

Brief Comments on the Bright Future for HRD Graduates in Thailand

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I have been coming to Thailand almost every year for the past 27 years and have seen many changes over those years. I am referring to the deeper changes than just the number of McDonalds and 7Eleven stores. The vast improvements to the infrastructure, including the building of Suvarnabhumi Airport, is just one example of the progress I have observed.

I believe that there are at present great opportunities for HRD graduates in Thailand for two reasons. First, Thailand is part of the fastest growing economic region in the world, with the ASEAN free trade agreement scheduled to take place in 2015. This event will increase the exchange of, not only more products, but also more services, including educational services for students in the region to come to Thailand to increase their skills. Second, the emphasis on HRD and “people development” in the forthcoming 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan, 2012-2016, will increase greatly the need for HRD specialists. So, HRD graduates should be in demand in the market place and also as teachers of HRD in this dynamic field.

My second point is that the need for more high quality research in HRD has never been greater. Policy makers are crying out for more local research as the foundation for making evidence-based policies. This need puts pressure on universities to give their graduates a sound background in the latest methodological research strategies. In my 40 years of teaching in universities in Australia, the US, the UK, Singapore and Thailand, I have seen the pendulum in research methodology swing from a dominance of quantitative research to the other extreme of a predominance of qualitative research approaches. Now, there seems to be a swing back to the middle path of combining the two approaches in more mixed methods studies, which use both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Of course, the research strategy is determined by the research questions or hypotheses that the researcher chooses to investigate. Nevertheless, sometimes the research questions are based on the limited training that the student has received, with an increasing number of Thai PhD programs neglecting to introduce their students to quantitative methodologies, because the instructors have been trained only in qualitative methodologies. In this way, students are being deprived of the opportunity to use statistical or other quantitative techniques, because their own program neglects to include such techniques in their research training. I sincerely hope that such neglect is overcome in the future, because the quality of the research studies and research training of Thai HRD specialists demands that they be competent in both types of research strategies.

I wish the HRD Journal and those who publish in it every success in the future.