

# Knowledge on Criteria of Undergraduate Qualification of the 4<sup>th</sup> Year Students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University, Thailand

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## Abstract

The purposes of this study were to examine the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University, and to analyze its relationship with personal factors. The populations for study were 99 undergraduate students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University. The test forms with 20 questions were used to collect data. The instrument was tested before using. It had difficulty value ( $P$ ) = 0.53-0.80; discrimination value ( $r$ ) = 0.20-0.53; and reliability value ( $KR-20$ ) = 0.72. The data collected were computed and analyzed via frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) and pearson correlation. The results of the study revealed that the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University was high, and there was no statistically significant relationship with their personal factors.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Criteria of Undergraduate Qualification, Public Administration

## Introduction

The educational services of Public Administration Program under The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Songkhla Rajabhat University, for Bachelor of Arts Degree in Public Administration have been tendered since the academic year 2001 until now. Throughout the time, attempts have been made to monitor, evaluate and improve to cope with modernization and dynamic social, economic, political and cultural changes. In addition, it has been done to supply the qualified graduates in this field to meet the need for national development, especially at the local level, and also to comply with the intent of the 2017 constitution for decentralization. The constitution aims at providing local autonomy to policy making, implementation, and control of local resources. Educational services in this field will help the locals to be well equipped in terms of personnels, management, moral and ethical practices under good governance principles. The senses of public awareness and other qualifications are basic and important feature of government personnels or even those who are not in public sector, for the benefits of the organizations and society as a whole (Public Administration Program, 2012).

Moreover, educational services at the first degree level in Public Administration is required to meet “The standard qualification for undergraduate degree in the field of Public Administration A.D. 2015”. This standard covers at least 5 areas of learning outcomes; e.g. 1) virtue and morality, 2) knowledge, 3) intellectual skills 4) interpersonal skills and responsibility, and 5) numerical analysis skills (Ministry of Education, 2015). From the 5 criteria of the undergraduate qualification one of them is about knowledge. This means that the graduates are expected to gain extensive and systematic body of knowledge in the field of study including awareness and understanding of related principles and theories. These required knowledges are important for graduates in the field of public administration who will work in public organizations in the future. They were also included in the National

Strategic Plan for Public Sector Development (2013-2018). This plan had formed 7 strategies, covering the aspect of the development of the required body of knowledge for competent public personnels needed for the development of networked governance. This kind of personnels will be capable to work co-operatedly and mutually use resources among related agencies both of public, private and others. It requires public personnels with modern and high competency, and they must be very professional, equipped with well adaptive working system and paradigm. High creativity and efficiency will be expected for working in public sector. (Office of the Public Sector Development Commission, 2013) From those aspects, Public Administration Program has given importance to the matter of knowledge by including it in the revised Public Administration Curriculum 2012, section 4: Learning outcomes, teaching procedures and evaluation. They were imbedded in every major subjects. The graduates are required to gain enough knowledge and understanding of relevant principles and theories. They have to be able to apply the knowledge and research results appropriately for solving local problems. And they must also be able to integrate knowledge in the field of public administration with knowledge in other areas for the work of public administrators. (PAP, 2012)

What have been mentioned has shown that public personnels or administrators or students in the field of public administration are very important to the national development work in the future. So the researcher is very much interested to study and examine the educational outcomes of the 4th year students as compared to the qualification criteria required for the first degree level in Public Administration, including to study the relationship between the required knowledge and personal factors. The result of the study will be available for improvement of the curriculum which will benefit the society as a whole in the future.

## Methods

**Population:** Populations for the study were 99 4th year undergraduate students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University in the academic year 2016.

**Data Collection:** The 4 sections test forms were used to collect data. The first section is about personal factors; e.g. sex, home town, former school, family monthly income and current average grade. The second section is about questions concerning principles and theories relating to public administration. The third section is about questions measuring the ability to apply the knowledge in public administration, including the using of research results for solving local problems. And the fourth section is about the questions measuring the ability to integrate the knowledge in public administration with the ones from other related fields. The tests in section 2-4 have 2 choices questions (yes/no), 1 point for 1 right answer and 0 for a wrong one, from 20 items. The tests had been tried out with other group of 30 persons of population. The results showed the difficulty level ( $P$ ) = 0.53-0.80; the discrimination value ( $r$ ) = 0.20-0.53 and the reliability value, calculated from Kuder-Richardson 20 formula or KR-20 value = 0.72. This meant that the test form was acceptable for collecting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997).

**Data Analysis:** After reviewing for completeness of data derived from the tests, the analysis had been made to obtain the following statistics:

1. Frequencies and percentages of personal factors: e.g. sex, monthly family income, home town, former school, current average grade and numbers of yes and no answers from each question.
2. Means ( $\mu$ ) and standard deviations ( $\sigma$ ) of personal factors: e.g. monthly family income, current average grade and the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University. The criteria used for evaluation were divided into 3 groups: high, medium and low, with the following knowledge intervals:

Aspects	Intervals of knowledge		
	Low	Medium	High
Knowledge on principles and theories in Public Administration	0.00-4.00	4.01-7.00	7.01-10.00
Ability to apply the knowledge about Public Administration and research for solving local problems	0.00-2.33	2.34-3.67	3.68-5.00
Ability to integrate the knowledge about Public Administration with knowledge in other related fields	0.00-2.33	2.34-3.67	3.68-5.00
Knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University	0.00-7.33	7.34-13.67	13.68-20.00

3. Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) to be used for examining the relationship between the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University and personal factors: e.g. sex, home town, former school. The result of the analysis showed the statistically significant relationship. The further analysis was made to identify the level and direction of the relationship by using contingency coefficient.

4. Pearson correlation (r) to be used for the analysis of the relationship between the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University and personal factors: e.g. monthly family income and current average grade by using the criteria for measuring the level of relation of Peck, et al. (1993, as quoted in Kesarat, 2012); as showed below.

>  $\pm 0.80$  means high relationship  
 $\pm 0.50$ - $\pm 0.80$  means medium relationship  
 $< \pm 0.50$  means low relationship

## Results and Discussion

Discussions of the result was done by separating into 2 parts according to the 2 objectives: 1) The knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University and 2) The relationship between the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University with personal factors, the discussions are the following:

### **The knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University**

As a whole, from the total score of 20, the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University was at a high one, with the average score of 13.99. It is only 0.31 above the standard. (The average high level score is 13.68 or more) (See Table 1-4). But it is still high, as the results were derived from the study with the 4th year students, the last year to finish the courses of study. So this group of students had accumulated quite a complete body of knowledge in the field of public administration, as compared to the other groups. So they truly had high level of knowledge as supported by Bloom, et al. (1956 as quoted in Patanothai, 2012). They explained that knowledge relating to circumstances and accumulated experiences, belonging to anyone will support their behavior and deeds. This is also consistent to what

Choopichaikum and Chenmanut had found. (1973 as cited in Samakkarn, 2007). They explained that knowledge arising from experiences and attitudes were from the study. On this point, Srisopha (1979 as cited in Samakkarn, 2007) had supported that knowledge is the recall of the past experiences and facts. And Klungpahol (2010) had explained that major factors influencing the knowledge and understanding, besides the level of education, various rational attitudes, and social status, experiences can also bring knowledge, understanding and then one's behavior. From the research result, it showed that education services offered through the Public Administration curriculum at Songkhla Rajabhat University, had been appropriate. The production of graduates in this field had maintained 3 required characteristics, at least, they are: having good knowledge, ability and skills for the profession, as demanded by various organizations, both public and private: being supportive in economic, social development and in moving toward modern democratic government of the country; being aware and interested in social, economic and political situations of the country; and gaining skills for seeking more knowledge by themselves, being able to do analysis of the problems systematically that will be useful for both local and country development (PAP, 2012). These desired qualities of graduates are requirements as stated by the standard for Bachelor degree in Public Administration A.D. 2015. It aims at producing multi-disciplinary graduates, well equipped with knowledge, intellectual capacity and skills for working in public agencies giving various public services. Those who study in this field of education are expected to gain knowledge and ability to apply public administration sciences for efficient performance with effectiveness and good governance (ME, 2015).

In addition, according to each objectives of study, especially, the third one: having ability to integrate knowledge in public administration with knowledge in other related fields, the result showed the high level. While, for the first one: having knowledge and understanding about principles and theories in public administration, the result also showed the medium level. And for the second: having ability to apply the knowledge/understanding and research findings in public administration for solving local problems appropriately, the result showed the medium level. These are the result of understanding caused by knowledge that they gained as pointed by Bloom, et al (1956 as cited in Patanothai, 2012). It was stated that knowledge and understanding are interrelated and can not be separated. To comprehend the knowledge must be done together with understanding. So when understanding is reached, one can realize mind condition under a particular circumstance and accumulated experience. And ultimately, it will bring about behavior or action of a person. This action is actually the ability to adapt the knowledge for explanation, comparison, or abridgement of any subject, idea or information (Srisopha, 1979 as cited in Samakkarn, 2007). The high level of the knowledge integration ability from the study revealed the quality that is consistent to the criteria required by the standard set for graduate in Public Administration A.D. 2015 and the quality of graduate that are desired by the Public Administration Program A.D. 2012 (Revised Program) of The Songkhla Rajabhat University. It is also consistent to the purpose of the Ministry of Education (PAP, 2012; ME, 2015).

**Table 1** Knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University as a whole

Variables	$\mu$	$\sigma$	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Knowledge Level
Aspect 1 Having knowledge and understanding about principles and theories in public administration (10 points)	6.81	1.58	10.00	1.00	Medium
Aspect 2 Having ability to apply knowledge/understanding and research findings about public administration for solving local problems appropriately (5 points)	3.30	0.95	5.00	2.00	Medium
Aspect 3 Having ability to integrate knowledge in public administration with knowledge in other related fields (5 points)	3.88	0.84	5.00	1.00	High
Knowledge of the 4th year students of Songkhla Rajabhat University as compared to the criteria as a whole (20 points)	13.99	2.57	20.00	7.00	High

**Table 2** Knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University for the first aspect: having the knowledge (10 point)

Variables	Yes answer		No answer	
	N	%	N	%
1. Public Administration is a science for public affairs	98	99.0	1	1.0
2. Woodrow Wilson was the person who lighted up the idea about Public Administration science	92	92.9	7	7.1
3. Public Administration is an interdisciplinary study	74	74.7	25	25.3
4. The name of the article that lighted up the idea about public administration is "The Public Administration"	28	28.3	71	71.7
5. Nicholas Henry had divided the development of public administration science into 5 paradigms. Public Administration as a pure science is one of them	50	50.5	49	49.5
6. Literature supporting the idea of separating administration from politics is Politics and Administration of Goodnow (1900)	81	81.8	18	18.2
7. Important essence of the literature "Politics and Administration" is that administration should not be under politics and interests	87	87.9	12	12.1
8. Management Science has arisen from the ideas of administration	42	42.4	57	57.6
9. Management Science deals with adopting Systematic working style to replace what is accustomed to	81	81.8	18	18.2
10. Study of public policy has been said to be the study of public administration in the past	41	41.4	58	58.6
For aspect 1 as a whole (10 points) Average score 6.81 is at a medium level				

**Table 3** Knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University for the second aspect: ability to apply the knowledge (5 points)

Variables	Yes answer		No answer	
	N	%	N	%
1. Public Administration science emphasizes the participation of stakeholders in looking after locality	75	75.8	24	24.2
2. Public Administration science promotes and supports more power of administration of local authorities for making decision	31	31.3	68	68.7
3. Public Administration science can be used to solve problems of both public and private organizations	95	96.0	4	4.0
4. Public Administration science is helpful to understand working systems in both public and private organizations and also in applying for local development	98	99.0	1	1.0
5. Research in Public Administration is the work for solving problems arising in public organizations	28	28.3	71	71.7
For aspect 2 as a whole (5 points), Average score 3.30 is at a medium level				

**Table 4** Knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University for the third aspect: ability to integrate the knowledge (5 points)

Variables	Yes answer		No answer	
	N	%	N	%
1. Public Administration science can be used together with legal science targeting to improve administration of an organization	96	97.0	3	3.0
2. Public Administration science can be used together with Political science targeting to improve administration of an organization	96	97.0	3	3.0
3. Public Administration are required to have good knowledge in every subject area	35	35.4	64	64.6
4. Public Administration are required to have ability in term of psychological tactics	74	74.7	25	25.3
5. Public Administration are required to be able economically	83	83.8	16	16.2
For aspect 3 as a whole (5 points), average score 3.88, is at a high level				

#### **The relationship between the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University with personal factors**

The results from the analysis to find relationship between the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University with their personal factors: e.g. sex, home town, former school, monthly family income and current average grade, showed that there was no relationship (See Table 5-6). This may be due to the fact that knowledge were from the accumulation of information and experiences in the past, especially, the body of knowledge in public administration, from which they had gathered throughout the curriculum. They were not from personal factors. It was agreeable with the study of Bloom, et al. (1956 as cited in Patanothai, 2012). As it was stated that knowledge is linking with environment and accumulated

experiences. And knowledge, itself, will affect the behavior or action of people. It also agreed with what was stated by Choopichai and Cheunmanut (1973 as cited in Samakkarn, 2007). Their explanations were that knowledges arose from experiences and attitude, were brought about by old knowledges formerly accumulated and learned. Many past research results also revealed that personal factors; e.g. sex, age, status, educational background/level, income, etc. had no impact on knowledge level (Sriswadi, 2009; Klungpahol, 2010; Patanothai, 2012; Porkar & Rienkham, 2013). So this research results about the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University clearly showed that those personal factors did not determine their knowledge level in Public Administration at all. It also implied that recruiting inputs to enroll in Public Administration degree can ignore those factors. As a matter of fact, teaching and studying process actually determine knowledge and understanding gained. As Ruengaram (2008) had studied about learning problems of the undergraduate students in Business Administration of Rachamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin Wangklaikangwon Campus. The finding was that their learning problems were in 3 dimensions: students side, teaching and studying process side and learning environment side. To the researches, these were the factors determining the level of knowledge to be gained by the first degree students.

**Table 5** The relationship between the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University with sex, home town, and former school

Personal factors	Knowledge level				$\chi^2$
	Low		High		
	N	%	N	%	
Sex					.118
- Male	3	5.8	49	94.2	
- Female	2	4.3	45	95.7	
Home town					.190
- Zone 1 (Within Songkhla Province)	2	4.1	47	95.9	
- Zone 2 (Outside Songkhla Province)	3	6.0	47	94.0	
Former School					.005
- Public school	4	5.1	74	74.1	
- Private school	1	1.1	20	19.9	
Total	5	5.1	94	94.9	

**Table 6** The relationship between the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University with family monthly income and current average grade

Variables	X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	Y
X <sub>1</sub> = monthly family income	1.00		
X <sub>2</sub> = current average grade	.171	1.00	
Y= knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program	.022	.171	1.00

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The Research results showed that the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4<sup>th</sup> year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University, as a whole, was high. Looking at each aspect: the first one, they had good knowledge and understanding in principles and theories of public administration. The second one, they could

apply the knowledge and understanding, as well as research results in public administration for solving local problems appropriately. Their knowledge is at a medium level. So for this aspect, in term of curriculum, instructors in each course should give more emphasis in introducing under body of knowledge in public administration and to help them to be more competent in applying the knowledge in the locality.

The research result showed that there was no relationship between the knowledge on criteria of undergraduate qualification of the 4th year students in Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University with personal factors: sex, home town, former school, monthly family income and current average grade. This finding actually showed that those personal factors had no impact on the level of knowledge. It implied that recruiting students for Public Administration Program can ignore those personal factors. Instead, emphasis should be taken for improving teaching and studying process in order to help students in Public Administration gain more knowledge and understanding.

### Acknowledgements

The research would like to thank the Committer for Public Administration Program of Songkhla Rajabhat University, for the permission to do this research. It will be helpful for improvement of both teaching/studying process as well as the curriculum administration. The research also would like to thank the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for its financial support for this research. It had provider the opportunity for research to improve skill knowledge and capability in doing research which will benefit students in the Program.

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