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Intention to Work in One's Hometown: Seniors at Naresuan University, Phitsanulok Province*

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1. Introduction

Returning to work in one's hometown is a social phenomenon that has attracted considerable interest after the financial crisis of 1997. Many of the people who became unemployed decided to return to their roots and work in their place of origin. This phenomenon reflects the importance of rural areas in Thailand. Even though rural people move to cities to work, they still have the home they left behind. If they find subsequently that they made a wrong step and are not successful in their lives or careers, they still have a "home" where they can always return (Prasartkul and Issarapakdee, 1999: 56) Going back to their hometown not only can serve to decrease the rate of out-migration from their hometowns but also to increase the knowledge and learning available for use in their hometown (Suppasawadkoon, 2005: 41).

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University seniors are young adults about to graduate in the near future. They are regarded as valuable human resources having knowledge and being ready to be employed for the development of the economy and the society in their areas of origin. Currently, more than half of all graduates nationwide have hometowns located in each region of the country: the central, eastern, northeastern, northern, western and southern regions, but move to Bangkok in search of work (Office of Ministry of University Affairs, 2000: 51; 2001: 36; 1998: 56; 1997: 53). They identify among their reasons for doing the lack of jobs in their area of origin and their desire to work in areas where they could make progress (Goldstein and Sombat, 1974, cited in Boonyanate, 1992: 4). Yet, each university in Thailand enrolls students through a quota system which how among major objectives (a) providing students living in the area with an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree and (b) producing technocrats able to develop the economy and society in that region as well as the country as a whole (Naresuan University, 2006: 1). It is such an approach that supports the students in taking their knowledge and learning from the university setting so that these may be applied for the development of that region.

Although government-supported Naresuan University has limits on the number of students it can enroll, the university plays an important role in serving as a center for higher education in the lower northern region of Thailand. It has 17 faculties which offer a total of 171 majors (Naresuan University, 2007: 9-12). The proportion of Mathayom 6 students that Naresuan University enrolls in the freshmen class of bachelor's degree programs from high schools in the lower northern region is as high as 70 percent (Naresuan University, 2006: 2). The percentage of students whose place of origin is in the northern region is 77.2. However, the results of a survey of Naresuan University graduates in 2004 and 2005 concerning job applications showed that the number of the graduates working in the northern region had decreased from 51.26 percent in 2004 to 42.01 percent in 2005 (Planning Division, 2007a and 2007b). These data indicate that Naresuan University graduates tended to move out of their original area to look for opportunities to earn a better living than they could in the northern part of the country. Therefore, the situation in Phitsanulok Province should be studied in greater depth.

Intention denotes having an idea or plan about what one is going to do: a decision to do something in a certain way. It indicates a

steadfast desire to do a certain thing (Likitthammarotchane, 2002: 89). A study by Fuller et al. (1983: 119-127) found that the number of students who had intended to move and eventually did move was 52.0 percent of the total. It could be said that the intention of moving is closely related to the behavior of moving. On the contrast, senior students who had the intention to work in their original area or hometown for the purpose of developing that area could be the source of a favorable trend, which would result in the development of their original area because the students possess academic knowledge that would be helpful for development purposes (Chai-umporn and Samukkarn, 1994: 8). For this reason, the intention of students should receive particular focus.

2. Objectives

The major objectives of this study were to determine the intention of seniors in Naresuan University to work in their hometown and to investigate the factors influencing that intention. It was felt that the results of the study would likely be advantageous in fostering a desire among students to return to their areas of origin in order to work, which would create stronger family relationships and thus advance social development while serving to overcome to some degree the lack of human resources in the local area as well.

The findings of this study could be useful in helping policymakers to recognize the situation and the factors affecting the intention of university seniors to return to their hometown to work so that they could formulate measures to overcome the lack of valuable human resources in these parts of Thailand.

3. Methodology

The study population was drawn from the 4,170 seniors in academic year 2007 in Naresuan University in Phitsanulok Province (Naresuan University, 2006). The method of Taro Yamane was used to calculate the proper size of the sample, that is, 400 seniors. The sample was chosen by stratified random sampling, using faculties as a criterion to divide the students into groups. The size of the sample drawn from each faculty was calculated proportional to total size.

The instrument used in this research was a questionnaire created by searching texts, documents, and related research reports

consistent with the variables. The data were analyzed by statistics, percentage, mean, median, standard deviation, and logistic regression.

4. Conceptual Framework

The previously described situation concerns the intention of senior university students to return to their hometown. The sample of seniors was divided into two groups: those intending to seek work in their place of origin and the seniors not intending to do so. Three groups of independent variables were studied: (a) population factors; namely sex, education program, grades, and hometown consciousness; (b) family factors, namely age of parents, family members, career within family unit, and family income; and (c) environmental factors, namely residence in area, duration of education, family ties, expectation of career in hometown, expectation of income there, attitudes toward going back to hometown, and subjective norms of the reference groups. The intention of returning to one's hometown to work was a dependent variable.

4.1 General characteristics: population, family, and environment of the sample

Individual factors

The study found that the sample comprised more females than males: 59.8 percent and 40.2 percent, respectively. Consideration of the curricula and academic performance of the sample population revealed that most of the sample population was in the Social Science curriculum and their academic performance was entirely within the intermediate level. The grade point average was about 2.6. Moreover, with regard to hometown consciousness, most of the sample population were in the intermediate or high levels.

Family factors

Most of the parents of the sample population were not in the elderly age group that is, not over 60 years of age. When the father or mother was 60 years old, they were categorized into a second group. A third group comprised those parents who both were over 60 years of age. Besides these factors, it was found that more than two-thirds of the samples had 4-6 people in the family; was they were followed by those with 1-3 people in the family, and 7 people or more in the

family, respectively. The average number of family members of the sample population was about four people.

After considering the career and income of the family, all (99.7 percent) of the family samples were still working; just a few (0.3 percent) were not working. The careers of most of the sample families involved working in government service or state enterprises. Most families had an income of less than 10,000 baht per month and between 10,001 and 30,000 baht, the average being about 30,000 baht a month.

Environmental factors

The results showed that more than half the sample had originally come from areas outside or inside the municipal area, and that most had been studying for a period of between four and five years, with the average being four years.

As family ties most of the sample population had strong family ties in the area; this was followed by intermediate and low levels of ties, respectively.

When the expectations about career and income from working in one's hometown were considered, it was found that the entire sample had expectations about pursuing their careers in their hometown and making their living by working in their hometown.

With regard to their attitude toward going back to their hometown, it was found that most of the sample were moderately or strongly favorable to that idea, which was similar to the subjective norms of the sample's reference groups, that is, moderately and strongly favorable.

4.2 Intention of returning to work in one's hometown

It was found that more than half the samples (58.4 percent) had no intention of returning to their hometown to work after graduation.

4.3 Factors affecting the intention of returning to one's hometown to work

The study was focused on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables using logistic regression analysis, with a condition stated that each pair of independent

variables had to be closely related, which would indicate that the independent variables could be substituted by any other independent variables in the analysis. Not to break the condition, the researchers tested the relationship among the independent variables by correlation coefficient; the results showed that no pair of independent variables were correlated, except for the correlation between the expectations about career and income from working in one's hometown, which was at a high level. The researchers had to choose one of the independent variables to be analyzed in an equation. Because most previous studies had found that income was an important motive for moving from one's original area, a student would decide to move or migrate when he or she had realized that migration would result in higher income, both real and expected (Schultz, 1962, as cited in Deesawad, 1998: 43-44; Bogue, 1959, as cited in Deesawad, 1998: 44; Todaro, 1966: 220-226, as cited in Boonyanate, 1992: 14). Otherwise, this study analyzed all the independent variables by logistic regression, except for the expectation about pursuing a career in one's hometown.

With regard to the factors affecting the intention of returning to one's hometown to work, only four were found to affect that intention: hometown consciousness, family ties, expectation of earning income in one's hometown, and subjective norms of the reference groups. All of these factors together could explain the transformation of the dependent variables, that is, the intention of returning to one's hometown to work was 42.7 percent. However, these four factors have an important positive effect on the intention of returning to work in one's hometown. If the level of a senior student in high with regard to hometown consciousness, family ties, expectation of earning income in his or her hometown, and the subjective norms of the reference groups are high, the possibility that he or she will return to his or her hometown to work is high too. On the other hand, if the level of a senior student is low with regard to hometown consciousness, family ties, expectation of earning an income in his or her hometown, as are the subjective norms of the reference groups, the possibility that he or she will return to his or her hometown to work will be low.

It may be concluded therefore that the hypothesis of this study is accepted, that is, hometown consciousness, family ties, expectation of earning income in one's hometown, and the subjective norms of the reference groups are related to the intention of returning to work in one's hometown.

5. Discussion

After studying and analyzing the data, the most important points about the factors affecting the intention of seniors at Naresuan University to return to work in their hometown are described below.

1. The results of the study indicate that more than half the seniors had no intention to work in their hometown because most of their parents were not in the elderly group, which is consistent with the findings of the previous study in that a family without an elderly member had a weaker intention of returning to their hometown to work than a family with the elderly member. Having an older dependant in a family may require that another family member look after him or her since an elderly dependant could not be abandoned (Boonchalaksee, 1997: 70-71).

Currently, the progress being made in technology and communications, especially with regard to mobile telephones, is an important factor that is helpful in enabling parents in the hometown to easily contact the children wherever the children may have moved to stay in.

They can help each other by telephone immediately whenever necessary, for example if a parent falls ill. In addition, children contacting their parents through mobile telephones, asking about their parents' health can bring happiness to the parents because their children are expressing their care and letting them know they are thinking of them. The parents would be happy to know that their children can support themselves in the city. It may be concluded that maintaining contact with family members even though they are far away can make them feel near. In addition to such advances in communications, modern transport makes it easy for the adult children to visit their hometown and see their parents, or for parents to visit their children. Thus, distance, which used to be an important variable in migration, is no longer plays such an important role (Sangtienchai and Kodel, 2007: 265; Prasartkul, 2006: 4-5).

2. The results of this study indicate that having hometown consciousness importantly affects the positive intention of returning to one's hometown to work. If university seniors have a high level of hometown consciousness, it is likely that there will be an increase in their intention to return to their hometown to work as well, which in

consistent with the finding of Insko (1967: 13). He held that whether a person had such consciousness depended on the degree to which that person was aware of and accepted his familial duties. First, that person should be interested in doing his or her duty, which would generate understanding and possibly acceptance of further action. This means that the students do not feel that returning to their hometown is an obligation, but a duty instead. This view is consistent with that of the previous study, which found that the consciousness was related to a relationship of learning, experience, and evaluation together with mind conditioning: a person learns through socialization the importance of such action and the value placed on it by the public (Sirinakorn, 2005: 52; Mattiko, 1998: 6-8). Therefore, it can be seen that the degree to which the seniors have the intention of returning to their hometown to work, that is, their hometown consciousness, is intermediate and high (62.2 and 37.8 percent), respectively. The seniors were found to really have the intention of returning to their hometown to work without being forced to do so.

3. The results of the study indicate that family ties strongly and positively affect the students' intention of returning to their hometown to work. Therefore, if the seniors' family ties are strong, it is possible that their intention of returning to their hometown to work will be strong as well. This result is consistent with the migration theory of Bogue (1977, cited in Tirasawat, 1997: 121-122). A theory has been proposed that whether migration happens or not will depend on the relationship of the student with his or her family and community. In general, a person has a relationship with his relatives, society, and the area where he or she used to live. Otherwise, if a person is satisfied with the economy, society, politics, and other conditions that exist in their previous community, that person will not think about or want to abandon his or her place and relatives to live in another area. This is consistent with the finding of the previous study, in which the effect on the migrants who moved outside of their original areas to work is they feel homesick and they missed their families the most of all, and so wanted to return home (Prasartkoon and Issarapakdee, 1999: 46-47; Boonchalaksee, 1997: 36-40). However, it may be because the decision whether that person should return home is made together with the family; in other words, the family unit makes the decision about a family member's migration, because that action of the family member will affect the family's production system and its ability to

care for the elderly and the young in the family (Rod dara, 2005; Boonyanate, 1995: 67; Rujitrakarehotikoon, 1995: 75; Plainoi, 1989: 46).

4. The results of the study indicate that the expectation of earning income in one's hometown has an important effect on the positive intention of returning to one's hometown to work. It can be said that, if the degree to which seniors have an expectation about earning income by returning to their hometown to work is high, it is possible that there will be an increase in their intention to return there for work. This result is consistent with that of many theories of migration, which hold that an important factor related to the decision to move or not to move is economic attraction; income is regarded as an important variable capable of predicting the desire of people to migrate (Todaro, 1966: 220-226, cited in Boonyanate, 1992: 14; Schultz, 1962, cited in Deesawad, 1998: 43-44; Bogue, 1969, an cited in Deesawad, 1998: 44; Ravenstein: 241-301). Not only are the results consistent with that of the previous study, but if the opportunity to earn the desired income is also compared, a person often will choose a career in the place that enables him or her to earn better income. Income is the main factor for people in general to consider in choosing a career to pursue because of the value placed on wealth and being able to meet the high cost of living in an increasingly competitive economic environment. Earning a good income is regarded as necessary for survival in today's economy (Rod dara, 2005; Deesawad, 1998: 60).

5. The results of the study indicate that the subjective norms of the reference groups importantly affect the positive intention of returning to one's hometown to work. If the level of seniors who are in accord with the referred groups is high, it is possible also that there will be an increase in the intention to return to one's hometown to work. This result is consistent with a theory about behavior. Ajzen Fishbein (1975: 301) proposed that a person expresses his or her behavior depending on how much each person in the referred groups desires him or her to express. Consequently, a person intends to act out his or her behavior when evaluating whether that behavior would produce a positive effect and the referred groups would agree with the behavior. On the other hand, if a person evaluates that the behavior would produce a negative effect and the referred groups would not agree with the behavior, he or she would try to avoid acting out that behavior. The results are also consistent with that the previous study,

wherein family members, especially father or mother and relatives, are influential with regard to the person's intention of returning to his or her hometown to work because these people have a close relationship and their opinion is worthy of respect too. Thus, they can very well change one's intention into practice (Boonyanate, 1992: 68; Rujitrakarnchotikoon, 1992: 75-76).

6. Recommendations

Suggestions for application

1. This study found that more than half the university seniors have no intention of returning to their hometown to work. It shows that the migration of young people out of their areas of origin is at a high level, so the government and others concerned should help to provide career opportunities for them. If these young emigrants could gain satisfaction in jobs in their areas of origin, they would not abandon their hometown.

2. It is important to create hometown consciousness among young people so that they would want to return to work in their hometown. Thus, a campaign focusing on the significance of going back home to develop one's hometown should be organized to support the notion that individuals have the power to develop and sustain their communities.

3. Family ties should be promoted in order to strengthen relationships with families through conversations via mobile telephones, and visits among family members and the young people by sending money home. These, measure would be helpful for strengthening family units and for to developing Thai society as a whole.

4. Training events should be promoted in order to enable young people to pursue their careers in the community, by focusing on the exploitation of local resources so that they would be able to make more money in their communities. This would have an impact locally on income distribution, and narrow the gap in economic opportunities available to people.

5. The referred groups should continually increase their role in advancing knowledge, improving understanding, fostering positive ideologies and consciousness concerning the goodness of hometown life.

Suggestions for further study

1. Because this study was undertaken to assess the intention of senior students to return to their hometown to work under the assumption that such an intention could predict the migration behavior of seniors, although a relationship between that intention and the seniors migration behavior could not be concluded, further study is necessary to reach a clear conclusion on this matter.

2. Because this study assumed only the intention of returning home to work and the intention not to return home, its results are limited: conclusions can be reached concerning the direction of migration and the reasons for it. Therefore, further more in-depth study is required.

3. Because the study has limitations with regard to the variables concerning the students' intention to return to their hometown, the instrument used in this study is not quite as good as it should be. Any further study should consider the significance of this point and provide more coverage.

4. In any further study, factors affecting the intention of returning to one's hometown to work, hometown consciousness, family ties, expectation of earning an income in the hometown, and the subjective norms of the reference groups should be assessed in an expanded study with greater coverage and depth.

5. This study found that all the factors studied could explain only 42.7 percent of the intention to return home, which shows that one independent variable may have an important effect on the intention of returning home to work; however, independent variables were not studied. Further study of other factors should be undertaken in order to understand the change in the intention of returning to one's hometown to work.

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