An Investigation of “Professionalism” in Thai Private Universities

By

Mr. Chansak Assawasirisilp

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Administration
School of Public Administration
The National Institute of Development Administration
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We approved the dissertation of satisfying the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Administration.

(Juree Vichit-Vadakan, Ph.D.)

(Jirawat Wongswadiwat, Ph.D.)

(Nisada Wedchayanon, Ph.D.)

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Abstract

This research attempts to study the professionalism characteristics of the Thai private universities by investigating on five core dimensions of professionalism: (1) uses or reliance on a professional organization or colleague community as a major referent, (2) beliefs in public service or indispensability of the profession, (3) beliefs in self-regulation, -control, and-evaluation and finally, (5) autonomy restrained by responsibility.

In addition, this research also explores the causal factors that affect the degree of professionalism of the Thai private universities encompassing; need-oriented factors of the individual, the individual stages of socialization, bureaucratization, and role conflicts and role ambiguity.

The sample of 506 full-time acharns from eight sampled private universities located in Bangkok and Metropolitan Area (BMA) and provincial areas are studied. The research results indicate that the degree of professionalism of the acharns in the private academic system is relatively moderate. Bureaucratization process measured in terms of centralization and formalization, has negative impact on the degree of professionalism, while internal job motive and need for power are influential to explain the changes in professionalism. The research result confirms that the interaction pattern between Thai acharns and students is still traditionally based on "patron-client relationship". Thai students still perceive that acharns belong to a group of privileged class who can reward and punish them accordingly.

In addition, pertaining to the individual socialization factors, it is found that in the pre-arrival period of socialization (anticipatory stage) determination in career and job expectancy are of most significance for acharns before entering the academic system. During the encounter period of socialization, it is even discovered that sense of alienation of perceiving oneself as a plain employee in profit-seeking companies is most influential. Finally, During the metamorphosis stage of socialization, right perception of self-capability and knowledge, the attitudes towards academic works,
devotion of oneself to the academic career, and adherence to professional norms are most significant to the professionalism degree.

The research result confirms the tentative hypothesis that the concept of professionalism and bureaucratization is incompatible in the sense that when the professionals like acharns are required to reside within the bureaucratic environment, role incongruence expressed in terms of role conflicts and ambiguity, are most predominant to explain the variations of degree of professionalism of the Thai private universities in significant extent. The proposed hypothetical model developed in this research is capable of explaining the changes or variations in the professionalism of the Thai private universities by 44 percent. The guidelines for future researches have been proposed within the dissertation.
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