



The public sector innovation for development of Thai public sector

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Abstract

This article aims to investigate the evolution and typology of public sector innovation in Thailand, identify supportive and obstructive factors, and propose new development guidelines. This study was conducted through data collection processes that included relevant literature reviews and in-depth interviews with government officials working with the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) to develop public sector innovation. The findings revealed that the evolution of Thailand's public sector innovation could be characterized in three periods: first, "under the context of bureaucratic reform," second, as "Central-Institutional Innovation," and third, as "Partnership Innovation" under the Kingdom of Thailand constitution of B.E. 2560. The findings revealed that political and administrative factors, cooperation with international development organizations, and awarding and rewarding schemes are all supportive factors of public sector innovation. The absence of authorized responsible agencies, operating budget constraints, and a lack of cooperation among related parties are all obstacles to Thailand's public sector innovation development. The proposed development guidelines include a more citizen-centric approach, improved collaboration between relevant sectors, and increased budget allocation to utilize public sector innovation effectively.

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Introduction

Environmental, economic, social, political, and technological conditions have significantly impacted public administration. These phenomena also influence the extensive reform of government agencies and

bureaucratic systems to achieve successful adaptation. In addition, citizen expectations for higher quality public services have also increased. Traditional public policy formation was not intentionally designed to solve complex problems. Yet, there are more diverse issues than ever before, affecting public safety and posing management challenges in the public sector (Daglio et al., 2014). Concurrently, there has been increased pressure on governments in many countries to change administrative procedures and find ways to improve public sector operations (Bason, 2018; United Nations, 2012).

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The significant contributing factors that initiate public sector reform in each country are fascinating detail in the field of public administration. According to an OECD report, mainstream globalization and reorganization of public services were identified as critical drivers of this change, particularly in developed countries. As a result, the paradigm for public administration reform was developed and later put into action. The introduction of policy design and implementation by the OECD influenced the public sector reformative paradigm in developing countries (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2014). However, appropriate administrative environments for domestic application must be considered when reforming the public sector in developing countries. At the same time, public interest also played a significant role as the heart and purpose of public sector reform. Similarly, citizen participation and the appeal for better public services were critical components of the reform (Robinson, 2015).

Public sector innovation has attracted widespread attention and has become frequently used by politicians, policymakers, and those involved in developing and improving public administration. It is also hailed as a “magic concept” capable of establishing a framework for public sector reform (Pollitt & Hupe, 2011). Public sector innovation improves the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations and grants permission to provide public services (Bekkers et al., 2011). As a result, governments worldwide have been fostering public sector innovation through improved public services (Walker, 2006). In a democratic context, some national governments have advanced public sector innovation alongside bureaucratic reform. Some countries promote public sector innovation to reduce corruption, while others use it to transform an overburdened bureaucracy into a data-driven bureaucracy, such as the social security system in Germany and Austria, the developed universal healthcare system in the United Kingdom and Nordic countries, the digital citizen card in Estonia, and the Dutch E-Citizen Charter in the Netherlands (European Commission, 2013).

In summary, public sector innovation has grown in popularity and has become a critical component in improving the government's efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness in providing better public services. As previously mentioned, the researcher developed three perspectives in studying the evolution, typology, supportive factors, and obstructive factors of public sector innovation in Thailand. The study results could provide recommendations for its development.

The literature review revealed that previous studies on public sector innovation in Thailand were mainly case studies or research on specific aspects of public sector innovation in some governmental agencies. There were, as yet, no studies on the overall situation or the development of public sector innovation in Thailand. The researcher was therefore interested in exploring this perspective of Thailand's public sector innovation and proceeded to work with research questions including—“What is the history of public sector innovation in Thailand?”, “What are supportive and obstructive factors of the development of public sector innovation?” and “What should be the approach for the development of innovation in the public sector?.”

This study aimed to investigate the development of public sector innovation in Thailand. The findings on supportive and obstructive factors of public sector innovation could be synthesized to create further guidelines for public sector innovation development in various agencies.

Literature Review

The Significance and Definition of Public Sector Innovation

Public sector innovation is defined as a new method or option intended to change core operations in the public sector (Lynn, 2003), which results in public sector reorganization such as new regulations, new infrastructure, social relationships, monitoring procedures, and public policy (Osborne & Brown, 2013). Public sector innovation is a process of new idea generation to create social value (Mulgan, 2007). Internal public sector innovation entails implementing improvements or new working procedures, whereas external public sector innovation entails providing public services (León et al., 2012). Public sector innovation is the creation of new policies and standards to address governmental issues. Thus, innovation in public administration refers to effectiveness, creativity, and solutions to unknown problems or new solutions to old problems (Alberti & Bertucci, 2006).

Recent studies on public sector innovation highlight three theoretical perspectives: (1) public sector innovation as internal activities related to maximizing organization efficiency, including attempts to offer new services and processes as well as concepts about innovation levels (Dunleavy & Carrera, 2013; Windrum, 2008); (2) public sector innovation as the modern forms of public services which change the relationship between people and the government (Hartley, 2013); and (3) public sector innovation as a creator of greater public value. Public sector innovation

generally focuses on improving organizational efficiency through internal organizational activities. It also focuses on external organizational activities to enhance service quality and find ways to promote innovation with other relevant sectors. As a result, public sector innovation entails focusing on public service, increasing organizational efficiency, and establishing external collaboration. These three main goals can be met by implementing new operational methods resulting from policy design to provide more efficient public service and create a more responsible and accountable government (European Commission, 2013).

Typology of Public Sector Innovation

Vries et al. (2014) classified public sector innovation into four categories—Process Innovation, Product or Service Innovation, Administrative Innovation, and Conceptual Innovation. This classification emphasizes internal organizational factors and efficiencies as the new conceptual framework for public sector innovation. Bekkers et al. (2013), on the other hand, focused on more tangible concepts of public sector innovation, such as the introduction of new types of public goods or services, improved service delivery, reorganized and retooled public service delivery, and conceptual innovation with constantly updated solutions. Alberti and Bertucci (2006) defined public sector innovation as a creative method to complete tasks. Furthermore, innovation is related to cooperation with external organizations or breaking away from traditional practices. In other words, this action aims to create new public goods, public services, innovation initiatives, and new working processes with

the primary goal of solving social problems. Moreover, innovation must be efficient, creative, and collaborative to answer and respond to original and novel issues. In terms of conceptual innovation, it must be institutionalized for further development. Osborne and Brown (2013) provided a theoretical explanation of public sector innovation, demonstrating the emergence of new inventions or innovations that contribute to “radical change” and “incremental change” in public goods and services. Walker et al. (2011) explicitly divided public sector innovation into three categories; Service Innovation, Process Innovation, and Partnership Innovation. This categorization corresponds with Perry (2010), who classified public sector innovation into the forms of public service-providing processes and policy development.

In conclusion, the initial goal of public sector innovation highlights the development of organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, innovation is determinedly designed for operational performance improvement and is a necessary tool for the government sector. Subsequently, the innovation focuses on external activities involving service quality improvement to meet public satisfaction because public service users need affordable service per their expectations.

Supportive Factors of the Innovation Application for Public Sector Innovation Application

From the literature review relating to contributing factors promoting public sector innovation, the details of the mentioned factors can be summarized in the following Table 1.

Table 1 Supportive factors of the innovation application for public sector innovation application

Scholars	Supportive factors on the innovation application for public sector innovation application
Bekkers et al. (2013)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Political and administrative stimuli from the public administration environment 2) Levels and characteristics of legal culture and domestic policy 3) Governing regime and state tradition 4) Resource allocation, resource dependency, and quality of collaborative networking between other related practitioners handling innovation application
Borins (2006)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Support from high-level administrative personnel 2) Rewarding and awarding innovation 3) Resourcing for innovation 4) Variety of skill sets and experiences of staff. 5) Learning from the external knowledge 6) Support from organization members, especially from middle managers and frontline practitioners 7) Experimentation and Evaluation
Duivenboden and Thaens (2008)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Clear focus and deep concentration on innovation application 2) Freedom to experiment 3) Knowledge and understanding of related actors 4) Change of government role into a facilitating stakeholder
Osborn and Brown (2013)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Research Push 2) Market Pull 3) Political Imperative 4) Conspicuous Production

Supportive factors of public sector innovation could be either internal or external factors, for instance, political factors and government administration, supporting resources and budget allocation, compensation and rewards, and learning innovation from outside the organization.

The Obstructive Factors in the Application for Public Sector Innovation

The major obstacles to public sector innovation have derived from political, economic, social, and organizational behavior contexts, including governmental risks based on complicated social relationships and public accountabilities. Kamensky (2011) explained that the problems related to innovation are well-perceived as a part of public policy and public administration. The innovation obstacles were tested and verified by theorists under the public administration context. The specific organizational activities regarding innovation development that received particular interest were organizational effectiveness, quality, and form development. Therefore, the obstacle to public sector innovation is significantly associated with “non-creative management” and the inappropriate selection of organizational structure and reform (Nelson & Svara, 2012).

All potential obstacles to the application of public sector innovation are summarized in the following Table 2.

In summary, most obstacles to public sector innovation are caused by internal and external factors. They could occur in political, economic, social, or organizational contexts, such as a strong hierarchical structure, budget limitation, a lack of coordination, organizational culture with resistance to change or creative innovation, etc.

From the literature review, the conceptual framework can be summarized in the following Figure 1.

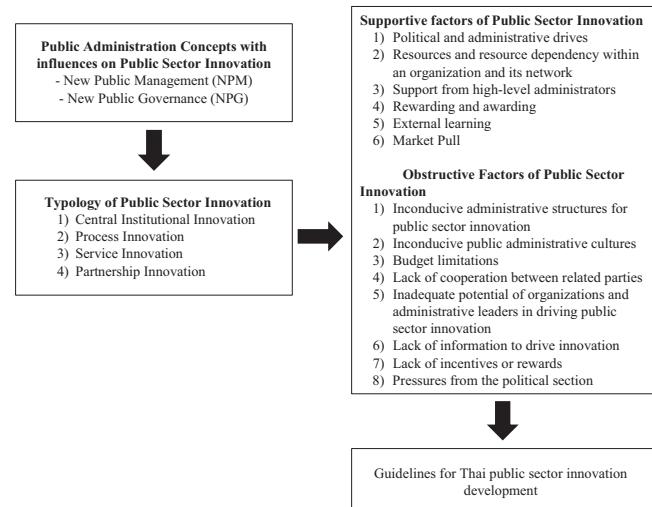


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the study

Table 2 Obstructive factors in the application for public sector innovation

Scholars	The obstructive factors in the application for public sector innovation
European Commission (2013)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Organizational structure limitations 2) Diversity of administrative cultures and legal statutes 3) Resource and budget limitations 4) Lack of multi-level cooperation between government agencies 5) Disorganized public sector reform and innovation management, ineffective coordination, and unavailability of the development framework for long-term innovation development 6) Inadequate introduction to good innovation practice 7) Inadequate proficiency in organizational management and innovation driving 8) Insufficient support and budget to foster and promote innovation when compared with the private sector 9) Limited organizational learning and institutional innovation (stimulation is required to initiate working creativity) 10) Lack of information to effectively drive innovation
Mulgan and Albury (2003)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Resistance to change 2) Risk aversion (as it is hard for the government to control both technical and market risks) 3) Hierarchical structure, contributing to unquestioning obedience to high-level administrators
Borins (2006)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Unaccepting attitude 2) Difficulty of cooperation 3) Innovation maintenance and new technology utilization 4) Pressures from the political section, e.g., insufficient budgeting and resourcing, rule and legal limitations, and opposite political viewpoints 5) Effects on private sector benefits 6) Opposite political stance 7) Effects of the external environment

Methodology

This research is a qualitative study that uses three methods of data collection – documentary research, in-depth interviews, and content analysis. A detailed explanation for each research method is provided as follows;

1. Documentary Research

Relevant documents corresponding to the research objectives were selected, including relevant government publications, related policy information, published research, and academic articles. The criteria for document inclusion were: (1) authenticity—the document must come from a reliable source and must be accurate and consistent with the situational context at the time of its publication; (2) credibility—it must be free from errors and misrepresentation; (3) representativeness—it must be able to represent information available in other documents of the same type; and (4) meaning—it must be easy to understand and be per the objectives and significance of this research. The included documents are as follows;

1.1) Annual reports, strategy plans, law books, rules and regulations, the published manual on public sector innovation, and other relevant documents, both printed and electronic versions, of the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC), Thailand

1.2) Related government documents on public policy, providing details of the applied policies and the outcomes of policy implementation. i.e., Constitution Law of Thailand, National Government Organisation Act, B.E. 2546, the Royal Decree on Principle and Procedure for Good Public Governance, B.E. 2546, Ministerial Regulation on Public Sector Development, Policy Statement of the Council of Ministers from past to present, Strategic Plan of the Public Sector Development, National Economic and Social Development Plans

1.3) Public administration academic journals

1.4) Books, articles, and dissertations relating to public sector innovation and public administration reform

The keywords “public sector innovation” and “bureaucratic reform” were used to search for academic articles relevant to the research objectives. With the keyword “public sector innovation,” 6 research articles were found, 4 relevant to the research objectives. They were articles about implementing public sector innovation and the Government Innovation Lab. The keyword “bureaucratic reform” was found in 63 pieces, 20 of which corresponded to the research objectives and

explored various reforms of Thailand’s bureaucratic system.

The content of these relevant academic articles was examined alongside annual reports, strategic plans, laws, and regulations, as well as manuals, books, and other documents on public sector innovation distributed by the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC). The data synthesis was used to develop guidelines for Thai public sector innovation development.

2. In-depth Interview

After receiving the information from documentary research, the data was analyzed to form the semi-structured interview question. These questions were used and answered by several high-level officials, such as the secretariat of the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission, the Director of the Public Sector Innovation Center, the Director of the E-Learning Innovation Development Division, and the Public Sector Development Officers.

Twenty people involved in the Government Innovation Lab project were interviewed using semi-structured questions.

1) Two public sector development officers from the OPDC.

2) Two experts from Thammasart University and King Mongkut’s University of Technology Thonburi.

3) Three representatives from central government agencies in three projects: Hospital Queuing System Project, Delay Solution for Herbal Product, Work Process Improvement on Certification in International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

4) Thirteen representatives from local government agencies in four projects: (1) Aging Citizen Group, Taphanhin District, Phichit Province, (2) Tourism Promotion, Ban Laem District, Phetchaburi Province, (3) Organic Farming, Loeng Nok Tha District, Yasothon Province, and (4) Community Enterprise, Khuan Khanun, Phatthalung Province.

As a means to validate the accuracy and reliability of the data, the triangulation technique was utilized. Human data sources were triangulated using the same questions to get answers from different sample groups or informants within the same sample group. This action was taken to ensure the validity of the data collected.

Results and Discussion

The research results can be summarized as shown in the following [Figure 2](#).

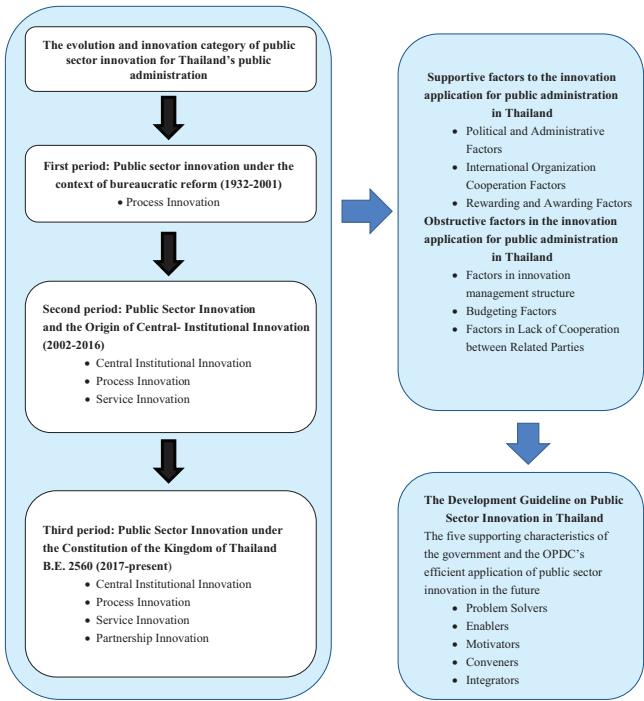


Figure 2 Public sector innovation for the development of the Thai public sector

The Evolution and Innovation Category of Public Sector Innovation for Thailand's Public Administration (1932–2001)

Public sector innovation under the context of bureaucratic reform (1932–2001)

During Thailand's first public sector innovation period, innovation was meaningfully applied to improve and develop public service quality under bureaucratic reform. In other words, public sector innovation still needed to be more apparent in the Thai public administration. However, several governmental reform patterns were newly introduced, such as committee appointment, law amendment, government regulation enactment, and reform planning initiation. Therefore, following this study's definition, these government proceedings could be defined as the first public sector innovation. Throughout the first period of introduced public sector innovation in Thailand, Process Innovation was highlighted by the Thai government, which can be described as efficiency, quality, and internal—external working process developments for the Thai government. These developments also include applying new management techniques to improve bureaucratic and public service qualities. The results of these changes include the competency development of the bureaucratic

systems, efficiency promotion of the public sector, annual agenda setting of public service promotion, and the establishment of Thailand International Public Sector Standard Management System and Outcomes (P.S.O.). The transformational actions also included result-based management and participation encouragement between public service operators and the general public.

The examples mentioned above of public sector innovations in Thailand correspond with Process Innovation, as explained by Vries et al. (2014), as an innovation in administration and organizational management that focuses on internal innovation processes to increase government agencies' efficiency. It focuses on internal organizational factors, quality and efficiency improvement, the creation of new corporate models, new management techniques and methods, and innovative work processes. Likewise, Perry (2010) defined Process Innovation as a new method of production, causing redesigned organizational structures, relationships, rules and regulations, reorganized responsibilities, and renewed public goods and services. Therefore, these significant changes could indirectly affect the new working procedure of the public sector.

Public sector innovation and the origin of central-institutional innovation (2002–2016)

This period was a crucial transitional period of public sector innovation in Thailand as the Central-Institutional Innovation—Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC)—was formally introduced and became the primary mechanism for various development patterns of Thailand's public sector innovation. This established government office is the main body for public administration development, responsible for being a management tool designer and developer to significantly promote the practical application of public sector innovation for all government agencies in Thailand. Moreover, the OPDC's innovation development not only fosters Process Innovation but also stimulates Service Innovation in many forms, such as result-based management, Thailand International Public Sector Standard Management System and Outcomes (P.S.O.), E-Government, service links, government counter services, and government service points, etc.

Public sector innovation under the constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560 (2017–Present)

The concept of public sector innovation receives great attention as an essential public administration tool for providing public service. According to the Constitution of The Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560 (2017), Chapter XVI,

Section 258 (B), No. 4: Administration of State Affairs, it states, “there shall be improvement and development of government personnel management for them to be creative personnel who are able to invent innovations and effectively perform civil service and administration of state affairs.” (Office of the Constitutional Court, 2017). Consequently, there have been attempts to find approaches for developing public sector innovation in Thailand. Innovation concepts used during this time are not limited to only Central-Institutional Innovation but also the newer Partnership Innovation. The result of applied Partnership Innovation is “Government Innovation Lab,” a project qualified to address and fully utilize all critical functions from every linked party, ultimately forming a horizontal relationship. Under the design thinking method, it will substantially promote environments for learning and teamwork.

The three evolution periods of public sector innovation in Thailand correspond with the works of Lynn (2013); Osborne and Brown (2013). They defined public sector innovation as new options and processes that change government agencies' basic functions while re-engineering the organization structures, rules, regulations monitoring systems, and public policies of the excessive bureaucracy. Furthermore, the public sector innovations that emerged during these three periods are consistent with Mulgan (2007); León et al. (2012); and Alberti and Bertucci (2006). They defined public sector innovation as a new initiative used creatively to create social values. These significant changes include reinvented internal processes and externally delivered public services, which can be regarded as a “New Standard” for public sector performance. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that public sector innovation is intensely focused on “Effectiveness” and “Creativity” and provides answers to new questions or new solutions to old unsolved questions.

Supportive and Obstructive Factors in the Application of Public Sector Innovation for Public Administration in Thailand

The scope of this article was defined through the Government Innovation Lab Project operated by the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC). The results on supportive and obstructive factors for the application of public sector innovation in Thailand are concluded as follows;

Supportive factors

1. Political and administrative factors

Since the National Council for Peace and Order

(NCPO) took control of the Thai government in 2014, there have been new national reform guidelines and promotion of public sector innovation, which has led to the OPDC designing a developmental model named “Bureaucracy 4.0”. This model goes in line with the new economic reform plan, the “Innovation-Driven Economy,” also known as a national development strategy called “Thailand 4.0.” The project “Government Innovation Lab” was established to follow this strategy along with four pioneering programs: (1) Hospital Queuing System Project, (2) Solutions for Delayed Herbal Product Registration, (3) Work Process Improvement for International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Certifications, and (4) Solutions for Local-level Issues in 4 Areas; (1) Aging Citizen Group, Taphanhin District, Phichit Province, (2) Tourism Promotion, Ban Laem District, Phetchaburi Province, (3) Organic Farming, Loeng Nok Tha District, Yasothon Province, and (4) Community Enterprise, Khuan Khanun, Phatthalung Province.

The effects of political and administrative factors on the application of public sector innovation in Thailand correspond with the study of Bekkers et al. (2013). It was indicated that political and administrative stimuli play significant roles in creating public sector innovation by improving an organization's efficiency, creativity, and legitimacy, resulting in higher public satisfaction. Types of state and governance traditions can also influence innovation outcomes (Bekkers et al., 2013). In other words, Thailand, under a government formed by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), a military junta, has become a solid central and unitary state under strict rules and command. This government has positioned itself in top-down relationships with other agencies in the administrative mechanisms. Consequently, innovations chosen by the head of state (NCPO) have been prioritized to ensure compliance with required administrative plans or national development guidelines.

2. International organization cooperation factors

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has collaborated with the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) to implement public sector performance improvement innovations. The UNDP formed a network of personnel from various sectors to work together in developing implementation guidelines for public sector innovation. This cooperation has brought a signed memorandum of understanding among allied agencies, including UNDP Thailand, Thammasat Design Center (T.D.C.),

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, and four allied ministries—Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Science and Technology, and Ministry of Public Health. This growing influence of international organizations in developing the public sector in Thailand corresponds with a report by the European Commission (2013). The commission reported that the means for public sector development in European countries were initiated by the public sector innovation specialists, formed and assigned by European Commission to analyze the critical obstructing points in public innovation and provide helpful recommendations to efficiently promote public sector innovation in European countries.

3. Rewarding and awarding factors

Both rewarding and awarding can indirectly promote the development of Process Innovation. In Thailand, the Public Sector Excellence Awards (PSEA) are granted by the OPDC to organizations that carry out organizational development activity in accordance with administrative quality requirements. The United Nations Public Service Awards (UNSPA) are internationally recognized awards granted to public service agencies that can be considered another supportive factor for Service Innovation promotion. The UNSPA publicly praises agencies that provide the general public with valuable or beneficial public services. Similarly to the awarding by the OPDC, the purpose of the UNSPA awarding is to promote innovation in the public sector and motivate government officers to implement innovation in their workplaces. This corresponds with Borins (2006), who explained that successful innovation derives from encouraging high-level administrative personnel and rewarding and awarding the developed innovation.

Obstructive factors

1. Structural factors in Thailand's public sector

Although the Government Innovation Lab has been established, it remains an ad hoc project led by a group of public sector workers who share a common interest and is not managed by any specific agency. Furthermore, non-participating agencies are not required to implement the project's designed innovation. As a result, this project's benefits of creative and designed innovation are limited. This issue emphasizes the importance of frontline agencies initiating problem-solving innovation for their problems. Additionally, the work process of the Government Innovation Lab should be reviewed and improved so that public sector agencies can apply innovation to their organizations more effectively, realistically, and practically.

Aside from the management structure consideration, public sector personnel participating in the Government Innovation Lab should be carefully selected and assigned. Additionally, the responsibilities of participating staff in the project are volunteer-based, and the majority of them work at operational levels with no decision-making authority. Consequently, the traditional top-down hierarchy, known as the DNA of Bureaucratic Organization, remains the main impediment to the public sector's creativity in creating innovation (Bason, 2018). This is because, in an organization with a bureaucratic structure, decisions are made by high-level administrators (Raipa & Giedraityte, 2014).

2. Budgeting factors

The Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) is responsible for allocating sufficient budgets for the operation of the Government Innovation Lab. Nonetheless, interested public sector agencies are required to spend their budget or request budget allocation from higher-level subsidizing agencies to support their implementation of the designed innovation in their operations. This issue is consistent with the Institute of Public Administration Australia's (IPAA, 2014) study, which found a lack of clear innovation strategy and innovation-related goals for government agencies. Budget allocation for innovation was primarily reduced as a result of these limitations. Furthermore, the European Commission (2013) summarized the experiences of innovation application obstacles gathered from many countries. The findings revealed that public sector innovation, primarily constrained by financial and budget restrictions, differs from private sector innovation in several ways, including a lack of adequate promotion and subsidy.

3. Factors in lack of cooperation between related parties

Despite having several parties working on public sector innovation in Thailand, including experts from the OPDC, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Public Health, regional and local government officers, and education institute specialists, they still lack clarification on their roles and responsibilities, including authority over the Government Innovation Lab management. Furthermore, poor coordination among operating agencies working at various levels is a concern. The presence of multiple stakeholders from different organizational backgrounds is another obstacle in the operation of the Government Innovation Lab. These issues are consistent with a European Commission (2013)

study, which discovered that unsystematic innovation management, lack of coordination, limited organizational learning, and Central-Institutional Innovation are barriers to public sector innovation. Similarly, Borins (2006) stated that difficulty in organizational coordination hinders innovation implementation.

Guidelines for Thai Public Innovation Development

Public administration operates as a large organization with a complex structure. As a result, it is exceptionally challenging to innovate and implement public sector innovations in the organization. Public sector innovation must not be only a “novelty” but innovations that address people’s needs and problems. The findings of this study revealed the evolution of Thailand’s public sector innovation and its supportive and obstructive factors. As a result, the researcher proposed the following guidelines for the development of Thailand’s public sector innovation:

1. The Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) should encourage the growth of Partnership Innovation, as it is a type of public sector innovation in which people can participate more than Process Innovation and Service Innovation. The projects chosen for funding should be innovative, focused on local challenges and issues, and have budgeting and personnel readiness. The personal interests of personnel selected to participate in these projects must also be considered.

2. The Government Innovation Lab should be encouraged to work on both area-based and topic-based operations, with collaboration from various sectors such as government agencies, the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, and service recipients.

3. Campaigns and public relations should be launched to promote the Government Innovation Lab’s working concepts and design thinking. It is to increase the number of public sector innovators and people with knowledge and understanding of creating and developing public sector innovations.

4. The Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) should learn from completed projects. They should know which projects were a success or a failure and what factors may have contributed to such outcomes. Thriving projects could be further implemented in a different area or with another target audience, whereas failed projects should be improved.

5. The Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) should offer training courses or

seminars to help government officers understand public sector innovation at the executive and operational levels. Executive-level workshops and training sessions should help promote personnel’s knowledge and understanding of public sector innovation and help administrators decide whether to collaborate on a project. It could help them understand the working principles and how to assist their personnel in a project operation or participation. At the operational level, civil servants should receive training that focuses on developing innovator skills and using the design thinking process to create tangible innovations in their responsible projects.

The government and the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC), working as critical agencies for driving public sector innovation, should possess five supporting characteristics (adapted from Holden et al., 2017) for the efficient application of public sector innovation in the future:

1. Problem Solvers—They can act as a player who attempts to solve new problems and challenges in the provision of public services, which requires using new problem-solving options through a design thinking process and innovative design techniques based on a citizen-centric approach.

2. Enablers—The government and the OPDC should act as enablers, facilitating more accessible and innovative development. They should provide the necessary resources for training and practicing new skills, such as design thinking, or building the body of knowledge for tackling challenging public service provision in the future, such as reducing road accidents or caring for the elderly.

3. Motivators—The potential activation of government agencies is required to create challenging situations or launch innovation achievement competitions. A rewarding program is also suggested to invite and attract other government agencies to pay attention to and innovate in the public sector to improve public service quality.

4. Conveners—All players involved in developing public sector innovation, including the corporate sector, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and citizens who use public services, should be brought together. This is for them to benefit from the exchange of knowledge and resources, or to serve as a potential network for collaborative work to solve more challenging problems.

5. Integrators—The government and the OPDC must establish a system to facilitate long-term innovation while also playing a significant role in integrating knowledge, techniques, and new skills, as well as all players to develop creative public sector innovation.

Conclusion

The evolution of public sector innovation in Thailand's public administration can be divided into three periods:

The first period "public sector innovation under the context of bureaucratic reform," saw an emergence of public sector innovation. However, the term "public sector innovation" was not yet used in public affairs. There was/were development and improvement of processes within government agencies to achieve more efficient results. The public sector innovation used mainly in this period was Process Innovation.

In the second period, "Public Sector Innovation and the Origin of Central-Institutional Innovation," the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) was established. It has played an essential role in setting guidelines for developing public services for various government agencies. In this period, other typologies of innovation have also been developed, including Process Innovation and Service Innovation.

In the third period, "Public Sector Innovation under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560," public sector innovation has gained importance. It has also been stipulated in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560. Due to the change in technology, economy, society, and politics, as well as the influence of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), public sector innovation in this period focuses more on cooperation between various sectors, becoming more of Partnership Innovation. A clear example of this network are projects operated under the Government Innovation Lab.

Supportive factors that drive Thailand's public sector innovation development include: (1) domestic political and administrative factors; (2) international organization cooperation factors; and (3) rewarding and awarding factors. Obstructive factors to developing public sector innovation in Thailand lie in; (1) structural factors of the public sector, (2) budgeting factors, and (3) a lack of cooperation between related parties.

Furthermore, to improve public sector innovation in Thailand, the government and the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) should work as key agencies for driving public sector innovation development. They should be the Problem Solvers, Enablers, Motivators, Conveners, and Integrators.

Recommendations

1. The government should assign the Government Innovation Lab as a project under the management of the Public Sector Development Commission's Office (OPDC). However, adequate budget allocation is required to encourage project participation and the continued implementation of innovation by participating government departments or agencies. Conditions must be in place to compel and encourage participating government agencies to implement the project's innovation per their missions.

2. There should be a policy that requires design-thinking projects to create public sector innovation as a minimum burden on government personnel involved in each ministry's strategic department. In addition, the personnel participating in the Government Innovation Lab should be able to use the project results as part of their performance agreement or promotion.

3. The Government Innovation Lab alone is insufficient to drive innovation effectively. There should be better support for budgets, knowledge bodies, experts, and technologies.

4. In addition to the Government Innovation Lab Project, working networks relating to public sector innovation should be formally established. This is to facilitate the exchange of information or interests and to create a cooperative work environment among government personnel from different agencies that provide similar public services.

Limitations

Despite exploring Thailand's public sector innovation since the Siamese coup d'état of 1932, this study examined only the supportive and obstructive factors of public sector innovation in recent years. The research was limited to factors pertaining to the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) and the Government Innovation Lab's project implementations. Although the results of this study could be used as a guideline for innovation development in the Thai government, other government agencies—including at central, provincial, and local levels—have been developing public sector innovations. Therefore, future research should focus on developing public sector innovation in other agencies, such as government ministries, public organizations, state enterprises, local government agencies, etc.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

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