่บัณฑิตใช้ในการพัฒนาทักษะในศตวรรษที่
21 ผ่านการทำงานอาสาสมัคร จากการศึกษาพบว่านักศึกษายังคงขาดความรู้และความเข้าใจและประสบการณ์ใน
การออกแบบกระบวนการเรียนรู้ที่มีประสิทธิภาพที่จะใช้ควบคู่ไปกับการทำงานอาสาสมัครอย่างเป็นรูปธรรมได้
บทสรุปของการวิจัยได้นำเสนอปัจจัยที่มีส่วนทำให้กระบวนการเรียนรู้มีประสิทธิภาพมากขึ้น รวมถึงได้เสนอแนะ
แนวทางที่มหาวิทยาลัย องค์กรนักศึกษา หรือชมรมนักศึกษาต่างๆ จะสามารถทำงานร่วมกันอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ
เพื่อที่จะรังสรรค์กระบวนการเรียนรู้ผ่านงานอาสาสมัครที่มีนักศึกษาเป็นผู้นำ ที่จะช่วยพัฒนาทักษะของบัณฑิต
และเตรียมความพร้อมรับมือกับความท้าทายของโลกการทำงานในศตวรรษที่ 21 อย่างแท้จริง

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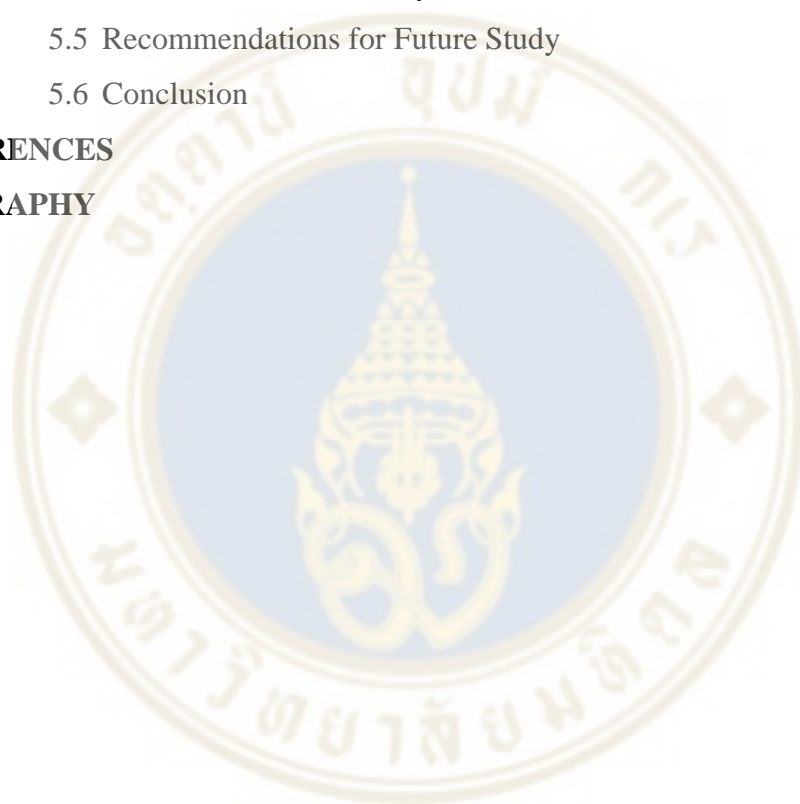
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will introduce you (1) Background Information on global economy and its impact to employment trend across the sector globally. We will discover how the phenomena influence the policy and practices in higher education to develop qualified graduates for labour market. (2) Problem Statement, this section present you with the current trend of applying community engagement activities as the tools to develop graduate's employability and the effectiveness in enhancing quality of graduates. (3) Objectives of Research Study and (4) Conceptual Framework.

1.1 Background

The global economy in 21st century is driven by knowledge, technology and innovation. These factors influenced a major shift in global employment trend. The rapid changing in global economy contributes significantly to the rise of employers' expectation towards the quality of new hired graduates. The competition among graduates to gain employment became so intense to the extended that many skilled graduates who have higher employability skills reap the benefit of an open economy to gain employment in their chosen occupations and the one who do not have necessary skills to meet demand of labour market are left to be unemployed.

In nature, the global labour market has surplus and shortage of skilled labour; the situation when the market has more number of graduates than the number of job positions and vice versa respectively. Thailand, like other new emerging market around the world, is constantly facing with substantial skill shortage in major industries. This is contradictory to the fact that there are plentiful of graduates enter to job market at the end of academic year. This phenomenon leave critical questions within higher education sectors that how higher education institutes can improve education system to enhance graduates' employability skills that meet employer's expectation as well as prepare these graduates to success in their life.

Over decades, the policy makers and higher education institutes around the world have acknowledged the complexity and rapid change of future employment trend. Many higher education institutes in developed countries, such as the United States, Singapore and United Kingdom, have been working collaboratively to reshape education policy and practice to equip graduates with employability skills to successfully secure their chosen career in the rapid changing labour markets.

In Thailand, the higher education system has been progressed over these few decades. Two long term national education plan were launched to improve higher education system. In 1987, the former of Ministry of University Affair initiated the First 15 Years Long Range Plan of Higher Education of Thailand which was implemented during 1991-2004. Then, four years after the first plan completed its term in 2004, the Second 15 Years Long Rang Plan was introduced in 2008. This plan currently serves as guiding principles for Thailand higher education administration and will finish the term in 2022. The significant change of this plan is the higher education direction is no longer emphasis on increasing number of graduates but to develop quality assurance system in order to enhance quality of graduates to response the need of future labour market.

The second 15 Year Long Rang Plan on Higher Education highlights critical need of country to enhance graduates' ability to handle with rapid changing trend in future employment in which will be determined by four important factors namely the changing economic structure, globalization, technology development and information. Today, graduates require new capability, diverse skills and different knowledge from former generations. These new skills like communication, team working and problem solving are now required by employers of all sectors.

We can observe that necessary skills in employment is no longer primarily focus on hard skills or technical competency but rather focus more on graduates' soft skills. With large number of graduates enter to job market each year, hard skills has become basic requirement of candidates but the soft skills will determine who is most suitable for the position. An increasing intense in securing the job in competitive workforces made soft skills able to complement hard skills in which enable graduates to successfully gain the entry employment.

Many researches confirm the correlations between graduates' soft skills and their capacity to gain employment. A study of Everson in 1999 reveals that soft skills can well support graduate to being hired in the job. On the other hand, Kluas (2010) stated that the lack of soft skill can eliminate the opportunity for career advancement of someone who has technical ability and professional expertise but no interpersonal or soft skills (as cited in Robles, 2012, p. 459). Realistically, hard skills still serve as baseline which normally expected by employers, but the soft skills will make graduates outstanding from others who share similar technical skills.

The soft skills will not only assist graduates to gain first employment but also act as fuel that drive long term career success. James and James (2004) said that several decades ago, technical skills were the only skills necessary for career employment. Today's workplace is showing that technical skills are not enough to keep individuals employed when organizations are downsizing and cutting positions (as cited in Robles, 2012, p. 459)

Practicality, higher education institutes realized that it is difficult for graduates to be able to develop these skills from non-interactive classroom-based education. Accordingly to the Executive Report on the 15 Years Long Rang Education Plan, policy makers suggests that university should provide interactive learning platforms within and outside of university to support students in acquiring new capacity and skills.

Throughout these years, higher education institutes have improved its education policy as well as the education curriculum and extra-curricular to enable effective learning to go in both direction of theory and application. With the new quality assurance policy, student activity is an important indicator that all university must thrive to perform better.

Students are required to participate in any form of student development activities facilitated by student affairs division and student-led organizations. Student affairs division hold key responsibility to grant financial support to student-led organizations and craft new policy and practices to ensure that these student-led activities will be able to enhance necessary employability skills for students. Some of the student-led activities are, but not limited to, academic support, sport and physical well-being, community services or student-led volunteering, environmental conservation, recreation, art and cultural preservation etc.

1.2 Problem Statement and Rational of Study

For many decades, student-led volunteering organizations play important role as learning platform to develop soft skills for students. In this experiential learning ground, students have opportunity to collaboratively work with one another, deal with conflicts, find solutions to work-related problems and learn to set goals and overcome several uncontrollable circumstances to achieve it in set timeframe. Through engaging with student-led volunteering projects, active member had encountered with problems that challenge them to use analytical skill in order to weight possible options before making decision as a team to move forward the volunteering projects.

With the nature of learning through experiential approach, active member students of student-led organizations should be able to enhance their soft skills in which reorganized as foundation for graduates' employability. Many researches address that community engagement or volunteering is effective learning activity to develop students' knowledge and skills. A research which is conducted in a university in Kenya found that students who engaged with volunteering activities can develop employability skills such as team work and collaboration, communication, problem solving and learning skills (Tumuti et al, 2013).

Many higher education institutions worldwide have recognized countless benefit of volunteering towards graduate's skill development. Besides, improving student's morality and civil responsibility, volunteering had help to develop essential soft skills and prepare them for future career.

In Thailand, universities launch initiatives to engage community work as part of learning activities for core subjects. For example, students in the field of physiotherapy must participate in volunteering work in a hospital for one semester. Many universities develop policy to engage various form of community services as extra- curricular activities in which students are required to meet number hours of volunteering work. In such case, students are provided with opportunity to choose their own volunteering projects that fit with their interests. These activities are normally led by student organizations or the student affair division.

The requirement of university to engage student with community services activities received both positive and negative criticism. Many scholars believe that student should engage with volunteering projects in voluntarily rather than meeting

university's requirement. However, some education policy makers said that the required hours was appropriately set with the purpose to introduce students to beautiful aspects of volunteering work, once they have completed these hours, it is their choice to continue or disengage with the activities. The numbers of students who join the student-led volunteering projects dramatically increase for short period of time, before soon after that some students decide to disappear from this active learning arena and return to their usual lifestyle to fully concentrate in their classroom learning. Often time, the volunteering is not perceived among students as learning opportunity to develop employability skills for future career. Many students think that volunteering is a mandatory activity to complete so they are eligible to attend graduation ceremony. Some students sign their membership with an organization because they would like to meet new friends not because they would like to develop any skills. Unfortunately that the same learning space can provide benefit to some group of student but for many other students, without effective interventions, they could miss the opportunity to use this learning space to develop their professional skills.

Given the reasons above, the researcher is interested in exploring deeply in this context. The researcher, by profession, is very passionate to understand how volunteering, that aims to create better society, can also serve as active learning tools to develop graduates' employability skills. Through several months in reviewing the literature, the researcher never found any researches that addressed the topic of employability skills, soft skills and benefit of student-led volunteering in university together in single study. None of previous researches both in Thailand and oversea address these elements and deeply explores how university can add value, towards the extent of skills development, to countless hours that students must engage in the student-led volunteering activities in each year.

The researcher believe that student-led volunteering play such an important role as experiential learning platform for Thai graduates for such a long time. Undoubtedly, student-led volunteering activities can enhance student's moral and sense of social responsibility but it is so unfortunately, no one really understands its benefit towards the employability skills. We all know one learning space does not fit all students thus it would be better to ensure we put necessary measures to carefully study the topic in

order to transform the learning experience and prepare graduates' skills to meet the need of labour market.

Therefore, this study aims to understand the benefit of student-led volunteering activities in developing soft skills in which serve as fundamental skills to help graduates secure employment. To better transcend the student-led volunteering activities to become effective learning mechanism, we need to examine how current learning process can equip employability skills to graduates and student. The researcher carefully designed this research to find out the area of improvement both in policy and practice of the student-led volunteering organization and the university. The findings anticipate to assist student organizations improve certain work practice so that the volunteering activities able to enhance graduates' employability and readiness to enter to competitive workforces.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

To assess learning process for graduates' soft skills development through student-led volunteering activities

1. Research question 1 (RQ1): What are the soft skills that students and graduates can develop through their engagement with student-led volunteering activities in university?
2. Research question 2 (RQ2): How student-led volunteering activities in university can enhance soft skills for students and graduates?
3. Research question 3 (RQ3): What are the factors that influence soft skills development through student-led volunteering activities in university?
4. Research question 4 (RQ4): How student organization can further develop learning process to enhance soft skills through student-led volunteering activities in university?

1.4 Conceptual Framework

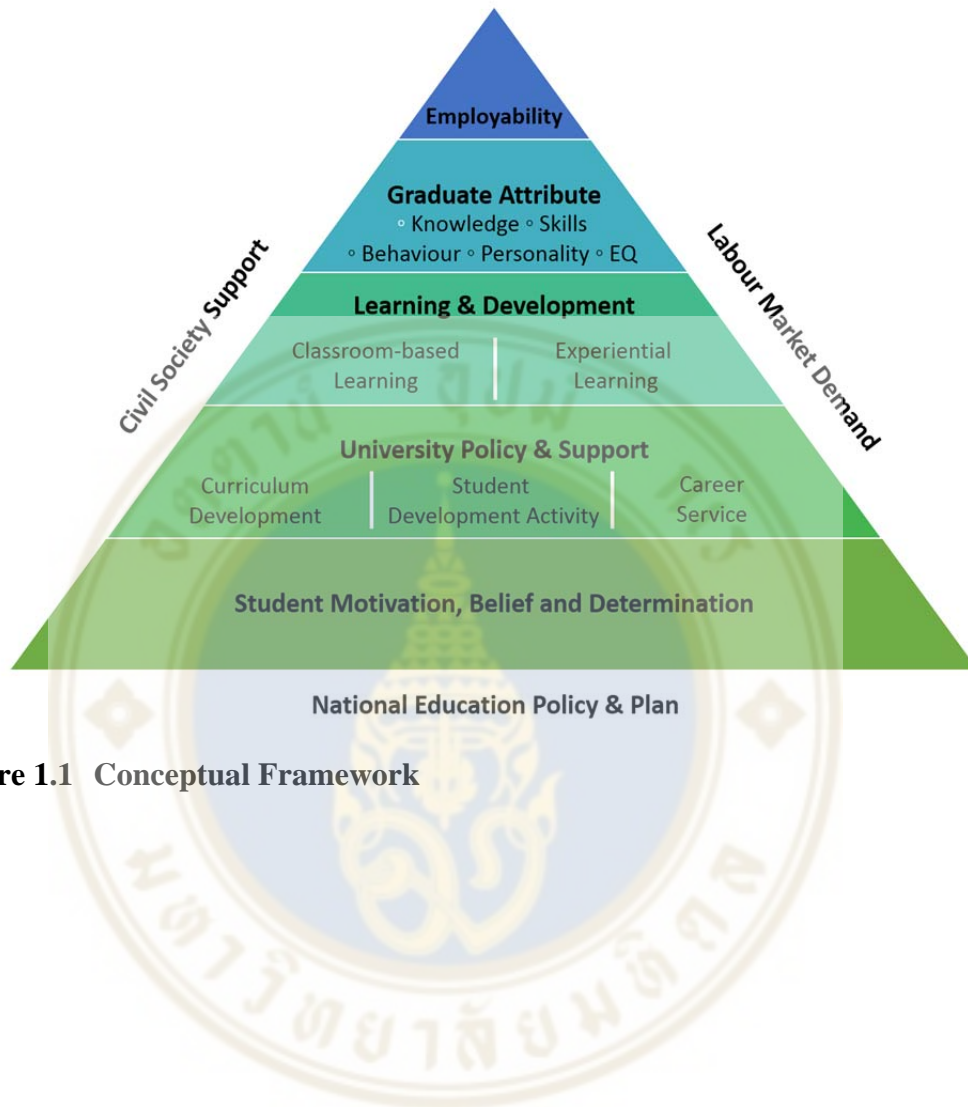


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education policy makers around the world have encountered with critical challenge in shaping the right strategy that can prepare graduates' skills to meet demand of labour market. In each year there are thousands of graduates who have similar technical skills in labour market but not everyone will be able to secure chosen occupation. In the other hand, some graduate who were able to secure employment has no skills to perform the job efficiently to be success in their first career.

Higher education institutes have critical role in paving ground for graduates' career success by equipping graduates with employability skills to enable them in securing employment and succeed in their career path. In order to do so, higher education institutes need to examine current trend of employability skills demanded in labour market as well as regularly assess and adjust their curricular to equip employability skills to students.

To better understand the context of employability skills and the current policy of university to integrating volunteering as part of curriculum to equip student with employability skills, in this chapter, the researcher will present background information as a foundation of this research. Through the literature review, the researcher explored

1. The various definition of employability
2. Employability Skills for 21 century workplaces
3. Thailand's Higher Education System and policy on enhancing graduates' employability
4. Graduates Desirable Qualities in Higher Education System
5. Teaching and learning method in university to understand how the different learning approaches equip student with different skills.
6. Community engagement as a new approach for soft skills development.

2.1 Graduates' Employability

Brown (as cited in York, 2008), defined employability as “ability of a person to secure and maintain employment. However it is important to note that being employed and employability is not the same. Graduate who has high employability skills may not gain employment within the right time frame due to several circumstance as such economic situation, personal reasons and nature of job type that graduate has applied for”.

According to Kulkarni and Chadchadi (2014) state that employability does not much emphasize on ‘being employ’ but rather focus on ‘the ability or skills to be employed’. In related to this, Pool and Sewell (as cited in Paadi, 2014) explained the employability that “there is so much more to employability than gaining employment” (p.130). In fact, statistics in regard to employability should consider the fact that many graduates decided to take certain jobs in order to cope with financial pressure. The study of Schreuder & Coetzee (as cited in Paadi, 2014) offer the definition of employability as “individual’s capacity and willingness to become and remain attractive in labour market also the individual’s capacity to be successful in a wide range of jobs” (p.131)

The working definition of employability adopted in this research come from the definition provided by York and Knights (2004) which defined employability as “a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy” (p. 3).

2.2 Employability Skills in 21st Century

Griesel and Parker (2009) emphasized the important that higher education need to produce graduates with high quality to response to the changing need of the knowledge-driven economy (p.2).

The world that we all live in today is almost completely opposite of our father’s generation. The skill set that was once critical to remain in the career is presently challenged with rapid change of dynamic workforces. Thus, all stakeholders who involves in promoting employability in higher education must take proactive approach to understand the future employment trend that influence the key employability skills

required by job market whilst crafting education management and student development policy.

2.2.1 The Change of Global Economy towards Employment Trend in Future

The paradigm shift in global economic development from agricultural-intensive and labour-intensive economies to knowledge based economies drive countries around the world to adapt their economic policy to the new global trend. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2005) has provided definition of “The knowledge based economy” as “the trends in advanced economies towards greater dependence on knowledge, information and high skill levels, and the increasing need for ready access to all of these by the business and public sectors”

The emerging of new technology that enable movement of resources has made the economic activities of one country inter-related to another, resulting that the knowledge based-economy trend in Europe and the United States of America influence to the paradigm shift of economic in developing countries. In order to keep up with changing trend, many countries continually import new technology to increase business productivity and reduce labour cost. Over the last two decades, the national economics’ competitiveness which was based on their ability to acquire cheap labour and resources was challenged to turn around their business model to manage opportunities and risks arise due to these rapid changes of economy. The shift in economic competitive environment cause higher expectation in all industry towards graduates’ education level and skills.

According to the document of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, in the OECD countries, more than a quarter of all workers are professional, associate professional or skilled technicians. Trend over the period 1998-2008 indicated that the share of occupations hold by highly educated workers have been grown whilst the occupation hold by medium and low educated worker have been declines (OECD, 2013). The labour market in new middle-income economies has greater degree of competitive as consequence of the paradigm shift in economic structure. In order to advance in professional life, graduates are driven to take higher education degree with the hope that they can acquire higher employability skills to meet with changing expectation of employers.

Several study on future employment trend in United Kingdom and United State of America clearly addressed these changes. In the case of the United Kingdom faced a major shifted in its occupation structure over the past several decades. Wallis (2012) addressed that “the demand for generic skills i.e. communication and problem solving has increased whilst the demand for skill to manual occupations has declined significantly” (as cited in OECD Skill Outlook, 2013). Furthermore, the study of U.S labour market of Autor, Levy and Murname (2003) found that generally in the labour market in future the need for routines cognitive will be decreased which will be contrary to the need of analytical and interactive tasks. In additional to that the studies of Lavy and Murname (2013) further predicted that the future of labour market will be more involved with certain tasks that need analytical skills such as solving unstructured problem, ability to process information and carry out non-cognitive work related tasks.

Clearly, in this competitive business environment in 21st century, customer satisfaction is the key indicator for business’ long term success. Therefore, business has shifted its direction and strategies to maintain employee’s performance to effective response to customer’s emerging needs. Today, thousands of corporates are in the process of re-structuring to decentralize decision making power to smaller business unit, hoping to facilitate better services and rapid response to customer’s problem.

As the business need has changed tremendously, employees nowadays are required to apply non- routine skills such as problem solving, decision making, negotiation and communication to deliver excellence performance in which drive business success.

2.2.2 Employer’s Perception on Employability Skills for Entry Level Employment

Even, there are variations in the exact definition of employability, but usually people perceived employability as the qualities, characteristics, skills and knowledge which significantly contribute to assist graduates in securing employment (Lowden, Hall, Elliot and Kevin, 2011).

Higher Education Institutes, policy makers and scholars across the world increase their effort to understand employer’s expectation on graduates’ attributes and qualities which included the knowledge, skills and competencies which enable them to gain entry level employment as well as continue to progress in their career path in future.

The investigation on employers' perception on the employability skill in labour market of the United State found that 'employers have high expectation on graduates' ability to demonstrate these range of skills and attributes such as team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and business managerial abilities" (Lowden et al.,2011)

It is consistent with the research conduct, by the Conference Board, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Cooperate Voice for Working Families, and the Society of Human Resources Management, of more than 400 employers on their perception of skills need in 21st century workforces. These employers were asked to rank each skill set as "not important", "important" and "very important" for graduates in three different level of education namely high school, second- years college and four-years college. The comprehensive skill set which they were asked to rank are comprised of basic knowledge and skills as well as the applied skilled.

The findings addressed that the most important skills cites by employers are professionalism and work ethics, oral and written communication, teamwork or collaboration skills as well as critical thinking and problem solving. Besides that, the findings also suggested that applied skills on all education levels are more important than the basic knowledge and skills such as reading comprehension and mathematics. The most key important message from this research is the basic knowledge are foundation to any new workforce entrant's ability to perform the job, however the success in graduates' career life is rely heavily on their ability to use the applied skills such as teamwork or collaboration and critical thinking to perform their job effectively.

In Thailand, according to the survey of Chalaemwong (as cited in Nguyen, 2014) found that key employability skills for all level of workers are analytical skills, management skills, technical skills, teamwork, computer skills and foreign language skills (p. 4).

The report of World Bank in 2014 (as cited in Nguyen, 2014) endorsed the important of skills such as problem solving skill, learning skill or ability to acquire new knowledge, communication skills, personal skill for self-management- in enhancing worker's productivity which serve as a solid foundation of career success (p.5)

In conclusion, the skills that employers across all sector expects from newly hired employees are mostly focus on soft skills or people skills as these skills enable them to work effectively in their designated role and business unit.

2.2.3 Soft Skills as Key Element of Graduate's Employability

Soft Skills has been proven its critical role as skills that enable graduates or employees at each level to secure, maintain and success in their chosen occupations. Similar to the term "Employability Skills", the definition of soft skills will need to be defined further. However the studies of Yorke (1998) address the generic skills or soft skills as the ability to collaborate and communicate with others people effectively, problem solves and deal with certain conflicts.

Oxford dictionary provide definition of soft skills as personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people.

We can observe that the employer' perception on graduates' attributes comprise of technical knowledge and generic skills which involve predominately on skills used while interacting and working with people (refer as soft skills). Even both technical and Soft Skills have played significant role in getting graduate hired but many study have found that workers with higher people skills has higher opportunity to progress and success in their career life. To examine the important of soft skill in complementing hard skills for job success, in 2012, the Seattle Job Initiative have conducted the survey with more than 400 employers and community colleges on the important of soft skill towards graduate employability. The report state that soft skill is not only assist graduate to obtain a job but also assist the company to gain their success in the business. The result reveals employer's perspective that the vital role of soft skill in secure employment. More than 75% of respondents have rated soft skills as important as or more important than technical skill in securing entry-level employment and, 71% of respondent emphasized that soft skill are equally or more important than technical skill in supporting the company to achieve company goals.

When it come into what are the soft skill needed to be success in the business, Robels (2012) address that the 10 soft skills which perceive important to secure and success in professional by business executives are comprise of integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility, social skills, positive attitude, professionalism, flexibility,

teamwork, and work ethic. The research also address that communication is the most important followed by responsibility and professionalism.

The comparative analysis on the important degree of soft skills was done as a joint study of College of Agriculture and Natural Resources of Michigan State University with the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) and the University Industry Consortium (UIC) in 2011. This research aims to understand the important soft skill need for successful transition of graduates upon the completion of baccalaureate degrees to competitive employment. The research reveals that employers think communication is the first attributes that they are looking for in new graduates. Decision making and Problem-Solving are ranked as the second priority followed by Self-management skills as the third skill (College of Agriculture and Natural Resources of Michigan State University with the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) and the University Industry Consortium (UIC), 2011)

An increasing intense in competitive workforces had made soft skills to complement hard skills to securing the job. Many research has been done over decades suggest the correlations of soft skills and graduate employability. Robles (2012) emphasized the increasing important of soft skills that “several decades ago, technical skills were the only skills necessary for career employment. “Today’s workplace is showing that technical skills are not enough to keep individuals employed when organizations are downsizing and cutting positions” (James & James, 2004 as cited in Robles 2012)

2.3 Thailand Higher Education System

Over several decades, Thailand has continuity put its resources to enhance long term country prosperity by investing in technology improvement, knowledge management and education development. In order to prepare human capital to work in knowledge based economy, National Education Act B.E. 1999 strategically provide direction for education development in Thailand aiming for the country to arise in immediate future as a nation of wealth, stability, dignity and capable of competing with other in the age of competition. In this section, the researcher will review the Thailand Higher Education System to get better understanding how far we go in term of equipping students with graduates’ employability skills.

2.3.1 Higher Education and Thailand's Competitiveness in Global Economic

The Thailand Competitiveness Report which developed by Subcommittee of Content Development for Economic Forum East Asia in 2012 emphasized that the nation's past success in maintaining competitiveness has relied on two factors: foreign direct investment (FDI) and low cost competition. However, as the global economic has changed and other players have entered the arena, Thailand's competitiveness has been challenges. Therefore, it is critical for nation to continuously seek for better strategy, uplifting unique strengths to turn around our economy from a low labour cost-based economy to one that is based on innovation.

Despite the country is undergone many economic and political crisis, the economy has been progressed for several decades. Thailand's strategic advantages in global economic competition including our strategic ideal geographic location, supply of skills and non-skill labour and infrastructure. The services and manufacturing industry has enable people in all education level to earn decent income to lift themselves out of poverty. The economic expansion which predominately rely on export also directly booth economic well-being of small business traders and workers in agriculture sector. According to the webpage of World Bank in 2011, it said that " Thailand has made remarkable progress in social and economic issues, moving from a low income country to an upper- middle income country in less than a generation" (Thailand Overview, 2011).

However, economic policy maker raised the concern that Thailand may have fallen into middle income trap in which the country has reached middle-income status as result of economic growth but it has been slow down for too long and unable to achieve the rank of high income economic countries.

Somchai (2012) address that there are many influencing factors including Thailand has lack of new technology investment, low level of research and development whilst encounter with labour shortage in both skills and un-skills workers etc. The most interesting contributing factor addressed in the study which needs to address further is the fact that Thai education is unable to prepare graduates for labour market- the relevant skills such as those needed for information technology, communication, and leadership are all lacking among new graduates.

The core element of knowledge-based economy is knowledge workers. Human capitals serve as foundation for country economic development. In order to move economic out of the middle-income trap, Thailand's policy makers, education institutions, family and society have common responsibility to equip necessary skill to students in which they can contribute in enhancing the country's prosperity in future.

2.3.2 Role and Responsibility of Higher Education Commission

Over the past decades, there was major transitional period for administration of Thai higher education. In 2003, the three main agencies in charge of education namely ministry of education, ministry of university affair and national education council where merged to form the New Ministry of Education. Refer to information provided in the website of Higher Education Commission, the new structure consist of 5 core agencies, Office of the Permanent Secretary, Office of the Education Council, Office of the Basic Education Commission, Office of the Higher Education Commission, and Office of the Vocational Education Commission.

The Higher Education Commission has the authority to propose higher education policies and standards corresponding to the National Economic and Social Development Plan and the National Education Plan. There are several bureaus within Higher Education Committee that take key role and responsibility to formulate the plan to develop desired graduates attribute

The Bureau of Policy and Planning has responsibilities to formulate policy recommendations for higher education development and higher education development plans as well as develop graduate production and manpower planning at the higher education level in line with the national needs.

The Bureau of Standards and Evaluation has responsibilities to formulate policies and standards on higher education and set system for academic accreditation and certification of higher education standards including suggested guidelines for equivalence of degrees and learning performance.

The Bureau of Student Development has responsibility to propose policy recommendations and set standards for student development and enhance student development in terms of skills and competence, and promote student activities to enable the wholesome development of students physically, mentally, and intellectually. They

also take key role in promoting learning networks and enrich student life by working with the community and enterprises.

2.4 Graduates Desirable Qualities in Higher Education System

In the country which extensively gears towards knowledge-based economy like Thailand, the Higher Education Commission and affiliate organizations play critical role to develop policy, standard and assurance system as well as work collaboratively with higher education institutes to enhance quality of graduates to serve as knowledge workers in labour market. Individual higher education institutes hold key responsibility to assess the expectation of graduates future's employers and society in order to shape curricular to deliver knowledge and skills to graduate in which meet the need of future labour market.

The affiliate organizations-Higher Education Commission (HEC), Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment Office of Public Sector Development Commission- are the three key main implementers that develop quality assurance system and provide evaluation framework for higher education institutes to develop graduates attributes to meet expectations of potential employers.

Griesel and Parker (2009) explained that graduates' attributes is "combination of a person's knowledge, skills competencies and attitude".

The studies of Barrie, Hughes and Smith (as cited in Hounsell, 2010) stated that the attributes cover core abilities and value agreed and expected by university and communities on the set of skills that graduates should develop in order to complete the degree.

In Thailand, the graduate attributes or qualities are different depending on each Ministry announcement, National Education Development Plan, original affiliations, and assessment organizations. In conclusion, Thai graduates' quality could be measured in three dimensions; Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (TQF: HEd), Higher Education Standards, and the indicators announced by the original affiliations and assessment organizations (Subin, Chieng, Suradej and Piboon, 2012, p.18). The first two dimensions predominantly address on graduates attributes including knowledge, skills, characteristic and value. The indicator announced by the original affiliations

and assessment organizations has share common indicators which address graduate ability to gain employment and receive salary as indicated in salary benchmarking as well as the satisfaction level of graduates' employer.

Subin et al (2012) address graduates qualities based on the higher education standard that graduates should

1. Has cognitive knowledge, skills, ability to learn and apply the knowledge for self- improvement to perform the job and develop innovation to contribute for social development as well as to compete in global arena

2. Live and perform their tasks in accordance with morality and ethical guidelines.

3. Has good physical and psychological state, and maintain their well-being

The graduates qualities based on Thailand Qualification Framework for Higher Education also has similar idea on the quality of graduates with the higher education standard.

Thailands Higher Education Commission Homepage present the definition of Higher Education Qualification Framework as the framework to ensure consistency of both standards and award titles for higher education qualification, it serve as framework that ensure the equivalence of academic awards-granted by higher education institutions in other countries around the world. The Framework act as appropriate points of comparison in academic standards for institutions in their planning and internal quality assurance processes, for evaluators involved in external reviews, and for employers, in understanding the skills and capabilities of graduates they may employ.

According to Subin et al (2012) the education program which is designed with the guidance of this framework should lead to equip cognitive or technical knowledge, generic skills and professional expertise as well as reflect higher education policy and philosophy in developing graduates in Thailand. These policy include

1. Graduate's ability to transfer and application of cognitive skills in problem solving, creative thinking, and entrepreneurship;

2. Familiarity with and support for national culture and traditions; and reconciliation of those traditions with requirements for competitiveness in the international knowledge economy.

3. Graduates should have the ability and commitment to engage in lifelong learning,
4. Graduates should have capacity in application of effective communication. These communication also include communication through use of information technology
5. Graduates should have the ability to take the initiative in individual and group activities.

The framework describes the expected increasing levels of knowledge and skills in these areas for each qualification. Developing these abilities requires use of methods of instruction that take students far beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills and emphasizes their use in practical situations on a continuing basis.

Qualities in each level and degree expected of student can be group into five domains of learning. Each of learning domains has its learning outcome in which graduates are expected to demonstrate higher qualities along with the level of education. Those five learning domains and outcome are Ethical and Moral Development, Knowledge, cognitive skills, Interpersonal skills and responsibility, Analytical and Communication skills. The description of each learning domain can be defined as detail followed

In addition to that Subin et al (2012) also addressed further on the 3 different affiliations working on graduate's qualities framework. These organizations are Higher Education Commission (HEC), Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) and Office of Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC). The common element of graduate' qualities that stated by these three organizations emphasized on the percentage of graduates that have been employed within certain timeframe, the percentage of graduates who receive salary at the level that indicate in benchmarking, the level of satisfaction of employers.

Overall the qualities of graduates based of these 5 different affiliations, primarily consistent with graduate's knowledge, skills and attitude that meet with expectation of society and employers.

It is vital that higher education constantly assess the need of employers' expectation towards graduates' qualities in order to develop graduates who have attributes that meet the demand of labour market. Such a plan will contribute to eliminate economic challenges due to skills shortage and reduce the percentage of unemployment rate, in which directly contribute to stabilize and stimulate long term economic growth.

2.5 Teaching and Learning Approaches in Thailand Higher Education

The development of higher education in global scale inspired Thailand Higher Education to improve new approaches in curriculum, teaching and learning. The lecture-based instruction had been reviewed and concluded that it is no longer an effective education mode to aid students in 21st century to achieve global quality of learning. Student-Centered Learning is the subject for further research of many education scholars and policy makers over past two decades. Even it encounter with certain problem in emerging to the Thai Higher Education but instructors gradually interested to the fact that it can deliver better result to student' learning. "Over time, students became the engine for sustaining the change and giving encouragement to the instructors" (Hallinger and Lu, 2013).

Slowly, many instructors begin to adapt their teaching and learning approaches that encourage student participation in learning. Many initiatives and theory on learning was introduced to help teachers and learners create an effective learning environment.

The example of new approaches of teaching and learning in Thailand higher education are experiential learning, active learning and contemplative learning.

2.5.1 Experiential Learning: Experience as Source of Learning and Development in Higher Education

Dewey (1986) addressed the important of providing opportunity for the learners to do something in order to learn as doing or performing some tasks will demand people to think and usually learning naturally will occurs simultaneously.

Educators and scholars around the world have put an effort to understand human learning and ways to improve the approach that enhance the learning. The most well-known theory that later lead to other studies on learning and development in higher education is the experiential learning theory

The experiential learning theories defined learning as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of learning (Kolb 1984, p. 41). It was drawing on the foundation theories of human learning and development of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, Carl Jung, Paul Freire, Carl Rogers and others.

Kolb (2005) addressed these key propositions of the theory which were shared by the studies of these well-known scholars as "Learning is a process, not the

outcomes” In related to the concept in John Dewey’s study (as cited in Kolb, 2005) stated that Education should be the continue process of reconstruct the experience where the process and goal merged and become one (p. 194).

To improve learning in higher education, the primary focus should be on engaging students in a process that best enhance their learning. The studies done in the past believe that student will best learn when they can truly engaged in the process that draw out their belief and ideas about the topic they are learning. Students should be encouraged to examine, taste then integrated the learning with new, more refined ideas (Kolb 2005).

Kolb's experiential learning style theory is typically represented by a four stage learning cycle namely as Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation (Kolb, 2005, p. 194).

According to Kolb (2005) the experiential learning cycle begin to allow the learner to take concrete experiences which directly mean doing something in which learners are assigned a task. The process then follows by Reflective Observation. Learning will take time out from “doing” to actually stepping back from the task and spend time to review what has been done and experienced. At this stage learners should be encouraged to ask questions and communicate to other members of the team. Abstract Conceptualization is the process of making sense of experience that has happened. It is involves interpreting these experience and understanding the relationships between them.

The last process within Kolb’s experiential learning cycle is Active Experimentation when the learner can related or associate the knowledge gained to the world around them to acquire and understand the results and consequences. The learning can only be useful to people when it put into the context that is relevant to them.

The theory believes that effective learning is occurs when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: of having a concrete experience or actually “doing” some tasks followed by observation of and reflection on that particular experience. The reflection should leads learner to form concepts which will serve as some source of reference for future situations which creating new experience.

2.5.2 Active Learning

The Center for Research for Teaching and Learning, University of Michigan defined active learning as “a process that students engage in activities, such as reading, writing, discussion or problem solving that promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of learning content”

In the Thai higher education context, the processes in active learning usually begin with theory and concept introduction which can run in the form of lecture or participatory workshop. Students will engage with group discussion and group work to complete assigned tasks. In the theory part, students are introducing to learning content which lay solid foundation in certain piece of knowledge about the learning topics. Later, students will have a chance to get involve with hand on activities in which encourage them to think critically to define the actual problems, ask questions, evaluate and analyze the context. The process aims to aid students to form new knowledge in which can apply to other similar circumstances.

The learning approaches promote collaborative learning of the instructor and learners. Throughout the process, students will receive regular monitoring support and feedback from instructors who actually develop learning interventions based on the information they have receive from students and through observation.

2.5.3 Contemplative Learning

Contemplative Education has recently been introduced and applied in Thailand Higher Education. It is an education philosophy that integrates introspection and experiential learning into academic study in order to support academic and social engagement. Contemplative Learning is very new but became more popular in the education institutions in America. The approaches create new possibilities to promote depth of understanding and a more personal relationship with the content of study (Brady, 2007, p. 1).

In Thailand, similar research was conducted with students of the Faculty of Physical Therapy, Rangsit University to understand the application of the contemplative education and its effects on the teaching and learning. The faculty has applied the concept with teaching and learning with students for a period of over four years. The result from this research show that contemplative in education made the change in the teacher's

attitude towards the process of human learning, the human relationship, and the way to deal with the relationship. These change of attitude lead to change in their teaching process and the interaction between teachers and students.

Currently, the contemplative education is slowly influence the teaching and learning approach of many faculties in Thailand.

2.6 Community Engagement as an Activity for Learner-Centered Education

In Higher Education, the experiential learning was integrated in both curriculum and extra-curricular to help student learn and develop necessary skills for future employment. These experiential learning can be deliver in the form of internship, field study, cooperative education, community service, volunteering or service learning etc.

The different type of learning through experience aims to achieve different level of learning outcome in which engage in different structure of learning component. The learning through internship, field study and cooperative education are primarily focus learning activities to help student achieve the identified learning outcome. The process is designed to achieve specific knowledge and skills related to subject of study.

On the other hand, community service, volunteering or service learning will focus on student's engagement in the services being provided to communities. Community engagement is used as the learning approach to help student deeply understand the subject of study. The community engagement activities should benefit students learning as well as contributing to partner communities.

As this research is primarily focus to understand on how students learn through student-led volunteering, it is important to understand the array of learning through engaging with communities work. In such case, the definition of volunteering, community service and service learning should be reviewed to understand how students learn through different type of community engagement activities in great detail.

Volunteering is the activities where the primary focus is on the services being provided to the beneficiary. The activities are developed to benefit service recipients. Volunteers can be refer to someone who perform certain services or from their own free will and receive no pay in return.

Furco (1996) addressed the service learning that it has share some similarity as volunteering in term doing something voluntarily or without financial gain. However, the service learning involves planned structure. Also it requires intense degree of commitment compare to the volunteer program. Many school-based community service programs might include semester-long or year-long activities in which students dedicate themselves to addressing a cause that meet the need of communities. Service Learning are different from other approaches of experiential education, that is, the service needs to be of benefit to the community but at the same time it also needs to provide the student with an opportunity to develop and achieve an identified learning outcome.

Bringle, R., & Hatcher, J. (1995) define service learning as “ a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility”

2.6.1 Community Engagement Activities in Different Learning Model in Thailand Higher Education

In Thailand, university students have opportunity to engage with various form of community engagement through different learning model as described below

1. Through University's Curricular: Student engages with community work as part of curriculum, many universities require student to engage in service learning. Community engagement is an activity in the basic requirement subject or elective subject. Activities are intentionally developed to help student learn and achieve identified learning outcome. Student will learn theory through series of lectures that introduce them to social issues and the concept of civic responsibility. Later on, they will be assigned to form a team, pick an area of interest to identified some social issues before working as a team to develop action plan which can help tackles these identified problems.

2. Through extra-curricular activities: Extra- curricular activities or student development activities within university are divided into two different types. The first one is the activities that lead by Student Affair Division and the latter one are led by student-led organization. In present day, many universities request and set up number

of hours that students must participate in the volunteering activities in order to eligible to take student grant or attend graduation ceremony.

3. Off-Campus volunteering activities with Civil Society Organizations: Individual university student who interests in social development activities has an opportunity to join the ongoing activity of many Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). These CSOs are working in various range of social development issue. For example run activities for children with chronic disease in a hospital.

These organizations often open opportunity for university students to volunteer as part time (afterschool hours or weekend) or full time (internships during semester break). Students will have a chance to work side by side with professional staff. Often time active student volunteers are invited to attend a team meeting as well as receive feedback upon the completion of activities.

In many universities, student can claim those volunteering hours with Civil Society Organizations as part of university requirement volunteering hours in order to eligible to receive certain support from the university.

4. Off-Campus Students-led Volunteering Activities (in partnership with Civil Society Organizations).

Many Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) see the important to empower youth especially university students to become the change agent. These organizations will work to support student-led volunteering group to run volunteering activities.

Students play a center role in running the activities. They will select the communities and social issues that they would like to tackle. Students draft project proposal and submit to CSO to review and approve. Training and workshop to equip students with the significant knowledge on project management will be held after the selection process. Throughout the volunteering project, student-led group will receive close mentorship support from the designated professional staffs. They will work closely with CSO to implement the projects. Each year student group will be invited to present their achievement, review their lesson learn and do strategic planning for the next activities.

2.6.2 Enhancing Employability Skills through Community Engagement Activities

Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) have recognized the benefits that student can derive through engaging with student development activities therefore many institutions constantly improve policy and process to strengthen their administration component and ensure that all relevant units can effectively facilitate community engagement activities.

The benefit that students and society derived from community engagement can be various. In broader perspective, the activities can bring great benefit to country development as it can help to enhance the sense of belonging to the country (Smist, 2006). The movement to engage civic responsibility in all level of education curriculum is the key policy for education development.

In term of employability, the research that mainly done in United State and Europe have shown that volunteering can enhance student personal and interpersonal skills. The research done in UK that aims to understand how volunteering can enhance certain skills for young people was undertaken by the National Youth Agency between November 2006 to March 2007 also stated that young people able to develop wide range of personal and social skills through volunteering which help prepare them for future employment. Besides that the research findings further address that volunteering can increase young peoples' confidence and self-esteem, develop their skills for self-management and communication, increase their ability to manage relationship with other and the enhance their team working skills.

Recently, Tumuti et al (2013) had reaffirmed this statement with the result from their research study conducted with student who studied in a university in Kenya. The research investigates the employability skills which student was able develop through engaging with community service and volunteering activities while they are studying in university. The result indicated that students who have been actively involved in the activities can develop personal and inter-personal skills such as team work, communication, problem-solving as well as self-management skills.

In conclusion, the studies on impact of volunteering to young people which conducted in many countries around the world addressed that students can enhance employability skills through volunteering. These skills help them gain an advantage of their peers who never been engaged with any tasks within the team working environment.

In the long run, the skills are a solid foundation for employees to further progress in their career life.

2.7 Student-led Volunteering Activities in University

Wallapa's study (as cited in Pitsanu, 2005 p.1) defined the Student Activities as any activities that student voluntarily participate in the form of student body organization, association, club and projects- to conduct activities in which match with student's interest and value.

According to Student Affair Manual of Rachathani University, student's activity is "any activity that university conduct or provide support. Activities may not directly related to student curriculum and should have no credit". These activities should support university to develop student's personality and attitude. Student activities can be categorized into Curriculum Support Activities-related learning to student curriculum – and Extracurricular Activities.

The primary objective of student activities is to develop graduates physical, emotional, social skills and personality trait. Student Activities has enhance student's ability in decision making, team working, critical thinking (Pitsanu, 2005, p1).

The Higher Education Commission divided student development activities into

1. The activities that higher education is key player to arrange those activities and
2. Activities that higher education institutes provide support to student associations or student-led organizations to lead those activities.

In the second option, university students are provided with opportunity to participate in various ranges of activities which run by wide range of student-led organizations. These organizations are working to achieve key set outcome which categorized into five dimensions as Academic Support Activities, Sport and Physical Well-being Activities, Community Engagement and Environmental Conservation Activities, Recreation, Art and Cultural Conservation Activities

Regardless of the organization's establishing objectives, majority of organizations are led by students who volunteer themselves to social goods. New students may be required to engage with student development activities for certain hours, later, they can

chose to continue their commitment or disengage with the activities of the organizations. Majority of the activities implemented by student-led organizations are volunteering activities i.e. building houses, teaching children and running youth camps. Therefore the term student-led volunteering organizations which will be addressed throughout this paper refer to any student-led organizations which students voluntarily come together to implement any activities that directly or indirectly contribute to eliminate addressed social problems as well as to build better society.

2.7.1 Important of Student-Led Volunteering in Higher Education System

Quality of Student is the quality of institutions. Student quality is the core of education management in which university has put their resource to improve the system and mechanism to assure graduates has desirable attributes and knowledge to serve as quality manpower in labour workforces as well as contribute for social and economic development in future.

The Student-led volunteering organizations was an approach which enable higher education institutes to enhance student quality, beyond what has been required in their curricular. The important of student-led volunteering activities is clearly addressed in the 15 years Long Range Education Plan (2008-2022) clearly which indicate the framework for higher education institutes to develop and prepare readiness of youth, student and graduates to become effective workforce in future in related to develop their skill through student activities in university in various forms. Some of the recommendation to higher education institutes listed in as part of this plan are;

1. Higher education institutes should support extracurricular that open learning spaces for students to develop their social skill as well as gain new fundamental skills beyond technical knowledge that students obtain from non-interactive classroom.

2. Higher education institutes should adjust these extracurricular to response to the rapid change of social and environmental situation. The new challenges for students and lecturers is to gain knowledge through taking action in which will help students gain step further from the static knowledge which have long written in textbooks to gain real world experience . Apart from providing academic knowledge, universities should also support activities which develop student soft skills such as decision making, communication, leadership, team working and problem solving etc.

Furthermore, The Education Act of 1999 (B.E. 2006) Chapter 6, Sector 48 emphasized that organization with jurisdiction over educational institutes and institutions themselves shall establish a quality assurance system in the institution. Internal Quality Assurance System has nine indicators, including student development, in which require an assessment to ensure the on-going improvement.

The same document also provide guideline for higher education institution to develop student desirable attributes through student activities as follow

1. Higher education institutions should have strategic direction to support students in both the activities that operate by the institutions and student organizations to ensure the consistency with the vision of university in regard to graduates' desirable attributes as well as the quality of graduates as address in the Thailand Qualification Framework for each level of education.

2. Higher education institutions should support, supervise and monitor student activities, at least, in activities mentioned as follow

- Academic Activities
- Sport and Physical well-being activities
- Volunteering, Community Service and Environmental Conservation Activities
- Recreation Activities
- Art and Cultural Conservation Activities

3. Higher Education Institutions should conduct monitoring and evaluation report on projects or activities which operate by institutions and student organizations to submit it to committee and management team at the end of academic year.

4. Higher Education Institutions should engage the evaluation result to make adjustment and improvement for the implemented activities which, ultimately, can enhance the on-going development of students.

2.7.2 Type of Activities held by Student-led Volunteering Organization

Student-led Volunteering Organizations in university have various ranges of activities but majority of these organizations will at least once a year run off-campus volunteering projects which normally referred among students as 'Camp'.

These days, student-led volunteering organization will work together throughout academic year to complete certain number of volunteering projects based on the requirement of the university.

The Knowledge Network Institute of Thailand had conducted research on experiential learning through student-led volunteering activities. The research collected data on the type of activities for 104 student-led organizations in 6 Rajabhat Universities and then groups them into four different types of camps as.

1. Rural Development Camps: This sort of activities will predominately focus solely on building the infrastructure for school or community. Common volunteering projects that student-led volunteering organization often does with school in rural area are building school's library, new classroom and canteen. For communities, student organizations often engage with the project of temple restoration or building new community hall.

However as Thailand's economy rise, many rural communities in the country is received funding to improve their infrastructure in which student organization slowly shift direction to work in different source of activities.

2. Learning and Rural Development Camps: As the camps that students build infrastructure for school or communities often come with higher cost and require intensive professional support. Many student-led organizations slowly shift their activities to integrate more cultural learning component within the camp. Within this type of project, student will work hand in hand with villagers to build the small scale of building, the other half of the time; camp participant can spend to learn local culture with host families. Students will live with host families. Often they will have a chance to help their host families with cooking, gardening and farming.

3. Learning Camps: Unlike the other two categories above that communities and student can mutually benefit from the volunteering projects. The learning camps is much more straight forward as in this case students are primary recipients of knowledge occurs through engaging with the activities. University students can contribute to running knowledge distribution activities such as educating villagers on ASEAN community or health-related topics.

4. Recreation and Teaching Activities Camps: Many student-led organizations nowadays run recreation activities for school students in rural area. Many volunteering projects involve games and sport that help enhance life skills for school students.

2.7.3 Comparison between Learning from Student-Led Volunteering and University-Led Activities

To understand how students can learn through student-led volunteering activities, it better to understand some background information of the similarity and difference between student-led volunteering and other type of learning through community service.

Each type of experiential learning through community engagement has priority learning component in different degree in which contribute greatly to the skills students can develop through engaging with volunteering. These are some of the key elements that made student-led volunteering different from other type of community services.

2.7.3.1 Student Role in Student-led Volunteering Organization

Unlike service learning where students are instructed carefully on the learning approach to achieve specific learning outcome, the students who engaged in student-led volunteering projects have more flexibility to design and develop their learning outcome. In service learning, lecturers will carefully looking through the contents, learning method and outcome to ensure the knowledge can deliver to students. The learning outcome is captured systematically through critical reflection sessions which facilitate or co-facilitated by lecturers or professional.

Thus, student role in service learning is knowledge receivers with some limitation or framework that student will carry over in their learning to help them construct new set of knowledge.

At student-led volunteering organization, students are knowledge designers and receivers at the same time. Activities can provide them with experience but it is their responsibilities to construct their own knowledge through reflect upon the experience.

In many situations while these students craft knowledge for themselves, they also hold responsibility to train and deliver knowledge to new member.

Through knowledge and skills transferring process, students accumulate and develop these skills in greater level.

2.7.3.2 Learning Space for Essential Career Skills

The student-led organization is created with ultimate goal to serve as a safe space for student to lead the activities. Working in student-led organization, students will perform the tasks that essential to their career such as coordination, working in the team, maintaining relationship with other and communicate with their team to carry the works.

Students who actively engage with volunteering activities will work as a team to write proposal to secure funding. They need to use communication skills to recruit new members and promote their organization to other students. Often that the financial support from university is not sufficient and students will need to come up with new initiatives to raise financial resource. The activity that all students will get involve is to coordinate with different unit of the university as well as with off-campus organizations.

Working in student-led organization, student can learn to deal with the unexpected situation as well as solving any challenges to achieve their set goal. These working experiences can definitely provide them with critical career skills such as problem solving and critical thinking which they will find it difficult to develop through other mean of experiential learning.

2.7.3.3 Limited Professional Support and Guidance

As standard practice, the university will provide both financial and mentorship support to student-led volunteering organization. However, as student-led organization is the only platform where students will learn their unforgettable life lesson while they encounter with the success and failure, the intervention by the university can be limited so students can nurture their leadership skills.

2.7.3.4 Less Structure and No Learning Objective

Student-led volunteering activities are an out of classroom activities which run in voluntarily basis in student own free time. These activities has no accreditation, no learning plan or set indicators. The objectives for volunteering project are set loosely to guide students on what they need to achieve but the learning outcome for member students are not clearly defined.

In addition to that the reflection which serve as a key learning activities in service learning is less prioritized in students-led volunteering organizations due to many circumstance such as lack of experience facilitator or time constraint. The learning process predominately attach with the activity implementation. It is believed that through self-reflection, student's skills can be enhanced but main challenge is that not all students truly realize the important role of self-reflection in their learning.

2.8 Summary of Literature Review

Throughout chapter two we have reviewed the definition of key terms use in this research such as employability skills, graduates desirable attributes and soft skills. The term of employability in this research will not only focus on gaining employment but more on the ability to gain the employment regardless of whether the person is employed.

The second section brought us to understand the influence of changing trend in global economy impact to the change in employability skills in 21st century workplaces. We have explored to acknowledge that soft skills is most needed by employers in 21st century as it directly contribute to create effective work environment that bring success to the company. Further, the researcher dived into the update policy and practices in the higher education system to review the readiness of university and higher institutes in developing graduates to response to the emerging needs in labor market and how the plan that university would like to implement to equip necessary skills both through curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Lastly, the researcher review more information on the various types of the student development activities to understand the relationships between the learning processes of each activities and the development of graduates' employability skills.

To this point, the researcher has sufficient background information to step forward to design the research methodology, collecting and analyzing the data which will be present in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Graduates' employability skills are subjective issues as individual graduate had different experience throughout their involvement with the student-led volunteering activities. We also need to keep in mind that each experience influence member students and graduates differently because of many factors that the researcher will describe later in chapter 4 on research findings.

Therefore, in order to understand the complexity of the issue, the researcher need to carefully design the research process, methodology and analysis to find out more how the university can equip graduate with employability through student-led volunteering activities. In this chapter, the researcher will introduce research design and process. The first part will explain rationale behind selecting the type of research and why the researcher has chosen a case study. Later, the researcher will also further provide you with more information on the target respondents and discuss in detail for research' data collection and analysis strategy.

3.1 Type of Research

Strauss and Corbin (1990) defines qualitative research as any type of research that the finding produced not by any statistical process or any mean of quantification. The qualitative research suitable to apply to understand people's live, experience, emotions, behaviours and feelings. Polkinghorne (2005) also further addressed that "qualitative research apply inquiry process that aimed to describing and clarifying human experience as it occurs in their lives".

The researcher selected the qualitative research methodology for this study as explained earlier, the issue of employability skills developed by each individual student and graduate can be very detailed and subjective as it has several influencing factors. This research aims to acquire in-depth descriptive personal experience, shared

by individual, to understand how individual learn through student-led volunteering activities in order to identify ways to improve the learning process within the student-led volunteering organization. The research is both exploratory and descriptive in the process of inquiring to collect data.

As the researcher would like to gain holistic perspectives in this area and acquire information in the set time frame, a case study was utilized to capture underlying information and explanation to understand how learning process through student-led volunteering activities can enhance soft skills development for member students and graduates. The nature of case study will be involved with detail examination in which can build in-depth understanding of chosen topic of study.

3.2 Case Study Selection

According to Yin's studies (as cited in Yazan, 2015), "case study is one of the most common qualitative research methodologies. Yet, it still does not have well-defined and well-structured to gain legitimate status as a social science strategy". The case study aims to examine a single example and seek enrich detail to understand the phenomenon. Flyvbjerg (2006) said that case study would be a good use in an early stage of an investigation to develop certain hypotheses.

With this study, the researcher selected a student-led volunteering organization to be a case study in this research with the ultimate purpose that a deep exploration of this case study can provide in-depth level of understanding towards the learning process which has been taken place for over period of time. The exploratory research questions will seek to understand how this learning through volunteering and development of soft skill can enhance graduates' employability skills over time.

Nontri Stream of Knowledge (NSK) is a student-led volunteering organization in one of the most well-known university in Bangkok. It is established in 2000 with the purpose to raise awareness of the important of education to youth and to support the equal access to quality education for children in rural area of Thailand.

The main volunteering activity for member of Nontri Stream of Knowledge is youth development. These activities include teaching, playing sport and games as well as conducting the life skills activities. In each year, the member will develop their focus

learning theme that they would like to educate youth. For example within the last few years, member university students conduct the classes on ASEAN community, sufficiency economy and the important of saving for future etc.

The researcher purposefully selected Nontri Stream of Knowledge as a case study based on personal connection with member of organization. In professional context, the researcher has been working in education and capacity development field for almost 13 years. The researcher also personally believe that youth are the change agents for our better society. However, as we know, Thai society dramatically shifted, students should also gradually improve their community engagement activities to better address emerging social issues.

One of the most emerging social issues in 21st century goes towards the employability skills of graduates that emphasize on soft skills development and prepare graduates to work effectively with others in the fast changing environment.

In late November 2014, senior members of organization had met briefly in Bangkok to discuss our experience and review how our student-led volunteering experience contributed to craft who we are and how our experiences mean in our career life. We found out that those experience are valuable to us but somehow it not yet closely consistent with a professional world. We were discussed for the approaches to assist the younger generation to add value to the student-led volunteering organization to effectively turn it as a learning platform that help new member reach the skills gap between the life in university and professional world.

Because of personal connection and good intention to create something greater for the organization, the researcher believe that this research will gain tremendous support from previous member and the research findings will be delivered to student-led volunteering organization to improve their interventions, activities and approaches to equip critical employability skills for current and future member of the student-led volunteering organization.

3.3 Target Respondents

Because the study aim to understand the holistic view of the issue, thus it is critical to identify various groups of target respondents who can provide range of data from different perspective to support the valid research findings. The target respondents in this research is included current (member) students, graduates , university affiliate that take care of student development activities in the university and civil society organizations that currently work to promote student volunteering activities in university.

To ensure the collected information can well explain the situations that have occurred through the past 15 years of organization, the researcher applied quota sampling to selecting respondents within students and graduates group. Kothari (2004) addressed in his book that “the quota sampling is the way the researcher ensure that the assigned sample share the same proportions to explain the phenomena of the research subject”. The sampling of graduates and students can well represent organization member from each year. The other two groups of respondents are university affiliate who directly in charge of student development activities and the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) who currently working to promote volunteering as student development activities in various universities in Thailand. The detail of each respondent group is described as detail follow;

3.3.1 Current Students

Current students are one source of information. The data collected from this group of respondents can provide update information on the requirement of university in regard to the volunteering activities hours required by university, administrative process to secure financial support to implement the projects. Moreover, the researcher can observe how students facilitate the strategic planning and project implementing to better understand the learning process to develop employability through volunteering experience.

3.3.2 Graduates

A group of graduates or former member of the student-led volunteering organization is the key priority respondent group in this study. The process to acquire better understanding on the impact of soft skills development through student-led

volunteering activities should focus on how graduates can transfer the skills developed during their volunteering in the university to their first entry employment and current workplace. The inquiring process aims to understand how graduates learned during the volunteering activities and how they able to identify area of improvement. The researcher hopes that the research finding from graduates can improve the effectiveness of learning process within the student-led volunteering organization in future.

3.3.3 Civil Society Organizations

Student-led volunteering activities were served as effective approach to develop certain skills for students over several decades. In the beginning of launching this initiative, there is only student affairs division of each university plays important role to support and encourage student to engage with volunteering activities. Recently there is great movement from civil society organizations to encourage student in volunteerism. In many universities volunteering has been used as part of experiential learning method to teach civic engagement and responsibility. Thus, to understand overall picture of volunteerism initiatives in higher education, it is necessary to capture an ongoing effort among civil society organization working to provide supportive environment that enabling student to achieve better in acquiring volunteer spirit and basic working skills through volunteering.

3.3.4 University Affiliates

The student affair division hold important role to ensure student can take benefit out of their volunteering's experience. The division has responsibility to conduct strategic planning to create effective student development activities that can be led by student affair division or any student-led organization. Often time, the student affair division also conduct training to provide information on proposal writing, budgeting and reporting to help student committee meet requirement listed by the university.

The other responsibility is to provide mentorship support, monitor and evaluate student-led volunteering organizations to ensure the student-led volunteering projects are remaining in high standard throughout the process.

We can see that the student affair division hold vital role and responsibility to ensure the activities enhance student's learning and development as well as maximizing high value contributes to a better society.

The table 3.1 below will show the number of key respondents group contributed to the data collection process.

Table 3.1 Key Respondents List

Categories of Key Respondents	Details	Number
Graduates	More than 10 years of work experience	5
	Have more than 5 years but less than 10 years of work experience	5
	Have between 1-5 years of work experience	5
Current member students	Joined the student-led volunteering organization for more than two years	12
University Affiliate	Student Affair Division	1
Civil Society Organizations	Volunteer Spirit Network	1
	Knowledge Network Institutes of Thailand	1
	Komol Keemthong Foundation	1
Total		31

3.4 Data Collection

This study involves the process of collecting both primary and secondary data. The qualitative data was obtained from semi-structure and in-depth interview with identified key respondents. The non-participant observation approach was used in the events and activities led by the student organization. These events provided ground update to start the data collection process. Later, the researcher conducted focus group discussion with current member of the student-led volunteering organization. The

focus group discussion was strategically crafted to bring together insightful information of volunteering activities conduct by the student-led volunteering organization outside the university in present day.

Findings from data collection process able to enrich the researcher understanding about the important of learning through volunteering activities in forming and enhancing soft skills development for graduates. In addition to that the findings lead to recommendation of improvement in which all stakeholders can take into account in order to facilitate effective soft skills development through student-led volunteering activities.

The ultimate purpose of this study is to ensure the current member and future students are able to gain substantial benefits to enhance their soft skills development that pave a solid ground for future employment. In order to achieve objectives of this study, the researcher has identified two sources of data to help consolidate important information that lead to recommendation to build effective learning process in the student-led volunteering organizations. These two sources of data are listed as follow.

3.4.1 Secondary data

Background information of this research was collected from variety of publications including journal, electronic-books, conference documents, and websites. These publications is the contributions from academic institutes, the researchers, education policy makers, government agencies, civil society organizations, media, association and university that share the ultimate goal of developing quality graduates to enter into labour market. The collection of information provided solid overview and background of the existing effort of all stakeholders involve in student development activities in higher education which lead the researcher to the direction to further investigate how we can enhance the effectiveness of using student-led volunteering activities as a way to develop graduates' qualities.

The researcher also found limited piece of secondary data through the student-led volunteering meeting minutes. Many of them was lost as it has been many years ago. The data received provide information of key activities and responsibility of committee for each year over the last five years. Most of the data record who doing what, challenges and agreed solutions to deal with the issues in each year. The data help the researcher understand project's priority for student in each academic year. Unfortunately,

there were no record of information on the relationship between volunteering and student' employability skills.

3.4.2 Primary Data

This research utilized three qualitative methods to collect primary data. These include non- participant observations, focus group discussion and in-depth interview.

Non-participant observation was applied as data collection method at very beginning of this study. The researcher participated in selected activities. These participations had done with judgement and close consultation with core member of the student organization to ensure that the research can gain real insightful data. The researcher participated in the selected activities such as organization strategy review and committee selection, annual activities meeting, proposal development, promoting student-led volunteering activities and fund raising.

Later, the focus group discussion took place just a few weeks after the first few non- participant observation had completed for a while. Both non- participant observation and focus group discussion was parallel and on-going process which took place over period of couple of months. The result from focus group discussion of students contributed to validate the result from graduates especially the part of skills developed through the student-led volunteering activities.

In-depth interview was carefully designed to collect information from graduates. Questions were a semi-structure with open-ended to provide opportunity to graduates to recall their past experience and reflect on how these volunteering experience contributed to enhance their soft skills and how the skills learnt helped them to successfully manage any work-places challenges. This collection method also used with identified current member student to investigate in detail on data collect from non- participant observation.

In additional to that, the in-depth interview facilitate better understanding on the topic from perspective of other key stakeholders; students affair division, Civil Society Organizations(CSOs) which currently work to promote civic education and volunteering in university.

Table 3.2 Research Coordination Schema

Objectives Description	Guiding Questions	Key Respondents	Methods
Objective 1 To examine the soft skills that students and graduates can develop through their engagement with student-led volunteering activities in university.	1.1 What are the soft skills do student and graduates can acquired? 1.2 How these soft skills aspects of student and graduates have been improved? 1.3 How graduates have applied the soft skills in their workplaces? 1.4 Does graduate lack of any soft skill which has negative impact to their professional life?	Student	Focus group discussion
		Graduates	In-depth interview
Objective 2 To examine how student-led volunteering activities in university can enhance soft skills for students and graduates.	2.1 How student and graduates can learn and develop their soft skills through student-led volunteering activities? 2.2 How the current student-led volunteering organizations facilitate the learning and development for its member?	Students	Focus group discussion
		Graduates	and In-depth interview
Objective 3 To investigate the factors that influence soft skills development through student-led volunteering activities in university	3.1 What are the influencing factors that enable effective learning and development of soft skills for graduates and student?	Student,	Non-Participant Observation, Focus group discussion
		Graduates	In-depth interview
		University Affiliates	In-depth interview
		CSOs	In-depth interview

Table 3.2 Research Coordination Schema (cont.)

Objectives Description	Guiding Questions	Key Respondents	Methods
	3.2 What the university affiliate does to provide support or influence the development of soft skills through student-led volunteering activities?	University Affiliate	In-depth interview
	3.3 What are the ongoing attempts that CSOs does to support effective or influence the development of soft skills through volunteering activities?	CSOs	In-depth interview
Objective 4 To examine how student organization can further develop learning process to enhance soft skills through student-led volunteering activities for its member student.	4.1 What are the recommendation to improve the learning and development of soft skills through student-led volunteering activities?	Students	Focus group discussion
		Graduates	In-depth interview
		University Affiliates	In-depth interview
		CSOs	In-depth interview

Table 3.3 Summary for Methodology for Key Respondents Group

Categories	Key Respondents	No.	Data Collection
Alumni	Alumni who have more than 10 years of experience	5	In-depth Interview
	Alumni who have between 5-9 years of work experience	5	
	Alumni who have between 1-5 years of work experience	5	
Student	1 st year student	3	Focus Group Discussion & Non-participant observation
	2 nd year student	3	
	3 rd year student	3	
	4 th year student	3	
University Affiliate	Student Affair division, Kasetsart University	1	In-depth Interview
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	Volunteer Spirit Network	1	In-depth interview
	Knowledge Network Institutes of Thailand	1	
	Komol Keemthong Foundation	1	
Total		31	

3.5 Data Analysis

Unquestionably, the analysis of qualitative data is somewhat complicated as the language of analysis is confusing. Qualitative research involves obtaining data in various forms to understand both larger scale of related issue and in-depth detail that describe situation and explain what those situation means in related to the main focus of this research. In order to analyse the collected data, the researcher applied constant comparison to assist with the analysis process

Thorn (2000) explains that “the constant comparison approach was originally developed for use in the grounded theory methodology of Glaser and Strauss. This strategy involves taking one piece of data such as one interview, one statement, one theme,

then compare it with all others that may be similar or different in order to develop conceptualizations of the possible relations between various pieces of data”.

Constant comparison was applied in this study to analyse the data which has been collected through interviews with key respondents, focus group discussion and non-participant observation that was taken place over a couple of months. The data analysis process involves label and categorize the conversation of interview and behavioural data from the non-participant observation for the purpose of classification and summarization. With this methodology, the researcher also applied 3 steps comparison to capture great detail within data collected from participants.

Step 1, the researcher compare data within a single interview. Boeije (2002) addressed the important of this step as “every data received from the interview should be studied to determine what the passage was delivered exactly and label each of them with the appropriate code”. If the researcher comparing the different parts of the interview, the researcher will find some consistency or pattern in the passage and should be able to identify the emerging themes.

Step 2, the researcher compare the data within the same group. As the research conducted interview with graduates and focus group discussion with current students. Therefore, the researcher applied such comparison to better understand what soft skills that the graduates able to develop before compare the list of skills among the group of graduate. Later, the researcher also did the same thing with students group. During the interview process, the researcher sort out information in different layer and take notes to see the similarities and differences of the emerging theme among these two groups of respondents. By comparing data within the same group, the researcher was able to identify cluster of soft skills commonly mentioned by a group of respondents.

Step 3, the researcher compare the data between different group to understand if the role and responsibility able to influence the level of skill development. The researcher take all piece of data of respondents who perform the leading role to compare with the respondents from the one who do the supporting role to identify the common and differences in skills development.

In this research, the researcher used Microsoft Excel to keep detailed transcript of the data. The Excel sheet helps the researcher to easily label and code the data. First in vague detail and then the researcher dive through information again and categorize

information in small detail to make sure it is place under the right categories of skill development. The coding approach through excel sheet and three steps comparison help the researcher to easily count frequency of key soft skills and understand relationship between different pieces of information. For example, the finding points out that respondents' role and responsibility significantly contribute to develop different set of skills or the intensity of conflicts among the member student significant reduce number of member students for the year.

3.6 Rigor, Reliability and Validity in the Research

Qualitative research is often criticized that the data is in a small scale to represent the phenomena which can indirectly interpreted that the study can lack of validity and reliability which the researcher is going to present in this section on how the researcher has applied method to ensure high rigor, reliability and validity in data collection and analysis process for this study.

Golafshani (2003) stated that “even the use of reliability and validity are familiar in quantitative the researcher but it now reconsiders in qualitative research paradigm as well. The definition of reliability can be considered whether the result is replication”. Golafshani also further explained by using the definition addressed in Joppe' study that “validity determines towards the extent the research actually measures what is intended to measure or how accurate the research results can be. Often, the researcher achieved the validity in the research by asking a series of questions, and then looked for the answers in the research of others”.

To ensure high rigor in term of reliability and validity in this research, the researcher have used Verification Strategies to ensure the rigor from research design process towards the end to the data analysis.

The Verification Strategies should occur within the conduct of inquiry. It is the process to ensure both reliability and validity of data. The strategies include the activities such as ensuring methodological coherence, sampling sufficiency, applying quota sampling, ensuring a dynamic relationship between sampling, data collection and analysis, thinking theoretically, and theory development (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002)

In the research design, research select qualitative in order to gain holistic view of experience of graduates and students who participate in the student-led volunteering organization. The in-depth data surely can provide sufficient support why and how the respondents able to acquire certain soft skills.

The researcher applies the technic of quota sampling to identify target respondents from both graduates and students. The study aims to ensure range of perspectives is gathered from graduates, who is currently working and applying the soft skills in their work now, the students who provide the current and update information of the situation, they university affiliate who can provide information on policy and practice and CSOs as outsiders who passionate to apply volunteering as student development tool.

Moreover, the students and graduates respondent are gender mixed. They come from different background and various professional and field of study in the university. They have different years of working experience or currently study in different year. With different source of data, the researcher can receive full spectrum of information to reach high rigor in the research. In additional to that, the researcher also randomized the sample of respondents for both group of students and graduates. At the beginning of the study in March 2016, the researcher received the name list for graduates and current students in the form of electronic files before randomly pick the name then call to ask for consent to participation in this research.

In the process of data collection through focus group discussion, the researcher applied the methodology called 'two raters'. The researcher invited a friend to help with the focus group discussion to capture the key content and clarify some of the interview answers that may lead to misinterpretation. This ways allow the researcher to fully focus on asking the questions. The technic can help to ensure that information received through the focus group discussion with students is well captured to analyse accurately.

Besides those Verification Strategies mentioned above, the researcher also applied respondent validation in the part of data collection process.

Johnson & Waterfield (2004) addressed that respondent validation is the mean to establish credibility of data. And yet, the approach of seeking validation from participants still is very questionable, but the new information received through respondent

validation can further complete the piece of data received earlier and helps to validate the findings in greater detail.

For this research, respondents were asked consent to participate in this research. They were explained on the purpose of the research and received list of questions at least a week before. The researcher had spent about 5 minutes with each participants to explain purpose of study, interview process and list of questions as well as clarify some terminology to ensure respondents are fully understand and able to engage throughout the interview process. This research applied the open-end questions to better understand their experience in engaging with student-led volunteering organization and to get sufficient key word and message that lead to valid interpretation.

To ensure the information received is validate, at the end of each question, the researcher summarized key received information to the respondent so that participants can eliminate some inaccurate data, then further explained or clarified the data to greater level of detail. Towards the end of interview process, participants were provided with 5 minutes to feedback on the researcher' interpretations of their responses, as well as can assist the researcher to re-analyse important piece of data for one more time.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

After a few months long of data collection process and analysis, the researcher able to summarize information to generate research findings that clearly explain what skills can be developed through engaging with the student-led volunteering organization, how students and graduates able to develop necessary soft skills and what are underline causes that made member students and graduates who share almost exact the same experience able to develop the skills in different level.

This chapter will present you with research finding. It will begin with the profile of respondents that combined of 4 different groups: graduates, current students, civil society organizations and the university affiliate. After that, the researcher will summarize research findings that respond each research questions which were addressed in detail in narrative part in the last section of the first chapter.

4.1 Profile of Respondents

This research applied in-depth interview, focus group discussion and non-participant observation to collect data from 3 groups of key respondents which are graduates, current students and civil society organizations.

4.1.1 Graduates

The in-depth interview was conducted with 15 graduates who actively participated in the Nontri Stream of Knowledge (NSK) during the time that they were student at this university. All 15 respondents were selected and divided into 3 groups based on number of years of their employment.

The first group of graduates has more than ten years of working experience. The second group has more than five years of working experience but less than ten years. The last group has more than one year but less than five years of working experience.

The respondents' pool has nine female and six male respondents. All of them have identified themselves as active member of the student-led organization as they were engaged with the activities over 2 years in different role and responsibility. The important feature to select respondents is to ensure the study get perspectives from both the group of core member who hold leading role and responsibilities (i.e. president and vice-president of the student-led organization) and other member who hold supporting role and responsibilities (i.e. coordinator, logistics support and administrator)

Respondents studied in various faculties. The three main field of study for organization' member are Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Business Administration and Faculty of Education. They currently are working as school teacher, customer services, program coordinator, engineer and sales manager.

Table 4.1 Profile of Respondent

Respondent	Sex	Field of Studied	Current Profession	Working Experience (Year)
Respondent 1	Male	Education	Teacher	13
Respondent 2	Female	Economics	Program Coordinator	12
Respondent 3	Female	Education	Teacher	11
Respondent 4	Female	Education	Teacher	11
Respondent 5	Male	Education	Teacher	10
Respondent 6	Female	Business Administration	Customer Service	9
Respondent 7	Female	Business Administration	Sales&	9
Respondent 8	Marketing			8
Respondent 9	Female	Fisheries	Customer	7
Respondent 10	Services			6
Respondent 11	Male	Fisheries	Manager	5

Table 4.1 Profile of Respondent (cont.)

Respondent	Sex	Field of Studied	Current Profession	Working Experience (Year)
Respondent 12	Male	Engineer	Program Coordinator	5
Respondent 13	Female	Humanities	Program Coordinator	4
Respondent 14	Female	Business Administration	Customer Service	3
Respondent 15	Male	Engineer	Engineer	2

Respondents were asked with open end questions so the researcher can hear their motivation to engage with volunteering activities. Three main reasons behind their first engagement are to follow their friends who were active member, to meet new friends and to travel to other provinces as well as take this opportunity to contribute their time for social development.

Majority of students who joined the student-led volunteering are staying in the university's dormitory located in the university compound. Member students often invite their friend or roommates to join volunteering activities and spend their free time widen their network with students from different faculties. Many students also see volunteering as a chance for them to get to travel to new locations. Only few respondents address the original purpose for joining the volunteering activities to help the underprivileged students and contribute to social justice.

Respondents acknowledge that the reason behind their first volunteering was simple as just making new friend, however, everyone addressed that their first volunteering activity enhanced their self-esteem as it give opportunity to expose to the life of children in rural area. They felt that they are in a privilege position, as well educated university students, so they were inspired to become active member to contribute for social development upon their return from the first volunteering trip. Yet, the research findings found that the most important reason that keep them continue to volunteer after their first trip is the good relationship they had cultivated with other member.

4.1.2 Current Student

The research findings are great contribution of 12 current students who actively participate of NSK for 2-3 years by the time they were engaged in this research. They were invited to attend a focus group discussion to tell their stories, share their experiences and reflect on skills which they able to develop through student-led volunteering activities.

The focus group discussion is gender balance, with students from different field of study, different number of year in membership. They held different role and responsibilities within the student-led organization.

The research found their motivation to be one of many active member of NSK are very similar to the graduates. They also reaffirmed that relationship among member is the most influential factor to keep them engage with the organization.

4.1.3 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

As described earlier in research methodology, there are number of civil society organizations (CSOs) that work to promote all form of community engagement as learning mechanism to achieve learning outcome in higher education.

The in-depth interview was conducted with staffs from three CSOs. The interview aims to understand various type of the application of community engagement activities as learning and development mechanism in higher education.

These respondents have been working for over 10 years to advocate that community engagement in the form of volunteering should be applied in education as a teaching and learning mechanism to booth students' morale and responsibility.

These organizations were carefully selected to be part of the research to gather important aspect of current initiatives in regard to volunteering activities in higher education institutes in Thailand. All of these organization share similar goals to advocate volunteering as learning and development tool for university students, however, they have different approach and activities to achieve set goals.

The first organization, the Knowledge Network Institute of Thailand, focus on building the network of higher institutions who promote volunteerism. Their work include build effective sharing platform among higher education institutions so that the institutions can share and learn the success and failure in developing policy and

practice to integrate volunteering as part of curricular or extracurricular activities in teaching and learning.

The second organization, the Volunteer Spirit Network, primarily working to promote volunteering and civic responsibility to university students. Volunteering is introduced as an active learning tool to boost students' morale and civic responsibility. The Volunteer Spirit Network is currently working with higher education institutes around the country to help them establish the volunteer centre to serve as coordination hub and training institutes for volunteering activities for the university.

The last organization, Komol Keemthong Foundation, is working closely with many student-led organizations from all regions of Thailand to do direct implementation of volunteering projects. The student-led volunteering organizations which were established on a voluntary basis with or without university recognition can access the foundation to apply for financial support and professional mentorship to implement their well-planned volunteering projects.

These three organizations have strategically worked to influence positive change in policy and practice in applying volunteering as a learning and development mechanism for university students. Their efforts have driven volunteerism to become one of the most effective learning tools in modern education in shaping civic responsibility and quality manpower. Their insightful perspectives on how student-led volunteering can add value to improve the quality of higher education are well captured to understand essential aspects which can enhance effective learning through engaging with volunteering.

4.1.4 University Affiliate: The Student Affair Division

This research also received a great support from Kasetsart's student affair division which is in charge of developing policy to integrate volunteering as part of curriculum and ensure effective practices within the student-led organizations to develop student necessary skills to enter into workforce successfully. The perspectives received from such interview with the director of this division gave the researcher insightful information on the development of the policy and how the policy was slowly shifted over time to develop skills and prepare quality graduates, soon to be employees, into the labour market.

4.2 The Soft Skills That Students Can Develop Through Their Engagement with Student-Led Volunteering Activities in a University (RQ1)

Respondents were asked to reflect on their experience on which soft skills that they have developed and enhanced through active participation in the student-led volunteering organization. All respondents agree that the volunteering activities had played significant role to shape their attitude, personalities and beliefs in which remain as a solid foundation to develop other important soft skills for their entry level employment and career advancement.

Through the interview process, respondents start to address some personal and interpersonal skills they perceived it has changed as a result of actively engaging in student-led volunteering organization.

4.2.1 Personal Skill

Personal skills is the most basic soft skills that most graduates and students able to develop through their engagement with the student-led volunteering organization. The personal skills that were mentioned frequently throughout the interview can be groups into three different set of soft skills namely; self-awareness and self-esteem, self-management skills and morale and civic responsibility.

4.2.1.1 Self Awareness and Self-Esteem

The most meaningful benefits that these respondents received through engaging with the student-led volunteering organization is the opportunity to deeply explore and understand their strengths and weaknesses which serve as a source of their self-confident and self-esteem to further develop their soft skills for their chosen occupation. One student who join student-led volunteering activities for three years stated that

“I came to the university with the idea that I am really capable as I was one among the top students who can get to this top university but my experience volunteering in a small communities far from home proved that I may be good at school but not in the world. I am aspired to improve myself and further explore who I am and who I would like to be from this experience”

Through the interview, the researcher was repeatedly told that the student-led volunteering organization is a place for respondents to self-explore and understand who they are and who they would like to be in future.

4.2.1.2 Self-Management Skills

Graduates had entered the university at young age. They may have not made the best choice to select their field of study. Through participating in the activities, many students and graduates had a chance to explore their potential, skills and competency. The experience helped to craft their career preference leading them to pursue the path after the completion of their degree.

Respondents agree that student-led organization is the first learning ground to improve their emotional intelligence as they were placed to work under the pressure to accomplish many tasks within the set time frame. They need to set their life goal and manage time to commit both volunteering activities and the study at the same time. One graduate who has been working for 7 years said that

“It was easy to just study and go home as your life only need to manage to be a good student. But to study and actively participate in the student-led volunteering activities at the same time was not an easy thing to do. I have learned to balance and manage my priority throughout the whole time as a student and a committee member. My time management skills was improved and I am so proud that I was able to accomplish two important aspects of my life at the same time”

4.2.1.3 Morale and Civic Responsibility

The most important philosophy of higher education institutes in Thailand is to equip graduates with skills, competencies, morale and civic responsibility so they can contribute to sustain prosperity of the country.

The study found that the student-led volunteering organization contributes to shape graduates' attitude towards civic responsibility. Key respondents in the research addressed that volunteering exposed them to the life of underprivileged students in Thailand. Because of the volunteering projects, they had to live with rural poor families. The experience inspired all of the respondents to believe that education is the tool to alleviate poverty. Besides that it also inspired them to become the change agent for social justice and development.

One of the most impressive personal story came from a current member student who habitually spend his weekend to watch television. He has addicted to a computer games before he commits himself to perform committee role of the organization. In his own word he said.

“Two years ago, I was joining a student camp in rural area. This small life-changing event made me realized how much I love to work with children. I was deeply inspired. I am truly believe that education is the best tool to improve the quality of life. I had witnessed how rural poor struggle to earn their living. The experience aspire me to be more useful to them in some way, since then, I decided to spend my weekend with more meaningful activities like joining the student-led volunteering organization. I think I become more responsible person, not only to myself but the society that I live in as well”

Off campus volunteering activities provide students and graduates with the chance to witness the privilege in their lives as university student. Many of them, for the first time, realized that any of their behaviours and lifestyles can directly or indirectly contribute to certain social problem.

Upon completion of the volunteering camp, some of them return to university with new perspectives in life. Many were inspired to make some changes to the small community they are living in like the university. Until now, most of the key respondents still continue to engage with some form of social contribution as part of their work or in their daily activities.

4.2.2 Interpersonal Skills

Respondents addressed six cluster of interpersonal skills that they were able to develop though the student-led volunteering activities. The top two soft skills that graduates most mentioned are team working and communication. These are following by problem-solving and decision making skills. The last two soft skills that commonly mentioned by leader of the student organizations are conflict management and leadership skills.

4.2.2.1 Team Working Skills

Each respondent has developed different set of soft skills based on their existing skills and responsibilities within the student-led volunteering organization.

However, team working skill is the most common one that all key respondents mentioned during the interview.

Unlike a classroom based learning which student can select their team member based on their preference, students who active participate in student-led volunteering activities have no control over who will be their new team member. In each academic year, when freshmen apply to join the organization, they were randomly assigned by their senior students to join an existing team to accomplish the tasks together. This would mean that students who are studying in different faculties, whom personalities can be entirely different, must learn to adapt their personality as well as communication and working style to be able to work effectively with the team.

Many respondents addressed that without participating in student-led volunteering activities, they had no opportunities to learn and develop the team working skills as the classroom based learning is not the best place to practice that. The comment below was shared similar idea as;

“In classroom based learning, even we were working as a team for any assignment but in practical I was only responsible for my part. Here, at student-led volunteering organization, I worked as a team member for any designated tasks. We, together as a team, planned, implemented, solved problem and reflected on any challenges to ensure we able to do better in our next activities.”

(Graduate with five years of work experience)

“I studied core subjects with many friends that I am quite familiar with their lifestyle. I don't need to adjust my personality that much to work with them. In the student-led organization, people came from different background and they had different set of believe. Thus, I need to learn how to work best with them. It's difficult at the beginning but the more I am familiar with their working style the more I can work well in the team member who obviously has various range of personalities”

(Graduate with three years of working experience)

“I have been working in this company for over 5 years. My technical skills is equivalent to my peer but I think that I faced less people issues than many of them. I have learnt people skills from joining the student-led organization. I gained experience working with people who has different personality. My experience as active member of student organization help me manage and balance relationship

with other members which significantly contribute towards my friendliness personality that I have used in my career life.”

(Graduate with five years of working experience)

With the interview and non-participant observation, the researcher can observe that team working skills is the most common skills developed through volunteering in both respondents groups of graduates and students. 12 out of 15 respondents in graduates group named the skills at the beginning of the interview before other skills. The reason behind this is very straight forward as the student-led volunteering activities involve team effort in order to implement the project successfully. Most of the activities will need more than two or three students to work together to accomplish the tasks therefore majority of students and graduates need to practice the skills shortly after become member of the organization.

4.2.2.2 Communication Skills

The second skills that often mentioned by respondents is communication skill. Throughout the time of working in student-led volunteering organization, weekly team meeting is the main activity that all students need to engage. In every meeting, students are offered the opportunity to present new ideas, share their opinions, express their feelings and bring up any concerns to the rest of the team.

Graduates and current students said that they slowly built up confident in public speaking through regularly participated in the weekly meeting. They stated that the weekly meeting was their safe space to engage in any constructive conversation. All of them were encouraged to speak up their mind therefore many graduates and students slowly enhanced their communication skills.

A current student, joined the organization for two years, was long before lack of confident to speak in a public space but now he shared his personal experience on how the engagement in the student-led volunteering organization can improve his communication skills. He said

“Before I join this student organization, I felt that my classmate can’t understand what I presented to them in class. I was lack of confident to be a representative for group. It was end up by I never get a chance to practice to present my work in front of the class again. At the student-led volunteering organization, I know my voice will be heard as everyone encouraged me to speak. I begin to communicate in small

group meeting then later in a bigger one. The more I use the meeting as an opportunity to practice, the more I learn to communicate with different people in different occasions. Today, I can say, I am more confident in speaking my idea, not only with friends in the student-led organization but also in front of my classmate too”

The fact that student-led volunteering organization has member student from different field of study can also contribute to build higher level of communication and negotiation skills. Students from different field of study have different way of looking into problems and often come up with different approaches to solve those problems too. One graduate who studied in Faculty of Humanities stated that

“I learn to drop my ego down and practice to listen to any new perspectives of my friends from Faculty of Engineering. Often time when I am not agree with their idea, I learn to communicate and negotiate in the way that my friend can understand my rational. These people think in systematic way, therefore, I need to find reasons to back up my idea and break it down into several process to better convince them to believe the same way I do. It was difficult and time consuming but I think it is really useful to my career life until now”

Additional reflection from other respondents who share similar perspectives on how the student-led volunteering activities helped them enhance their communication skills can be listed as follow;

“Everyone know that I barely talk in any meeting or public. Yet, they assigned me to work as a coordinator in the student organization. In order to work successfully I must ask support from other agencies. I have to convince potential donors to support our volunteering projects. Slowly, my communication skills were developed”

(Graduates with five years of work experience)

“Once we organise the volunteer projects, communication is the most critical skill to have. Even if you are too shy to convince any team member but in order to move forward with your assigned tasks, we learn to communicate. My experience gained through the student-led organization does not enable me to be an MC in any public event but I definitely manage to have effective communication with my co-workers in my daily work basis”

(Graduate with four years of working experience)

““Working in the student organization equip me with the right communication skills in workplace. As a new worker in my company, I know who I should ask for help so that I can quickly learn useful skills for my role”

(Graduate with two years of working experience)

Communication is the skills that graduates and students must exercise in order to work well with other people in the team. It is also the indicator of how well the organization can run. Any year that graduates able to effectively communicate the result of activities also came out positive too. The communication skill is the skill that student and graduate addressed most among all other skills and often come together or right after they named the team working skills.

Many respondents found their own way to develop communication skills. It is valued by all key respondents as one of the most critical employability skills to be success in the workplace. They feel very thankful that they had a chance to practice using the skill once they were actively participated in the student-led volunteering organization.

4.2.2.3 Problem Solving and Decision Making Skills

Another set of skills that were frequently mentioned by key respondents is problem solving and decision making. In the student-led volunteering organization, students play a central role to plan and implement activities with limit support and guidance from professional.

All of the volunteering project are held in rural part of the country. Students travel to different locations to do field survey and collect information before they make plan to implement the projects. No matter how much effort student put in planning, once the activities commence, there will be something goes in opposite direction. Many respondents valued these unpleasant experience as this is the opportunity to learn important lessons. These challenges had driven them to work better together to find solutions. Few key respondents share their invaluable experience which improve their decision making and problem solving skills as

“As commit and active member, we were encountered with problems all the way from beginning to the completion of the volunteering projects. For example, we often had not enough member to start our weekly meeting. Once we have enough member to get the meeting going, none of them would like to commit to

certain tasks. Some of them said that the weekly meeting are too boring and time consuming. Later, we decided to combine meeting with our team dinner or we asked them to join picnic day at one of the public park. People seem to enjoy this kind of casual meeting better. This way, we were able to double the attendee's number which later I managed to deliver key message and tasks across all members"

(Graduate with four years of working experience)

"Joining volunteering projects to teach in rural area school exposed me to new challenges every day. Sometime, we planned to have outdoor activities but it was raining all day long. Another day, half of students didn't show up to join our long well-planned activities. We made decision to adjust our plan. We were more flexible with our approaches so we can combat with any arising challenges. The more I encountered with problems, the shorter time I took to come up with greater solutions"

(Graduate with ten years of working experience)

"Learning in classroom, I only faced with questions that the answer is either right or wrong so I just need to make decision and receive its consequence but when I am working here at the organization I know that there are many options. I learn to compare and find the best option for my problem."

(Student who serve in the organization for two years)

"Student-led volunteering projects provide the opportunity to exercise my critical thinking skills while I was trying to solve certain challenges. In classroom learning, I barely encountered any unexpected situation as I learn the lesson that my lecturer carefully planned. The theories and knowledge on business management learn in class was great, but I have no clues how to manage and execute the plan until I joined the student-led volunteering organization"

(Student who join the student-led volunteering for three years)

Towards this extent to develop problem solving and decision making skills through the student-led volunteering activities, the study found that the experience in volunteering projects can well prepare graduates' attitude to be ready to encounter with any arising problems with confident. Respondents said that working in the student-led volunteering organization constantly give them a real test of working world problem. They had the chance to solve smaller scale of problems which gradually prepare them to tackle other complicated workplace issues in future.

One respondent who is currently working as program coordinator reaffirmed the statement through her word that

“Even my experience from the student-led volunteering organization was not equipped me with the skills to deal with every customer related issues but it equipped me with the right attitude to face with any challenges arise from difficult customers. Until now, I can response positively to any problem. I often come up with the solution very quickly. I believe that my ability to solve problem and make decision is the most critical skill I learned through engaging with student-led volunteering activities”

4.2.2.4 Leadership Skills

Van Linden and Fertman’s studies in youth leadership (as cited in Ricketts & Rudd, 2002) stated “Leaders are the people who have the ability to think for themselves, communicate their idea and feelings, help others understand and act on their own beliefs as well as influence others to pursue their goals in an ethical and socially responsible approaches”

Leadership skills in this research predominately focus on the ability of respondents to be able to communicate organization’s vision, inspire people to engage positively with the volunteering activities and the ability to lead other to achieve the goal.

Most of member students have learn leadership theory in their core course without knowing how to apply in everyday life situation. Without getting involved in any form of student development activities, they would not know that in reality to exercise leadership in an organization setting can be more complicated than learning the leadership theories in textbooks.

The leadership skills are long-term development process thus student need the experiential learning spaces to exercise and further develop the skills. Research found respondents who identified leadership skill as key soft skills gained from student organization are the one who has served in leadership position in volunteering events during their engagement with the student-led volunteering organization.

In fact, once reviewing their background, the researcher found in-depth information that these respondents were active student leader in their high school. Therefore, they had capacity to lead a small team. Once they joined the volunteering

organization, they immediately exercised the skills. The researcher has no doubt why they were selected to serve in leadership role in their senior year.

One respondent reconfirmed this critical observation through his story. He was appointed as student leader throughout his high school year prior taking the president role in the student-led organization. Without these experience at high school level, he would not have leader' charisma in which persuade his peer to select him as a president of the student organization. Nevertheless, he still stated that the experience in leading the team to run student-led volunteering projects in the university level help him to enhance his existing leadership skills to higher level. In his own word he said

“Obviously as a student president in university, I had encountered with higher degree of people problem as I need to lead well-educated university students who have intellectual and leadership capacity as equivalent to me. The experience in leading the team gave me great lessons on how to communicate with my team to set goal. I learnt to apply different communication approaches to work with the team of people with different level of capacity and commitment. It is really difficult to make everyone agree with the goal but I have managed to go through several projects successfully”

(Graduate with seven years of working experience)

However, as the student-led volunteering organization has flexible structure that enable members to take turn and serve as a project leader therefore many respondents regardless of power position in that year can also develop leadership traits through the projects that they took leadership role.

In this study, the researcher also found the concept of lateral leadership as many respondent who did not have position of power nor the experience to serve as project's leader also said they able to develop some leadership traits through working and leading their peers in several projects.

4.2.2.5 Conflict Management Skills

Many respondents admitted that because they were young at the time, they had no ability to manage their negative emotions while they were working in the team which led to certain conflicts. One graduate who was working as an

engineer for 5 years said that “Conflict is part of team working. We can’t avoid it no matter how hard we have tried”

Many respondents agreed that some conflict make them learn but only if they know how to manage and control negative consequences. The study found personal conflicts between few key members created many negative impacts to the organization.

Once the conflict occurs, often the solution is the student, who self-identified as part of the problem, decided to leave the organization to let the other team run the projects. In those years, those remained-students agreed to appoint member who has gained mutual respect from each parties as a president to maintain healthy relationships among all members.

Unlike previous addressed soft skills in which most member can develop though active participation in volunteering projects, many respondents agreed that conflict management is a higher level of soft skill that require external support to guide them to develop concrete skill set and use it to cultivate strong bond between members.

Few respondents honestly admitted that they tend to avoid mentioning their concerns and frustrations in front of other member as they believe this is the best way to resolve certain issues, before they soon realized that they were wrong about it. One respondent share her personal story related to her lack of conflict management skills during our interview. In her word

“I am sure you can imagine that we (students) come from different background. All of us has full energy to contribute to the work. Often we believe that our approaches of doing things is the best way forward and we expected that other will believe the same way. We lack of experience to handle complex issues once it come to conflicts between our good friends. We have no mentor to guide us how to apply constructive engagement approach to solve problem therefore many time we just let the problem roll until it was difficult to resolve. Towards the end, we pretend that there is nothing to resolve and slowly our member disengage with our activities and we couldn’t deliver meaningful projects that year”

Among all of the respondents, the study found only three members, who were working in leading role, responded positively that they have gained the skills

through their direct experience in solving personal conflict between members. One former student's president shared through the interview that

“That year, there aren't many active member to complete all planned volunteering projects. I was concern that if the situation goes towards this direction, our student-led organization will be shut down. When I step in as a leader, I arranged weekend trip for all of us to spend time together. This is non-work related trip that allow all member to get to know each other in personal level. A few weeks gone by, we had more people join the activities to deliver volunteering projects as we planned”

From the narrative part above, the researcher presents the table below to summarize the frequency of soft skills that students and graduates are able to develop through participating in the student-led volunteering activities.

Table 4.2 Summary of Soft Skills Developed among Graduates and Students

Respondents (No.)	Team Working	Communication	Problem Solving and Decision Making	Leadership	Conflicts Management
Students (12 people)	12	10	9	6	1
Graduates (15 people)	15	12	9	5	3
% of respondents	100	81.48	66.66	40.74	14.81

The findings lead us to believe that team working skills was named the most as skills gained through participating in student-led volunteering activities. We can say that conflict management skills is the most difficult skills to develop in which the interview had helped to clarify to us that graduates and students will not able to develop the skills without appropriate guidance. Some graduates pointed out that as students are young and full of energy to put in the student-led volunteering organization and often time it lead to conflict that they do not know how to deal with it. In such a case, students and graduates believe that mentorship support will be very useful to help student go through the turbulent and able to learn from such a meaningful

experience in volunteering activities that we will address in more detail in recommendation part.

4.3 The Benefits of Soft Skills developed through the Student-led Volunteering towards Graduates Employability and Career Advancement (RQ1)

In conclusion, through the interview, respondents addressed that the experience gain through participating in student-led volunteering organization help to increase their employability and career advancement by

4.3.1 Increase work readiness

In 21st century workplace, employers are looking to recruit graduates with work readiness skills. This refer to someone who has basic academic, critical thinking, communication skills and ability to adapt to work in new working environment.

Respondents addressed that their experience in the student-led organization has prepared them for their first job interview and help them transit and adjust to the life of newly hired employees successfully. Some critical comments arises in the interview with two graduates who has recently enter into professional life were

“When I sat for my job interview, the interviewers use competency based interview questions which most of them asking about my experience in doing some tasks. I had an opportunity to give them an example of how I manage to work and solve some challenges during my university life. I draw my memories from the experience gaining through the student-led volunteering work. Without these invaluable experiences, I am not sure how I would answer these interview questions to secure this job”

“The most valuable skills I have developed though the student-led volunteering organization is planning and time management. These two skills always useful for new employee with no regard to the role and responsibility. I was so lucky to have an opportunity to practice once I was student. These two skills help me to effectively transit from university life to be an active staff of the company”

Majority of the respondents said that they gradually developed basic working skills such as team working and communication skills throughout their time with the student-led volunteering organization so they able to better adjust themselves to the new role by using the skills developed in their new work contexts. Everyone believes that their basic skills gained through volunteering work contributed directly to increase work readiness.

4.3.2 Manage relationship at work

Maintaining and managing workplace relationships is one of the most difficult part for newly graduates who have just entered into new workplaces but many respondents confirm though the interview that experience with student-led volunteering help them go through workplace conflicts easily. A few respondents share during the interview on how student-led volunteering help them manage their relationship at work better as

“I had working with new members who has different personality in different volunteering projects. Once I first joined this company. I find no problem making new friends and familiar myself with new team members very quickly. I am enjoy to managing relationships with other employees who work in various departments. These good relationships I have cultivated help me accomplish my tasks many times for these years”

(Graduate with six years of working experience)

“The experience gained through the student-led volunteering organization taught me to listen deeply so that I can understand underline meanings of what they would like to tell me. I can maintain good relationships with people because I paid attention to them”

(Graduate with four years of working experience)

“People said that I am really friendly and nice to work with. I barely find problem working with anyone in the office. Often I was asked to help other department with certain tasks. If I have time, I often do it as this can develop new skills which may be useful for my work in future”

(Graduate with two years of working experience)

4.3.3 Enhance work productivity

One key findings found in this research is the majority of respondents are currently in the occupations that differ from their field of study. Therefore many respondents never have opportunity to apply technical skills learnt through their degree in the workplace. Most of key respondents need to learn and practice new technical skills from their senior employees which made certain interpersonal skills like communication, team working are essential to their career advancement. Some reflections received from in-depth interview are

“Even my technical expertise are not equivalent to other managers who have been working here longer than me, yet, I believe that my people skills has compensated my capability to maintain the position. My human resources manager often said that my strength is my interpersonal skills. I know how to manage, lead and inspire my team to accomplish goals. As a manager, I manage relationships among my team members and inspire them to achieve higher goals together. I have applied my leadership skill with my daily life, I think that I am working less, in term of number of hours, but gain more or equivalent productivity as other teams”

(Graduate with seven years of working experience)

“I joined the company in a position close to my field of study. However, the technical knowledge from classroom is not much applicable to new workplace’s setting because my company has different work procedures. Once I was hired for my first job, I need to relearn many things from my peer and seniors. As a new member of the company, I recall my past experience once I was new member of the student-led volunteering organization. To success in a company, I do the same thing; making new friends, listen more than speak and ask for peer support if necessary. The experience in student-led volunteering organization help new employee like me keep the level of productivity to meet my company’s expectation”.

(Graduate with twelve years of working experience)

4.3.4 Build-up lifelong learning skills

Soft skill development is a lifelong process. Graduates gave high value to their volunteering experiences in rural area as the place where they was inspired for lifelong self-improvement.

An example on this case can be demonstrated through personal story of one respondent who has been working for over 11 years. She gave very impressive quote to show her gratitude on her time with the student-led volunteering organization as

“The first time I was exposed to the life of underprivileged people in rural area of the country, I think that I am more capable than them because I am an educated women who live in capital city of this country. The experience in rural communities proved that I am wrong as I was not able to do simple tasks that children in the village can do. I thought that I am going to rural area to educate children, in turn, I received more knowledge than I can contribute back to them. This made me realize that my knowledge is only applicable to my context and environment in urban community. There are many other contexts I never know before. There are many new things that I need to be humble enough to make myself a new student again”

One respondent reaffirmed that as a member of the student-led organization which has mission to improve quality of education for rural poor children as well as promote lifelong learning, she was convinced to believe in the philosophy too.

“When I was assigned to new tasks, the first thing I did is asking someone to teach me how to do it. If I encounter new work related problems, I know that I will learn one new way to do it better next time”

(Graduate with twelve years of working experience)

Many respondents offered their personal thoughts in the same direction that they developed the attitude of lifelong learning. They believe that there is always something new they can learn every single day to apply such knowledge within their new work contexts. A positive attitude developed through volunteering activities were told throughout the interview that it is essential to be success in graduates’ career lives.

4.4 Experiential Learning as the Main Learning Approach in Enhancing Soft Skills through Student-Led Volunteering Activities (RQ2)

The student-led volunteering organization serves as a learning space where students exercise their academic knowledge and soft skills to work as team member in order to deliver volunteering projects to target schools and communities. These volunteering experience provide hand on experiential learning to students and graduates. One respondent

who was working for 3 years stated that the student-led volunteering organization provided her opportunity for self-development in many areas. In her word, she said that

“Student-led volunteering organization provide me a room to grow through working with other students. I am not sure exactly when these soft skills were built as I slowly changed behaviour and attitude towards several things without realizing it. My commitment in the student-led volunteering projects shaped my skills and shifted my attributes to whom I am today”

(Graduate with three years of working experience)

Respondents who gained key employability skills such as management and planning and other important soft skills through their involvement with the entire cycle for volunteering projects said in the interview that their experience involved with these listed activities help them enhance their employability skills.

4.4.1 Organization Strategy Review and Committee Selection

The Student-led Organization is solely managed by committed members. The organization survives from generation to generation because members exercise well-planned strategies to maintain high number of membership as well as to secure important resources. Throughout a decade long of operation, the committee members of each year put their efforts to review organization strategy and select committee who will continue the mission.

Before the academic year begin, committee will conduct annual organization strategy review, often referred as organization seminar. It usually held every year by senior member students who are going to complete their bachelor degree and enter to professional life. Potential member students who show strong commitment to become the next group of committee are invited to join the three day and two night event.

Senior member students took this opportunity to review and discuss with new team on the organization’s vision, mission, completed volunteering projects and other activities occurs within past academic year.

In additional to that, the event is the best opportunity to transfer skills and knowledge to new group of committed members. The topics of volunteering projects’ administrative process, proposal development, budget management, project management

and reporting are delivered so that the new members know how to run the student-led volunteering organization in the near future.

A few months after the seminar, the committee selection process usually occurs so members can form new working team as well as select their most preferred leader. A week before the Election Day, member students can nominate their representatives. Traditionally, the president and vice-president of the organization were filled through voting system but other key supporting roles such as secretary, coordinator and accountant, often leave widely open for any member students to volunteer to take the role. Once all positions were filled, the student organization is obligated to update the list for new committee to Student Council and the University Student Affairs Division.

4.4.2 Annual Activities Planning

Based on university's regulations on student development activities, all student-led volunteering organization need to deliver five volunteering projects within one year of academic calendar, The committee members meet regularly in the first few month at the beginning of academic year to plan organization's annual activities. Throughout the year, member student are working together to do site identification and set up implementation plan for upcoming projects. Key tasks are designated to each team which usually combine both former and new members. Each team have agreed timeframe to complete the tasks and set the date for following up meetings.

4.4.3 Site Identification

Through the planning process, any member students regardless of their role in the organization can volunteer to join one of the two field survey teams. The field survey teams begin their location searching process online before give a call to identified schools to make appointment for field visit. Often time, the location's name for off-campus volunteering project, referred as youth camp, was suggested by member who know or familiar with the community.

In the field visit trip, team members will further assess some essential elements i.e. space to conduct volunteering activities, service provider for meals and lodging within the community, means of transportation in each day of activities. Then, the team will consolidate information collected from field visit to present to other committee

for review in their next meeting. All members are asked to vote their preferred volunteering site according to the set selection criteria. The primary selection criteria including of strong support from school principle and community, the number of school students and school location that best fit with their budget.

4.4.4 Proposal Development

Proposal Development is an essential process to secure resources and support from the university. At the beginning of each academic year, the committee will bring the results gained from organization seminar to develop a proposal in which they will have to decide five main volunteering projects to implement within the year. The process of proposal development is a great opportunity for new committee students to begin their bound and work as a team. Throughout the process, they practice to listen to one another. The committee members will also open opportunity for all members to suggest new initiatives and activities which will be included in the proposal.

Once the proposal was developed, the student affair division often invite at least three representatives from each student-led organization to present their proposed projects in front of the review committee which usually combine of lecturer, academic officers and representatives from the student council. The results for budget approval is announced by the University Student Council within a month after their final review process.

4.4.5 Promoting Student-Led Volunteering Organization

The beginning of each academic year is also the best time to promote the student-led volunteering organization. During June or July, the university traditionally arranged 'Student Activities Week' to open opportunity for all student-led volunteering organizations to present their organization's activities to first year students.

Committee students from all the student organizations are working collaboratively to arrange the event by setting up the promotion booths and prepare many fun games to persuade first year student to join their booths and signed their name for upcoming activities.

Later on, these students in the name list were invited by the committee group to the dinner meeting called 'welcome new comers'. The event aims to build good

relationships between former members and new students, hoping that these students will become active members of the student-led volunteering organization in future.

4.4.6 Member Recruitment and Selection for Volunteering Projects

After finalising site identification, set the timeframe and promote the organization activities in the university campus. A group of committee will advertise the first volunteering opportunity through every channel within the university to start the recruitment process. Students who interested to attend the off-campus volunteering project can submit their applications.

Once the working committee has enough applications, they began the selection process. Applicants will be selected base on their motivation, interests and commitment. These applicants are invited to participate the orientation meetings which held two times in consecutive weeks. Any students who had participated in both orientation meetings will be invited to join a week long off-campus volunteering project.

4.4.7 Fund Raising

While member students are working to prepare off campus volunteering activities, they often encounter with the financial constraints. Member students of all generations were once gone through the situation where they had to make decision either to scale down the project to match the budget provided by university or work harder to fundraise from other sources to continue their set plan. Every so often, the committee had chosen the latter one. Therefore, in each year, these students also engaged with various range fundraising campaigns which include selling second hand books, postcard, handmade stuffs, t-shirts. In additional to that, they also contacted company, temples and charity to donate food supplies and products for their upcoming volunteering projects.

4.4.8 Project Implementation and Post-Services Review Meeting

As mentioned in previous section, the student-led volunteering organization has five main projects to roll out throughout academic year. The duration of these projects were designed differently to serve project' objectives which can be ranged from 3 days

for the small project to 2 weeks for the main volunteering project occurs in long semester break.

The Nontri Stream of Knowledge (NSK) has main mission to advocate the important of education among youths in rural area of Thailand. The main activity is to work in collaboration with school teachers to apply teaching materials, which develop based on the needs of the school, to teach school students in the assigned classes.

In every off-campus volunteering project (often called by NSK' member as teaching camp), the committee of the organization usually hold key responsibility to lead different team of logistics, academic support, welfare support and camp coordination. Each team plays important role to ensure the success of the camp.

As the main activities of the project is teaching students and run outdoor life skills activities. The member of academic team hold primary role to teach in the assigned classes with assistance of the academic support team who in charge of developing teaching materials and train new members to use these materials in classroom.

Other main function in the camp is the logistics and welfare team who hold key responsibility to arrange accommodation and transportation as well as maintain other welfare of all members throughout the period of volunteer project.

In this study, key respondents state almost exactly the same thing that their most valuable experience occurred during volunteering project implementation as they learned to plan, manage relationship with other team members, dealing with some conflicts and solve problems to ensure the project can achieve its set objectives. Gradates and current member students have emphasized that they learn and develop their important soft skills through working in assigned role and responsibility.

At the end of the work day, the group of committees will come together to review their daily activities. All members had a chance to present their success and challenges in implementing activities for each day.

The activities review meeting serve as safe space for committee to reflect their personal feelings towards the support from other team as well as to further seek collaboration to improve team work performance. Conflicts resolution skills and problem solving skills of some respondents were enhanced at this stage as they need to resolve the issues before the activities begin again in the next day.

As explained above, the study shown that the experiential learning process play the most critical role to enhance soft skills for graduates who were the active members of the student-led volunteering organization.

All respondents emphasized that the success of volunteering projects came from members' ability to carry full responsibility to work collaboratively in the team. Members exercise different soft skills to help them work harmoniously and effectively within the team. They learn to communicate, manage relationships and resolve the conflicts as well as making decision to solve any problems which obstruct them from achieving project goals.

Throughout the whole working process from the planning to the implementation of the volunteering projects, these respondents had the chance to exercise and use soft skills namely team working, communication, problem solving and decision making, leadership and conflict management skill in different level based on their role and responsibilities. They keep using the skills, not just in one project but five projects throughout the years for few years during their university time, thus they are able to slowly enhance these skills and then transfer to their first professional work.

4.5 Critical Learning Approaches in the Process of Experiential Learning to Enhance Soft Skills through the Student-Led Volunteering Activities (RQ2)

The experiential learning in student-led volunteering projects provides a lot of opportunity for students and graduates to learn and develop their soft skills. To understand better of the learning approaches, the researcher used non-participant observation to observe five activities namely organization strategy review, annual activities planning, promoting student-led volunteering organization, fund raising and meeting for project implementation. The researcher also applied in-depth interview to further understand the phenomena from the group of current member students and graduates.

Through combination of research methodology, the researcher found three learning approaches commonly occur within the learning process. Both non-participant observation and in-depth interview with key respondents confirmed that members learned

and develop necessary skills through reflection, modelling other people's behaviours and through the mentoring relationships with the seniors. These learning approaches are crucial as it helps them aware the knowledge and skills gained through their engagement with the student-led volunteering organization and identify ways to improve their skills further.

4.5.1 Reflection

Reflection is the main learning tool that occurs while graduates engaged in volunteering projects. Some key respondents said that while working in student-led volunteering organization, they feel comfortable to share their reflection upon their personal attitude, feelings and lesson learn towards their work experience to their peer.

However, the study found that reflection process are put in different priority level throughout these 15 years based on the committee students of each academic year. In some years, it was prioritized as main core learning tool to help student learn and reap the benefit of self-development though their participation in the student organization. In those year, they tried several ways to improve the reflection process including use new facilitation technic. Several time, they had invited experience facilitator to help ensure the process will run effectively so the members can learn through reflection of their work experiences.

One graduate who constantly looking for ways to improve the learning process within student organization addressed the reason why he think reflection is critical to his learning and development.

“Often, the committee members tend to forget that the volunteering activities supposed to contribute benefits to communities and to constantly improves students' inner-self. Every day, our attitude was slightly shifted to different direction. The volunteering influences our behaviours to interact with other people. After years that we worked in the student-led organization, our existing skills were further enhanced to greater level. In my opinion, it will be such a wasteful, if we had time to work in volunteering projects but no time to observe how these projects influence the changes within us. I believes that the reflection process was the most fruitful time and I couldn't trade it with other things which are obviously less significant for my professional life”

(Graduate with thirteen years of working experience)

However, some years the reflection was not part of core activities. There were many reason behind that including members struggled to cope with amount of work or no experience members who can facilitate the session. One respondent, who was an active member told the researcher that in his year his team didn't put much attention to the reflection process. He justified the situation as

“We were busy throughout the year as there were only few active members worked in the student organization. I admitted that the reflection were the last thing we think about. We struggled so much to complete volunteering projects. I am not sure how we survived those time as it was really difficult for us”

(Graduate with eight years of working experience)

The findings from many respondents are consistent with what the researcher observed in one of the key activities. In February, 2015 the researcher joined the organization strategy review. In the event, the senior students taught the younger one on how to implement some key tasks such as administrative work, proposal writing and budgeting. For two days event, there were no time allocated to allow students to sit back and reflect what was going on or how to do their work better in the next academic year. None of the process led them to think how the valuable volunteering experiences can benefit their career life in future. Further to this observation, the researcher did the in-depth interview to find out where the reflection process stand within volunteering activities implemented throughout the year. Unfortunately that it was given so little priority for this academic year.

The results from in depth interview, the researcher noticed that students and graduates justified different reasons to prioritized or not prioritize the reflection process in their year of operations. Mainly, they said that there is not sufficient time to do both volunteering work and learning process. However, most of respondents agreed that their learning will be much more effective in developing certain soft skills if they take time to reflect their experience.

4.5.2 Mentoring

Mentoring was addressed as a learning method for several key respondents. As mentioned earlier, new member students were assigned to work in existing team which lead by committee who has few years of volunteering experience. Once the project roll

out, the mentoring process occurs naturally as the former member will work closely with the new one to teach them on how to achieve assigned task. Occasionally, the experience member assume the role of mentor and resource person and the new members are mentees. With a few years of working in student-led volunteering organization, the research's respondents were once serve as mentee before become mentor in later years.

From the interviewed, most of respondents had positive experience serving as mentee and mentor during their time with the student-led volunteering organization. All the interviewees told the researchers that mentorship has influence the level of commitment and work performance of all member. One respondent confirmed the statement above through his own word as

“I had a great help to immerse myself to the organization and the work tasks from a senior member. He was very supportive. He help me navigate the work and balance both study and volunteering activities. I worked much more effective through his guidance as I learn to skip the same mistake he already did. Once I become mentor myself in later years, I remember exactly how it feel like to have great life' mentor. My experience with my mentor has inspired me to deliver kind of support to my mentees”

(Graduate with five years of working experience)

One female respondents also mentioned that the feedback from her mentor can help her to shape the way she worked in the organization. Through her word she said

“As a female leader and only female in the leading team, I was so concern that all male committee members will not listen or support me while we tried to accomplish the work tasks. My mentor guided me the way I can improve my working skill to gain respects from these male committees. He encouraged me that I should lead the team with full confident and make any judgment based on collected facts and information. To lead these men, I should talked less but work along with them more. These suggestions help me to survive in my role as a student president”

(Graduate with eleven year of working experience)

Often time, senior members had also put their effort to increase new member's awareness of social problems and call for action. During the mentoring process, some senior member also spent time to reinforce positive attitude to member as well.

One respondent reflected the experience working with his mentor before he said to the researcher that

“My senior taught me an important thing that we always get more than we gave. He is right. I was once thinking that as an educated student volunteer I can help other people, in fact, I had received important life-long lesson throughout my volunteering time. My mentor play an important role in my life and I learn a lot from him”

(Graduate with five years of working experience)

Through the non-participant observation and in-depth interview with the current member, the researcher found that mentoring assisted new members to improve work's efficiency in short period of time. In addition to that, it equips all member with the right attitude towards volunteering and social development agenda. In one event that the researcher went to observe, senior members were working closely in the team of younger members. The learning process through mentoring occurred naturally. However, the proportion of their relationship still use directing style rather than empowering which is philosophy of mentoring process.

Because mentoring relationship has influenced the learning of students and graduates thus it is a component that member need to build up the skills to effectively mentor their peers and junior students. Yet, the researcher found no evident to support that the committees or any member students were equipped with the skills by any organization to perform the tasks effectively. This is another critical point to discuss further as a way to enhance students' learning and development through volunteering activities.

4.5.3 Modelling others

Human learn from each other all the time. If one group of members has attitude towards any situation or behave in certain way, it often influence to other members.

Graduates and students who shared their personal stories in this interview addressed several things to confirm that they have followed certain characteristics, behaviour and attitude of their senior members. Some of the quotes which confirm that learning through modelling other is one of effective learning mechanism for student-led volunteering organization.

“The student-led organization is the place where likeminded people come together to contribute their energy for a better society. It is very easy for me to follow my senior's character. She is very kind and supportive person. She pushed me to become

better person. I am appreciated her support and realized how the kindness of one person can create positive impact to other person's life. Once I became a senior member, I remind myself to give high level of support forward to reinforce positive atmosphere in the student organization”

(Graduates with three years of working experience)

“My senior is very calm and patient. He is a good listener. I was with him in the situation that he dealt with conflict among two members. I have observed how he patiently dealt with the situation and how we talked to these two members. Once it was my turn to take the leader role. I often recall his working style and think about his decision if he is in this situation like me. It had help me to go through some difficult situations while I was managing my work at the student-led organization”

(Graduates with six years of working experience)

Modelling positive attitude is one of the technic that members used in the student organization to create supportive working and learning environment. This has influence the commitment of member to stay engage with all the activities. Many respondents said the same way that they maintained strong commitment over a few years because of positive atmosphere and the strong bond with their senior members. In the interview, the researcher also found out that many respondents talked about their senior with high admiration as these people were their first role model in their adulthood life.

In the student-led volunteering organization, students learned and adapted characteristics, attitude and communication style from these peers and seniors which directly indicate that modelling others is important learning approach used in the student-led volunteering organization.

4.6 Influencing Factors for Soft Skills Development through Student-led Volunteering Activities (RQ3)

Respondents reflected on the various range of factors that influence the effectiveness of soft skills development through student-led volunteering organization. These following influential factors are personal attribute, the learning process in the student-led organization and various student support services received from the university.

4.6.1 Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is the most important factor that influence skills development through student-led volunteering activities. Intrinsic motivation which include of attitude, interest and aspiration will contribute greatly to their level of achievement in learning and development through working in the student organization.

As student-led volunteering organization is an open space and run in voluntarily based. There was no university accreditation in which students need to obtain in order to complete their bachelor degree. Therefore, if the activities does not fit with their interest, they can disengage any time to join other organization that they prefer more.

These respondents mentioned strong motivation to keep engage in the student-led volunteering act as fundamental step to create positive learning experience. People who can greatly benefit from this learning space are people who self-motivated, be open-minded to new experience, able to accept feedback and have a strong self-determination to accomplish assigned work.

Some statement from few respondents reaffirmed the important of intrinsic motivation towards the effectiveness of soft skills development through student-led volunteering activities as follow;

“I follow my good friend to join the student-led volunteering organization without any expectation to receive anything of out my participation. In turn, after few years, I noticed that my attitude towards certain things in my life was slowly changed. I think that being an open-minded person keep the doors of learning wide open which lead to many positive learning experience”

(Graduate with three years of working experience)

“With the attitude that there is always room for improvement, I was excited to take new tasks to learn different skills. Over a few years of my active participation, my communication and team working skills were enhanced”

(Graduate with five years of working experience)

“My seniors was my life coach. He know my personality and motivation. He often provide me with the space to exercise my idea and initiatives. I often receive feedback which help me improve my leadership skills”

(Graduates with six years of working experience)

In conclusion, intrinsic motivation is a great source of student's energy while working in the student-led volunteering organization. It keep student maintain their interest and engage positively with the activities. Students have different reasons that motivate them to maintain their commitment with the student-led volunteering organization. Many students take volunteering projects as a learning platform. Some came with bigger idea of contributing to create a better society. Yet, hundreds of students joined the organization without any special reason but to follow their good friend to make new friends. With different motivations, the same platform can give various value and result of skills development to individual member.

4.6.2 Orientation

Orientation is the critical elements of the student-led volunteering organization. It is the process to reinforce organization culture and believe to the new members. In the past, orientation were used to welcome and introduce new members to a new setting for team working environment and foster positive relationships among new and old members.

Ideally, orientation aims to shape student mind sets on volunteering and enhance their team working skills in order to complete assigned tasks of the volunteering projects effectively. Good orientation should facilitate deeper understanding of project's goals and member' role to contribute the knowledge and skills to achieve the goals together.

Several respondents share common experience that they were very impressed with the orientation. On those years, member students were oriented to perceive the student-led volunteering organization as a learning platform where they can get hand-on experience, learn through their mistake and pursue guidance from peers to perform better. Throughout the year they remembered that their senior members step away to only act as mentor. Therefore the students had a safe space to initiate new idea and bring some new approach to the volunteering projects. One respondent share her experience as

“During the project orientation, my senior mentioned to us all that the student-led organization is our learning playground. Here, we perceive mistake as the vital part of working and learning process. It encourage me to start the membership with this student organization as I felt safe among people who treat mistake as a learning point. I

enjoyed working with such an open-minded seniors over that year. Without a positive atmosphere, I don't think that I can learn much through my volunteering experience"

(Graduate with nine year of work experience)

Obviously, beautiful message during orientation is not sufficient to keep all member stay engage in positive experiential learning environment. To make the student-led volunteering organization a learning space, the study found that the committee members of those year put their attempt to reinforce the concept into working culture, unfortunately that this positive message slowly disappeared from years to years over the last 15 years. Perhaps it is time to reintroduce the concept again.

4.6.3 Team Allocation and Work Rotation

Working in a team is core component of the learning process. Each team member is a source of learning. Every member were assigned to work in a team that occasionally rotated every few months, few respondents found that their team member's personality, characteristics and attitude contributed significantly to the degree of their learning and development of soft skills.

The following statements illustrate to us that the team allocation and work rotation are the main contributing factors that effectively enhance their interpersonal skills like communication and team working skills.

"Good learning environment occurs when a team has members with various skills and experience. I often learn new things from new team members. I think it is better to rotate our role and responsibility every time we begin planning for new project"

(Graduate with four years of working experience)

"One time, I was assigned to work with a dominated senior who often think she always right for everything she does. None of my team would dare to have different opinion from her as she is older. We barely try new things in that project, resulting that I had no chance to improve my skills much. It great to have such experience but next time I prefer to be rotated to work with another team"

(Graduate with six years of working experience)

"People think that it would be difficult to manage team if our personality are totally different. I like team diversity as it encourage me to improve my team working skills. Working in different role with different team was very challenging to me but I

have learn a lot through my experience as I had to change my communication style to make the new team members understand my message. I think that my interpersonal skills was improved greatly after a few years of working in the student-led volunteering organization”

(Graduate with seven years of working experience)

4.6.4 Volunteering Activities

As previously discussed, students can learn and develop various range of interpersonal skills if they were allocated to work in new tasks or with new team. Unfortunately, over a decade, the patterns of volunteering activities has no significant development. The current students engage with similar activities the pioneers’ generation did over 15 years ago. Many respondents mentioned that over a few year of membership they maintain almost the activities that their seniors taught them.

Each academic year, the student organization draft the proposal to deliver five volunteering projects. However, sub-activities within each volunteer project are very similar and there were no innovation in the approach of delivering the services to communities and schools. Many respondents provide statement in the same direction that

“I used pretty much the same skills with my last projects. I should admit that sometime I automatically completed the tasks without using my critical thinking ability because the work was not challenging to me anymore. However, these activities had enable me to further develop interpersonal skills in higher degree. I think it is because I had rotated my role to different tasks with different team”

(Graduate with two years working experience)

“I didn’t learn much through engaging with actual volunteering activities. My soft skills were developed because the interaction with peers, communities, schools teachers and children. Even, I am bored to do the same activities but I still believe it is right path that lead me to awaiting learning opportunity”

(Graduate with ten years of working experience)

4.6.5 Learning Interventions

Even intrinsic motivation is a key driven of success in acquiring soft skills through student-led volunteering activities. However, through this study we found that

few respondents, who joined the student-led volunteering because it was required by the university, had the positive experience because the learning interventions organized by committee members.

One respondent stated that she had no willingness to integrate into the student organization and underestimated team effort at the beginning of her membership. Later, through some learning intervention during the off-campus volunteering project in one of the North-eastern provinces, she began to accept that she can't accomplish everything by herself and it is better to achieve together as a team.

As it is impossible to recruit students with the right attitude to join the student-led volunteering organization thus the learning process within the organization is a crucial factor to drive the change of student' learning and development paradigms.

4.6.6 Skills of Facilitator(s)

Among all influential factors in related to the experiential learning process, respondents rated skills of facilitator as the most crucial factors that enable students to learn and develop themselves through their engagement with volunteering activities.

Usually the learning component in volunteering project was conducted through group reflection, project planning and project close up meeting. All of these learning session need skilled facilitator to design learning process and integrate the component throughout one cycle of volunteering project. An effective learning session should enable students to critically reflect back on their experience, take the lesson learn and identify area of improvement.

The real issue is, in practical, all the members have no advance knowledge and skills in facilitating an effective learning. Over the past 15 years, reflection process was simply and briefly conducted in weekly meeting where there was no safe space for members to reflect upon their experience, learn from their mistake and take back their invaluable life lessons.

This research also found that there were only few academic years that committee members acknowledge the vital role of group reflection. Over these years, committee members had worked to design effective facilitation approaches and set significant amount of time to allow member to learn from each other. One of the surprising

facts found through this research is the reflection process was frequently skipped because the time has run out to complete full-length of meeting agenda.

A few respondents had provided an interesting perspective to support how facilitator and facilitation process can influence an effective learning through volunteering activities. The response from graduate who is currently in job market for over seven years can well captured the important of having facilitator to help facilitate the reflection process

“I was so surprised that the meeting facilitator had schedule some time for us to look at our own mistake in running activities but there was no time to reflect how we can best learn from these mistake and how to do better next time. These reflection process aims to help students to effectively work in current project. It predominately focuses on what tasks to do and how we can do it well. It would be great if facilitator ask us on what we actually learn along the way to accomplish the tasks”

We have to bear in mind that these students and graduates definitely learn through their volunteering experience even without group reflection activities but an effective learning process will intensely shift their learning outcome. Good facilitation process will encourage them to not only drawn experience from volunteering projects but also to apply these skills learn in their study and future career life.

Unfortunately that the facilitation process in the student-led volunteering organization over the last 15 years were conducted with some guidance of skilled professional. The most important part of learning was in hand of student leaders who had limited experience in designing the process to help students learn through their experience. Consequently, these student facilitators encountered with uncontrollable circumstances. Many times, the learning session finished without significant learning points to take away.

Respondents conclude during interview that it would be great to have facilitation skills or good facilitator to help them learn effectively through their engagement in volunteering projects.

4.6.7 Students Support Services

As previously discussed, committee students may lack of experience to facilitate the learning process or lack of ability to help members turn the student-led

volunteering organization to be a platform for employability skills development. Thus, student affair unit, a responsible agency for student development activities, take the vital role to crafting student development policy and practices to enhance learning environment and prepare students 'readiness for future career.

In regard to the student support services provided of student affair division, the quality of mentorship and financial support are the two main influencing factors to develop students' soft skills through the student-led volunteering activities.

4.6.7.1 Mentorship and Coaching Support

The level of university support towards the extent of mentorship support to committee students can be limited based on the university's philosophy, policy and practices. Most of the university take responsibility to ensure that student organization comply with the policy and requirements but leave the students-led organizations with high level of flexibility and autonomy to manage internal affairs. This philosophy of university was stated through interview with the representative of the student affair division as

“Our university’s philosophy believes that we should empower students to govern themselves. The Student Council has role and responsibility to provide peer support to other student-led organizations. All of student organizations is provided with flexibility in managing internal affairs as long as it does coincide with the rule of regulations stated in the Student Activities Manual. We believe that with less intervention from adult, students are empowered to work effectively without fear to fail. They can practice to conduct strategic planning, execute the plan, solve problems, and learn through their failure and success. Personally, I believe that student-led organization are workplace simulation that can prepare students with the skills and attitude to work successfully in their chosen occupations”

However, as the student affair division does not involve much with the planning and implementing process of the student-led volunteering organization therefore the time spent for mentorship support is also limited as well. These respondents provided both positive and negative in regard to limited time of mentorship support received from the student affair division as following statements.

“I think that we have received sufficient mentorship support from assigned staffs of the student affair division to complete proposal and secure funding.

I don't expect to have very close supervision in every step we do. As student, we are closed monitored enough in the classroom based learning. Here, at the student-led volunteering organization, I hope that I can confidently apply my skills and knowledge in volunteering projects. Sometime, failure give me greater lesson than the success. Without the opportunity to fail without fear I won't be able to develop certain essential employability skills"

(Student who is an active member for two years)

"We joined the student-led volunteering organization at young age. At the time, we were stubborn and close-minded to learn from other. It would be good to have effective learning interventions from professional organization so that we can actually learn from volunteering experience"

(Graduate with ten years of working experience)

"Over the 3 years of my membership, I noticed that we didn't receive necessary guidance to improve work performance. Even some students are capable enough to acknowledge their mistake but often they has no other approach to make the situation better. It would be good to have an academic staff help us learn better and navigate us to some alternative options"

(Graduate with two years of working experience)

4.6.7.2 Financial Support

With limited financial resources compare to number of student organizations registered to received support from the university, the student affair division has encountered with difficulty to grant full financial support to cover all the expense for the proposed projects from the student-led volunteering organization.

In many years, the student-led volunteering organization lack of adequate financial resources to effectively implement volunteering projects. They need to alter their work plan or seek another source of funding to continue their volunteering activities. The study found that once students focus attention and energy to secure source of funding, they have less time to work on the learning process that can strategically develop attributes and skills for their future career. Moreover, the lack of continue financial support had negative impact to the relationships among members because the committee students must extensively work in stress to secure more funding sources in

which, if no plan to turn the challenge to a positive working atmosphere, it often lead to internal conflict and argument.

4.6.7.3 Training Support

Another important factor to the level of achievement for soft skills development through student-led volunteering activities is training support received from the student affair division. The student affair division run training once a year to equip core knowledge to committee member of the student organizations. The learning topics, for example, are proposal development, rule and regulation of conducting student-led volunteering activities, report writing and leadership skills.

Even training had help core member students to enhance their peer support network as they had a chance to meet with student leaders and representatives from other student-led organizations, yet, several key respondents share almost similar feedback that the opportunity was only provided to certain number of student volunteers. Towards the end of the interview, respondents said these training should make available to more audience so we, active members, can utilize the knowledge and skills learn to improve volunteering work of the student-led organization.

4.6.8 The Collaboration with External Agencies

Over decades ago, student has limited access to the support from external agencies; civil society organizations (CSOs) or private sectors which made them rely solely on the funding and technical support from the university. However, as volunteerism has become national agenda, CSOs have shifted their strategic direction to partner with higher education institutions to promote volunteerism and civic education. Several CSOs are working collaboratively with university to provide professional guidance on proposal development to student organizations. Often they run training to equip students with project management skills. Most importantly, various CSOs and companies also provide financial support to help students effectively implement volunteering projects.

The research have found that even there are many opportunity for the student-led volunteering organization to partner with, receive financial and guidance support but the concept of working with external agencies is not yet widespread among all the student-led volunteering organizations due to several reasons.

These are the reasons which were given during the interview

“Once I was a student, the university is the only world I know. We put almost no effort to seek more information on which external agencies can be our alliance or supporters”

(Graduate with twelve years of working experience)

“I reached out to one CSOs and receive information on how to secure funding. It came with many rules and regulations that we could not handle with. As a student, I guess that we would love to have no boundary to express our idea, turn it to our real life and learn through the process of working and think less about the results”

(Student who is an active member for 3 years)

As previously discussed, the university students participate in the student-led volunteering organization with various reasons. They have different motivation and personalities which can determine different level self-development gained from the new learning experience. However, the research findings reveal that through appropriate interventions, students will have high possibility to enhance necessary employability skills in order to work effectively in their first employment as well as progress further in their career life.

4.7 Approaches to Develop Learning Process to Enhance Soft Skills Through Student-Led Volunteering Activities (RQ4)

It has been a long time that student-led organizations position themselves as socialization space where students can learn and development basic working skills and necessary soft skills. However, as the time has changed, students-led organization will need to quickly improve their strategic position to be able to response and serve the need of university; produce quality graduates to enter to professional world. In order to assist students of future generations to use the student organization as a self-improvement platform, in this section, the researcher consolidates the recommendation points from respondents to guide students to slightly improve strategy so that they can manage the organization, implement the volunteering activities as well as conduct effective knowledge transfer to help sustain the impact of their contribution to our society.

In this section, the researcher would like to present findings on research question 4 (RQ4) that asking how the student organization can further develop the learning process to enhance soft skills through student-led volunteering activities. These are recommendation from our respondents.

4.7.1 Recommendation 1: The Student Committee should develop appropriate learning interventions to help students learn through volunteering activities.

Graduates and Civil Society Organization share similar ideas that student committee assume high responsibility to develop appropriate learning interventions. They recommended that good learning interventions should be able to meet these objectives

1. Help member students learn how to learn: More knowledge beyond classroom and university campus awaiting for students to learn if they only know how to learn. The fact is the student-led volunteering organization is one of the main learning platform to bridge students with real world experience. These young adult will be introduced to knowledge they have not learn in class room learning and require different mode of learning technics. Thus committee students should consider to develop session to help member students discover how they can best learn and experience the world so they can design their learning strategy for self-development through engaging with the volunteering activities.

2. Help member students understand their strengths and weaknesses and identify their capacity gap to further improve it: The most important thing in the process of soft skills development through student-led volunteering organization should focus on the ability to understand the strengths and weaknesses in different context. Students should conduct self-assessment on their capacity and skills to be improved further.

Many students has never thought that they have communication issues until they are working in the team. The experiential learning process will expose them to the issues but it is important to have interventions to help them critically think on their determination and strategy to improve the skills.

3. Help member student identify their source of motivation: As mentioned in research findings that intrinsic motivation of the members has influenced the level of learning through the student-led volunteering organization. It is vital to develop an

intervention to prepare their mentality to be a member of the team. One graduate suggested that activities can be held in public park or integrate in the orientation session. It can be a small seminar with great help from experience facilitators to help students think deeply and be ready to transform belief and attitude to serve as committed volunteers in the organization.

4.7.2 Recommendation 2: University should provide appropriate trainings to members of student-led volunteering organization

Civil society organizations that have been working to promote volunteering as student development activities recommended that university should review and carefully look into their policy and practices in encouraging students to participate in student-led volunteering organizations. A representative from one civil society organization said that

“Unlike ten years ago, students in rural part of the country nowadays can access to better education and local communities. They have own budget to run many development projects. It is fair to say that students’ contribution has lose its charming among people in society which perceive the volunteering activities is a student development tool rather than the contribution for social development. Therefore students need to rethink and develop innovation projects to add needed value to the communities that they are working with”

Civil society organizations recommended action points to university and the student-led volunteering organization as detail below

1. The university should ensure that the student-led volunteering organization have advisor or professional in social development field to help them craft sustainable social development projects. The assistance from professional who has experience in social development can assist student to create meaningful volunteering projects to appropriately address emerging social needs.

2. The university should facilitate training to help students understand the context of social issues and sustainable development. The training topics such as project design and management, need assessment, budget and financial management should be delivered to help them work in higher standard. Apart from technical competency, students should be equipped with soft skills to work effectively in volunteering projects.

The university can run workshops to equip them with the skills like team working skills, communication, problem solving and decision making skills, conflict management and leaderships. The workshop can help them familiar themselves with the concept, they can take time to assess themselves and develop their engagement strategy with the team while they are implementing the projects.

4.7.3 Recommendation 3: University should provide sufficient financial support but make it more competitive to access.

This recommendation came from many graduates as they were encountered with financial issues to fund the projects. Many graduates address that financial support is the fuel of student-led volunteering organization. With sufficient support of funding, student can focus their energy to develop new innovative volunteering projects instead of attempt to secure money for the projects.

However, some graduates share different opinion as they see that if university provides all the financial resources they need for the project, it will not help them learn how to source the support from external agencies. In reality, if the project is short of money, students often come up with innovative solutions to get more support. Therefore the university should make decision on the appropriate amount to support and provide them with knowledge on grant writing and budget management or channel them to external agencies to get additional financial support or in-kind donation. The financial support and connection with other agencies will encourage students' commitment as well as booth their creativity in project's planning and implementation.

4.7.4 Recommendation 4: Improve the experiential learning process in the student-led volunteering organization

This recommendation mainly came from graduates and current students. Graduates and students agreed that they have learn most from the student-led volunteering organization so we should pay more attention to improve the process within the student-led volunteering activities from the beginning to the end. The committee should ensure that students can learn from process of organization management and review, project's planning, budgeting and implementation. Recommendation for the action points include:

1. Provide meaningful and effective orientation to new member students. A good orientation should help new member students understand the student-led volunteering organization's core value and nature of work. It could be designed in a way to help students consider if this is the right choice to commit their energy for the next couple of years. Even we know that, new members remain their engagement with the organization because personal connection with seniors and peers. Yet, we should keep in mind that personal relationships is fragile, somewhat not sustain, thus helping them to realize how these volunteering work can add new meanings in their life will definitely sustain their commitment in volunteering projects.

2. Seek support from professional or experience staff to run effective organization review or seminars: A good organization review should address several purposes including the challenges, success, failure and lesson learn. On top of that, it should provide a chance for all member to draft strategy for new academic calendar. Because the review process involves high level strategic thinking, member students should seek assistance in running the review workshop from experience facilitators. The form of support can be conducted through training support on how to run effective strategic review and/or invite them to co-facilitate the session to free committee member to be able to learn from such events too.

3. Assign and rotate member students to perform various role in different team in order to acquire in-depth team working skills: The committee students need to ensure that the members understand the rationale behind the work rotation. It is an alternative way to improve member student's communication and team working skills as the new working environment will move them out of their comfort zone and learn to adjust themselves with their new team to perform new role and responsibility.

4. Develop job description for each position: The job description will enable new students to assess their capacity and familiar themselves with the role before they perform the tasks. The clearer committee can write the expectation towards the role and responsibility of that position, the better students can transit themselves to perform good works.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

University students, today, are going to become manpower for country in couple of years. Four years in university is such a short time for students to learn and develop fundamental knowledge and skills to be successful in a working world as the restless professional world is spinning so fast which made it almost impossible for students to know exactly how challenges the life at work would be upon their completion of degree.

Thus, apart from those technical knowledge and skills currently deliver to students in lecture-based learning, the university should consider to develop policy and good practices in order to provide experiential learning platform to help students enhance essential employability skills and prepare them to a working world.

The research on Graduates Employability: Enhancing Soft Skills through Student-led Volunteering Activities in a University aims to access and understand the learning process for graduates' soft skills development through student-led volunteering activities. In chapter 5, the researcher will summarize research detail from the designing until research findings that lead to the recommendation part that the researcher would like to offer to the student-led volunteering organization, the student affair division and fellow researchers who interested to study in the same filed.

5.1 Research Methodology

The research was designed to collect comprehensive understanding of the complex issues on the process of soft skills development thus the researcher has applied the qualitative approaches including group discussion with current students, in-depth data collection from graduates or former member of the student-led volunteering organization who are currently employed in various sectors. It used exploratory and descriptive in the process of inquiring data in order to gain holistic perspective of research findings.

5.1.1 Case Study Selection

In Thailand, the nature of the student-led volunteering organizations in many university is involved youth development activities such as classroom learning in certain topics and outdoor life skills activities. Thus, the researcher carefully selected a student-led volunteering organizations called Nontri Stream of Knowledge or NSK to be a case study to understand the process of soft skills development through student-led volunteering activities.

Nontri Stream of Knowledge was established by a group of student in 2000 with the purpose to advocate and support equal access in education for children in rural area of Thailand. The main activities held by member students over the last 15 years are working with community to advocate on the important of education for their children as well as working with school teachers to develop teaching materials and run life-skills activities with students in rural area.

5.1.2 Target Respondents

As the study aims to understand how the student-led volunteering activities has contributed to enhance soft skills for university students over a few years that these students involved in the activities, the target respondents of this study is the group of graduates or former member of Nontri Stream of Knowledge who are currently employed in the labour market in Thailand. Also, the researcher had broaden perspective to understand how volunteering activities has gradually changed over time thus, the current member student was selected to be target respondents to provide update information on the current volunteering activities.

The third group of target respondents is civil society organizations that have been working to advocate to Thai university to make the volunteering activities become part of learning and development mechanism to improve moral and quality of university students. The last group of target respondents is the Student Affair Division that work to develop policy and practices to ensure that the student-led volunteering organization is an effective learning platform to equip employability skills and prepare university students for a professional world. The table below summarize the list of key respondents for this research.

Table 5.1 Key Respondents List

Categories of Key Respondents	Details	Number
Graduates	More than 10 years of work experience	5
	Have more than 5 years but less than 10 years of work experience	5
	Have between 1-5 years of work experience	5
Current member students	Joined the student-led volunteering organization for more than two years	12
University Affiliate	Student Affair Division	1
Civil Society Organizations	Volunteer Spirit Network	1
	Knowledge Network Institutes of Thailand	1
	Komol Keemthong Foundation	1
Total		31

5.1.3 Data Collection

This study involved the process of collecting both primary and secondary data. The semi-structure and in-depth interviews with identified key respondents was conducted. Additional data was received through group discussion with current member students. Non-participants observation was part of the data collection process to understand how ongoing volunteering activities has been developed overtime to enhance student' soft skills.

5.1.4 Data Analysis

The researcher applied constant comparison to analyse the data. Also to achieve high rigor in this research study, the researcher carefully design the target respondents to include all perspectives in the research as well as applied the respondent validation throughout the interview process.

Key respondents were asked consent to participate in the research. They were explained on the purpose of this study and received list of questions before the in-depth interview was conducted. The in-depth interview is open-end questions to seek deeper understanding on their experience with student-led volunteering activities.

At the end of the interview, the researcher summarized key received information and then ask participants to provide feedback and further clarify some part of information if there is any inaccurate piece of information.

After the data was collected, the researcher applied the constant comparison technic to categorize and compare interview data received from all key respondents to find similarities and differences then consolidate these piece of information to write research findings.

5.2 Summary of Research Findings

The conclusion of research findings can be addressed in 4 parts as detail below

Part 1: Profile of key respondents

Part 2: Soft Skills that student able to develop through the student-led volunteering activities in a university

Part 3: The learning process that enable students to enhance soft skills through the student-led volunteering activities

Part 4: Influencing or supporting factors that enable effective learning and development of soft skills through the student-led volunteering activities

Part 5: How student organization can develop learning process to enhance soft skills through student-led volunteering activities in a university

5.2.1 Profile of key respondents

This research was a great contribution of 15 graduates, 12 current member students, 3 civil society organizations and a student affairs division from the university.

The group of graduates has various years of working experience ranging from one year to 13 years. These key respondents can well represent both male and female graduates. They assumed different role and responsibility once they were participating with the student-led volunteering activities. Their current profession are vary from teachers, administrators, program officers, sales managers and engineers.

The group of current student were randomly selected to participate in group discussion. These 12 students are studying in various field of study but majority are from faculty of humanities, faculty of education and faculty of engineers.

The three civil society organizations have working closely with each other to achieve the same goals: promote volunteering as a tools to develop university student' moral and quality in order to prepare them to a working world. However, they worked in different approaches in which make them have different key partners to achieve the goals. In this case, the first organization work directly to support students group to implement the projects, one work directly with the student affair division to set up volunteer centre which students can seek mentorship support to run their student-led volunteering activities. The last civil society organization is working closely with the management team of partner universities to run oversea study trip for management team to understand how other university around the world have used volunteering activities as a tool for student development.

The last key respondents is the student affair division who contribute information on university policy and practice in supporting the student-led volunteering organization to manage the organization and implement meaningful volunteering work.

5.2.2 The Soft Skills that students able to develop through the Student-led Volunteering Activities in a University

The research findings reveal that students and graduates able to develop personal and interpersonal skills which is essential to their future employment.

Regard to personal skills, the student-led volunteering activities had help student become self-aware of their potential to grow. They had a chance to explore their strength and weaknesses which serve as a primary sources of their personal development. Moreover, these key respondents are able to develop self-management skills, civic responsibility and morale through their engagement with the meaningful volunteering activities.

Beyond these personal skills, key respondents able to enhance critical interpersonal skills like team working, communication, problem solving and decision making, conflict management and leadership skills in various level. Through the study, the researcher found that students who took different responsibility has developed different set of skills in different level as describe below

Team working and Communication are the most common skills that most of member students and graduates can develop through participating in the student organization.

The reason justify the findings is that students were put to work as a team where it forces them to learn how to adapt and adjust with new group of friends and seniors. They learn to communicate, negotiate and convince other team member while they were working in their assigned tasks. Students were rotated to work in different team in every volunteering projects which they must constantly change their working and communicating style in order to work well with others.

Problem solving and decision making were mentioned by committee of the student-led volunteering organization. Graduates who was once working as coordinator, secretary, team leaders, vice-president and the president addressed that they were able to develop the skills through their responsibility. The other member who did not serve as a committee rarely developed the skills through their experience with the student-led volunteering organization. This could be because their role and responsibility was not involved anything that need them to solve the issues or making decision. Often these member will seek support from team leaders thus they had no opportunity to develop such a critical skills.

Leadership skills was acknowledged as the ability to apply those soft skills mentioned earlier such as team working, communication, problem solving and decision making and conflict management together to lead all the member in achieving their set objectives. The leadership skills was addressed as skills developed through participating in the activities among vice-president and president of the student-led volunteering organization. This has no surprised as these young leaders were in the leading role to run many volunteering projects over and over. They had many opportunity to apply high level of soft skills in their commit role and responsibility.

One critical element found through the study is majority of student leaders has long shown potential to become leader and/or had experienced to lead youth group in their high school. Once they joined the student-led volunteering organization in their first year of university, these young adults have shown their leadership potential and fully engaged in many organizations activities. So that soon after they joined the organization, these people were carefully picked by their senior members to lead a small team that open their door to receive close mentorship and guidance to further enhance their leadership skills. A year later, they step up to take the lead role after their seniors complete their degree.

These soft skills is valuable asset for graduates' professional life regardless their number of years in the labour market. The research findings reveal significant evident through the life of graduates that the student-led volunteering activities had contributed to increase their work readiness and prepare them into a working world. The student-led volunteering organization is a great experiential learning platform as they had opportunity to work in different role throughout their service years.

The most important element found through this study is the fact that the volunteering projects had broaden graduates perspectives about life and the world they are living in. The experience contributed to form attitude of being a lifelong learners as a first step to be success in their career and personal life.

In summary, graduates able to develop both personal and interpersonal skills in various level based on their role and responsibility. These employability skills has play significant role in these graduates' career life as it help prepare their mentality to enter into a working world, manage their relationships with their colleagues, enhance their work productivity as well as expose them to the attitude of a lifelong learning that help them continue their self-development journey to further success in their career life.

5.2.3 The learning process that enable student to enhance soft skills through the student-led volunteering activities

The most critical component in student-led volunteering organization is the fact that student able to get hand on experience while they were executing the volunteering activities. To implement every projects successfully, students learn to form and manage a strong team. Each year, these graduates were engaged in organization review, annual activities planning and elect new leading members before develop many proposals to secure enough funding for each volunteering projects.

Throughout several years of their active participation, they went through countless planning session. They worked together to promote organization, recruit new members to join their team as well as provide on the job training to new member to build stronger team with more capable hands to work in the projects.

To these graduates, the student-led volunteering organization was a workplace simulation which put them into the situation that they have opportunity to apply all ranges

of skills to achieve organization goals. Undoubtable that, these activities had enable them to at least improve fundamental soft skills like communication and team working.

In regard to the learning process, precisely, we can acknowledge that the experiential learning is main learning process that help student learn through their participation in the student-led volunteering activities.

In chapter 2 we had discussed on the process of experiential learning that can be divided into 4 steps as follow described;

1. Concrete experience: The learner get to the actual tasks to gain experience
2. Reflective observation: The learner has to step back to reflect on what they have learned through the experience
3. Abstract conceptualization: Making sense of experience that had happened
4. Active experimentation: Applying to the learner's context

However the researcher found that graduates and member students had put priorities differently in each process of experiential learning theory. The major process which occurs is the concrete experience where students implemented the volunteering projects. The other process such as reflective observation was put as the second priority and often conduct in case there is enough time left to run regardless how impactful it can made to the learning and development of students

The learning process can only complete when students known how the experience gained through participating in the student-led volunteering activities can relate to them and how to apply in other context in their lives. The skills cannot be appropriately developed without knowing the level of current capacity, their goals and objectives of their engagement with volunteering activities. These key questions will be processed during the reflective session in which member students in the past had chosen to skip out with the reason that they had no time. Through the interview, research finding guide us to the conclusion that without a good facilitated reflective process, students may lack of opportunity to make sense of their experience and critically think on how the experience can be applied into their life in a few years down the road.

The other two learning approaches that equally important to help students develop their soft skills are mentoring and modelling others.

Mentoring is the other process of learning in the student-led volunteering organization. The nature of working in a university is the senior students will pass

knowledge to their juniors. The mentorship process occurs without any structure. Once, these juniors become the seniors, they repeat the learning pattern.

Therefore we could say that, mentoring is the process used in the knowledge transfer from one generations to the next. Mentoring among member is done in a very naturally ways at the time they are working together. No time is properly set for the session as it always goes as a flow and no special approach to help the knowledge receivers learn better and understand the context better.

The last learning approach found within the experiential learning process is the way students learn through modelling others. Many open-minded students and graduates found the approach is very effective to enhance their soft skills through noticing and modelling positive behaviours and attitude of peers and seniors.

Even the modelling others is an informal learning approach but it has a huge impact on students' personality and soft skills development. Many respondents found that their characters, value and belief system was influences by their model peers and seniors. Thus organization culture, contributed by all member of organization, has played such a vital role to model good patterns of interpersonal relationships among all members. Set of behaviour learned through being a member of the student-led organization like team spirit, morale, respect others and responsibility to assigned tasks has become graduates' valuable assets that help them grow professionally and be ready to become sought-after employees in their field in future.

5.2.4 Factors that influence soft skills development through the student-led volunteering activities in a university

There are many factors which contribute to effective learning and development of soft skills for students while they were active members of the student-led volunteering organization. These factors are ranging from student' personal attributes, the experiential learning process in the student-led volunteering organization and the support from the university or civil society organizations.

5.2.4.1 Intrinsic Motivation

Motivation influenced to the process of soft skills development the most. It is not just apply only with the learning within the student-led volunteering organization setting but also in their university students' life as well. Many graduates

who participated in this research said that their negative attitude stop them from learning while they were engaging in the student-led volunteering activities. Therefore understanding that people has different personality, interests and motivation can help the university develop effective interventions to support students to learn and develop their soft skills through the volunteering activities.

5.2.4.2 Intervention within the experiential learning process

Having said that intrinsic motivation serves as a first step to be success in developing employability skills, however, we all know that it is almost impossible to recruit very open-minded students to be member of any student-led volunteering organization so the interventions to help these students open to new experiences is very important. This research reveals many stories that students were transformed to become a better person while they actively participated in the volunteering activities.

The interventions which assist key respondents transformed themselves included events like orientation, organization review and planning or seminar. These events can contribute to initiate the change as it provide student the quality time to reflect their learning experience and associate it with their personal and professional life in future.

Another related issues is involved the skills of facilitators which usually are the president or vice presidents of the student-led volunteering organization, do not have skills to effectively facilitate the reflection process. Throughout 15 years since the establishment of the organization, the reflection process was conducted briefly as part of weekly meeting that has many important agenda to discuss. Regrettably to address that reflection, even is one of the most critical part to assist in soft skill development, has not yet set as main activity to help students learn through their experience in all the event. In order to help member students learn better, the student-led volunteering organization need to craft better strategy in which the researcher will present a few approaches in the recommendations to improve effective interventions in later section.

5.2.4.3 Student Support Services

Beyond the points discuss earlier, the student support services has become more important to assist students delivering high standard quality of volunteering projects.

There are several civil society organizations currently working with various university in Thailand to utilize the student-led volunteering activities as a learning platform to improve students' quality and prepare basic working skills to enter a professional world. For example, one civil organization called Komol Keemthong has been working directly with many group of university students. Their work aims to empower student through training events. The foundation's high experience development workers are working with university students from projects planning towards the end. They provide close mentorship to ensure great results are delivered to target communities. The element of mentorship and coaching support from experienced CSO' staff play important role to help students systematically think and plan their projects, reflect to gain meaningful lessons and further improve work capacity and necessary soft skills at the same time.

However these professional support services is currently limited as CSO does not have sufficient funding and human resources to provide support to every student- led volunteering organizations from every university. It would be great if these professional mentorship service can be available for leading members of the student-led volunteering organization so that the organization can improve their learning quality.

The last two important elements that influence on how students can develop their soft skills through the student-led volunteering organization is financial support and training support from the university' student affair division or civil society organizations. Many respondents believe that sufficient financial support can help the student member to channel their energy to volunteering activities rather than to secure source of funding. In contrary, some respondents stated several benefits that students gained through various fundraising activities. They believe that the activities boost student's creativity and unity to work together in order to secure enough funding for their meaningful projects.

Training support is one of the crucial part of work capacity and soft skills development for students. However, it not what key respondents expect to receive once they were students. The research findings collected two different perspectives on the training support from university and professional entities. One group of key respondents believe that student can learn most from their mistake but other said with

the training interventions, they can learn from other people mistake and spend less time to solve problems and be more productive in their project management. These two aspects are both valid. Nothing better than the other. Training interventions can be delivered to boost productivity and reduce negative impact that project could make to local schools and communities but we need to carefully design the interventions to provide enough safe space for students to learn from their success and failure over the period of their membership.

5.2.5 Recommendations from key respondents to develop learning process to enhance soft skills through the student-led volunteering activities in a university

In summary, key respondents recommended four main points. The first recommendation goes towards the committee. Respondents suggested that committee should develop appropriate learning interventions to help student learn how to learn, help them identify their source of motivation. More importantly to help them understand their strengths and weakness so that they can identify their capacity gap to improve further.

The second mainly came from civil society organizations that recommend that the university should provide appropriate training to members of student-led volunteering organization. The training should focus both on technical skills that help students develop high value social projects and soft skills that assist student to work well together. These two skills that university should deliver to students will not just help them realize the real meaning of their volunteering work but will turn the valuable experience to serve as a platform for skills development for their future career.

The third recommendation that commonly addressed by graduates emphasizing on student support services in term of financial and other resources. Graduates who were once encountered these challenges stated in the interview how difficult it was to cope with financial shortage while they were busy managing the dynamics of working relationships between teams.

The last recommendation predominately focus on the experiential learning process in the student-led volunteering organization. The recommendations in this category came from current students and graduates as they are familiar most with all the activities within the organization. Most of the recommendation closely consistent with the influencing

factors that contribute to make effective learning. These recommendations includes provide meaningful and effective orientation, seek support from professional to run effective organization review, assign and rotate member students to perform various role in different team and develop job description for each position.

5.3 Recommendations to Further Develop Learning Process to Enhance Soft Skills Through Student-Led Volunteering Activities in the University

Apart from the recommendation that graduates, civil society organization and student affair division had recommended, after analysing research findings again, the researcher would like to present possible interventions to further enhance on what have been said by key respondents.

The researcher hope that these recommendation will be able to assist university to provide student support to bridge the gap between what the university can provide and the real world context as well as to help students work effectively to deliver good volunteering services and develop critical employability skills. Some of the recommendation from the researcher are listed as follow;

1. University should ensure that the student-led volunteering organization receive on going mentorship and coaching support from their advisors. Though, the committed student were trained in basic working skills and soft skills, student may sometime face with certain challenges in term of secure sufficient funding, working with local authorities or basic problem like working with difficult personalities person in the team. Thus, the ongoing mentorship and coaching support is vital to help them identify the problem and come up with their own solutions. The university should balance between providing quality of mentorship to guide them how to work as professional but, at the same time, maintain the enabling learning space to allow student to learn through their experience in dealing with success and failure.

2. University should support the knowledge exchanged between the student-led volunteering organizations in Thailand: A great learning begin when students share and learn from each other. It is not only one group of young adult who commit their time and energy towards social development. In Thailand, there are a thousand student-led organizations in all universities. The researcher believe that peer learning and support

is an effective tool to boost student's work productivities as it will expose students to new ideas generated by other student-led volunteering organizations from other universities. In addition to that, the knowledge exchange is a great source of inspiration to sustain students' energy and commitment to volunteering projects and other social development initiatives.

3. University should assist the student-led volunteering organization to connect with external agencies and resources: There are many civil society organizations that provide the support in the form of financial resources, training and mentoring support or human resources support. The researcher would like to suggest university to bridge the services provided by civil society organizations (CSOs) with the student-led volunteering organization so that member students have opportunity to work closely with professional who definitely can provide them the basic knowledge and skills in project design and management. These skills will be useful for university students to know in order to design meaningful volunteering projects to address the real need of communities.

4. Make the reflection process incorporate in each volunteering projects: Even students can learn through self-reflection but not all students pay enough attention to critically think on great lesson from each activities. The reflection session should ensure that students can systematically think through their best and worst experience then summarize the lesson learn and how it relevant to their everyday life.

5. Select a facilitator who has facilitation skills to help students learn through their experiential learning in volunteering projects: The leaders of student-led volunteering organization should seek further support from civil society organizations or the student affair division to recruit highly skills facilitator to help run some sessions. Students can invite the experience facilitator to assist the workshop for couple of time so that they can observe the process. Member students should learn how to best encourage students to process their idea, summarize and conclude key topics to follow up in the next meetings. After a few time, member students should take turn to practice facilitation skills and train the skills to the next group of students.

6. Develop knowledge management system to ensure meaningful projects database and information is kept in electronic form to deliver to the next group of member students: Lesson learn from one generation is a great learning source of the next generation.

It will help save time to reinvent the wheel and focus the energy to create add value and new initiatives. The student committee should ensure that project review, summary, lesson learn through group reflection in each volunteering activities is well capture to keep the learning outcome and lesson learn. The reflection session, conducted upon completion of volunteering project, should help member reflect on their experience, their success, failure and suggestion for area of improvement for volunteering projects in future. These valuable information should be stored and kept available to access any time in future.

The researcher believes that these recommendations to the student-led volunteering organization and the university will be able to assist the student-led volunteering organization to efficiently manage the organization. I hope that the organization can become effective learning platform to help member students enhance their basic skills for first entry employment in the near future.

The effort of this research is also aims to pave the way for policy makers and practitioners to study further on how the university in Thailand can effectively improve graduates' employability through student development activities. However, the researcher realized that one single research won't be able to explain the phenomena of graduate' employability. There should be more research conducted in future to help craft better policy and practices to help both university and student-led volunteering organizations develop socialize and learning platform. In the next section, the researcher would like to explain the limitation and recommendations for future study to assist fellow researchers develop research strategy to explore new research findings in the area associate with graduates' employability and student development activities in universities in Thailand.

5.4 Limitations of This Study

This study has several number of limitations which is vital to document. The process begin with review secondary data from student-led organizations. From the beginning of the student-led volunteering organization in 2000, there are small number of document that record ongoing phenomena of the student-led volunteering organization. Students keep record of meeting agenda, activities and lesson learn in the form of meeting

minutes which is the main source of secondary data for this research. The final report of recent years still in good form to be reviewed as part of the study, but there was no final report of the first five years of the student-led organization. As the researcher has incomplete and inconsistent of information on the change on policy, work practices and volunteering activities over a decade of operations, thus it is difficult to understand how the learning paradigm within the organization has shifted over time.

The main purpose of this study is to understand how student-led volunteering organization had help to develop soft skills for member students, primarily focus on graduates who are currently in labour market. As described that graduates were randomly picked as key respondents in this research rather than specific on convenience geographic locations. Majority of participants are currently living in other part of the country. Therefore the interview process were mostly conducted through phone call where technology had helped to record the conversation for future reference. In such case, the researcher added several steps to ensure the interview were conducted effectively to maintain high rigor in data collection process.

In regard to the research question on soft skills that member can develop through engaging with volunteering activities, the data is predominantly based on self-assessment of key respondents. The process does not involved data collected from their past and current employers or their peers.

Other difficulty in data collection is the timeframe while these experience occurs. These graduates were asked to reflect on their past experience within the time they were member of the organization. Some pioneer members have to reflect back to their experience which occurs more than ten years ago. Often time, information shared did not reflect to the time that the researcher would like to extract the information from. Thus throughout the interview, the researcher has to keep remind key respondents to only reflect on skill development from that specific period of time or specific events that occurred in their lives. In related to this, some graduates admit that it is very hard to tell if these soft skills were developed through student-led volunteering activities or other experience in their lives.

The research methodology applied in this study is non-participants observation. Because organization's activities were scheduled to run throughout the academic year and most of the volunteering activities are held in rural part of Thailand. To observe

every activities will be time and resources consuming which can effect to the delay of research findings. Furthermore, the researcher would like to ensure that this research were conducted in the way that it still enable safe space for students in engaging with volunteering activities in their normal manners. Therefore, the researchers only participated in five important activities to gain better understanding in the studied topic.

Another point of limitation which unavoidable is the fact that the researcher is part of pioneer group who established the student-led organization. The main concern is power dynamic between the researcher and graduates or member students may direct the answer towards positive direction. To eliminate the concerns, the researcher have explained rational behind this study and the important to obtain accurate data for the research.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Study

According to the number of limitations listed above. These are recommendation for future study that I would like to recommend for fellow the researchers.

1. Include the perspectives of graduates' employers in future research: The research questions on soft skills development is predominantly based on the self-assessment of key respondents. In the upcoming research, fellow researcher can consider to include employers' perspective to get in-depth understanding on how respondents perform in professional context. The perspectives of graduates' employers will provide clearer picture of how the skills learned from student-led volunteering can help student in their existing career.

2. Get the support from other facilitators to collect data through group discussion: The fact that the researcher is part of pioneer group who established the student-led organization raised many concerns during data collection. The main concern is the power dynamic between the researcher and graduates or member students may direct the answer towards positive results. To eliminate the concerns and increase validation of data, the researcher have explained rational behind this study and the important to obtain accurate data from the respondents. Also during the group discussion, the researcher also invite other friend to help with data collection to facilitate the discussion. If fellow the

researcher fall into the same situation, he/she should consider appropriate interventions to collect the most accurate data from key respondents.

3. Adding quantitative methodology to add value to future research: For fellow researchers who would like to further explore on graduate employability can further apply quantitative research methodology to see level of different between the soft skills that can most developed through student-led volunteering activities and the skills that were least developed through the learning interventions then investigate further what has influenced the development of these soft skills. The quantitative data will help the researcher to identify effective approach to improve the learning process in order to effectively enhance graduates' soft skills and work readiness.

4. Conduct comparative study: It has been doubt for some time if self-management approach in the student-led volunteering organization can provide different result on skills development from the well-defined services learning led by university professor. In order to enrich the benefits of research findings to improve graduates' employability, new research directions can focus on comparative study between these two approaches in soft skills building through communities engagement activities. Perhaps, the research finding can lead to suggestions to develop policy and practices that can effectively manage various type of community engagement activities in future.

5.6 Conclusion

It's critical to enhance graduates' ability to handle with rapid changing in future employment. In the 21st century, graduates require new capability, diverse skills and different knowledge from our former generations. Many interpersonal skills like communication, team working and problem solving are now required by employers of all industry.

The necessary skills in employment in this century is no longer primarily focus on hard skills or technical competency but rather focus more on soft skills. With large number of graduates enter to labour market, hard skills is basic skill set that every candidate able to offer to their employer so it is their soft skills that will determine who will be successful in securing employment in future.

With such a dramatic change in skill set needed in labour market, universities in Thailand has to quickly adjust their curriculum to equip graduate with necessary skills to serve in rapid changing industries. Many university launch new curriculum and extracurricular activities to equip new set of skills for students. Currently, students are encouraged to take internships, volunteering opportunities with CSO and NGOs in Thailand or participate in the student-led volunteering organizations to gain experiential learning and cultivate necessary working skills like communication, team working, problem solving skills, conflict management and leadership skills.

Among all, the student-led volunteering activities is the most common extracurricular activities. The research findings found that student-led volunteering organization able to offer the experiential learning to its member. The member student able to derive direct working experience while working as a team. They also develop necessary soft skills through modelling other member and through the mentorship provided by their seniors.

Through the learning process, member student able to develop different skill such as team working, communication, problem solving and decision making, conflict management and leadership skills in various level base on their role and responsibility taken during their membership time. The findings also lead us to understand more that motivation and attitude, the support received from the university as well as the intervention within the learning process can definitely influence the process of soft skills development for graduates. The better we can understanding what has influence effective learning process within student-led volunteering organization, the better we can develop policy and practice to use student-led volunteering activities to be student development mechanism and prepare students to enter into labour market.

This research findings lead us to develop many recommendation including the student-led volunteering organization should improve the experiential learning process to emphasizing on delivering meaningful and effective orientation to new member, ensure that the reflection process is incorporate in each volunteering activities so that member can reflect their meaningful experience that serve as foundation to develop basis working skills for graduates.

The research also found that learning interventions can most influence student's skill development therefore the committees should seek collaboration and

great support from the University's Student Affair Division to develop appropriate learning interventions or learning events to help gradually transform members intrinsic motivation and attitude. The events should design to guide them how to best learn from participating in student-led volunteering. In addition to that the learning intervention should help them explore and understand their strength and weakness with the ultimate goal that they will be able to identify the skills that they need to acquire in future to be ready for labour market.

Besides that, the student-led volunteering organization should ensure that their knowledge management system is well managed to effectively deliver meaningful lesson learn from one generation to new group of member. The knowledge of one generation is valuable asset of coming group of committee. People can learn from their mistake but it is better to learn from mistake of other so that the current member of organization will not spend too much time reinvent the wheel but focus more on how to grow from the wisdom of former members.

The last recommendation that equally important goes towards university to further improve their student support services currently available for student-led volunteering organizations. Even the university's philosophy is emphasizing on self-management of student-led volunteering organizations as well as provide the safe space for student to learn from their success and failure. However, the researcher still believe that sufficient interventions from the university will strengthen effectiveness of student-led volunteering organization to be an actual learning platform to develop soft skills for graduates. The university should provide facilities, finance and resources to ensure student-led volunteering organizations have the most basic support to operate the volunteering activities and then grow professionally further. To further enhance the effective of this learning platform for student, the university can provide appropriate training, ongoing mentorship and coaching support to ensure the committee have sufficient knowledge and skills to help student member turn the experience gained from volunteering into necessary working skills to enter into workforce.

The researcher truly believes that university is on the right direction towards promoting student-led volunteering activities as student development mechanism. However, we all know that students will need to be equip with academic competencies and soft skills in related to professional context, thus the university need to continue to put more

effort to enhance the effectiveness in their policy and practices both the curriculum and the extra-curricular activities. The university must ensure that student-led volunteering organization is an effective learning platform which can add value to the core curriculum to equip soft skills and groom students to be successful in both personal and professional aspects of lives in the near future.



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