

Structural Patronage in Thailand: A Decade of Power Struggle and Problematic Issues in Governance with Regards to The Thai Local Administrative Organizations¹

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Abstract

This paper examines and analyses contemporary problems of power struggle and problematic issues in governance regarding local administrative organizations in Thailand. The study showed that Thai local administrative organizations, although applying a decentralization principle for decades, still encounter a power struggle in general and problematic issues in governance in four

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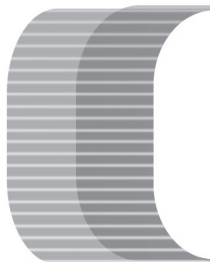
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dimensions. These are: the structural problem of local administrative organizations, power, and public duties in providing public services, local personnel administration, and local public finance. Based on our findings, we argue that structural patronage has, relatively to other factors, caused most of those problems.

Keywords: Local Administrative Organization, Local Governance, Law and Public Administration, Supervision of Local Administration, Decentralization



โครงสร้างอุปถัมภ์ในประเทศไทย: ทศวรรษแห่งการต่อสู้เรื่องอำนาจหน้าที่และปัญหา ในการกำกับดูแลองค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นไทย¹

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้เป็นการศึกษาและวิเคราะห์ปัญหาเกี่ยวกับการอำนาจหน้าที่และการกำกับดูแลองค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นของไทย จากการศึกษา พบว่า แม้ว่าจะมีการกระจายอำนาจไปยังองค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นมานานหลายทศวรรษ แต่ยังคงมีปัญหาอำนาจหน้าที่ขององค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นและปัญหาในการกำกับดูแลที่สำคัญใน 4 มิติ ได้แก่ ปัญหาเชิงโครงสร้างขององค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น อำนาจหน้าที่ของท้องถิ่นในการจัดทำบริการสาธารณะ การบริหารงานบุคคลของท้องถิ่น และการคลังท้องถิ่น ผลจากการศึกษาในการศึกษาวิจัยนี้ พบว่า ปัญหาทั้งสี่ประการนี้เกิดจากโครงสร้างและปัจจัยอื่น ๆ ซึ่งนำมาซึ่งปัญหาดังกล่าว

คำสำคัญ: องค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น การปกครองท้องถิ่น กฎหมายและการบริหารรัฐกิจ การกำกับดูแลองค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น การกระจายอำนาจ

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The Nature of Problematic Issues Concerning Local Administrative Organizations.

The 4 dimensions of the problems that local administrative organizations face all relate to their roles, powers, and duties. Each of these dimensions can be described as follows.

First Dimension: The Structure of the Local Administration Organizations

Problematic issues with regard to the structure of local administrative organizations consist of these key issues: problems defining overlapping areas within the regional administration, problems concerning the unsuitability of various structures of local public organizations, and administrative issues within a given local administrative organization.

Currently, Thai local administrative organizations have defined areas that overlap with those of regional administrations. That is to say, the provincial administration comprises administrative organizations in the form of the province, district, sub-district, and villages. Meanwhile, there is also a provincial administrative structure, municipalities in the forms of cities, town municipalities, sub-district municipalities, and sub-district administrative organizations, whose powers and duties have been defined identically to those of the regional government, affecting the effective use of public administration resources and the management of the state's budget. In addition, it was discovered that there are public administration problems due to a lack of efficient regional cooperation with the central government and cooperation between individual local administrative organizations.

To address such issues, it has been suggested that local administrative organizations develop mechanisms to facilitate collaboration between the central government, the regional government, and the local government and that these mechanisms clearly define the responsibilities of each party to cost-effectively utilize their resources. This can be accomplished by utilizing the province or provincial cluster's developmental plans for the related administrative bodies-i.e., the central government, regional governments, and local governments-as well as for the other parties involved. Moreover, it has been suggested that there should be a collaborative agreement in work implementation, contractual planning, and collaborative projects and that all parties'

designate indicators to help them monitor and evaluate their operations. In its initial phase, the Royal Decree on the Integrated Provincial and Provincial-Cluster Administrative Act B.E. 2551 (2008) should be revised to provide for integrated cooperation between all sectors in public administration and improve the laws on the sharing of power and authority for greater clarity (The National Reform Council, Report, 2015: 17). Additionally, a Royal Decree on cooperation between the central government, the regional governments, and the local governments should be drafted and assigned to the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (Ibid., 18).

Second Dimension: Power and Duties of the Local Administrative Organizations in Providing Public Service

There are two important problematic issues that must also be addressed, as follows:

Firstly, Problematic issues concerning the transfer of the duties and missions to the local administrative organizations. Based on the literature review and interviews with experts, the problematic state can be summarized into three categories according to their causes:

(1) Structural issues regarding organizational decentralization and governmental policy (and national politics). It could be stated that the problems under this category are “the source” of problematic issues regarding decentralization and other Thai local administrative issues, besides issues concerning power, duties, and public services. Issues in this category include issues related to government policies that cease to expedite the complete transfer of missions and duties to local administrative organizations according to the decentralization plan. In other words, the enactment of laws has not been expedited clearly enough to define the mission and responsibilities shared between the central ministries, departments and governmental agencies on the one hand, and the regional administration and the local administrative organizations on the other. Furthermore, there have been no laws to modify the responsibilities of the governmental agencies that carried out such responsibilities previously, resulting in the “transferring of personnel without the transfer of finance.” In other words, there was a transfer of mission and responsibilities because of the decentralization law and legislative plan, but funds and personnel from the central and provincial governments have not been transferred to local administrative organizations.

(2) Problematic issues arising from the government agency commissioned with the mission. This problem reflects the insincerity of the central government in the transfer of responsibilities, which includes a lack of commitment to the transfer of its mission to meet the administrative action plans by several government agencies that have ceased to implement the processes and procedures set forth in the decentralization plan to devolve power. The distribution of up to 35 percent of state revenue to local administrative organizations, previously planned, has not been realized. Currently, the central government's revenue distribution to local administrative organizations comprises only 25 percent of its total revenue. Moreover, there are issues resulting from methodological failures in decentralization-namely, most missions and responsibilities have been transferred to the lowest level of the local administrative organizations, which are municipalities and sub-district administrative organizations; on the other hand, over 70 percent of municipalities and sub-district administrative organizations are small and limited in capacity and, therefore, are unable to fulfill the mission and responsibilities that have devolved to other governmental agencies.

(3) Problematic issues arising from local administrative organizations, such as the fact that many local administrative organizations lack sufficient funds and are incapable of collecting sufficient revenues to carry out the mission and responsibilities that have devolved to them. The failure to transfer personnel from other government agencies to local administrative organizations has resulted in the lack of personnel required for the local administrative organization to perform the assigned tasks. This is especially true of tasks for which personnel with specialized expertise are required.

Secondly, Problematic issues in the division of power and duties in the provision of public services between the State and local administrative organizations under the Determining Plans and Process of Decentralization Act B.E. 2542 (1999). This study has found that the Determining Plans and Process of Decentralization Act B.E. 2542 (1999) has failed in its statutory requirements in clearly defining the divisions of powers and duties in the provision of public services between the State and the local administrative organizations, and between local administrative organizations themselves, for the following reasons:

(1) There is ambiguity with regard to interpretations of the legal content of the 37 provisions contained in the Determining Plans and Process of Decentralization Act B.E. 2542 (1999), none of which demonstrate any clear divisions with regard to the scope of authority and duties in the provision of public services between the State government and the local administrative organizations.

(2) Ambiguity concerning the regulations involved in the transfer of tasks and duties and the criteria for the determination of further decentralization: No information stipulating the regulations and criteria that the Decentralization Board requires for consideration in the decentralization of the local administrative organizations can be found. Also, no regulations can be found with regard to further decentralizing local administrative organizations.

(3) Issues concerning overlapping powers and responsibilities between the state government and the local administrative organizations and between local administrative organizations themselves. When the Determining Plans and Process of Decentralization Act B.E. 2542 (1999) was enacted, the provincial administrative organizations, the municipalities, the sub-district administrative organizations, Bangkok Metropolitan, and Pattaya all had additional powers and duties in the provision of public services beyond what was stipulated in the laws concerning their category as local administrative organizations. However, this Act has not been able to clearly determine and define the scope of public service administration between the State government and the local administrative organizations or between local administrative organizations themselves, resulting in a redundancy of authority and responsibilities between the three administrative categories.

The Determining Plans and Process of Decentralization Act B.E. 2542 (1999) has specified that the Provincial Administrative Organizations are responsible for broad-scale public services requiring advanced technical knowledge or for activities that benefit the public at large. However, the provisions, as stipulated in the law as well as in the rulings of the provincial governors and the Supreme Administrative Court and the governor, have still failed to clearly identify or standardize that types of operations or missions that qualify the Provincial Administrative Organizations to administer public services in other local administrative organizations or that qualify them to provide financial support to organizations or agencies.

Third Dimension: Problems of Local Personnel Administration

According to the findings of this study, the current Thai local personnel administration system is unable to attract adequate people to work, and moreover, deters professional progress. In other words, the local personnel administration process fails to draw capable individuals with adequate knowledge and expertise to work with the local administrative organizations due to the fact that the processes involved are numerous, complex, and chaotic, causing delays in the recruitment process, testing, registration, appointment, and transfer of funds; further, salaries are not perceived as attractive, and these administrators are regarded as second-class public officers. All these factors result in local administrations' failure to recruit talented and able individuals to work for their localities (Kokphol O. and Chaowna S, 2007: 22)

With respect to the obstruction of professional progress, it has been discovered that qualifications for certain positions-such as the deputy chief of a local administrative organization-requires that one obtain an educational degree only in political science or law, prohibiting other types of professionals from applying and, thus, barring knowledgeable, capable or skillful individuals from other professional fields from securing the position. Moreover, it has been discovered that there are no systems in place to promote capable personnel to the regional or central administration, nor do they have any opportunity to become high-level executives in the position of director-general of the Local Administrative Organizations, despite being well informed and knowledgeable in local administration (Ibid, 23).

Moreover, issues related to the central organization include issues of personnel administrative organizations lacking unity as a result of the personnel administrative structure implementing a three-level committee according to the Local Personnel Administration Act 2542 (1999), which consists of the Office of the Commission on Local Government Personnel Standards, the Central Board, and the Provincial Board. The Provincial Board divides their committees further into the PAO committee, the municipal committees, and the TAO committees. The practical implications of this division are redundancy and the overlap of power and responsibilities, a lack of clarity, and confusion within the local administrative organization. These factors result in varying advantages and disadvantages between the various types of government officials and employees. Furthermore, they complicate and delay the transfer of local employees (Ibid.).

Additionally, there are issues arising from the composition of the Office of the Commission on Local Government Personnel Standards. Namely, there is a requirement that representatives from local administrative organizations be members of the Office of the Commission on Local Government Personnel Standards, but, in practice, it has been discovered, local officers who have been affected by the promulgated resolutions or regulations directly have not been represented on the committee (Apichart Statidniramai, 2012: 79-80) In addition, the senior members comprising the committee are predominantly retired officials who lack knowledge and understanding about local government organizations and personnel management (Ibid, 24).

Since personnel management is not independent of the Office of the Commission on Local Government Personnel Standards, local governments may be dominated by a central authority. The lack of any real independence in the administration of their work is a result of the structure stipulated for the Office of the Commission on Local Government Personnel Standards, under the Ministry of the Interior, which has a Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior with the Director-General of Local Administration as commission members and the Head of the Commission as the secretary. Consequently, the Commission is administered by people who come from the Ministry of Interior. This is the cause of local government lacking any real independence in their management of personnel (Ibid).

Fourth Dimension: Problems of Local Finance

Major problems regarding local finance include issues concerning local administrative organizations' revenue structures, laws and regulations, fiscal development capacities, and budget allocations regarding intergovernmental transfers to local administrative organizations. Issues concerning local administrative organizations' revenue structures are significant problems for local fiscal systems due to the following:

(1) The proportion of revenue allocated to the local administrative organizations, which is determined to be 35 percent of net governmental revenues, has not been achieved (Office of the Decentralization to the Local Government Organization Committee, 2017).

(2) Local administrative organizations rely on intergovernmental transfers as their main sources of revenue. Although the proportion of the revenue of local administrative organizations to net governmental revenue has increased annually, this increase is due to subsidies. Local administrative organizations have relied on subsidies as the major source of revenue since 2001.

(3) Imbalances in intergovernmental transfer revenues between general subsidies and specific subsidies persist even though the government has allocated greater amounts of intergovernmental transfers. The increase has been in terms of the proportion applied to that of specific subsidies, though, during this current government administration (of General Prayuth Janocha), the amount has decreased (Office of the Decentralization to the Local Government Organization Committee, 2017).

(4) Thai intergovernmental transfers have fiscal restrictions since most subsidies come with conditions for their use. Thus, subsidies can be divided into specific grants and general grants. The specific subsidies are funds allocated by the government for the implementation of certain governmental objectives or for the implementation of certain governmental policies, whereas the general subsidies are divided into two categories: general subsidies for specified missions or objectives and general subsidies according to their powers and duties. Therefore, local administrative organizations lack the freedom to apply either general or specific subsidies. In the calculation of intergovernmental transfers, it was discovered that conditional subsidies accounted for 70 percent of all intergovernmental-transfer revenues (Department of Local Administration, 2017).

(5) Another major source of revenue for local administrative organizations are revenues from the State. This includes all the taxes that the State has collected and allocated on its behalf. The local administrative organizations' tax revenues collected by the government are estimated at 30 percent, and 20 percent of these revenues are dependent on governmental allocations. For the above reason, the local administrative organizations are dependent upon the State government for approximately 50 percent of its entire revenue, which affects local administrative organizations' fiscal autonomy. Only 10 percent local administrative organizations' total revenues come from their own tax collection.

(6) Lastly, the problem of overlapping revenue structures between local administrative organizations themselves and the fact that local administrative organizations' revenue structures do not currently consider socio-economic differences leads to different public service needs. However, these types of revenue structures do not differ.

Key problematic issues pertaining to expenditures and the budgeting of local administrative organizations are as follows:

(1) Public participation in budgeting is considered necessary, as it greatly increases the expression of public opinion in the communities' decision-making processes. However, in practice, participation by the public is lacking in substantial content. As a result, public contributions to development plans are limited, lack diversity, and occur only in the early stages, when information regarding conditions and requirements is collected from the community.

(2) Issues concerning regulations that determine the proportion of expenditures allocated to local administrative organizations. Local administrative organizations' expenditures can be grouped into two categories: current expenditures and investment expenditures. The law has stipulated that the proportion of expenditures in both categories cannot exceed 40% of the local administrative organizations' current expenditures. However current expenditures exceed legal requirements, and local administrative organizations have little remaining budget for development.

(3) Problematic issues in the financial control and monitoring of local administrative organizations. The inspection of spending by the public sector is carried out with many limitations. There are also problematic issues with regard to financial audits conducted by the Office of the Auditor General of Thailand, whereby audits are not conducted by inspecting local objectives and affairs, but by inspecting regulatory expenditures, which results in considerable problems for local administrative organizations.

Discussion and Analysis of the Problematic Issues

This section attempts to analyze the fundamental aspects of the local administrative organizations and their future directions. The aim is to search for a new conceptual framework to overcome longstanding problematic issues that have ensnared

progress over the past decade. The points of analysis are summarized as follows:

The development and emergence of local administrative organizations and their present state. The Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO), the Municipalities, and the Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO) (excluding Bangkok and Pattaya, which are special administrative areas) have had a very short development spans: the municipalities were organized under the Municipal Act B.E. 2496 (1953), the sub-district administrative organizations under the Sub-district Council and Sub-district Administrative Organizations Act 2537 (1994) and the provincial administrative organizations under the Provincial Administrative Organizations Act B.E. 2540 (1997). Meanwhile, considering only the sub-district administrative organizations and the provincial administrative organizations, these organizations cover the whole of Thailand, and they overlap in some areas due to their nature. However, these organizations' missions and duties are divided. In terms of experience, SAOs are only 23 years of age while PAOs are only 20 years of age. From a political and administrative perspective, they are the largest political and administrative organs directly related to the public.

Overall, the foundation of the political system has altered tremendously in terms of its organization. Today, all areas in Thailand are under the administration of the local organizations. Originally, only the regional governments had the authority to govern regionally. This change of power in administration across the country has led to a change in the relationship between government officers and the public. Not only was there a relationship between "officials" and "the people" but, in addition, there was another type of organization in overlapping areas. This organization was the local political organization, with "local politician" playing a key role. The relationship between "local politicians" and "the people" is different from the relationship between "officials" and "the people." The latter is the relationship between the regulators and the regulated, while local administrative organizations whose presence overlaps in the region results in a relationship such as that of "the Patron" and "the protégé"

Thus, the emergence of local administrative organizations is of paramount importance in the breakdown of the strong governing relationship, which is a type of vertical relationship, while the local administrative organizations have created horizontal relationships. From a political and governmental perspective, "local administrative

organizations” have contributed significantly to the creation of a unique political and administrative culture. This culture motivates locals to become increasingly aware and to participate in the creation of local administrators in each of the areas. These changes came with the overnight establishment of local administrative organizations within the nation without respite for other developments or contributing factors. These are the positive outcomes of the changes in governance that have occurred in the last two decades.

As mentioned above, “local administrative organizations” are organizations that have emerged in all areas across the nation, exhibiting a horizontal relationship and a dimension of social patronage. On this basis of social patronage, “people of influence” or “big wheels” in various localities can come to be “politicians” in their local communities, further strengthening the patronage system. While the competitiveness of national politics increases, the patronage system in local politics has been linked to national politics and developed into important an basis for national politics, resulting in a tight system of power relations between “local politicians” and “national politicians,” especially with regard to budget allocation to local administrative organizations, which is a significant problematic issue leading to discrepancies and inequalities in fiscal distribution among local administrative organizations. This strong relationship between national politics and local politics is, therefore, like a coin with two sides. Whenever there is a national political crisis or a crisis of faith, local politics are also affected, as it is understood that local politics form a basis for national politics.

Yet, the relationship between the “local” and the “central” can be divided into two dimensions. **The first dimension** is the central dimension, in which national politicians share mutual interests with local politicians. Local politicians are aiming to grow into national politicians while national politicians allocate budgets to the local areas to maintain their power base. Therefore, their relationship is mutually dependent. **The second dimension** of the relationship between the “local” and the “central” is that the “central” are “central civil servants” whose duties are to regulate local administrative organizations, primarily the regular career officers. These regular central officers are linked to “regional officials” and the “local officials,” which form networks of relationships in terms of organizational development between “the principle of decentralization” or “devolution of power” and “the principle of centralization.” Both principles are contradictory, and their contradictions are revealed in terms of their power and duties, their personnel administration, and their budgeting.

The conflicts between the “local” and the “central” in the last decade are rooted in the second dimension. While the relationship between local politicians and national politicians in the first dimension continues in the form of mutual benefits, the fact that local administrative organizations are still under the influence of national politicians is better for them than if local administrative organizations were completely self-reliant, in accordance with the decentralization principle. Therefore, there are many future challenges to the development of “local administrative organizations” that involve both internal factors within the “local administrative organizations” themselves and external factors, especially from the “central authority,” including “political bosses” and “regular officials,” particularly those “regular officials” who emphasize “national security” and have no faith in “political bosses” either at the national or the local levels. Consequently, the development of “local administrative organizations” would be even more limited. These are the current state and the problematic issues that the local administrative organizations are facing.

In summary, the establishment of sub-district administrative organizations (SAO) and provincial administrative organizations (PAO) throughout the country helps to reduce the vertical relationship between “officials” and the “people” and to develop a horizontal relationship between the “local politicians” and “the people,” resulting in a local patronage political system. The “influential” or “big wheel” locals become “local politicians,” developing ties between local politics and national politics. Therefore, the relationship between the local and the central is of two natures. On one hand, there are mutual benefits provided by national politicians; on the other, there are conflicts with the “regular officials.” Therefore, this trilateral relationship poses major obstacles to the development of “local administrative organizations” in Thailand. A better solution to the decentralization of the local administrative organizations requires a new conceptual framework in order to help “local organizations” (including local administrative organizations, local officials, the central government, the regional government, community organizations, and civil society) work together with an emphasis on their mission as the appointed area of focus, especially regarding the well-being of the local inhabitants as their primary goal. Such perceptions would allow the recognition that old conceptual framework poses issues in overcoming present challenges. In such cases, therefore,

a modification of the conceptual framework is required in order to achieve the set objectives.

Furthermore, there are many problematic issues related to the structural design of local administrative organizations with many structural issues of various dimensions, such as the promotion of “the district councils” to “the sub-district administrative organizations.” While the appropriateness and readiness in various dimensional capacities were lacking, the geospatial information also overlaps in local administrative organizational structure, and the formulation of local administrative organizations’ structure with identical formats. These are all fundamental issues in the formulation of a structural design for local administrative organizations. The decision to establish the regulatory policy of The Sub-District Council and Sub-District Administrative Organization Act B.E. 2537 (1994) was a decision that had a significant effect, creating major cultural changes in Thai politics and Thai governance, as noted earlier. However, this has resulted in the formation of an organic relationship between local politics and national politics under the “patronage system.” Moreover, local politics reinforces the strength and stability of the “patronage system.” This issue has led to the establishment of the Thai “structural patronage” political system, resulting in even greater difficulties resolving problematic issues regarding the patronage system in Thai politics, as it is an issue that not only concerns individuals but also has become significant at the structural level. This system has infiltrated every aspect of the administrative body, resulting in problematic issues of corruption that have been difficult to address.

Elaborating further on the present structural design of the Thai national political institutions, with regards to the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Thai Constitution B.E. 2540 (1997) has stipulated that both the House of Representatives and the Senate must be chosen through public elections in order to provide a democratic solution in both national councils. However, this organizational system led to a political crisis in Thailand and to the promulgation of a new constitution. The 2007 Constitution requires that the House of Representatives come from public election while half of the Senate continues to come from a selection processes and the other half must come from political appointment. However, as the political crisis still lingered, a new constitution was drafted on August 7th, 2016, stipulating that senators must be chosen through appointment by persons who are knowledgeable, with expertise, experienced, and

professional. Moreover, the senators chosen must have characteristics that will be of benefit to one another or have had experience in various fields of work in society. And, importantly, the division must be split in such a way that all eligible individuals can be in one of these groups. The structure of national political institutions in the past 20 years has been designed to acquire senators in three ways: (a) from election, (b) from both election and recruitment and (c) from appointment. What was the reason for 3 new re-designs in the acquisition of Senators? The reason behind this was the “structured patronage system” discussed above, which has resulted in the entire body politic of the national and local political systems being subjugated by the “structured patronage system” which, in turn, leads to political crises in Thai society. The “patronage system” and the “electoral system” contradict one another. Once the “patronage system” is related to the “electoral system,” this result in problems with the “representative system,” in that the minor opposition parties stand less chance of having national representatives on their side. This issue concerns the quality of democracy, which is linked to the structural design of the political system. In short, local politics play an important role in reinforcing and strengthening the “structured patronage system,” which is an important factor in the political crisis of Thai society.

Using democratic principles as an important base for acquiring local administrators and local council members prevents the intervention of the central authority, such as central officials or regional officials, from handpicking representatives as local executives or members of local councils. If this happens, it will cause a limitation or reduction in the quality of local self-reliance. However, the electoral system can also make a concentration of the local patronage system and vote buying. Since there are only small number of candidates and a smaller arena of political competition, those who have a relationship with national politics will have more advantages. This leads national and local politicians to seek more connections that will, eventually, provide benefits to one another in securing the positions of both local and national parties, hence increasing the stability and strength of the “patronage system.”

Although there have already been three alterations to the manner by which new senators are acquired in the past 20 years, the patronage system in the small local administrative organizations still works more effectively, as it provides mutual advantages to both parties. Moreover, the family system, or the kinship system,

in the local Thai community has become one of the major factors that supports the patronage system. In this case, there needs to be some adjustment in the design of more appropriate structures for local political institutions according to their sociological factors. To be exact, the Thai local administrative organizations require a new design construct that fits the requirements for each specific sociological factor. In conclusion, the structural design of the local administrative organizations must consider the possibility of recruiting diverse collaborating parties together, rather than excluding them from the local organic system. Most importantly, any approaches to developing the structural design of the local administrative organizations should include the flexibility to vary depending on the specific characteristics of each locality with its differing and diverse dimensions.

However, as necessary it is to adjust the national political structure, it is also necessary to adjust the local political structure according to the socio-political aspects of that locality. Therefore, it is not sufficient to design the structural institutions based merely on the “electoral principle,” as this does not help to eradicate the “patronage system,” which has evolved into the “structural patronage system.” Meanwhile, the basic aim of the national and local political structure is likely to differ in the following fundamental respects:

(1) While the reorganization of national organizations focuses on balancing and monitoring the use of state power, local organization should perhaps focus more on having the consensus of community members.

(2) The reorganization of national organizations focuses on defining or implementing policies and goals for the benefit of the nation, while the local organizations should only focus on fully meeting the needs of community members.

(3) The reorganization of national organizations should focus on establishing secondary organizations to implement policies; however, the reorganization of local organizations, which already collaborates closely and directly with the public, does not require any other agencies to work as intermediaries.

Therefore, to achieve the purpose of establishing a different kind of organization, either different design requirements or a different type of organization is needed. Reducing the intensity of political competition at the local level-by, for example, creating openings for people in the locality (sub-district headman, village headman), regional

personnel (doctors or local teachers), local personnel, and civil society personnel, along with personnel from religious organizations-to provide greater room for a developmental dimension, which, in addition, may partially reduce local political influences. In this respect, the focus should be shifted to the development of the well-being of the local inhabitants in all dimensions, whether in education, healthcare, or social security as well as the local economy. The maintenance of the physical and mental well-being of local habitants requires the organic and unified participation of all parties involved, sharing the same objective, which is to improve the quality of life of the locals. This is, therefore, the conceptual basis for the establishment of the local administrative organizations whose principles and concepts are different from those of a national political structure. Thus, for Thailand, the “electoral principle” alone lacks a basis for the development of decentralization, and it cannot achieve the mission of a local organization. This is the major reason why local organizations require reorganization to deal with their local challenges effectively and enable greater welfare for their local inhabitants.

The division of governance into various types and levels. The division of governance into various types, with each type containing multiple levels, while all the governance is applied in the same locality, but with differing objectives. This is the fundamental issue of decentralization: the separation of government into central government, provincial government, and local government, all of which contained in any particular province. These public administration activities are carried out in the same locality, superimposed on one another even though they may have different objectives. Their budgeting is also different. The central and regional government utilizes the department’s bases in calculating its budget (functional base), while the local government utilizes the area to calculate its budget (area base). These issues lead to the calculation of the budget, the allocation of the budget, the monitoring of the budget and the evolution of budget; however, the problem of corruption is embedded into such budgetary practices, not to mention the ambiguous authority and duties between the central, the regional and the local governments. These problems come at a significant cost to the relationship between the central, the regional and the local government, which may result in conflicting relationships between each level, along with conflicts between personnel. These issues all present barriers to improving the quality of the lives of locals.

Local governments in any particular province also contain superimpositions between PAOs, municipalities, and SAOs, with consideration that PAOs are local administrative organizations are at the top part of the structure, while the municipalities and SAOs occupy the lower part of the structure. The problematic issue of the superimposition, and the ambiguous power and duties, of local administrative organizations is one of the fundamental obstacles to adjusting the organization and its many diverse multi-level relationships.

It can be said that governmental administration, in terms of administrative regulations that concern local administrative organizations, contain both verticals issues, which result from the relationship with the central and the provincial government, and horizontal issues, which result from the relationship between local administrative organizations that overlap geospatially and that are, therefore, challenged by problematic issues of ambiguity regarding their power and responsibilities.

The nature of the problem is that, in any province, there are no less than five types of organizations: namely, the central government, the regional government, the PAOs, the Municipality, and the SAOs. The more organizations that there are, the more problems arise in terms of authority, budget, administration, and personnel boundaries. To alleviate these obstacles that hinder local administration, local personnel must primarily be committed to their geospatial mission. This signifies that local development is their primary priority, while responding to the central government is of secondary importance.

Clarifying geospatial authorities in each of these provinces will reduce ambiguity in the power and duty boundaries between local administrative organizations. This issue, therefore, requires a new organizational structure at the provincial level with the development of the provincial budget as its basis, while budgeting on a functional basis should merely be supplemental. This budgeting methodology is opposite to the present method, which budgets on a functional basis while area-based budgeting is supplementary. Modifications to these fundamental concepts, which utilizes the area basis as the objective when carrying out work missions, leads to budgeting methodologies that utilize the province as the basis and that leads to the utilization of the provinces as the assessment basis, which will result in clarity with regard to their own goals, budgeting, personnel, administration, and evaluation of success.

Conclusion

The administrative organization of the Kingdom of Thailand is divided into many levels, and the local government is also split into two levels. This administrative organization poses numerous obstacles to local development, however. Thus, administrative re-organization requires a new conceptual framework that still includes the central government, regional governments, and local governments as a base for provincial budgeting, but where “provinces” are independent administrative entities. Therefore, the central government, the regional government and the local government in any particular province would have to collaborate to determine the provincial budget and, in terms of administration, aim towards the development and welfare of its people as its main objective.

The brief analysis in this paper is not intended to answer questions pertaining to each problematic issue, but to provide an overview analysis of the conceptual framework with regard to decentralization and its effect on the organization of local governments in Thailand for the past two decades. The original models often resulted in conflicts between the central government and the regional and local governments, most particularly between “regular civil servants” and “local officers.” The elimination of any party may not be an appropriate solution regarding administration at the local level. These issues, however, require a new conceptual model that overcomes problematic issues at the local level.

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