

Project Title : The Impact of Economic Factors on the Direction of
Human Resource Development in Thailand

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Abstract

It is widely recognized that influence of the phenomenon known as "credentialism" has expanded and become further institutionalized in Thailand. This phenomenon manifests itself in (1) the expanding demand for and supply of higher level formal education and (2) in a widespread use of educational credentials as the primary job requirement. This phenomenon has resulted in many problems which affect individuals, the formal education system, and the Thai economy in general. To solve these problems in the long run, their causes should be understood and dealt with in a systematic way. In this research paper, a model is proposed which describes the relationships among 3 economic variables and their impact on the growth of the credential system. These economic factors are : (1) the pattern of relations external to Thailand, characterized by dependence of the Thai economy on the world system ; (2) the direction and pattern of social and economic modernization efforts ; and (3) the resulting direction and pattern of Thai socio-economic conditions, characterized mainly by (a) uneven development between the center (Bangkok) and the periphery (the rest of the country), and (b) the prominent growth of the tertiary economic activities within the urban area. The growth of the credential system in this study is characterized by a specific direction and pattern of formal education expansion. Through a structural - historical study, a hypothesis has been formulated which states that predominant feature of this relationship is determined by the combined impact of the three economic factors mentioned

above, with the growth of the credential system becoming a foundation upon which the tertiary sector has been built. This research paper, then, attempts to test this hypothesis using path analysis.

In this research paper, the word "credentialism" is defined as a phenomenon in which it is generally held that educational credentials are the most important factor determining one's future social, political, and economic status. Such an attitude stems from a set of 3 beliefs : (1) a belief that formal education is absolutely necessary for the development process ; (2) a belief that an unlimited expansion is the prime stimulus of the development process ; and (3) an acceptance of educational credentials as the job requirement without considering the nature of the job or particular skill it may require.

In testing the proposed hypothesis, various indices of each variable have been utilized and the results have tended to confirm the research hypothesis. Some policy implications are, then, drawn concerning the issue of alternative approaches to human resource development and planning, the adjustment of the role of formal education, and the adjustment of the growth of the tertiary sector. However, in drawing a more precise approach to human resource development, the issue of credentialism needs to be scrutinized further. Some future research prospects are recommended such as (1) an in-depth study of each factor influencing the growth of the credential system, and (2) a study of the dynamic of the role of educational credentials in the job market.